

Edinburgh Festival Fringe: Twangdogs 'citizen-musicians' deliver Americana harmonies

Contributed article

Two doctors, two professors, a book buyer, a toy salesman and a statistician walk into a bar ... and will charm Edinburgh Festival Fringe audiences with their rich harmonies and rockin' repertoire of tunes about love and loss, bar fights and breakups.

Twangdogs, a band of citizen-musicians from Chicago, bring their unique blend of "country, rock 'n' roll – and everything in between" to the Jazz Bar on 6-7 August. The band will perform at 10 pm both nights.

Their music is a satisfying stew of old-time rock 'n' roll (Buddy Holly, Creedence Clearwater Revival), contemporary country (Little Big Town and Pistol Annies) and twang-inflected songs drawn from artists as diverse as Warren Zevon, Old Crow Medicine Show, the Grateful Dead and the Rolling Stones.

Just don't ask the Twangdogs to describe their music in a word or two. Guitarist/vocalist Rich Gordon might use the term "alt-country," while bandmate Merrie Viscarra (originally from Oklahoma, the country music heartland) thinks anything with the word "country" in it doesn't do justice to the diversity of the band's material. Guitarist/vocalist Quincy Stringham describes Twangdogs' repertoire as "a rich blend of Americana over the past 50 years – folk, country, alt-country, good old rock 'n' roll."

If there's a musical thread that ties Twangdogs' show together, it runs through the many places where American

country music crossed paths with rock 'n' roll – whether that's Lubbock, Texas (Buddy Holly), El Cerrito, California (CCR), Nashville, Tennessee (Little Big Town) or Cincinnati, Ohio (Pure Prairie League). The band also reaches beyond the U.S. to incorporate tunes from artists such as Kathleen Edwards (Canada) and Richard Thompson (the UK).

Twangdogs met in ensembles at Chicago's historic Old Town School of Folk Music, where John Prine and Roger McGuinn (Byrds) once studied. An ensemble is basically a band that lasts for eight weeks – long enough for the students to learn nine or 10 songs, figure out how to play them as a group, and perform them live.

Three of the Twangdogs are long-time members of the school's Grateful Dead Ensemble; the rest met in ensembles organized around themes such as brother acts (Bee Gees, the Kinks, Everly Brothers, Avett Brothers), Canadians (Barenaked Ladies, Leonard Cohen, Blue Rodeo, the Arcade Fire) and duets (Dolly Parton/Porter Wagoner, Sonny & Cher, Johnny Cash/June Carter, Steve Earle/Lucinda Williams, Tom Petty/Stevie Nicks). Keyboardist Jenny Macagba noticed how well her classmates' voices, instruments and musical tastes complemented one another and suggested they try to make a band.

Since early 2012, Twangdogs have been playing regularly around Chicago, impressing audiences with their muscular sound and harmonious vocals. Every one of the Twangdogs has a demanding, more-than-full-time professional career outside of music, but they have found such pleasure in making music together that they have made the time to practice regularly and perform frequently.

Twangdogs are:

- * Jack Garon (guitar, banjo, bass)
- * Janna Henning (guitar, fiddle, mandolin, bass, vocals)
- * Jenny Macagba (keyboards, guitar, vocals)
- * Merrie Viscarra (guitar, vocals)

- * Quincy Stringham (guitar, bass, vocals)
- * Rich Gordon (guitar, bass, vocals)
- * Steve Alspach (drums)

On their musical journey together, Twangdogs have become fast friends. They love to share their music and camaraderie with their fans.

“The whole Twangdog experience makes me happy and joyful,” Viscarra says.

Audiences at the Fringe will agree.

###

SHOW DETAILS:

Twangdogs Country!

- * 10-11:30 p.m., 6 August, The Jazz Bar
- * 10-11:30 p.m., 7 August, The Jazz Bar

Tickets (edfringe.com): <http://www.bit.ly/Tdogs>

FOR MORE ABOUT TWANGDOGS:

- * Fringe programme: <http://www.bit.ly/Tdogs>
- * Band website: <http://www.twangdogs.com>
- * Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/twangdogs>
- * Twitter: @twangdogs (<http://www.twitter.com/twangdogs>)
- * YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/twangdogs>
- * Soundcloud: <http://www.soundcloud.com/twangdogs>

Press contact: Rich Gordon, richgor@gmail.com

Submitted by [Rich Gordon](#)

