

Texas Music Times

March 2007

Stoney
LaRue

Inside this issue:

• Austin Allsup • Doug Moreland • David Abeyta

About the Cover

I hear names all the time that industry types are predicting to be the next “big thing.” Normally it is a comparison that goes something like this; “He is the next (insert name here).”

Actually I get kind of tired of it because no one really knows and it really does not matter. However, when I hear someone say that “Stoney LaRue” is the next big thing, it always sparks my interest.

Not because I don’t agree with the statement, but because I do agree completely, and normally the person telling me is someone of stature in my view. Moreover, I am hearing it more and more. Stoney LaRue is one of the most dynamic and interesting performers in TXRD music.

He is a showman who can captivate a crowd in ways that engage and entertain the fans not only with his music, but also with clever wit and humor.

I recently saw him with other “Stars of Texas” as the San Antonio Rodeo in an acoustic song swap. Stoney set the tone of the set at the start by saying it was the biggest acoustic show he had ever seen.

It relaxed the crowd and brought a small chuckle. To be perfectly honest it is an unfair format to have the Texas artist play acoustic

at that Rodeo when the Nashville acts are allowed to bring all the production gimmicks to get people to watch. They do that so most of them don’t really bother to listen.

But Stoney performed his songs that night with just his voice and his acoustic guitar playing to arena that had to listen and the intensity of the applause when he was finished with each tune was proof that music still counts to many fans. He did a great job and so did the other Texas stars. It was proof that in Texas the music still matters and there is no one better at delivering the music with style and pizzazz than Stoney LaRue.

He is Stoney LaRue and Texas Music Times is proud to have him as our March 2007 cover story.

The Editor

“*Stoney LaRue is one of the most dynamic and interesting performers in TXRD music... who can captivate a crowd in ways that engage and entertain the fans not only with his music, but also with clever wit and humor.*”

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and all the artists and fans that keep iT real...god bless

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THIS MONTH IN TEXAS MUSIC TIMES



Cover Story:
Stoney LaRue -
Harley Davidson Cool



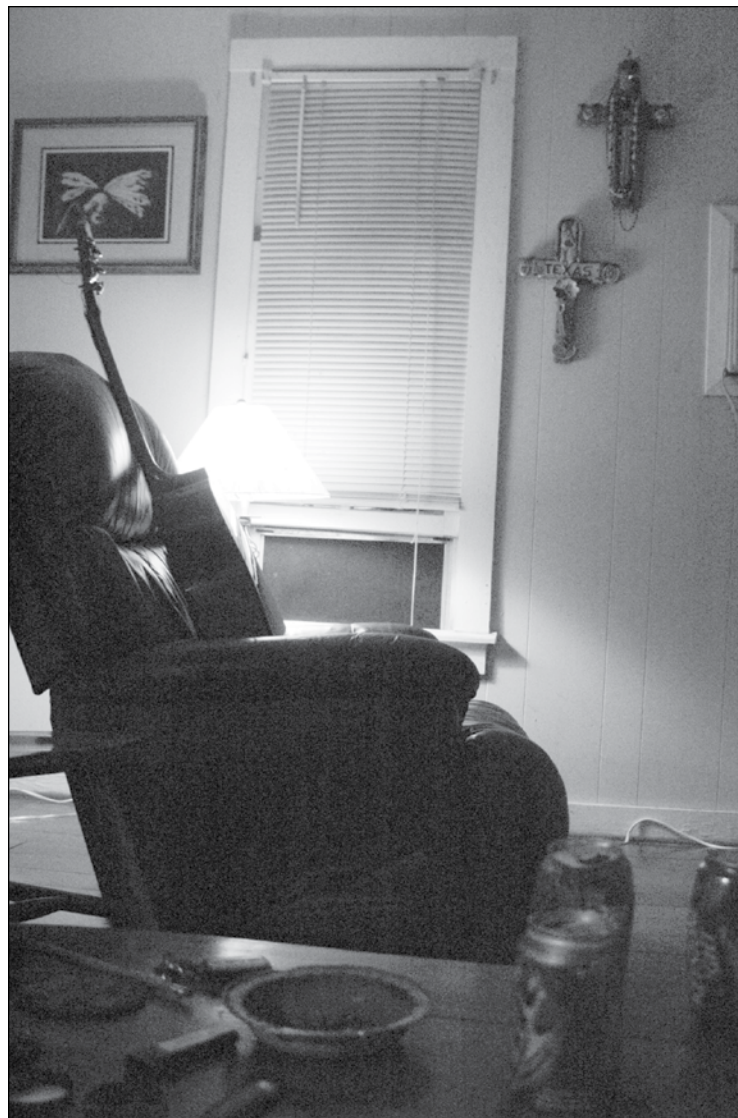
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The Doug Moreland
Show

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By RANDY CUNNINGHAM

Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop once in awhile and look at it, you might miss it.

Yep, that quote from the 1986 film classic *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* is right on the money. But even though life is constantly changing, there are 3 facts that will always stay the same:

#1—Wal-Mart will eventually take over the entire world. From the creamed peas infants crave to denture cream (and all ages in between), it's become the Mecca of one-stop shopping. Once they install a delivery room and a department that sells coffins, we'll be good to go from start to finish.

#2—A man would give up his life, deer lease, and a case of his favorite adult beverage before turning over the keys to his remote control. Warning: Never attempt to snatch this TV accessory from a guy who's in the midst of NASCAR, Sunday afternoon football, or a hunting show that involves tracking a 10-point buck through the Colorado mountains. You could lose a limb. I'm serious.

#3—Musicians are an interesting bunch. These folks hit the stage when most 9-to-fivers are retiring for the evening, and stay up deep into the night cheered on by adoring and slightly inebriated fans bellowing, "DUUUUDDE, YOU FREAKIN' ROCCCKKK!" So much for the "normal" life.

So, imagine hearing from your editor, "Hey, we'd like you to interview this really interesting musician who's on the verge of becoming a huge star. He's a comedian, a heckuva fiddler, and a chainsaw artist to boot."

Huh? A chainsaw...what?

Like I said, musicians are definitely a unique group. And at the top of that list is Doug Moreland.

You've heard his story. Originally from Ft. Davis, Texas, Doug forged and polished his entertaining skills performing in the dinner theatres of New Mexico and Arizona. Around 1999, his introduction to the world of chainsaw sculpture by some friends took him to eastern Tennessee, where in two months his carving prowess enabled him to bankroll enough cash to record two albums and pay moving expenses back to Texas, settling in the Austin area. Along the way, he enlisted a fiddle-playing border collie named Holly-peno (nicknamed Holly), and until her death in 2004, the duo dazzled audiences on the Texas-American circuit with a lethal dose of music and comedy, breaking all previous entertainment moulds. After releasing the music-only *Everybody Knows My Name* in 2005, he disbanded his Big Hat Band in exchange for an all-acoustic fiddle, standup bass, and guitar trio that leapt immediately into the primetime lights, as Moreland's threesome opened for none other than Willie Nelson. By 2006, a drummer and keyboard player rounded out the lineup, and the *Doug Moreland Show* was alive and bucking. Most recently, his 2006 release, *Doug Moreland*, has reviewers and fellow musicians alike singing his praises, comparing the music from his 11-track masterpiece to the western swing of Bob Wills and Asleep at the Wheel, and simple, straightforward lyrics remi-

niscant of the immortal Hank Williams.

So, back to the editor's initial request for an interview. What kind of questions can be prepared for a chainsaw sculptor? Do we talk about his favorite type of lumber? Should we compare and contrast the different motors he uses? (I can hear it now: "So, Doug, what type of horsepower is necessary to cut through pine or oak?" Yep,



those are the juicy tidbits that our readers are dying to learn about!)

Well, the questions were finalized, and moments later the phone rang. The voice on the other end had a definite west Texas twang, saying, "Hey, this is Doug Moreland. I'm up in Round Rock, carving an eagle in this lady's yard." Almost an hour later, we were still talking, and laughing like crazy. Here are a few of the more memorable moments:

Talk about some of your favorite chainsaw projects.

About 5 or 6 years ago I was down in New Braunfels, and me and Bubba (Bubba Daniel, a good friend and fellow sculptor) were carving. Ragweed was there, and this was when they were traveling in a van. Cody came up and showed me the picture of the Carney Man off their CD, and said, "Can you make this?" So I said, "Sure," and after I finished I gave it to him because it was his 25th birthday. They tried to pay me for it, but I wouldn't take any money. Later I found out they stuck it in my back pocket when I got drunk. I've also made a horsehead for Jason Boland, a skull for Stoney, a parrot for Django (Walker), and a gargoyle for Bleu Edmondson, 'cause he's kinda grumpy sometimes.

You've been on the road for years. Is there a "Spinal Tap" moment you can share?

Yep, matter of fact this happened just last week. We were down in Corpus playing at a place called the Thirsty Cactus, and our hotel was just right down the street from the place, and to get to the club was only about a 2-minute drive. You just had to get up on the freeway and circle around. Well, I was driving and I thought I'd just cut through the backstreets, but I kept getting lost and it took about 30 minutes for a 2-minute drive. The band was laughing at me, saying, "See? You're not always right!"

Sounds like you need a sense of humor in your world.

I tell you, I've got a collection of funny friends. If you're going hang around with me you'd

better be funny, because I'm just out here having a good time. Bubba Daniel is one. He always catches me off guard by saying the most random things. I just wish the world could see just how funny he is.

Was there ever a time when you met someone in the music business and felt so nervous you could hardly speak, much less be funny around them?

I usually feel really comfortable talking to people in music. I don't get nervous if they're a big star, because that just means they've been doing this longer than me. But, I went down to Houston one time to go see Jimmy Buffett. I was with Django Walker, and his dad Jerry Jeff is good friends with Jimmy. So after I was introduced to him, he asked me what I did, and I told him I was a chainsaw artist. Later, someone else told him I also write songs.

Talk about writing songs and how you go about it.

I've got hundreds of songs. Roger Miller, who died in 1992, wrote songs because he wanted to, and that's what I do. Guys

today like Matt Skinner and Ryan Bingham are the same way. I don't write just to sell them to the masses, I just do it.

If you were asked to play just one Doug Moreland song in front of your largest crowd ever, what would it be?

I'd sing "Home To Me" off the new CD. I love the simplicity of that song. I played it for Matt Skinner and he just said, "That's good." That meant a lot to me.

Speaking of songs, what's the most perfect song you've ever heard?

"Georgia," by Willie Nelson. I heard it awhile ago on the way up here to Round Rock in the truck.

Do you remember the first time you heard yourself on radio?

*Yeah. Back in 2000 a friend of mine ran a radio station down in Gonzales, Texas. I think it was called the Lone Star Radio Hour. But he called me at 5 p.m. and said, "Hey, my guest cancelled. Can you be here by 6 p.m.?" I thought a minute and said, "Uh...yeah!" So on the way down I heard "Dallas" off *Toast To Life*. (1999 release.)*

Ever get tired of hearing your music played?

I still get chills. I'll tell you what. If I ever get tired of that, you can come up here and kick my butt.

Final question. Let's pretend that the cable channel A&E wanted to film a reality show about your life. What would the title be?

I'd call it, "Doug Moreland: Anything to Keep From Getting a Real Job."

For much more information regarding the man, the myth, and the chainsaw, visit www.dougmoreland.com

OPINION

Showcases

A Tale to Two Events

By KEITH HOWERTON

As a newbie to the music business, I am drinking from a fire hose of new knowledge most of the time. However, I have learned a couple of key points in my first year of business, six months of publishing a music magazine, and working with the industry and artists. First, I have learned that the “music business” is often nothing more than the “business of music.” Greed is a powerful motivator and it will often destroy the art that should be foremost in the “music business.” Second, I have learned that there are those in the “industry” who claim to be experts that have no idea what the hell they are talking about most of the time because greed has taken over their decision-making. They have become irrelevant to the music but very important to the machine of the “business of music.” I try to avoid those types. However, I have learned a great deal from all of the “industry” professionals I have met. Some good things and some terrible things but learned from them all and will continue to do so.

There is no other place that involves more industry networking and mingling than the “Showcase.” I bring that up here because I think the music showcase concept is the industry standard for highlighting talent, networking, and learning about the music and the industry. The “big daddy” of Texas showcases is South by Southwest or SXSW that is held in Austin each March. SXSW may have once been a great independent forum for Texas music where industry types got together with the yet undiscovered. However, currently it is more of a corporate gig where the world comes to Texas and for the most part has nothing to do with bringing Texasmusic to the world. With the exception of a few names like Ray Wylie Hubbard, Sunny Sweeny, Charlie Sexton, Charlie Robison, Kelly Willis, and a cool set of pure Texas talent represented by the Nancy Fly agency (Momo’s, March 16th) the SXSW festival is not really about Texas music. One of the names attending SXSW this year is a band named “Holy Fuck.” I am sure they will represent the Texas lifestyle very well...Not.

SXSW does not claim to be a “Texas Music” Showcase but it would seem that the biggest showcase in Texas could pay more homage to our own homegrown talent. If SXSW is not specifically about Texas, it is most certainly about money. Industry types can play in a \$1000 per sponsor golf event, pay \$10,000 magazine ads in the event programs, and register for the music event passes for a cost of \$400 to \$700. However, they give students a break at \$250. It also brings huge money to the city of Austin at 7000 attendees spending about \$250 per day each. Not that I am against making money but a Texas event should have a better representation of Texas and in the music department SXSW is lacking. It is, in my view, a general reflection of the Austin music scene with respect to “Texas Music.” Many artists will privately say they hate playing the town as they are not paid very well and they are taken for granted. There are much better cities in the state for Texas music. Obviously, the money made at SXSW does not make its way to the Artists who live there.

In contrast to SXSW, there is Rick Star’s KFAN radio, “Windows on Texas” showcase held in January every year in Fredricksburg. If SXSW is fine champagne then “Windows on Texas” is a big can of Lonestar Light. I love those big cans. Rick truly brings Texas and the Texas style of Americana, country, blues, and rock to the world, or at least the rest of the country. Many travelers from the music centers in the country attend including Nashville. The artists represented at the “Windows on Texas” showcase are truly those who could use a break and some backing. Many of them are gigging bands that play the Texas and Oklahoma bar circuit for \$300 to \$500 a night. Some better-financed names do play the showcase as well, but most of that financing is from private investors or personal fortunes. Major labels and billboard types are not as well represented but the talent is superb and Rick puts on a great show of support for the music he loves. “Windows on Texas” is what a Texas showcase should be. The town of Fredricksburg and the businesses help Rick pull it off and it is a great representation of Texas music. Somehow, I don’t see Rick (a Vietnam era cool guy hippie radio type) turning his event into an over-commercialized greed fest, but I am sure he needs help to pay the bills and improve the financing of the event.

Rick and “Windows on Texas” are what radio and showcases should be about. They are about the art and the money is something needed to bring the art to the people. Yes, there are always business realities and I fully understand them, but just because you can make tremendous money from an event and charge crazy prices for the goods and services does not mean you should. Many artists have understood this for years. Most of them keep their merchandise reasonable, they like lower ticket prices if they can do it, and they realize that fans don’t like feeling gouged. Tom Petty once refused to record a CD because he felt the label was going to price it too high. You go, Tom, you are my hero. Most industry professionals, venue owners, record labels and others could learn from the artists that have kept it real over the years. It is about the MUSIC with business realities, but when it becomes the “business of music” the art suffers and becomes just another big mac with fries super-sized. Texas is better than that and so is our music. Good job, Rick. I will be back next year for sure.



Rich O'Toole

Marijuana, Jalapenos, and Being Good

By KEITH HOWERTON

Rich O'Toole has had a crazy couple of months. His single “Queen of the Misfits” has rocketed up the charts to the top five and has stayed there for 4 weeks. The recent move has kept him busy answering phone calls for gigs and bookings, as well as, conducting business on a completely different level with new merchandise and a rush order for a few thousand more CDs to sell.

He has also landed a distribution deal with Double Exposure Media Group in Fort Worth that has the potential of putting Rich’s debut CD “*Seventeen*” into retail stores around the region and country. “*Seventeen*” has also been requested to be placed in stock by a German retailer of Texas music. In addition to the busy schedule on the business side of things, Rich and his band have finished a solo single studio project of the live show favorite “Marijuana and Jalapenos” for internet and limited radio release later this year. The superb pedal steel work of Roger Ray (Jason Boland and the Stragglers) added the final touches to the studio version of the song that promises to turn the live show crowd favorite into an internet radio standard on stations like Radio Free Texas and Tossm radio. All of this new attention and hectic schedule has come at a great time for Rich as he practices his faith.

Rich, who is Catholic, has given up drinking beer and other alcohol for lent. Anyone who has seen a Rich O'Toole show knows he likes beer. In a recent interview Rich commented, “Man, this is tough, it has been 10 days and 5 shows and it is really hard being in a bar and not drinking”. As for the contradiction of giving up drinking while finishing a song titled “Marijuana and Jalapenos”, Rich is only going public on the continued need to consume Jalapenos to take his mind off beer. He would not comment on the Marijuana part. Rich asks for fans to bring plenty of Red Bull’s to the stage until after Easter Sunday. For more on Rich O'Toole check out his website at www.richtoole.com.

Stephanie Briggs

Spark- New Texas Indie Release

By STEVE CIRCEO

The quality that went into creating the new Stephanie Briggs CD, *Spark*, is obvious right from the packaging. This is the kind of effort we need on the Texas indie music scene. The CD inserts are built on a sharp two-color design, complete with full libretto, and interestingly placed handcropped photos of the album's players. The packaging obviously took a lot of time and effort and seems very personal, not the product of a soulless art studio. Nice.

I know, I know, you don't care about what it looks like – you want to know how it sounds.

But, wait, before I even get into the songs themselves, I want to comment on the overall production quality, because there are just too many crappy sounding releases out there. Stephanie and Matthew Briggs produced, and Pat Manske engineered, mixed, and mastered the record, which sounds crisp and clean. Getting the sound right is tedious (read: expensive, whether in time or dollars), so I want you to know that the effort is noticed and appreciated.

Now to the music. You may recall Stephanie Briggs from her time in

Rodger Wilko, where she and Zack Walther shared lead vocal and songwriting duties. Rodger Wilko had a sound I enjoyed, and, having already heard Zack's post-Wilko departure from that sound, I was curious about which direction Stephanie would go.

I'm happy to report that *Spark* is a noteworthy achievement in pop music.

Like Plumtucker's *Lightning Wheels* last year, my enjoyment of *Spark* stems from the trip it takes me on. The album includes simple acoustic meanderings, wailing electric riffs, engaging instrumentation choices, and exciting vocal detours, all of which combine to create a 45-minute musical journey. This album just plain makes me feel good, and Stephanie's lead vocals are no small part of that.

Whether moving in a fast-paced staccato or carrying a melody, Stephanie's voice is clear and beautiful. She knows her vocal range and doesn't try to push outside the envelope. She generally, in fact, delivers her words in more of a musically speaking, rather than a singing, style. Stephanie has something to say, and she wants to make sure you can hear it.

So what is she saying? The songs on *Spark* are poetic, often abstract, observations on life. "Photo Chemicals" tells the story of an imaginary meaningful glance. "Doll" is a triumphant song of escape from a deadend relationship. "Caterpillar" is an inspired acoustic instrumental (including Stephanie's ooh-ah-ing voice as an instrument) that leads directly into the haunting and musically ambitious "I Don't Mind," a song about two lovers who communicate best when they aren't using words.

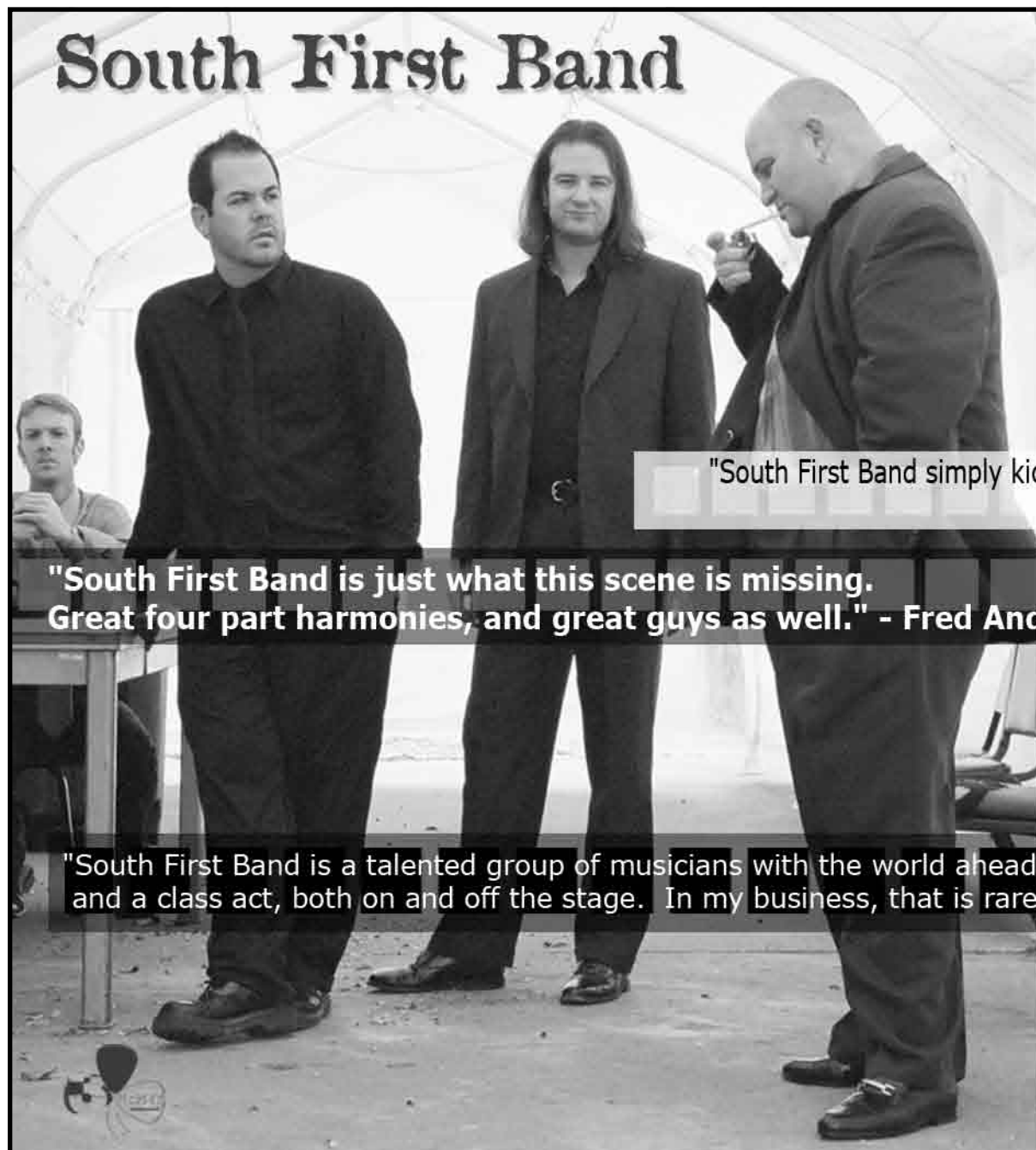
(Let me insert a quick disclaimer here. Grasping the meaning of a Stephanie Briggs song is not a simple matter. In fact, I may be way off base on the above interpretations relative to Stephanie's original intent, but these lyrics are true poetic art, and that means the interpretation is best left to each reader/listener. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.)

Spark is undeniably hip, rad, boffo, sick, off the hook – insert your favorite term for "cool and exciting" here. More than that, though, it's a firm reminder that "pop" does not necessarily mean "mindless." Stephanie Briggs has put her mind on full display with *Spark*, and I like what I see ... and hear.

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"The skies full of silver
and gold try to hid the
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And if we help
eachother grow while
the light of day shines
down our way, we can't
go wrong."

"No place to fall"
Townes Van Zandt



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Mar 20 - Schotzi's, College Station
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Mar 22- Adairs Saloon, Dallas
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Mar 24- Auslander, Fredericksburg
Apr 5- Bostocks, Stephenville
Apr 6- Schotzi's, College Station
Apr 7- Muldoons, El Campo
Apr 20- Woody's FT. Worth

SOUTH FIRST BAND
LIKE THE MOVIES

MY DAY IS COMING

AUSTIN ALLSUP

By B.K. SMITH

Austin Allsup understands hard work.

Five hours past a standard workday, he's on his hands and knees placing a one-inch-by-one-inch square of glass tile in the bathroom of a home he may never visit again. Wiping sweat from his brow, he smiles that large, boyish grin—the grin that has put him in more trouble than it's been able to get him out of in his short life. A life that adds one year tomorrow, making him 23 years old and a Capricorn.

He's not smiling because tomorrow is his birthday; he's smiling because tomorrow is his 188th gig.

And because he is about to release a live album. And because he's a musician.

"Working hard doesn't hurt me. My day is coming," Allsup says. "And it's all good."

So goes the life of a talented and greatly undiscovered musician. Early to rise every weekday to work laying tile or hardwood floors, writing songs late into the evening, and gathering the energy to play every weekend on the main stage for hundreds of loyal fans.

None of his fans are more loyal than Mike Leatherwood, a Fort Worth firefighter and Austin's boss in the tile and floor business. Leatherwood has been very good to Austin, allowing him time off to travel to different cities and states throughout the country. Allsup says that the Leatherwood has also been a good influence, something his life had lacked for a long time.

Allsup grew up in Little Rock. He smiles a little at that thought too, then he flames a Marlboro Light and begins to talk. His words are slow and deliberate. He looks through his long, blond hair as he paints his portrait. His stories are far beyond what a typical kid, roughly the age of a college grad, would tell. He takes a drag and starts talking.

With a 91-mile-per-hour fastball, Allsup's life was cut out to be a starting pitcher at the University of Arkansas. The right-handed hurler was being looked at by several schools, but his idea was to play for the home town Razorbacks, get a degree, and be successful. At 17, his mom and stepdad divorced, sending his plans in a new direction. His father stepped in for guidance and Austin's world was about to change. Austin's dad is Tom-



my Allsup, a man who can tell a fascinating story or two of his own accord.

The story has been told 100 times more than the population of Owasso, OK—Tommy's birthplace. Still, there is an icy chill that follows the account of February 3, 1959, as cold and calculating as that night in Clear Lake, Iowa. Tommy was playing guitar for a band named The Crickets. His legendary band members Waylon Jennings and Buddy Holly were part of the "Winter Dance Party Tour," which scheduled a 24-city course over three weeks. Actually, the Surf Ballroom in this small Iowa town wasn't even an original stop. The promoters were trying to fill an open date. Holly, who legend says was tired of the long, cold bus rides, chartered a \$36-per-person single-engine Beechcraft Bonanza. The plane was big enough to hold three passengers and a pilot. When J.P. Richardson, known throughout the United States as The Big Bopper, asked Waylon Jennings for his seat, the future country music icon quietly stepped aside. The Big Bopper had developed a case of the flu (which was erroneously attributed to Ritchie Valens in the film *La Bamba*) and didn't

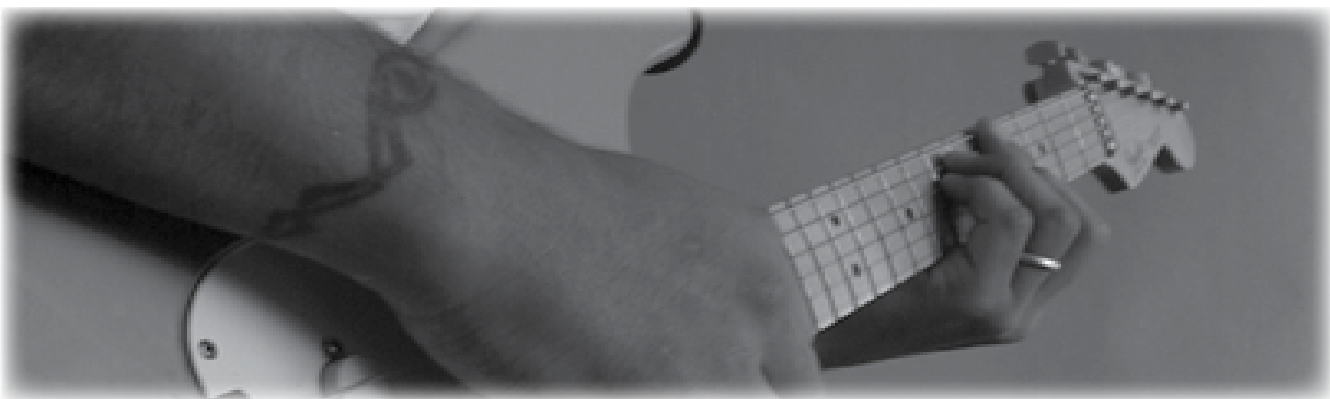
feel like he could travel the length of a bus trip.

Valens had always wanted to take a plane trip and asked Tommy if he would give up his seat. "I'll flip you for it," Tommy replied. A local radio deejay tossed a coin and Tommy ended up on the bus. That coin saved his life.

"I'm—*we're* only here because of a coin flip," Austin said relaying the story, as Tommy stands at the bar, listening intently. "That's a pretty powerful piece of history to live with." The plane carrying Holly, Richardson, Valens, and the pilot crashed shortly after takeoff, killing everyone on board.

Austin went to DFW Airport to pick up Tommy, just days before gig number 188. His dad had been in Los Angeles at a national music expo, playing guitar with the likes of Sheryl Crow and U2 frontman Bono. This is a far cry from stepping on stage at the White Water Tavern in Little Rock, as Austin had years ago. The joint, roughly the size of a standard sardine can, holds just 75 people and has a stage that is eye-level with ev-

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ery person that's packed in.

"It's a good thing I'm tall," Austin said. "Otherwise, that show would really suck."

If nothing else, his dad has taught Austin how to be level headed. Austin didn't pick up a guitar until he was 17 and didn't play his first solo gig until June of 2005. Sure, he sang along with Bob Wills, Elvis, Led Zeppelin, and Pearl Jam, but that was mostly in the shower or during the down time while participating in his church's choir. Being the son of a legend didn't make him an instant star on stage.

"I should give everyone their money back that was at my first show," he laughed in a half-serious tone. "I think I just stood there and sang."

Even though he had been through a semester at Southlake Music College, he still didn't have the edge to keep people coming back. Finally, Tommy pulled his son out and told him that good ol' dad could teach him what he needed to know. Tommy handed out pointer after pointer, slowly guiding his blood protégé to a stage presence. Once Austin learned that, his show evolved.

It's Saturday night in November, but it's not quite the ass-clinching cold that north Texas has experienced in the past. Austin is standing outside of Woody's Tavern, a lively sports bar near I-20 and Bryant Irvin in Fort Worth, and he lights a cigarette. He stands alone. Maybe to gather his thoughts, go over his routine or maybe it's just because sometimes

he's better by himself. Little does he know that roughly a month after this recording, he will become "disengaged" from his fiancée and will again have to balance a career and a personal life. At 6'4" and 190 lbs. with his long blonde hair and engaging smile, it doesn't seem to pose an issue. Plus, he's still in his early 20s. He's going to be just fine in the singles market.

But tonight, his focus is on the show. There are over 400 people, including his dad, in the audience and he has to nail this one.

"My live show is five times more rockin' than a regular album," All-sup says with confidence, mixed with just a tad bit of nervousness. "It's all about putting on a good show. That's what I'm going to do."

His crowd is definitely a melting pot of all types of individuals. There are college-aged students and hippies and folks who were well into their 20s when they heard The Crickets for the first time. One couple, age unidentified, drove 2-1/2 hours to see the show. Woody's Tavern may be a far cry from playing The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, but Austin's getting geared up just thinking about it. The light shines in his eyes just a little more with each passing moment and he feels his altar ego coming out.

"I'm not going to sing some stupid-ass song that doesn't have any meaning to me," he says, almost defensively. "I want my music to have a trueness and passion to it that people will recognize. Without

that, I'm just another musician."

It's showtime. Austin steps on stage with a sweat-soaked bandana pushing his hair out of his eyes and a Rolling Stones t-shirt. Some patrons are playing pool in the back of the building; others are blowing smoke into the air and still others watch in amazement as Kansas State continues to dominate the then #4-ranked Texas Longhorns on the Wildcats home field in Manhattan.

"I hope these people are here to watch me," he says. "If not, they will be by the end of the night." He fires up his guitar and the show begins.

After his first song, all of the pool players have their cues by their sides and all but two people, both in Kansas State sweatshirts, have stopped to watch him. The Wildcats eventually won the game 45-42, but that duo missed a helluva show.

After a handful of songs, Tommy works his way up to the stage and the father-son guitar jam begins. "He's the most talented guitarist I've ever seen," Austin says. "Sometimes I catch myself just watching him play when I'm supposed to be playing."

The crowd has been captivated, which is exactly what Austin wanted in the first place. He slides up next to Lyn Roth, a guitarist brought in for the live album, and they punish their guitar strings. Two TCU students are standing near the stage, listening to Austin's rendition of a Pearl Jam hit when one girl looks at the other.

"Who is this guy?"

"I don't know, but he's hot." They both laugh and continue to sing along. They will later approach him and ask for an autograph and maybe a phone number. But Austin would never admit the second part.

"It's on my shoulders to provide everything," Austin said, noting that he recently dismissed his manager and is now handling all aspects of the band's endeavors. Drummer Josh Clark, bass guitarist Reuben Salazar, and guitarist Ron Gada help when they can but Austin is the lifeblood of the group. Austin pauses for a minute, takes the final drag off his cigarette, puts out the dead soldier and his eyes light up again.

"Check this out."

He rolls up the sleeve covering his left arm to reveal an intricate cross-shaped tattoo with the initials of his grandfather, Kenneth Crowson. Crowson contracted a rare form of lung disease and died at the age of 68. Austin would later write a song about him, titled "Grandpa." He reflects on the hard work, dedication, and honesty that his grandpa taught him.

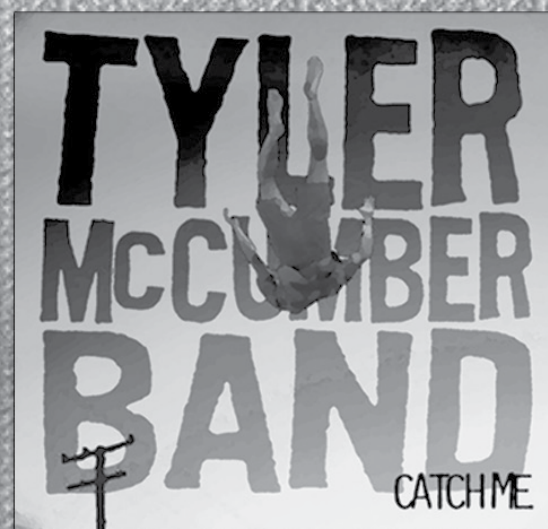
Austin understands that every weekend, he has to wake up (many times hungover from the night before), refuel with Gatorade and assorted snack foods, and get his head on right.

"I live life to the fullest," Austin said. "But, I also know that I have to be the one to push us to the next level."

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Stoney LaRue

HARLEY DAVIDSON COOL

By Keith Howerton

Upon arriving at the 36D Management office in New Braunfels, Texas, I was struck by the brand new Harley Davidson Softail in the parking lot. I was there to do a photo shoot and an interview with Stoney LaRue and I thought to myself, "I wonder if that is Stoney's." Brian Kirkpatrick, the photographer I asked to shoot the session, removed all doubt with his first words as I hopped out of my jeep. "Of course, Stoney came out on his new bike," Brian commented as he greeted me. I thought, "Cool, this is going to be fun." As a Harley rider myself I am drawn to Harleys like women are drawn to diamonds, and the sight of a brand new Softail Deluxe with Vance and Hines pipes on it is enough to make a Harley lover stop like a five pound bass looking at a top water bait. It is also enough to keep two guys talking motorcycles for the next three hours. But I had other things to talk with Stoney about, even if Harleys would have been my first choice. I got the feeling Stoney might have felt the same way. After all, they are beautiful machines and only Harley owners know how that feels.

Although, I have seen Stoney perform on many occasions, I had only met him once at a brief encounter at the Reckless Kelly DVD/CD release party. It has been a bit of a priority to get out and talk with him for sometime, but the schedules of magazine publishing have kept me from having any time to talk with him. Other writers for *Texas Music Times* have covered Stoney, but I have until now, not had the chance. It was a cover story I wanted to do myself and I am glad I did.

The first impression of Stoney LaRue is lasting. He is a regular guy that is cool to the bone. I got the feeling he liked being that way and relaxes while riding and hanging out with friends and writing and playing songs; not for the business of writing songs or music, but just because it is what he does. He is likely one of the next major players and artists to come from Texas and Oklahoma, but he keeps that grounded in where he has come from up to this point. The truly amazing thing about Stoney is his humble ego and affable personality. He is a great, regular guy that is an instant friend in the style of another great Oklahoman named Will Rogers. Even if Stoney met a man he did not like, it is doubtful that man did not like him.

Stoney's roots as a performer come from the roster of Red Dirt regulars that grew from an old farm house known as "The Farm" in Stillwater, Oklahoma, and migrated to another Stillwater home called the "Yellow House." Performers

like Cody Canada, Jimmy LaFave, Tom Skinner, Mike McClure, Jason Boland and others all made an artist pilgrimage at The Farm and then the Yellow House. Stoney admits that his time at The Farm was limited. He only went out there a couple of times, but he lived at the Yellow House for about five years.

"I spent a year on the couch," Stoney said. "That is just what you did at the house to get a room, but then when I

got my room I hung on to that sucker. Everyone pulled their weight and we shared expenses, but money was tight so it was tough every month to get things paid. Glad it was not my job to collect the money. Boland and I would play acoustic gigs and make money to pay our bills and man, we would have to get that paid before noon the next day or it would be gone," Stoney remembered. Even though Stoney did not have the task of collecting bill money, he made a contribution to the community known as the Yellow House.

"I worked for a cable company so I got us free cable TV. It was my main contribution, but then the bills got ran up with WWF premium shows." The memory made him smile. The Yellow House is no more, but Stoney told me he would dance on the concrete where it stood. The memories of the place are that strong to him. He met and spent great amounts of time with

⇒



DANG GOOD MUSIC.

LARRY JOE TAYLOR / TIMES

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"MONKEY RIVER TOWN GIRL"

FEAT. JERRY JEFF WALKER

"TOO MUCH ROCK"

FEAT. MIKE MCCLURE

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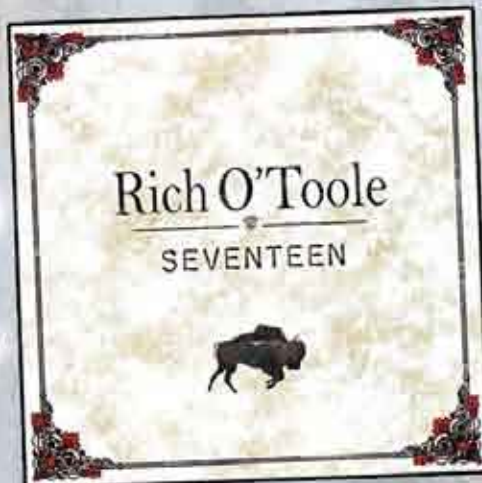


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his wife and manager Kandace Phillips there. He often can still remember the blended smells of beer, cigarettes, mold, and reefer that gave the Yellow House identity.

Stoney LaRue is at that transition point in an artist's career. He has recorded four records. His first project was a studio project called *Downtown* that was mixed in the basement of a trailer on the side of a cliff in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, from private sessions from Cain's Ballroom. There was also a live recording with Travis Linville from the Red Dirt Café. Both projects are now out of print. His latest projects are the *Red Dirt Album* and the *Live at Billy Bob's* CD and DVD. The crowds at his live shows are growing larger and his future has promise to continue to prosper. He now is a major live draw in Texas, Oklahoma, and surrounding states. When asked if he misses the days of smaller, more personal crowds, Stoney is introspective.

"You know, it is great to have 500 or 1000 or more people at one of our shows, even if the reality is that a good number of them are there just because it is the place to be that night. But I look at it this way, this is a chance for them to hear my music and that is a beautiful thing. I still love small crowds, always will, and will always play somewhere where only a few show up to really see us and be personal with us. It

is a good thing," according to Stoney. The smaller crowds are more personal and he loves that familiar feeling of engagement with an audience via his performances.

"When we travel to Alabama for example, we get Adam Hood's fans to come out and see us, and that is pretty cool," said Stoney. Adam has more than a few Stoney fans in Texas as well.

Small crowds are not likely to be the norm for Stoney LaRue in the near future. He is off in the spring on tour with Roger Clyne and the Peacemakers in the mountain and western states, and the rumor is that he will be working with famed producer and music publisher Frank Liddell who is the co-founder of Carnival Music group in Nashville. Things are happening for Stoney and even though he will be moving along that path to greater exposure, it is doubtful that he will ever leave those roots of small shows and loyal fans behind. He is an extraordinary performer who connects to a crowd like no other, and will always find some place to have a cool gig with loyal fans of his "Red Dirt" sound.

If you are near New Braunfels, Texas any time soon, look for a red bandana on a guy riding a great looking blue and white Harley Softail Deluxe. If you see him, give him a wave; I guarantee he will wave back. That is just who Stoney is. ♦

SA Indie offers new music to South Texas Festival to be March 7-13

San Antonio, say hello to SA indie, your very own weeklong music festival.

You may have seen it referred to as "South by San Antonio" earlier this year. SA indie's organizers chose to rename the festival to avoid confusion with South by Southwest.

"We are not now, nor have we ever been, affiliated with that thing up in Austin," explains Delphine Gunning, SA indie's founder. "We are focused on independent artists, and, so far, we have about 150 of them coming in from all over the country and the world."

Ms Gunning is an experienced music promoter and is the owner and operator of San Antonio's only listening room, The Red Room. Working along with her is Robin Lambaria, the festival's co-founder and creative director. Ms Lambaria is responsible for booking and scheduling.

SA indie's musical range is wide, from rap to country to rock to salsa and beyond. Scheduled performers include Nathan Hamilton, Ian Moore, Stephanie Briggs, and Plumtucker, along with San Antonio's own Jackson Parten, Monroe, Marcus Rubio, Dog Men Poets, and Sin, to name just a few.

SA indie will run from March 7th through the 13th and will feature performances at three venues: The Red Room, Rebar, and The Revolution Room. All the venues are within walking distance of each other in the Broadway and 410 area.

Full festival passes and all-venue day passes are available now at the festival's website. Single-venue day passes will be available at the door of each venue on each day of the festival.

For tickets and more information about SA indie, visit www.SAindie.com.

Happenings in Texas Music

FREDRICKSBURG TEXAS- The Auslander Biergarten is hosting a Spring music festival from March 8 to 17. The festival line up includes regular names in Texas music like Cory Morrow, Walt Wilkins, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Jason Eady, Zack Walther, Buster Jiggs, and Keith Davis along with others. Willie Nelson's daughter Paula Nelson is also set to perform. "The event promises to deliver great entertainment and fun as we celebrate the arrival of spring with Texas

music," stated Jeff Jefferies who is the owner of the Auslander Biergarten. "We are going to have a great time and everyone should come on out", said Jefferies. The event is supported by program director Rick Star and his Americana and Texas music radio station 107.9 KFAN via live broadcasts during the first hour of each of the shows. Line up, ticket, and lodging information can be found at www.theauslander.com or by calling 830-997-7714.

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He moves through the crowds with the subtlety of a man on a mission. Right up to the stage for a quick, last minute tuning and to make sure that his gear is all in order, and then he's gone again. The next time the audience will see him, he will likely already be on stage with the rest of the band, ready to entertain. He's laid back. He's low key. And he's one tremendous guitarist.

Once on stage, the man who moves so deftly through a crowd is suddenly a force demanding attention. Between the finely tuned intros and meticulous solos, an audience can't help but stop any side conversations and take note.

When asked to do this article, it was easy for me as a longtime fan of the band, and after a series of emails and phone calls with editors and managers, I had my phone interview set up with Reckless Kelly's lead guitarist, David Abeyta.

Sideman Blues...

RECKLESS KELLY'S DAVID ABEYTA

By RACHEL TAYLOR

point there was a distinct shift in the sound. It became more diverse with the acid rock elements of "Mersey Beat," and later, the attitude laced wail of the slide in *Wicked Twisted Road*'s "Six Gun." *Reckless Kelly Was Here* brought the unfamiliar, yet profound acoustic picking on "Wicked Twisted Road." Always with a look of undeterred focus, he is a master of his art.

years and just figured out that I really liked working hands on. Been working with Cody (Braun) who is great dealing with arrangements and vocals. We produced an album for Buster Jiggs and *Careless* for Mickey and the Motorcars. We even got to help produce a little from afar with Elliot Shiner (mix engineer) and Peter Zavadil (director) on *Reckless Kelly Was Here*. I learned a lot, though it was definitely a challenge working from a distance."

And why does he think he is so drawn to production?

"I guess it's the control freak in me," he said, but I caught that he was only half joking. "All the things that frustrate me about the live shows; like last night the sound in the room was great, but to-night—who knows." He paused, "But the studio, the studio lets you get things out just like they are in your head. Again, I guess it's just the control freak in me. That and as opposed to touring, I really enjoy that it gives me the chance to sleep in my own bed."

So what does he find to be the biggest challenge in this venture?

"The biggest challenge is finding the time to do it. We're on the road so much. Sometimes I feel like

all the touring and live performances are all so that we can do the records," he says referring back to the consistency offered by the studio.

I last saw the guys of RK perform about a month ago in Kerrville. The set list left out a few of the more familiar tunes, however, this decision made way for a few new ones, and after having followed the music of the band for years, for me, it was a brand new show. Judging by the response from the fans that night, I wasn't the only one who thought so. And as for David, though the man might be laid back, his take on the music is anything but.

David and the guys of Reckless Kelly are currently working their way up the West Coast, spreading the music, though they should be making their way back to Texas in March. For a listing of upcoming shows, check out their website at www.recklesskelly.com.



David Abeyta and Cody Braun of Reckless Kelly

The band is currently on tour in California with Big Head Todd and the Monsters. Considering the label "Texas Music," I first inquired as to how our brand of music is received out west.

"Really great. We're opening for some acts like Los Lobos and it's giving us the opportunity to play in front of bigger audiences. It's paying off—we see the people singing along. I think we're going in the right direction and building [a fan base] steadily 20-30 people at a time."

And as for working with Big Head Todd? "It's been a good experience. Their fans are getting into our music, and our fans are getting into theirs. The crowd is good at word of mouth."

Speaking of the sound, David plays a significant role. The first album David contributed to as an incoming member of the band was *Under the Table and Above the Sun*, at which

But he isn't restricted to the sidelines. Interrupting "Hey, Say, May," David has dominated the spotlight of live shows with his rendition of "Guacamole," and more recently the Chuck Berry classic, "Nadine." I asked how it was that he came into this now expected aspect of every show.

"It started in sound check. It's usually pretty boring and maybe even a little stressful, so I would play it just to keep it light. Willie (Braun) decided that we should stick it in the break and it was a hit with the live album. Lots of people just seem to have fun with it."

Shifting gears a little and steering away from the performance aspect, I asked David about his interests in production, knowing that he is credited in a couple of recent projects.

"I've been working with it for the last couple of

Texas Black Heart Brigade

By DARA THOMPSON

Tired of the same old Texas Music scene? Looking for something new and exciting? The Texas Black Heart Brigade may just be what this scene has been waiting for! Founder of the TBHB, Richard Avants (aka Dicky) is a veteran of the Texas Music scene. His most recent stint as bassist for the Bleu Edmondson Band gave TXRD fans an opportunity to see the energy that he brings to his music, and also something to look forward to with his new project, the Texas Black Heart Brigade. Avants is working to bring something new and fresh to the scene. According to Avants, "It will be an in-your-face, high energy, rock and roll show, and who doesn't like that?" During a recent visit with Richard, he said that he has a deep appreciation for the loyalty of the fans in this scene, and is looking forward to bringing some new talent and a new brand of music to the people.

Just where did the band's name come from? According to Avants, although the band will be based in Oklahoma, some of his musical and personal experiences while living in Texas were "very dark and cold," hence "Texas Black Heart." Avants further stated that "Brigade is used as a term to bring fans together, join them to a 'movement' giving them something to be a part of—real life music with a positive message about bigger and better things in life. It won't be about drinking and bad day songs, but will convey a positive message. Life in moments of clarity rather than intoxication." He is currently in the process of auditioning potential group members and is looking for players with high energy and an intense passion for bringing great, raw edge music to the fans. "I want people to leave a show asking, 'What the (hell) was that? I want to see that again!'"

Richard is already making plans for the first studio CD, tour dates, and fan interaction. The TBHB's first CD will feature special guests, such as the Stragglers' (yes, as in Jason Boland's band!) Roger Ray who will be lending his talent on the pedal and lap steel, Noah Jeffries on the violin and mandolin, and Brad Rice who will assist Avants with percussion and samples. As for a big-name producer, Avants doesn't see that it fits in with his plans for the band. "If you get a big time producer in there, sure, it helps, but the record often ends up sounding like that producer, not like the unique sound of the band. It limits what you are doing as an artist. I want this record to sound like the Texas Black Heart Brigade, not like someone else's idea of what it should sound like."



Richard "Dicky" Avants of the Texas Black Heart Brigade

Richard stated that the band's website should be up and running in February. March will find the band in the studio recording, with the first live performances in late April/early May, possibly opening for some heavy hitters such as Cross Canadian Ragweed and Jason Boland and the Stragglers. Avants is adamant about including fans in the process. Soon a street team/fan club will be organized, interactive chat room on the website for members to connect, and opportunities for fans to earn free tickets and backstage passes to shows. Some big name company endorsements have already signed on as well, such as Southern Thread and Shine (drums).

I have seen Richard perform over 70 times this past year, however this interview was the first opportunity I have had to listen to his insights and views on the current state of the Texas Music scene. His frank and honest opinions were very refreshing. When discussing the current state of music, Avants said "There is some bland stuff out there right now—cookie cutter bands, if you will. Lots of parody, same tired themes in songs. It's starting to lack fun. Where is the indi-

viduality? There are so many singer/songwriter bands out there, and although they are putting out some good music, where is the collaborative creativity from the other band members? Are they just hired guns? Bands are lacking a sense of brotherhood. Exceptions are Cross Canadian Ragweed; those guys have been together for years. Boland's guys too. Where is the raw talent that makes artists such as Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, and Stevie Ray Vaughn have such a timeless quality?"

Avants went on to discuss his vision for the TBHB, "I want to put out a tight group of guys who are busting their asses on stage as a whole, presenting all of their hard work and love for music as a gift to the audience. Each member of this band will have creative input, work as a team to bring the product together for the fans." On a personal level, Richard tells me that to him, music is about being a musician first. "Although ultimately you want people to enjoy what they are seeing and hearing, it's about being a musician first and foremost."

He recognizes the loyalty and passion of the ➡

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Emory Quinn - Letting Go

By KEITH HOWERTON

Emory Quinn or EQ as they are called is nothing but pure fun. These young guys are hip and talented musicians who can play almost anything, and they often switch instruments in sets.

Their debut CD titled, "Letting Go" is a collection of cool grooving songs that are not country, not pop, and not Americana. They are all three at the same time. Emory Quinn is their own sound that can effortlessly cross the mainstream lines in the same CD with ease and versatility.

They have a sound that could emerge to be the Jimmy Buffet lifestyle sound of Texas. Their lives as outdoors lovers come through in the music and their personal style. "Letting Go" is a record that relates to a Texas outdoor lifestyle without getting stupid and cheesy.

The songs are masterful in their lyrical construction of what the Texas outdoor life is like. "Three Day Weekend," the first single on the record, is a fun song of a good weekend on the coast when life is simple and easy. Listening to the tune will transport you straight into

that scene. There is not a bad track on the CD and standouts include; "Bring me Down", "All you Ever Do", and "Come Around".

Each tune is different and hard to describe, but they are all fantastic. If Emory Quinn could be explained in one word, it would be "versatility." They are not only extremely talented players of several instru-

ments each, but they also are capable of crafting an evolving sound in each tune that is distinct but different in a way that sets the trend and does not follow it.

Their debut CD is a must for anyone who is tired of the same trend in Texas music. It is different and spot on. It is one of the best of the year so far.



TXRD music fans, and is hoping that people will catch on to the new breed of live show he wants to bring to the stage. "These people are the most loyal fans any genre of music could have. They stick with a band through thick and thin, until they feel you are selling out." When asked his thoughts on an artist "selling out" he had a very unconventional response. "That's stupid. Musicians work hard to earn a spot on the big stage. We all want a good record deal to have the chance to play to a wider audience. People think artists 'sell out' and are not keeping it real anymore, and that does happen. But, what does 'doing it for the cause' mean anyway?" Using the example of Pat Green who went from the smaller venues in Oklahoma and Texas to the big stage and a major label record deal, Avants said "Yeah, he got a good deal. He earned a chance to play to a larger audience and got chastised by his fans for selling out. Guess they feel like they have lost their connection to that musician, but he still comes back to play the small venues, as does Ragweed, Boland, Randy Rogers....."

As a fan and a writer, I am looking forward to reviewing the Texas Black Heart Brigade's first CD and first live shows. Richard did play some samples of the songs for me, and I really believe people will connect with this music. It is positive, uplifting, real, and best of all, fun! Until the website is up and running, you can get all the TBHB info on the myspace site www.myspace.com/texasblackheartbrigade. ❖

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THE TALE BEHIND THE TUNE

BY GEORGE BANCROFT

The Tune: "Floods"
The Tale Teller: Mike McClure

I first noticed Mike McClure's name shortly after I started producing and hosting *The Texas Tunesmith* radio show in 2004. His name seemed to be popping up everywhere. I saw Mike McClure credited as the producer on a couple Cross Canadian Ragweed records, then on a Jason Boland and the Stragglers CD. While researching different acts, I poked around on the internet to look at various music venue calendars and found that Mike was performing around Texas. I sent an email to someone somewhere to see if I could get him on the show, but he was between publicists at the time, so I moved on to folks who were easier to reach.

About a year ago, I decided to do a show on Darren Kozelsky. I got my hands on a pre-release copy of Darren's *Let Your Mind Fly* CD. The copy I got didn't have any liner notes, just the CD. I'd been made aware that McClure produced the record, but I was surprised to learn when I interviewed Darren, that Mike also wrote about half the songs on the recording. I enjoyed everything on Darren's CD, but I was particularly enamored with the cuts penned by McClure. I knew then that I had to track the man down and pick his brain about his songwriting.

A few months ago, I finally put together a show around McClure and the songs on his *Foam* CD. During the course of an interview with Mike, I asked which of his songs might be more special to his fans than the others. Almost immediately he responded, "Floods." Here's what he had to say about the tune:

"I originally recorded 'Floods' for the Afterglow album when I was with

The Great Divide. I always liked that song and that's one that people always requested everywhere I went. It just kind of seemed to resonate with people. When I wrote that song, the band I was with, we were leaving Atlantic Records and going back to being on our own, independent. I was just kind of mad at the whole process, dealing with the label. Sometimes they can be pretty mechanical. I didn't feel that they did very much for us, and I was pretty frustrated. I think that song appeals to a lot of people because it's vague enough to fit whatever they're going through, and the lyrics are ambiguous enough to fit any kind of circumstance."

Some folks have asked me lately if I thought the Texas Music scene is dying. I'm not sure how to answer that question. I try to pay little or no attention to "the scene;" however, I pay a great deal of attention to the songs, and I believe that Texas Music will do well when the songs are good. That was true when Bob Wills was playing his music. It was true in the 70s. It's true today, and the future will follow suit. Any decent sideman will tell you that it's hard to play tasteful music to a lousy song.

Mike McClure writes songs as well as anyone anywhere. As long as guys like Mike are making frequent contributions to Texas Music, Texas Music will be just fine. If there is a problem with the state of Texas Music, it might be that there are just a lot of records being made and promoted.

I love songwriters like farmers love the rain, and no farmer ever complained about having too much rain. I'm not complaining about having a truckload of songwriters running around; I'm making an observation. Folks are belching out songs and CDs like frat boys at a keg party. Here's another observation. Mike was right: "Floods" does fit any kind

Floods

MIKE MCCLURE

- Verse: I'm a ball of fear, I'm a pile of doubts
But I hope through the fear
And I pray that it all works out
Cause it always does
When it rains sometimes it floods
- Verse: I'm a shot in the dark, I'm a fist in your gut
I might do something crazy
To get myself out of a rut
But when push comes down to shove
When it rains sometimes it floods
- Chorus: *Let the damn break down
Let the water wash over me
I don't care if I drown
If that's how it has to be
Let the water wash over me*
- Verse: I get out on the edge
But I come back to the middle
Of all points in between
Of my own personal riddle
Yea, the answers they slowly come
But when it rains sometimes it floods
- Verse: Yea, but it all gets lost no matter how hard you try
Everything comes with a cost
And there's no way to slide
This illusion is clear as mud
And if it rains sometimes it'll flood

Repeat Chorus

of circumstance, including the circumstance that anyone in the business of Texas Music is in right now. So, if you're looking for some insight into whether or not the Texas Music scene is dying, just read the lyrics to Mike McClure's *Floods*.

George Bancroft lives in Big Spring, Texas. He has a radio show called *The Texas Tunesmith* and can be heard at KBST 95.7, Saturday and Sunday evenings, and on the internet on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. (CST) on tossmradio.com.



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Full Steam Ahead for The Scott Wiggins Band

Coming off the recent chart success of the first single “Country Girl” from the band’s debut record “Only See...” The Scott Wiggins band is set for another great run at the Texas singles charts. “Country Girl” reached the top thirty on the Texas Regional Radio Report and the Texas Music Chart.

It almost cracked the top 25 on the Texas Regional Radio Report. The second single is another great song from the record called “Mexico.” The recent success of the band’s debut CD is a stark contrast to how they got started with it.

The record was recorded in a home studio in Houston in 4 days. They did the music in 3 days and the vocals on the fourth. “It was kind of stressful, but fun at the same time”, said Wiggins. Wiggins and his band mates also self-produced the record with some help from Chris Rocha. They did send it away to have it mixed and mastered.

Like many recordings in Texas, talent has a way of transcending the budget

expended on the project and “Only See...” is a reflection of that phenomenon. All of the songs on the CD were written by Wiggins except “Mexico” that is co-written with Jason Fajardo who is the band’s former lead guitar player. Even though the band is only on its second single from the debut record, and is touring like mad to support it, they are planning and working on the next project.

They have already had rehearsals and meetings with the rising production star, and Texas guitar standout front man, Keith Davis. Keith is working with the band to produce the next project with Austin sound engineer stand out Adam Odor on the controls in the studio.

They are planning on going in the studio in May of this year. It is a milestone of sorts for a band that has been together since forming the core in 2001 with Wiggins and drummer John Diaz. The Scott Wiggins Band is Scott Wiggins, John Diaz, Ryan Fedako, Ricky Diaz, and Austin Gillum. For more information check out www.scottwigginsband.com.

How One Renegade Band Keeps Riding The Rail

By JENNIFER RAINEY

The guys of Renegade Rail have seen things move into full swing lately. Between finishing a third album, shooting a video for the CMT Madness Competition, and touring, they have been showing the rest of the TX/RD family and friends just what four Missouri guys are really made of. Of course, they can’t do this without some new threads, so Nathan Cross of Southern Thread has generously hooked the band up with new clothes.

“The ink hasn’t been signed yet, but Nathan Cross felt sorry for us the last time he saw us dressed in rags, so he hooked us up with some great clothes,” lead vocalist, Mike Munsterman said.

Perhaps, the biggest news for Renegade Rail is the release of their third album, *Ragged*. Munsterman said the guys all thought it’d be fitting, since that’s how they feel after a live performance. Although this is their third album, it’s the first one the band is completely satisfied with because they took the time to hire a real producer. The producer of *Ragged* is none other than Mike McClure. McClure who is not only known for his own music and live performances, has also gained recognition as a successful and popular producer among Red Dirt bands. He has produced his own albums, which include *Camelot Falling*, and the recent release *Foam*, as well as albums for Cross Canadian Ragweed and many other TX/RD favorites.

“The atmosphere at the Dirty Bird Recording Studio [located outside of Norman, OK] is set around making the artist feel comfortable. Not to mention, he [McClure] was a blast to work with,” Munsterman said.

Fans can buy the new album at CDBaby.com, Lonestarmusic.com, or at one of the Renegade Rail shows. Fans can also request the CD on Red-dirtradio.com, where their first release, “Card-



board,” received an impressive rating of 9.8 out of 10. Munsterman said Skydog, the Red Dirt Radio DJ, has listed this song as the highest-ranking song ever on that station.

Renegade Rail has been performing for several years now and recorded two other CDs, *Derailed* and *It’s Not Us*. While it seems that most Red

Dirt artists hail from Oklahoma and Texas, the guys of Renegade Rail are from a little farther to the northeast, specifically the Sedalia, Missouri area.

“We all hit it off at a late night Tupperware party and we’ve been playing together ever since,” Munsterman joked about how the band started. “Really, we all were playing the same old, tired cover songs in other bands and decided to get together and create our own sound instead of someone else’s.”

The band members truly believe in writing their own songs and Munsterman and drummer Eric Kullman both agreed that their biggest influences are real life experiences. They’ve been writing songs for three years, but they believe they’ve really kicked it up a notch in the past year.

Long time fans may have noticed some changes in the band recently, as former member Leslie Kullman has left the band. Kullman played keyboard, rhythm guitar, banjo, and backup vocals. Munsterman said there was no bad blood from the split, but rather that Kullman is planning a wedding and also going to college. She even recorded keys with them on *Ragged*. Other members of the band include newest member, Luke Hayworth on lead guitar and vocals, and long time member, Rocky Vincent on bass and backup vocals.

The band just finished shooting a video for the CMT Madness Competition, where the winner will be on the *Studio 330 Sessions*. Renegade Rail is also working on booking more shows in the TX/OK area. Fans can find a list of concert dates and other information on the band by logging onto renegaderail.com, or myspace.com/railthis.

ALBUM REVIEWS

Drew Kennedy *Dollar Theatre Movie*

Drew is a talented musician and I have found myself to be a very close follower of his music for several years now, with many Tuesday nights (and various others) having enjoyed a cold one and some beautiful Drew Kennedy music. I've been waiting in great anticipation of this CD and am pleased to announce now that the wait has ended, it has not been in vain.

Dollar Theatre Movie by Drew Kennedy follows his 2003 independent debut record *Hillbilly Pilgrim*, and right from the opening track, the lyrics are enough to make anyone with a soul stop cold and think. Drew's talent is proven as all 13 tracks credit him as either writer or co-writer. Peter Dawson, talented musician in his own right, is included in that poor of great writers. Add in great music and musicians and the circle is complete on this record.

"Goodbye" is one of the most tear jerking songs I have ever heard. It tells the tale of a man who knows that what he is doing to his woman is so much less than what she deserves. *I believed you when you said you'd*

never leave, so please let me. A new spin on the end of a relationship, he only leaves her because that is what is best for her.

The song aptly titled "The New Me" describes a total change of persona a man takes on as he decides that his life is not what it should be. The heart-wrenching "The Last Waltz" addresses the loss felt when one of the great dancehalls closes down. Another song worth mentioning is "Tomorrow's Not Tonight."

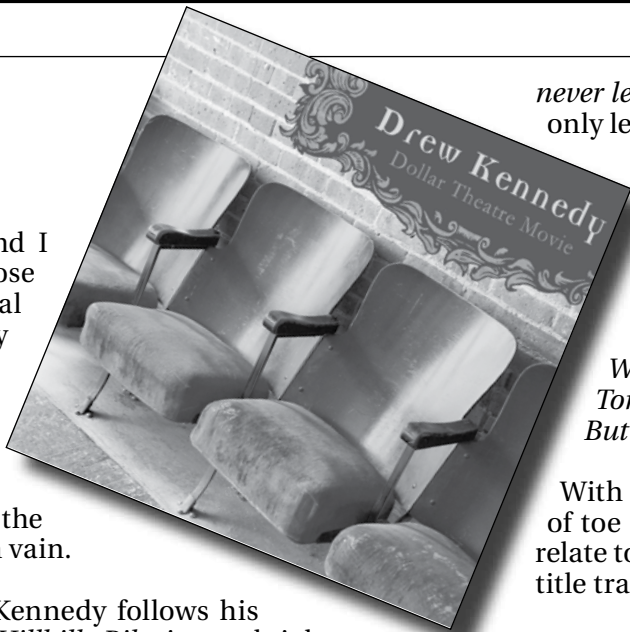
*Working for a dollar, just to bring me home a dime
Tomorrow I can worry
But tomorrow's not tonight*

With its quick beat, movement is demanded whether it be in the form of toe tapping or all out dancing. Not to mention, most everyone can relate to the feeling of working so hard to take home so little. Finally the title track offers its own brand of insight.

*It's the second time around
Like a dollar theater movie
I can blend in like you never even knew me*

There is not a doubt in my mind that I could produce a rather lengthy rave discussing *Dollar Theatre Movie*, but the most concise summary I can give is that this is a soulful must have for anyone who truly appreciates lyrics. Buy it, pop it in, and spin it; I'm pretty sure you'll agree. For more information on Drew visit www.drewkennedymusic.com.

Elise Tschoepe



Jay Boy Adams *The Shoebox*

"Color You Gone," continues to climb the charts and it's not even the best track on the album. Jay Boy Adams' music is its own genre, mixing folk, blues, rock, and country into an astonishing twelve tracks. Jay Boy Adams has released a realistically graphic debut album.

Jay Boy Adams combines wisdom with lyrics in, "The Shoebox," Moro Bay," and "For Home." His music portrays a man looking back on the "good ole days" and grasping the emotions that describe who he is, and what takes him home.

"Life in a Small Town," along with, "Showman's Life," depict the lives of two raw, honest souls facing consequences for the decisions they make. Showman's life is the classic Jesse Winchester song that has been covered by Nashville superstars like Gary Allan.

The phenomenal acoustics and astounding mandolin solo in "Mississippi to Abilene," leave a listener impressed and inspired. The story line in the song paints a vivid image of a rural man's life.

"Bottle and the Bible," pulls heart strings and clenches the spirit. Its honest, humble lyrics sung by a graceful, soulful voice leave a listener with chills. This breathtaking blues waltz combined with an amazing story defines good music.

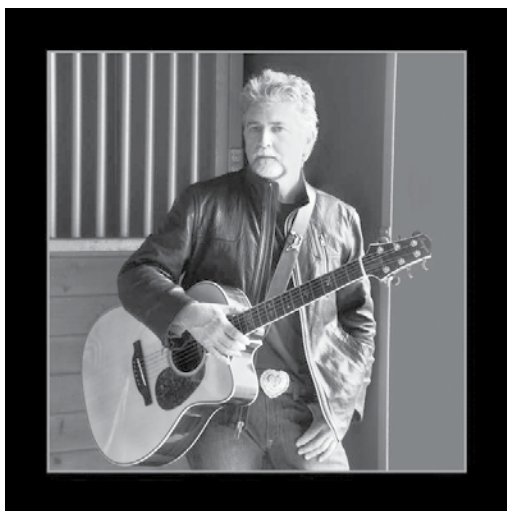
In, "Life and Fate," and "Waitin' on Five O'Clock," Jay Boy Adams rocks out with a country blues feel, as both songs talk about everyday life in the real world.

The current single, "Color You Gone," makes great for radio airplay with its easy tempo and creative lyrics. "Water for My Horses," takes a listener back in time as it illustrates the tale of a man chasing, "an outlaw to hell." The instrumentation and stunning mix of gospel soul in, "John the Revelator," will leave ears ringing for more.

Jay Boy Adams does a great job of combining honesty with edge and soul with drama. The album, "The Shoebox," is a sincere, intense portrait of reality and emotion.

Tracy Nicole

Tracy Nicole is the Music Director for KYKC 100.1 FM in Ada Oklahoma.



South First Band *Like the Movies*

From the first track, "Wake up Wanting Me" to "Ice Cold Beer", it is obvious that the new release from The South First Band is a quality production.

"Wake up Wanting Me", which is the first single for radio is a catchy tune of a relationship gone wrong. The tune has a catchy hook, superb harmonies, and great rhythm and lead guitar work.

Four other notable songs on the record are, "Nothing Like We Have", "Stars over Austin", "Back to Texas", and "Ice Cold Beer". They all are powerful songs that are well produced and recorded. "Stars over Austin" is a ballad that warms the heart like the Austin skyline after a long drive to get there. "Back to Texas" and "Ice Cold Beer" are fun rocking songs that are just a blast to give a listen. "Nothing Like We Have" is simply a superb piece of lyrical and poetic work.

Without question, however, the best track on the record is the title track. "Like the Movies" is destined to be one of the best songs of 2007. With the hook, "Life is never like the movies; love is never in a song", "Like the Movies" tells a story of taking things and love for granted. The South First Band is known for rocking shows and powerful harmonies. On "Like the Movies", they don't disappoint in either category. Their harmonies are strong, the beats are rocking, and the songs well constructed. With a CD like this under their wings, the South First Band is destined to fly high in 2007. This one is a must have.

Keith Howerton



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TMT FIVE

blacktopGYPSY

Andie Kay Joyner and Heather Woodruff had to experience life before they felt ready to write about it. When they met in the early 1990s, both were already accomplished musician/vocalists.

Woodruff was an award winning fiddler coming off a two-year run as a support player in Branson, Missouri. Joyner was still a teenager, but had sung in front of thousands of people at countless performances. Each had grown up in musical families that exposed them to bluegrass, folk, and traditional country music.

For the next decade, the ladies further groomed themselves for their own band by separately backing Texas artists, such as Mark David Manders, Max Stalling, Johnny Lee, Tommy Alverson, Bob Schneider, and others.

They took a Tuesday night residency at the legendary Dallas honky-tonk, Adair's Saloon for almost a year. After several failed personal relationships, a handful of song-worthy misfortunes, and countless all-night jam sessions, their songwriting began to draw from very specific situations and soon there was more than enough material to complete an album.

Woodruff and Joyner co-produced their debut CD, blacktopGYPSY, with Austin musical mastermind Adam Odor at famed Cedar Creek

Studios. The album is a montage of styles representing the songwriters' varied influences and phases of musical interest.



The traditional country material one might expect of a fiddler and country vocalist is certainly there. blacktopGYPSY moved from the studio to the stage in early 2006, adding stellar musicians Sam Swank on lead guitar, Jerry Mowery on drums/percussion, Scott Harper on bass guitar, and Darcy Starcher on background vocals. With the help of these musicians and their own songwriting abilities, blacktopGYPSY is turning the page to a new era in Americana music. For more information about the band, visit www.blacktopgypsy.com.

Blake and Fallon

Blake Powers and Fallon Franklin are the dynamic duo that with Fallon's husband Joey Cambell make up the group known as Blake and Fallon.

The group's newest project titled "*Wasted Day*" is a strong departure from the previous country style of music of their solo projects. Featured in the March issue of Texas Music Times, the editor of TMT called Blake and Fallon "The other side of Texas music" for the pop, pop rock and Americana reflections that create a sound all their own.

"*Wasted Day*" is a superb project that branches way outside of the traditional sounds of Texas music. They are from Texas but the record is a solid product of great production and tunes that transcends genres.



With several superbly written and performed tracks, the record is a smash project that the group can be very proud of and any music lover will enjoy.

The group has one of the most dynamic and busy tour schedules in Texas, which highlights their growing popularity. For more information on Blake and Fallon please check out their website at www.blakeandfallon.com.

Keith Davis

Keith Davis is no stranger to Texas music and definitely not a rookie. Even though he is still in his 20s, he is a veteran of the scene.

His accomplishments include being one of the best lead guitar players in the state having played with tour regulars like Kevin Fowler, Django Walker, Larry Joe Taylor, and most recently the rising star of Brandon Rhyder.

For most of 2006 as Brandon Rhyder set Texas on fire to the point he is now one of the hottest draws in Texas, Keith Davis was standing on his right hand side as the

lead player in the band.

Keith also has one record called "*Sideman Blues*" that was produced and recorded by Keith in his home studio, and is set to release another project in the spring or summer of 2007.

In addition to Keith's accomplishments as a solo artist and sideman, he is also be-

coming one of the most sought after producers in Texas.

He is producing at least one project per month and has recently begun working with superb Austin sound engineer Adam Odor. For more information on Keith Davis check out www.keithdavisband.com or his myspace at www.myspace.com/keithdavisband.



Steve Simmons

Steve Simmons is one of the best songwriters in Texas. His most recent project titled "*Broadway*" is filled with sad, funny, rocking, and honky-tonk style country songs.

However, it is not so much the music or Steve's vocals that make the record such a pleasure. It is the stories. His songs of Texas lifestyle are real without being stupid and just about drinking beer and chasing women. He is a songwriter to be respected.

His wit can be heard in "Christi's Avon and Tex Mex" and his passion in the story of war's tragedy in "Casey". The ability to have two



Steve Simmons and Billy Joe Shaver

songs on the same record that are both so good yet so different is nothing short of genius. Steve is set to return to the studio for some more recording soon. Check out more about Steve at www.stevesimmonsmusic.com.

Josh Daniels



Josh Daniels debut project titled "*Sermons at Gunpoint*" is a great record from a talented young singer songwriter. At the young age of 24, Josh has already made his mark around Texas by opening for some of the region's best talent like Randy Rogers and Cross Canadian Ragweed.

The CD is so good that he was selected by 99.5 The Wolf radio station in Dallas to profile the release on The Front Porch show with Justin Fazell. Profiling a debut CD so early is unusual for the show.

Josh is also raising some industry buzz. Chris Thomas, the CEO of Palo Duro Records called Josh sound, "Great and soul-filled". One particular track on "*Sermons at Gunpoint*" titled "Born in the South" is a destined to be a great hit.

For more information on Josh Daniels visit www.joshdanielsband.com or www.myspace.com/thejoshdanielsband.com.

Rich O'Toole Band

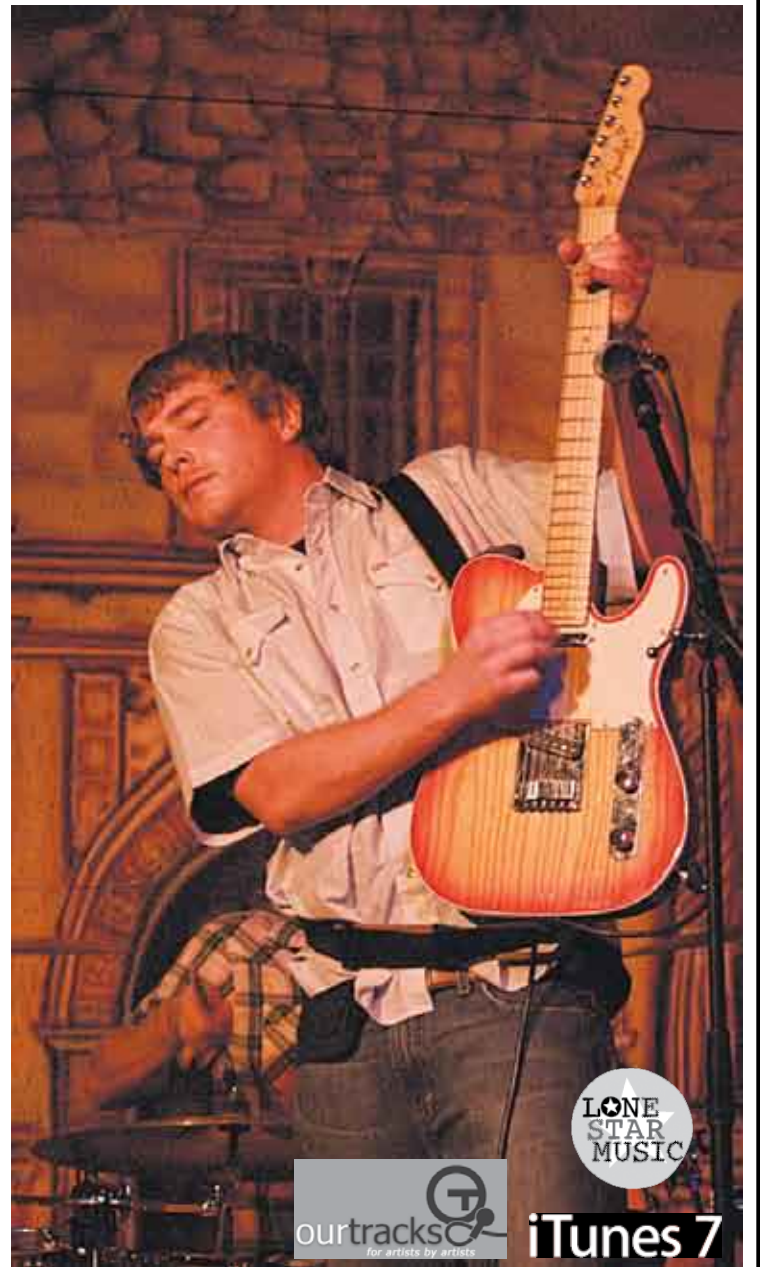
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