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Band brings edgy twang of Texas to Magic City

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It's almost impossible to categorize Reckless Kelly's music. It's twangy enough to be country, yet edgy enough to be rock. There's an intimate singer-songwriter vibe in songs like "Wicked Twisted Road," but the band can also tear the roof off the place like the most hardcore dance-hall regulars in songs like "Baby's Gone Blues."

The band has been lumped in the Red Dirt Music genre, but that's as nebulous a classification as alt country or Americana. Maybe it's best to quit trying to categorize RK's music and enjoy it like the crowd at Zydeco did Thursday night.

The RK boys - lead singer Willy Braun, fiddle and mandolin player Cody Braun, drummer Jay Nazz, bassist Jimmy McFeeley and lead guitarist David Abeyta - are perpetual tourers, but they don't make it to Birmingham that often.

Being a Texas country band that's based in Austin means (almost) never having to say, "We're outside Texas." The gargantuan size of both Texas and the Texas music fan base in the state allows the band to tour extensively without leaving the state, which gave its rare visit to the Magic City particular impact. Then the band lived up to the anticipation with such songs as "Break My Heart Tonight," "I Still Do," "Vancouver" and "You Don't Want Me Around." The charismatic and at times female-swoon-inducing Willy Braun fronted the band, black hair secured with a do-rag, his throaty voice perfect for the songs that ranged in tone from earthy to ethereal.

The highlight of the night was a throbbing rendition of the Stones' "Wild Horses." What began as a country-rock band's take on a rock band's country song ended up with a jaw-dropping, fuzz-toned guitar throwdown by lead guitarist David Abeyta that lasted several minutes but never wore out its welcome or devolved into overkill.

In contrast to Willy Braun's charismatic persona, Abeyta generally stands to one side of the stage, head down, providing the crunchy backbone of the song. The whole mixture works to perfection, and it's a shame the band calls Austin home. Birmingham could use a few resident bands like Reckless Kelly.

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