

## Hip by Accident: Those Darlins, July 20 at RIBCO

Written by Jeff Ignatius  
Thursday, 16 July 2009 08:04

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When Those Darlins play RIBCO on Monday in a [Daytrotter.com](#) show, be prepared for things to get a little crazy. And if they don't, expect some good-natured hectoring from the Tennessee-based band.

Nikki Darlin -- they go by that fake family name, even though the three singing and songwriting leaders aren't sisters -- described the scene at a recent Nashville show celebrating the release of the group's self-titled debut:

"Jessi [Those Darlins' guitarist] and I had built a giant chicken piñata that was destroyed during

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'The Whole Damn Thing' song. And my friend ... had made me a dress that night, and he ripped it off of me in the middle of the set. So I was playing the rest of the show in my underwear. And then everyone started taking their clothes off and got up on stage. Everyone's spitting beer all over everyone else. People were making out, and it was just fucking awesome."

The piñata, by the way, was filled with feathers.

That sort of wildness is par for the course these days, said Nikki, who plays baritone ukulele. And if it's not happening, the group does its best to goad the audience. "We end up just picking on them," she said. "Verbally harassing them. ...

"We want to be entertained as well as entertaining others," she added. "So we try to interact the audience. ... 'Come on. Prove you want to have fun.' ... It usually works pretty well."

If everything but the ukulele sounds punk-rock, there's certainly that attitude in Those Darlins. They generated big buzz at this year's South by Southwest -- where they played seven shows in four days -- yet chose the do-it-yourself route for their album.

The band's got a foot-stomping old-time country vibe -- mostly acoustic, with an emphasis on casual harmonies, booze, and broken hearts. "The Whole Damn Thing" is a sweet thing that starts like this: "I got drunk and I ate a chicken / I ate a chicken I found in my kitchen / Not just a leg and not just a wing / I'd like to let you know that I ate the whole damn thing."

But there's definitely a rock-and-roll soul in there -- evidenced by lead track "Red Light Love" -- and a love of classic girl-group pop.

Throughout the album -- which includes a pair of Carter Family covers -- the group skates between cheeky and earnest. "DUI Or Die" might be a cautionary tale, but it ramps up to a party anthem, and the chorus shifts from preachy to something both funny and true: "Drunk driving / It happened to me / And it could happen to you / Drunk driving / I'm guilty / and I'm going to blame the booze." On "222," which rises to a full rock ruckus, the band gets a lot of mileage from an easy double entendre that works because it's tossed off so innocently: "You're too, too hard to

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forget."

Those Darlins formed in 2006, with roots in the Southern Girls Rock & Roll Camp; bassist Kelley founded it, and Jessi was a camper there. Nikki described the early sound as "pretty gritty, and all acoustic, and really jangly. It sounded like really old '30s recordings. ... None of us has ever been in a serious band before."

When Those Darlins began recording in spring 2008, Nikki said, the addition of percussion to their songs was transformative. Working with producer Jeff Curtin (who engineered Vampire Weekend's debut) in New York, they recognized that they had something special working. The thought, she said, was that "we're going to finish this record, and we're going to fucking knock the socks of America."

South by Southwest ain't America, but it's a good start. The band announced that "we're virgins to South by Southwest, but we're going to slut it up all week," and they scared up good notices from the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *Paste* magazine.

"If you really want to truth, we're pretty naïve to what is hip," Nikki said. "I didn't even know what South by Southwest was ... " until a year before the group performed there.

That ignorance works in the group's favor; they're hip by accident.

And while the band is just getting started on a national level, Nikki said Those Darlins feel like they'll be able to achieve their American domination without the traditional record-company apparatus: "We've got everything under control except for not having a bunch of money."

*Those Darlins will play on Monday, July 20, in an all-ages show at RIBCO (1815 Second Avenue in Rock Island). For more information, visit [RIBCO.com](http://RIBCO.com) . The Velcro Lewis Group opens.*

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*To listen to the band's Daytrotter.com session, click [here](#) .*

*For more information on the band, visit [ThoseDarlins.com](http://ThoseDarlins.com) .*