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'3 Redneck Tenors' mix Homer and Pavarotti

by Chris Casey

Meet cousins Billy Bob, Billy Joe and Billy Billee.

These guys are much more likely to worship the roaring throttle of Nascar legend Dale Earnhardt than the vocal majesty of Italian tenor Puccini.

Still, they share an unlikely trait with the latter. They may be uncouth and uncultured -- mullets to humble Joe Dirt, beer belches to impress Homer Simpson and hillbilly lingo to match Jeff Foxworthy -- but there is something undeniably smooth about these hicks from Paris, Texas: their golden throats.

Imagine a shake of Three Tenors, a dash of the Irish Tenors and a smidge of "The Beverly Hillbillies," and you've got "3 Redneck Tenors." The show, coming to Greeley Jan. 28, is part of the Union Colony Civic Center's "Just for Laughs" series.

Don't expect a concert of operatic classics at this show. It plays more like blue-collar musical comedy, following the cousins from the dusty plains of Texas to the vaunted stage of Carnegie Hall.

The fellas live modestly in a trailer until the day they are discovered by "The Colonel." Once he gets past the milieu of sweaty T-shirts, Copenhagen cans and beef jerky, this shrewd impresario smells money. He books the trio of rural rubes for a series of shows in a quest to find the perfect performance hall. That, by gum, would be Carn-iggy Hall.

The "3 Redneck Tenors," in the sixth month of a 50-city tour, was written by Matthew Lord (who also directs) with music arranged by Craig Bohmler. The show features a cast of veteran opera and Broadway stars including Lord, Keith Buterbaugh, Steven Sanders and Dinny McGuire.

As bountiful as the buffet at Western Sizzlin, "Redneck Tenors" is a smorgasbord of musical styles -- country to classical, pop to Puccini -- with a whole lotta shakin' (and spittin') going on.

It's an absurd tale of mellifluous art transcending a bulging beer gut. In other words, a redneck musical worth is salted corn nuts.