

Hi guys-

Here's the Dustbowl article for April 17. Twang, twang, twang.  
Hope yr all ok, we'll talk soon. Big P-

Dustbowl: Retro-Nashville Athens Style!  
After Dark Club, April 10, 2009  
Perri Pagonis  
[perripagonis@yahoo.com](mailto:perripagonis@yahoo.com)

Telecaster Nick, who looks remarkably like a pale, affable, funeral home director, tells me he hates current country music. Nick is the co-lead guitarist and founder of the band Dustbowl. As I write this article, I believe it is safe to say, Athens has exactly one country music band. Dustbowl is it. They're pretty good. I lived in Virginia for 42 years, so I know what I'm talking about. Pretty Lydia, the group's bassist, tells Nick in a kind way that "hate" is a strong word and he should use it carefully. Nick thoughtfully digests this information and tells me again that he hates current country music.

Their show at After Dark club in Exarcheia on Friday, April 10, was anything but a reflection of the current Nashville sound and mentality. Most American country music at this point in time is practically identical to the straight FM pop you hear on the teeny-bopper radio stations. The only visible difference being that the country artists wear cowboy hats and leather boots with triangular, isocetes tips. Dustbowl is retro-country music a la Hank Williams and Patsy Cline. Their sound is clean electric, single-coil trebly and mid-volume loud. There are no microchip keyboards, pre-programmed loops or sequencers in their musical arsenal. They play their instruments by hand: guitars, bass, pedal steel and drums are manually operated, revealing all the greatness, fun and foibles that go along with applied human dexterity.

Although their ideological roots are firmly entrenched in classic American country music, their playing style reveal influences from many other artists and musical genres. If one listens with careful ears to their live set, one can hear the work of varied artists such as Roy Clark, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Gun Club, Graham Parsons and Joe Ely.

Indeed, both guitarists, the aforementioned Telecaster Nick and DD Dynamite are complete masters of the blues and pentatonic minor musical scales. At times their combined playinig style, with drop-dead gorgeous pedal steel accents by new guy John Hardy, sounds remarkably like the Rolling Stones's musical output during their country-influenced *Let it Bleed* creative period.

Vocalist Big George, is a really big, impressive guy to watch on stage. With his Elvis meets Peewee Herman hairdo and Porter Wagoner party suit, he croons and warbles like a slick, low-profile bible-belt revivalist singer. Bassist Lydia and drummer Shoeshine Boy are my absolute favorite type of rhythm section. They provide the bottom half of the song with no flash whatsoever, giving the most solid of low-end foundation for the guitars and pedal steel to create the melodic foreground of the songs. Their set highlights this evening included performances by guest vocalists Tonnie from Down n' Out and Vice Leslie from the Velvoids. A better night of local all-star product could not have been asked for. Highlights of

their nearly sold-out concert included the tunes, "John Henry," "Hello Trouble," "Sympathy for the Devil," and "Rolling in my Sweet Baby's Arms."

Their current CD on On Stage records, *Troublebound and Lonesome*, shows another side of their diverse playing style and pathos. When performing in concert, the band provides energetic two-steps and foot-tapping, powerful rhythms. The recording on their new disc is more pensive and understated than their live shows, with very careful attention being given to the guitar and vocal melodies. Vocalist Big George's voice is a luscious audio hybrid between country legend's George Jones's plain sincerity and Dwight Yoakum's cool, bucolic sophistication. Any devotee of Americana country music owes it to themselves to see the band live and hear their new CD, which is available to listen to in its entirety on their official webpage, [www.dustbowl.gr](http://www.dustbowl.gr).

The evening's program began with local blues singer Low Down Nick. He finger-picked acoustic tunes and sang retro/country/blues standards such as "Railroad Bill" and several other instrumental songs that reminded the listener of the the work of Leo Kottke, but without the intricacy of phrasing and byzantine melody.

And finally, a Street Agents of Fabulousness (SAOF) update. Agents Kristina and Stelios from Exarcheia informed me that the management of Underground Rock Cafe, located at A. Metaxa 19-21, (210-382-2019) at plateia Exarcheia, have opened a state-of-the-art metal club next to Underground. The new Metalground club is open Thursday through Sunday after midnight and features Black metal, Death metal, and Poser-glam Djs. The sound system is crystal-diamond clear, the place is clean and the chairs don't have holes in them.

If you hear anything worth reporting in the rock underground, street-punk fashion or gonzo-culture categories, please drop me an email with all your information. Be one of the few, the proud, Street Agents of Fabulousness. You guys make this column happen. Today Exarcheia, tomorrow Ambelokipi and beyond!