

SLIM SANDY JUMPS BACK

BY DAVE O RAMA

Peter Sandmark has been shakin' it up on the Canadian rock 'n roll scene for over thirty years now and he shows no signs up slowing down.

As the drummer for Ray Condo's Hardrock Goners and guitarist and singer for their side project, The Crazy Rhythm Daddies, Sandmark has proven that he can lay it down on the back end or take centre stage behind the driving wheel.

Back in the early nineties when Ray Condo and the majority of the members of the Goners and Crazy Rhythm Daddies had transplanted themselves on the west coast, Peter Sandmark and his brother, lead guitarist Eric Sandmark, remained behind to keep on rocking it up on the Montreal scene.

Almost fifteen years after this exodus Peter Sandmark finally decided to pull up stakes and he moved his family to the Fernwood area of Victoria BC around 2005.

Once established out west Sandmark quickly got back to business, adopting the name Slim Sandy and recording several sides with a variety of "hillbilly" combos comprised of west coast rockabilly musicians from both sides of the border.

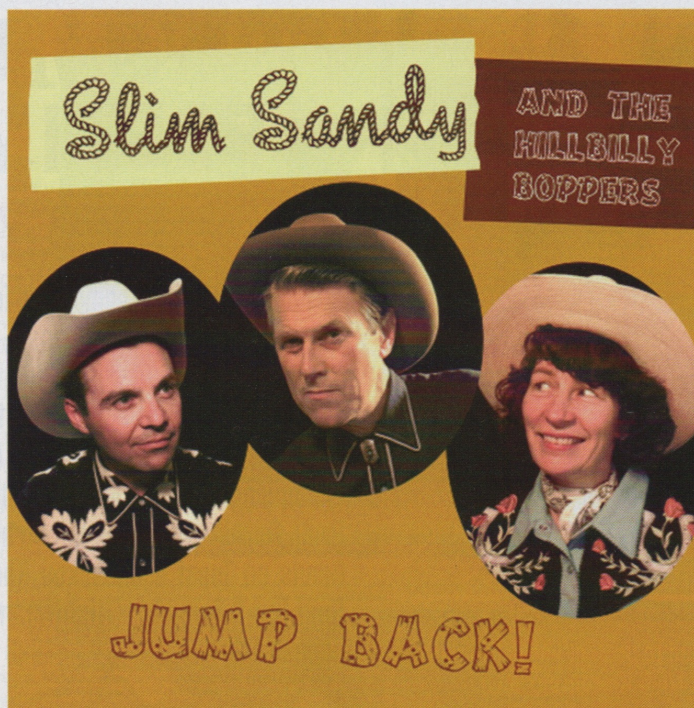
"I remember looking at a lot of Fats Waller records and Waller always had a different name for his bands, and I thought that was kind of funny."

As Slim Sandy he has released eight recordings, both on CD and vinyl, featuring a variety of combos including His Hillbilly Bebop Band, The Hillbilly Boogie Gang and The Hillbilly Boogie Band. Supporting him up on his newest release, *Jump Back*, is his current trio The Hillbilly Boppers, featuring German Ebert on drums and Willa Mae on washtub bass and harmony vocals.

"The truth is that there were different musicians on all those albums so it kind of reflects the reality of that."

A card carrying member of the global rockabilly scene, Mr. Slim Sandy's choice of material reflects a large spectrum of music that tends to be embraced by rockabilly fanatics around the world.

"Rockabilly is a very particular type of music, but what I like about the rockabilly scene as an international phenomenon is that it embraces a lot of different kinds of music."



"If you attend the Viva Las Vegas festival weekender in Nevada you'll encounter traditional rockabilly bands but you will also hear doo wop, various blues styles, honky tonk, western swing bands, boogie woogie, psychobilly and neo rockabilly, or bands like us who play hillbilly style."

"Ray Condo used to call rockabilly the biggest cult in the world. And yes I roll up my jeans, cut my hair and put grease in it, so I guess I'm part of that cult if you will."

True to his observations Slim Sandy kicks out a raw country blues sound on his guitar and harmonica that can incorporate many different musical styles from the Americana songbook.

His new CD, *Jump Back*, was recorded live in the living room of his Victoria, BC home with one microphone incorporating

everything from blues to bluegrass, jugband to boogie woogie and rockabilly to rhythm and blues all distilled down into some good old hillbilly lightning.

Slim Sandy admits that he's out to make recordings "that sound like the live show."

"I believe there is a value in the live sound. I think when you play live it's more magical. So, we're not overdubbing the vocals, we're singing the harmonies right there on the spot. There's a bit of voodoo in there for sure."

"Musicians adapt to each other sonically when it's live and you just can't capture that with overdubs. Something is lost in the overdub process in my mind."

Slim Sandy makes it clear "that what you hear on the record is what you hear live."

Sandmark's Slim Sandy persona was first realized as a solo artist, a kind of one man band where he performed on guitar, vocals, harmonica and a foot drum. Eventually he got himself an old suitcase to carry his snare drum in and soon realized all he really needed was the suitcase.

"Believe it or not I often check the suitcases I come across to see what kind of sound I get. Some of them are no good."

This jugband approach to his hillbilly flavored rock 'n roll also includes partner Willa Mae on the washtub bass and at other times her use of the washboard as a percussion instrument, ironically giving the songs a really dirty sound.

"Rockabilly is funny. I sometimes like to call it hillbilly swing.

SLIM SANDY ON THE CASE

Our current drummer German Ebert loves the old drummers from the swing era and gets that style and it really makes the music jump. They used to call Elvis a hillbilly cat. He was doing less chords but with a swinging beat."

I've always admired Sandmark's ability to dig up old unfamiliar musical gems from American recording history. He's very humble in his insistence that he not a musicologist but when he describes to me all the effort he put into tracking down the lyrics to Clayton McMichen's Pistol Boogie for the *Jump Back* sessions, I have to give him credit for his unwavering determination.

"I think one of the missions of our band is to recreate the live experience of rock 'n roll. And I think it's better done when there isn't a nostalgia factor. The audience doesn't have to know the songs. It's about the performance. It's about getting people dancing."

Score Slim Sandy's new record *Jump Back* at slimsandy.com, on iTunes, or pick it up at better record stores in the BC coastal area.

You can also catch Slim Sandy and the Hillbilly Boppers live this summer at the Chemainus Rockabilly Rumble festival, July 11 on Vancouver Island.