



COURTESY OF FAT POSSUM/EPITAPH

Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney of The Black Keys skip the piano and show their colors at Mojo's this week. The band begins its European tour with a sold-out stop in London.

Get all keyed up

The Black Keys go beyond flats or sharps

Some bands pour their souls out louder than others. The Black Keys, a two-man blues-rock band from Akron, Ohio, are proof of that. In 2002, *Rolling Stone* gave four stars to the duo's debut album, *The Big Come Up*. *Thickfreakness*, its sophomore album released in 2003, prompted *Entertainment Weekly* to label The Black Keys "one of the ten bands to watch." Now The Black Keys, stopping in Columbia on Saturday, will continue to make its way around America. Next month the pair starts its European tour, which only goes to show that getting fired from your lawn mowing job isn't the end of the world.

Before they were rocking out on stages across the country with musicians such as Beck and Sleater-Kinney, guitarist-vocalist Dan Auerbach and longtime percussion pal Patrick Carney spent their days shaving grass in their hometown for a low-rent-apartment supervisor. After failing to edge a lawn properly, the two got sacked. Undaunted, they packed up their stuff, hopped in the car and hit the road to promote their first album. Now, with critical success and international tours in the works, their lawnmowers are bound to get rusty — unless maybe the band decides they need blade-wielding backup on their next album.

As unlikely as that might sound, The Keys have been cranking out inventive new music at an alarming rate. The band's most recent venture, *Rubber Factory*, was put out in stores last week. *Rubber Factory*, on Fat Possum/Epitaph Records, was produced in an old tire factory the boys dubbed Sentient

the place was so laden with chemicals that cigarette smoke felt clean going into his lungs.

The fumes aren't the only reason critics have become intoxicated by this bluesy release. The band might have only two members, but it has achieved a wide musical range and an amazing sound working with just simple lyrics, vintage amps and fuzz boxes.

Auerbach's rough voice and gritty delivery meld with his steamy guitar as Carney holds everything together with thundering drums. The Black Keys' band name seems to fit its music like a straightjacket. It comes straight from the mind of a literally schizophrenic artist, a friend of the duo, who calls anything he thinks is "shady and devious" a black key.

Being shady and devious isn't the key to the band's success. Its music goes far beyond those labels. The rhythmic drum beats and floor-shaking guitar riffs grind together with thirsty, smoky vocals and distinctive guitar picking. The Keys bring old-fashioned blues mixed with punk distortion and attitude to Mojo's Saturday.

— ERIKA KELSEY

EVENT INFO

What: The Black Keys with The Cuts

Where: Mojo's

When: Sat., 8:30 p.m.

Cost: \$12

Call: 875-0558