

# 'Redneck Jazz'

Danny Gatton's innovation produces fine blend of music

By ROB MONATH

Danny Gatton

Redneck Jazz

"I don't like someone to try to categorize what I do. It can't be put into any bag or corner...I like it all and I want to do it all. That's been my downfall and it might continue to be that way, but I'll just have to play what I feel and that's it."

Danny Gatton, Aug. 1, 1977

## Records

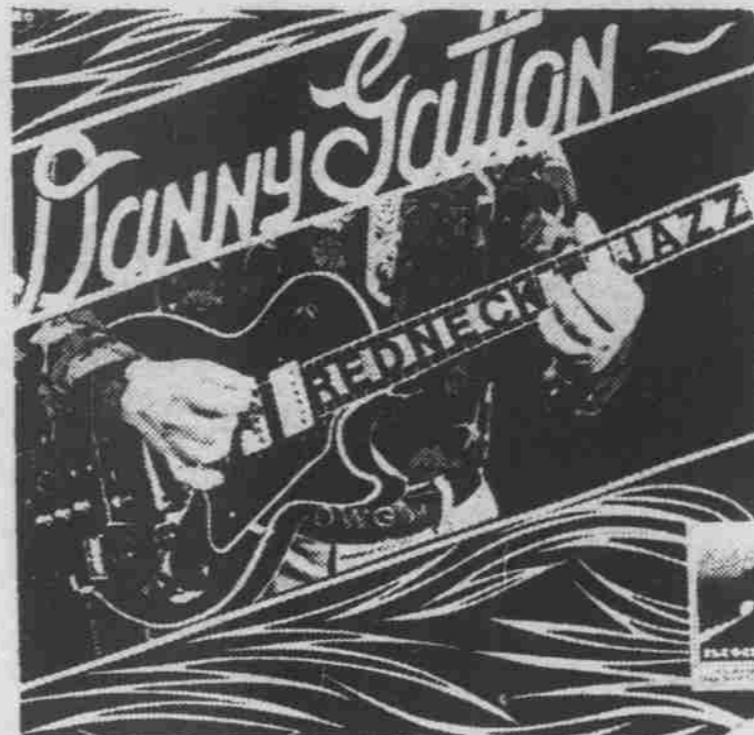
As this quotation implies, guitarist Danny Gatton is a man who likes to experiment with many musical modes and styles. His latest album, *Redneck Jazz*, explores a whole slew of them in a unique melding of jazz, country, blues, and rock influences, which thoroughly captivates the attentive listener.

Gatton's band consists predominantly of John Previti, bass; Dick Hientze, piano; Dave Elliot, drums; and Evans John and Chuck Tilley, vocals; all in addition to Gatton's own lead guitar, banjo and pedal steel. The band executes songs which cover musical genres from older swing jazz like the title cut, "Redneck Jazz," to a more country-western, "Truck Driving Romance," to an even jazzier instrumental,

"Comin' Home Baby," to name only a few.

Gatton's guitar work is absolutely astounding. His riffs embody a touch of practically every guitar great, from traditional jazzman Charlie Christian to bluesman B.B. King to the avant-garde John McLaughlin.

Gatton diversifies his sound ever further by attaching a Magic Dingus box directly to the body of his guitar. This little ditty is capable of producing about 13 different tones through the guitar, most



notably one which approaches the timbre of a Hammond organ. In this sense, Gatton is also an innovator like the man who designed his guitar and who also, Gatton claims, has been the chief influence on his playing: the man is none other than the legendary inventor/guitarist Les Paul.

Whether whipping off unbroken lines of blinding improvisation as on the countryish "Truck Driving Romance," or easing in and out of bends and glissandos as on the mellower "Sax Fifth Avenue," Gatton's picking shines with clarity and finesse.

On "Rock Candy," Gatton pairs up with agile pedal steel man Buddy Emmons; their pace is so rapid it left this reviewer in a daze (temporarily, of course).

The late Lowell George of the band Little Feat is quoted in the liner notes as saying, "Danny Gatton is the best player in any style that I've ever heard."

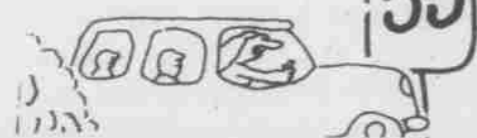
Many more people would feel the same way about Gatton if they heard him. The only problem, unfortunately, is that Gatton still is a local phenomenon emanating primarily out of the Washington, D.C., area. Gatton's mother actually handles all the promotion and distribution.

Hopefully, he'll catch on nationally as well as he has in D.C. where, at one local record store, he supposedly outsold the Rolling Stones' latest LP.

Luckily for Chapel Hillians, Gatton and his band are scheduled to play at the Cat's Cradle on the weekend of May 23.

Rob Monath is a record critic for *The Daily Tar Heel*.

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