

Music

Noble Savages hard to categorize, easy to appreciate

In a world where most rock 'n' roll bands are easily categorized by what style of music they play, it's hard to say just where Noble Savages fits in. The material it performs comes from and is inspired by such diverse musical types as rhythm and blues, basic blues, funk, folk, country rock (a la the Grateful Dead) and jazz.

"We've come up with some non-sense names to describe what we do, like funkabilly and country jazz," said Steve Irwin, guitarist for Noble Savages.

"In the end — and I hate to admit it — we'd have to be called a 'pop' band," added Scott Irwin, the band's drummer, "but not pop in the conventional sense of the word."

The band consists of the Irwin brothers on guitar and drums, Skip Williams on bass and Robert Keller on alto sax. Sometimes, Noble Savages plays as a "power trio" minus Keller.

As for its style, perhaps the band's material speaks best for itself. In its July concerts at the Skylight Exchange and La Terraza, cover

Michael Phillips Music

songs have included Joe Jackson's "Right and Wrong" and "On the Radio," Bob Marley's "Exodus," the Rolling Stones' "Honky Tonk Woman" and the Beatles' "Dear Prudence."

The material performed in concert, however, stresses Noble Savages' own compositions, written primarily through the collaboration of the Irwin brothers. Arrangements are provided by the entire band.

"We end up doing covers because they're crowd pleasers, and well, because they're really good tunes," said Scott Irwin. "Then once we get people on the dance floor, we play some of our own stuff. Hopefully, people will keep dancing and think, 'Hey, I've never heard this before, but it sounds pretty good!'"

As an initial step toward establishing themselves as "their own band,"

Noble Savages recorded its first album in late July. It is scheduled to be pressed and ready for distribution by early September. Songs on the album will consist mostly of the band's own original compositions. Included will be songs entitled "Let the Sunshine In Again" (a sequel to the tune from "Hair"), "Prophet for Profit" (an open letter to deserving televangelists), "Peace on Earth," "Mrs. Mojo" and "The Coyote Song." Aside from the band's regular personnel, guest keyboard player Greg Woods will appear on some of

the album's tracks.

"The album will contain a lot of different musical styles," said Steve Irwin. "Our hope is that at least one of the styles will reach everyone who hears us."

Noble Savages' ability to perform superbly within the confines of several musical genres is testimony to the band's diversity. When asked if Noble Savages love of such a wide range of styles tends to confuse the average listener, Scott Irwin responded: "You've got to play what you feel. The music has got to be

honest. That's what listeners want. Nothing we do is contrived."

"If it's not authentic," added Williams, "believe me, an audience can tell."

While remaining honest, the band admits that over time the wide variety of material it performs is becoming more stylistically centered. How can it be sure it is narrowing its tastes in a way audiences will appreciate?

"A musician thrives on applause," said Keller. "The audience responds well to what we do."



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