

BY CORINNE BROWN

Country Crossover Colorado Style

Railbenders play the new Outlaw Country.

Rail bending is a little known skill that was once used to derail trains, a nasty trick dating back to the Civil War. Men who succeeded in setting a fire on top of the rails were undoubtedly worth their salt—daring and tough. Those same words describe Jim Dalton, a

contemporary sound described by Dalton as Alternative Country. “Our music is influenced by the Outlaw Country artists of the ’70s like Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash and others,” he says. “The music of that era has been very important to this band.”



It's no big surprise that the Railbenders (from left: Tyson Murray, Jim Dalton and Graham Haworth) are hanging around a bar. We know they must like their whiskey as "Whiskey Saturday Night," "Whiskey Drinkin' Man" and "Whiskey Rain" are just a few of the drinking songs featured on their albums.

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songwriter/musician, whose band the Railbenders lays it out hard and fast with music you can dance and stomp to all night long.

Repackaged four years ago from Dalton's earlier band, The Whiskey Dicks, the Railbenders are a

Dalton adds that both his parents were instrumental in getting him into music. “One summer as a kid, after listening to my parent's Ventures album, I pulled out a guitar that my mother kept around the house and picked out the notes to



"The Mandolin is the bottom four strings of the guitar, backwards . . . so a person with dyslexia has no problem learning to play the Mandolin."

- Steve Goodman

‘Wipeout.’ By the time my Mom got home, I was playing it for her. She said, ‘How did you learn that?’ ‘I don’t know,’ I answered. ‘I just did.’ She signed me up for guitar lessons the next day. Thanks Mom.”

Two CDs, *The Railbenders* and the latest, *Segundo* (loaded with fresh originals and a few covers, such as Neil Diamond's “Sweet Caroline”) prove Dalton's roots. Infused with heavy doses of country and rock ‘n’ roll, the band's hard driving, soulful music grabs your attention and holds it—full throttle—with Dalton on lead vocals and rhythm guitar; Tyson Murray on upright bass, also known as the bull fiddle; and Graham Haworth on drums and vocals.

It's no coincidence that many songs have trains as subjects; Jim has a personal obsession about them. The rest are about the hard life. “Drinking, loneliness, bad livin’ and the occasional ‘lets just have a good time and raise some hell songs’ are the main stock,” he says. Whether you can relate or not, what's common to all their music is the pure energy that streams from every cut. Live performances are even better. The Railbenders rock.

Dalton, also a bartender and real estate appraiser, has ambitions to cut a new CD by the end of 2004 and is fueled by many new ideas, including a Country Christmas album. His fan base in Colorado is growing rapidly, thanks in part to KCUV 1510, the city's new underground radio station. Fans are confirming airplay in Arizona, Utah, California and San Antonio, especially through smaller college radio stations that are willing to play music with some edge—a fact Dalton's thankful for.

Recorded in Denver, Colorado, and distributed by Big Bender Records, Dalton's music is at the heart of Denver's growing music scene. Wired or acoustic, recorded or live, he's the legacy to the road songs of Johnny Cash, the drinking songs of Merle Haggard and the plaintive sounds of the other kings of Country. The Railbenders offer unpretentious music on tap.