HeadHunters: On a roll

Band’s first record spins hot tunes

by HUGH LEACH
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In the Kentucky Headhunters, Hank Williams Jr. has found the perfect opening act. The Headhunters, like Williams, are rock-influenced bluegrassers who stretch the boundaries of country music to its outermost limits. They’re loud, they’re entertaining — and they’re NOT! Their first album, irreverently called “Pickin’ On Nashville,” reached the one-million mark in sales after only two singles were released.

Their current single, “Dunum Walker,” a catchy, upbeat number that sticks with you long after you hear it, is among the top 20 country songs in the nation.

They were nominated as best new vocal group at Wednesday’s Academy of Country Music Awards.

Lead singer Ricky Lee Phelps says the group is a bit surprised at the acceptance it has received since being labeled as a country act.

“It was the industry that we didn’t expect to receive that much attention from,” he said. “The Headhunters’ music is influenced by rock, blues, country, gospel, bluegrass and maybe a few others for good measure.

“It’s really just fun music,” Phelps said. “I just want to have a good time. We don’t want to get too serious and try to show off our musicianship.”

The group’s beginnings go back to the early 1970s in Kentucky when brothers Richard and Fred Young, their cousin, Greg Martin, and another cousin formed a rock group called the Richy Brothers.

The group disbanded in 1981 and the Youngs and Martin found jobs in Nashville — Richard