



Music

The Treatment

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DECEMBER

Thursday 14

CRITIC CHOICE

DALE WATSON

Dale Watson's latest album, *Whiskey or God (Palo Duro)*, appeared to be his swan song when it came out in March: in late 2005 the hard-core honky-tonk singer had relocated to Baltimore from his native Texas to be closer to his children, setting music aside and picking up work as a UPS driver. The hiatus appears to have been short-lived--he moved back to Austin this summer and he's playing shows again--but if *Whiskey or God* turns out to be the last recording he releases, he'll have gone out in style. Merle Haggard, Johnny Cash, Ray Price, Gary Stewart, and other unpolished shitkickers have always been influences on his music, and as usual Watson's best tunes lament the disappearance of old-school country sounds. But as many of the songs reveal, Watson has withstood enough tragedy in recent years to be nobody's pretender; a new documentary, *Crazy Again*, details how his girlfriend's death in 2000 sent him into a downward spiral that led to a stint in a mental hospital. Chicago's Hoyle Brothers open with a Christmas-themed set that's also their final show with singer-guitarist Jacque Judy, who's moving to Austin himself. Don't be surprised if Watson gets into the spirit and plays a few songs from his fine holiday collection, 2001's *Christmas Time in Texas*.

9 PM, Martyrs', 3855 N. Lincoln, 773-404-9494 or 800-594-8499, \$12.

--Peter Margasak

Dale Watson's MySpace page

The Trailer for the Watson documentary *Crazy Again*

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