The Cowboy Junkies first made a name for themselves with *The Trinity Session,* recorded live with a single microphone in a Toronto church in one night for a couple hundred bucks.

To mark its 20th anniversary this year, the Cowboy Junkies did it again.

"We weren't that excited about it at first," said bassist Alan Anton of the project that would become the CD and DVD package *Trinity Revisited*. "We didn't want to mess with it, or look like we're messing with it."

So the band - Anton and three Timmins siblings - didn't mess with it *much*.

The Cowboy Junkies, who will be performing at Iowa City's Englert Theatre on Friday, returned to the church for the first time in two decades. With a few guests - Ryan Adams, Natalie Merchant, and Vic Chesnutt - they set up the same way and performed the seminal album for a film crew.

"That album, of all of our records, is a real kind of sacred one," Anton said in an interview this week. Although the band has released a handful of studio albums over the past 20 years, none has made the splash of *Trinity*, split between originals and covers.

Upon its release in 1988, *Rolling Stone* raved: "*The Trinity Session* is in the great tradition of albums that establish a mood and sustain it so consistently that the entire record seems like one continuously unfolding song. The mood in this instance is hypnotic and introspective - an intense, melancholic longing that blends the elemental emotions of country music and the blues with the poetic world-weariness of the Velvet Underground."

The goal with *Trinity Revisited* wasn't to re-imagine or re-work the album, Anton said, but to re-create it. That approach might seem strange - he admitted it was a bit like "us covering ourselves" - but it's valid, particularly considering that the original recording has been called a "happy accident."

Of the new recording - released in October, following the April release of *At the End of Paths Taken* - the All Music Guide said: "The performances and arrangements rarely stray far from the tone or intent of the original album, but they never sound rote, and the easy but troubling narcotic flow of this music remains as hypnotic as ever."

The visual aspect of the project was particularly appealing, Anton said, "to show our fans, so they can actually see the space, and they can imagine exactly what it was like when we were recording *Trinity*."

Anton gave a lot of credit to the ambiance of the setting. "Half of the sound is the church, is the building," he said. "It just sounds so sweet that it's really fun to play in there."

The church hadn't changed, and the songs and arrangements hadn't changed, Anton said. About the only difference was the money. "I don't even want to guess," he said of the cost of filming the project. "It wasn't our money, but there were a lot of people there."

The Cowboy Junkies will perform on Friday, March 28, at the Englert Theatre in Iowa City. Tickets are $36. Mary Gauthier opens, and the show starts at 8 p.m. For tickets, visit (http://www.englert.org).