



Raybeat Jody Harris dreams of being way out west

RAYBEATS

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"And dancing to them," Jody says.

Considering their backgrounds — the original three in the Contortions, Pat in Eight Eyed Spy — the music is as sunny as a day on the beach. "We're not that kind of New York band," Pat says. "Too many bands, we thought, were too serious. There were elements that just didn't sit right. This band is a lot of fun."

And so they are. That night at Maxwell's, Danny came right out playing surf guitar — not bass — over Donny's Waikiki beat, focusing attention from the very beginning on the fact that he isn't George Scott, he's Danny Amos, and he's bringing his own talents to the band.

There are plenty of things you can do with Raybeats music: dance, listen, write a film around it. For that's what they play: theme music to a movie in your mind. But not some early '60s Italian film: with their taste in regional strains, as well as their matching cowboy outfits, the Raybeats are truly an American band. Jody, Donny, Danny and Pat hail from such landlocked states as Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska and Kansas, places with a great tradition of rock instrumentals.

The components are all taken from the kitsch/trash school of rock: surf instrumentals, cowboy, early '60s theme music, Tex-Mex, pure Mex and bossa nova (I swear!) all ground up in a Cuisinart and chucked out again with the individual parts intact. The underlying sound is the same surgically clean instrumental guitar that made California famous. It seems that surf sound was based on know-how and technology — very in words in those days — hence all the shiny guitars and chrome lute buggies with not one distorted guitar

to clog up the freeway. This was ruined by fuzzboxes and fuzzy minds of the next few psychedelic years, but the Raybeats hark back to that earlier era.

Yet it's not all goodtime music, either. The music can swing so fast from raunchy rock 'n' roll to just the prettiest melody that you can't help being exhilarated. Like Eight Eyed Spy, whose music was written by George Scott and Pat Irwin, the Raybeats' music is intricate and takes murky curves — but then the sax or organ comes in and lightens it up. And just as soon as that happens, the hollow melody of those picked guitar lines makes you feel you're inside the Pipeline with your sunglasses on.

But is this music just for ethnomusicologists or latent beach bums? Not really. It's for anyone who likes superb musicianship and rock 'n' roll that features equal doses of passion, raunch and beauty. Beauty's the operative word here, for the Raybeats play some of the most beautiful theme music not found on a soundtrack. Donny's drumming is both inventive and fun, with a beat halfway between Stax and a Puffa Puffa Rice commercial. It's as much fun to watch Jody Harris' agile hands play their textbook-clean lead guitar as it is to watch him chew gum all the while. Pat Irwin is a multi-instrumentalist *extraordinaire*, so good on each instrument it's hard to pick the one he's best at (sax).

Earlier Jody said, "The band thought it would be tasteless to try to 'replace' George." But Danny Amos does a nice job of defusing George's loss: at once trying not to fill his shoes but rather to bring a respectfully personal approach to the band. Soon kids from all over the land will be able to hear what has to be America's, nay the world's, best instrumental rock combo.