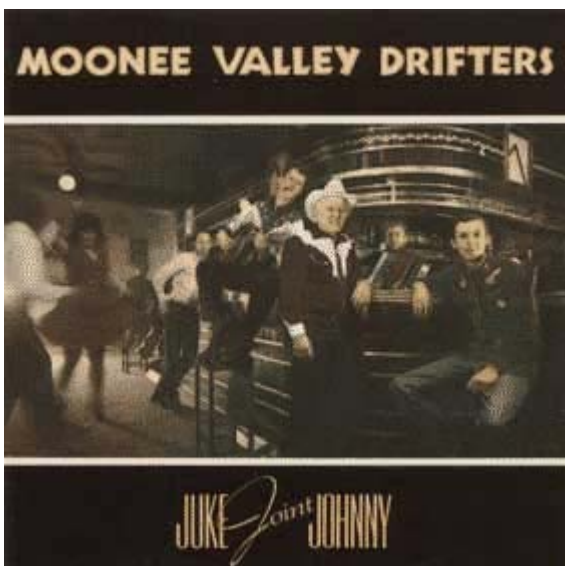


## Reviews and articles on *Juke Joint Johnny*

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Click on the album cover for info

[from Susan Jarvis in *The Sun-Herald*  
October 27, 1991]

The new album reveals the extent of their musical talents. The music is fast and furious, extremely danceable and very interesting.

Highlights include the title track, "Juke Joint Johnny", the old Hank Thompson song "Six Pack to Go" and the W. Walker tune "No-one To Talk to But the Blues".

For country traditionalists there is the Buck Owens song "Above and Beyond" and Marty Robbins' "Mean Mistreater", along with a traditional Tex-Mex waltz titled "Prenda del Ama".

Tom Forsell has contributed several of his own tracks: "Here I Go Again", "Cajun Baby", "Walking By Myself" and "Foolin' With Me". There is also a blues instrumental by Rick Dempster titled "Shuffling with the Reeds".

Other tracks include the Merle Travis song "Guitar Rag". Curtis Gordon's old rockabilly hit "Rock, Roll, Jump and Jive" and another rockabilly number, Syd King's "Good Rockin' Baby".

This style of music is fairly different from what has been seen in country circles over recent years and it is being hailed by some, including writer David Latta, as part of the "new country" movement. It is, however, essentially very "old" country, transplanted from the American mid-west.

The new Moonee Valley Drifters album is currently available only through Brunswick Recordings (10 Dawson Street, Brunswick, Victoria 3056) or at their gigs. However, Forsell points out the band is negotiating for a more extensive distribution, which will see CDs and albums as well as cassettes in the shops.

The Moonee Valley Drifters will be making their first visit to Tamworth for the 1992 Tamworth Country Music Festival.

At this stage they will be performing at the Longyard Hotel, plus a number of other venues and are likely to attract a lot of interest from diehard Dancehall Racketeers fans who welcomed that band passionately a couple of years ago.

[Read the whole article](#)

[from Terry Reilly in *Rolling Stone*]

## *JUKE JOINT JOHNNY*

Moonee Valley Drifters

Brunswick Recordings

Around Melbourne The Moonee Valley Drifters have made a virtue of refurbishing some obscure country-inflected, American roots music. *Juke Joint Johnny*, the band's second album, sustains a constantly confident air, overplaying not a single note in its sparse ambience of original rock & roll's gentler side.

Lead singer, Tom Forsell grew up in Detroit, Michigan listening to Bob Wills and Hank Williams before emigrating to Australia in 1973. His virile vocal eradicates any tinges of self-doubt and from the moment he bounces into "Rock Roll Jump Live", the five-piece Drifters maintain an unswerving instrumental credence replete with Paul Pyle's slapping double bass and Rick Dempster's flowing steel guitar. These are deep southern sounds similar to that of Roy Hall, the man originally responsible for "Whole Lotta Shakin' Going On" and whose "Diggin the Boogie" receives a swinging update alongside a creditable cut of Sid King and the Five Strings' "Good Rockin' Baby".

Forsell switches to accordion and delivers "(Hey Baby ) Que Pasa" in a convincing Tex-Mex tradition, impeccably driven by a tastefully subdued rhythm. Forsell's four compositions stand present and correct in his musical milieu, the high point being the sprightly melancholy "Here I Go Again". But timely variation is appealing and the one vocal offering by guitarist Brendan Shearson, Merle Travis' "Guitar Rag", doesn't detract from *Juke Joint Johnny's* laid-back assuredness. And for good measure, Dempster chips in with a harmonica instrumental, "Shufflin the Reeds."

The veritable cornerstone of *Juke Joint Johnny* is a delectable pot-pourri of country-based, roots music always delivered with unerring feel.

[from Rhythms Mag 1992]

A little bit of Americana lives right here in Melbourne. *Juke Joint Johnny* conjures up visions of small bars in the sundry states of America where everybody wears check shirts and drives a pick up truck. No way the habitués would throw empty cans at the Moonee Valley Drifters - the band is talented and tight and does some mean cover versions. Tom Forsell captures that authentic feel with his vocals. Rick Dempster's lap steel is a delight...Juke Joint Johnny and a six pack of your choice - the ideal companions.

[from *InPress*]

*Juke Joint Johnny*

MOONEE VALLEY DRIFTERS (BRUNSWICK)

Detroit refugee Tom Forsell is a complete contrast to Albury bush boy Lee Kernaghan in musical inspiration.

While Lee's music is fuelled by a vibrant modern rural lifestyle the source

of veteran Tom's material is American honky tonks and bayou bars.

The Moonee Valley Drifters might live in the receivership state capital but their music flows from the deep south.

And, like the artists who wrote and cut their tunes, the quality quintet are faithful to their original feel.

There's a healthy mix of old time country, western swing, Tex-Mex, cajun, blues and fifties rock on this 20 track disc.

The playing, from the impeccable piano work of producer James Black to the double bass of Paul Pyle and harmonica and lap steel of Rick Dempster, is crisp and cool.

But, unlike the music of Asleep At The Wheel and the Austin Lounge Lizards there's an unhealthy imbalance of originals to covers - 5/15- and little humour or cerebral stimulation.

Forsell's best originals "Here I Go Again" and "Cajun Baby" - both inspired by local scenarios - fit well with Augie Meyers' "(Hey Baby) Que Paso" and the title track.

Inclusion of songs such as Hank Thompson's historic "Six Pack To Go" and Merle Travis's "Guitar Rag" may be new to urban cafe society but are well worn honky tonk staples for more creative fans.

I don't suggest the Drifters taint links with their rich roots by cutting cornball shockers like many local yokels.

But a sense of humor, in the vein of The Wheel and Lounge Lizards, might be a timely catalyst for a broader appeal to radio and live audiences.

Of course the Moonee Valley Drifters might be happy merely tilling history, albeit with panache, and not trying to reach the rapidly growing youth market which has made Garth Brooks, Travis Tritt and Alan Jackson honky tonk heroes of the nineties.

As a homage to the American past "Juke Joint Johnny" is a soulful success but as a reflection of modern Australian country music it provides little for future historians to ponder.

Unlike Kernaghan's "Outback Club" this is not the type of disc to be buried in a time capsule for retrieval by 21st century researchers.

But I suspect the real purpose of the disc was to establish Moonee Valley Drifters as keepers of the flame - not new generation ground breakers.

On that level, with 20 songs, it's good value for fans of that genre.

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