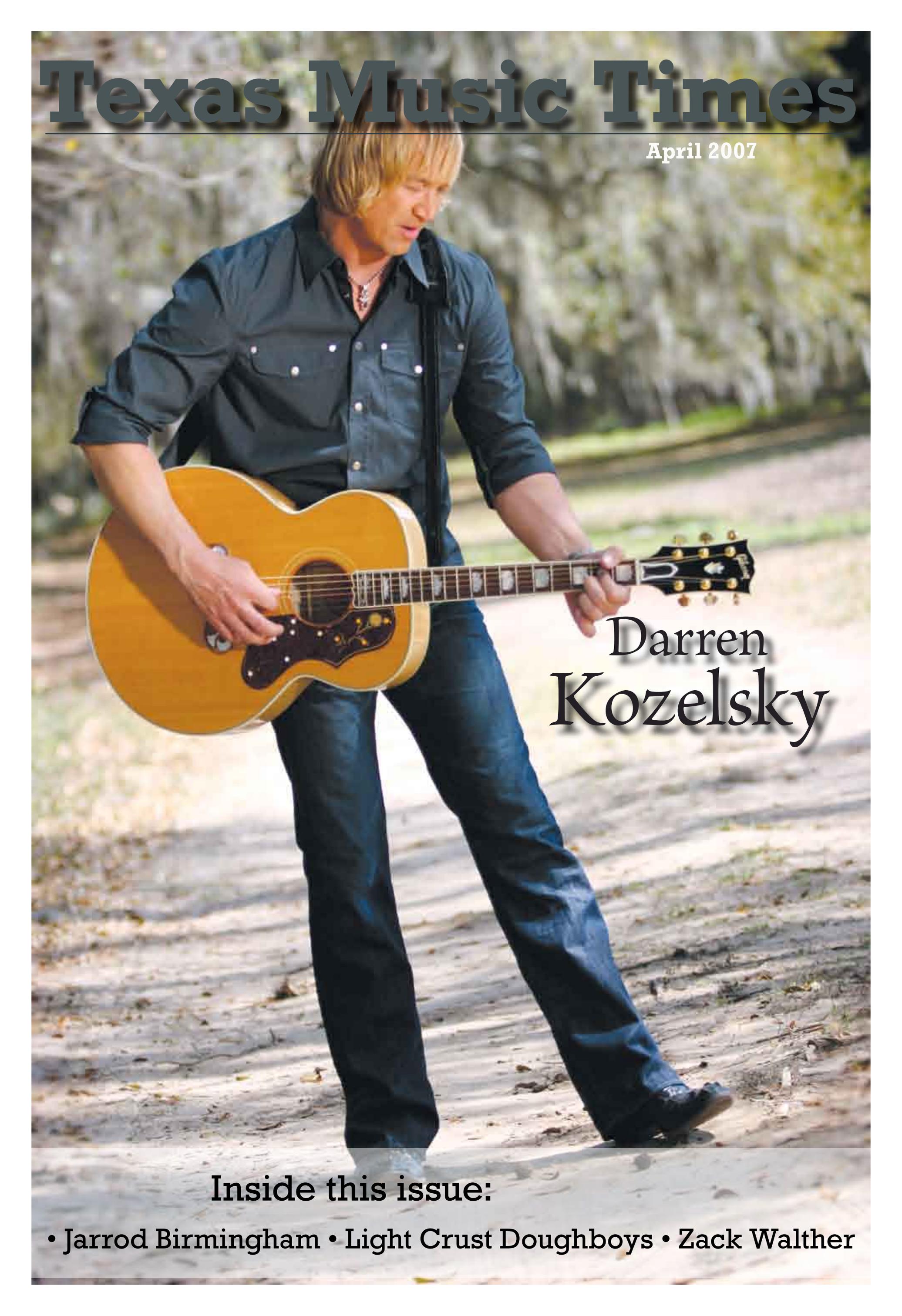


Texas Music Times



April 2007

Darren
Kozelsky

Inside this issue:

• Jarrod Birmingham • Light Crust Doughboys • Zack Walther

About the Cover

Making cover decisions, as a magazine publisher is always a "nerve racking" experience. At least it is for me it is a pain in the butt. I know you are saying, "Hey you publish a magazine dummy, making a decision about a cover is the cool part of the job."

Well, all I can say is, "Wrong." First, there is the mechanics of getting the cover photo and deciding to use a press shot or getting a photo shoot coordinated. Then it is the story itself and making sure that there is something new and interesting there for the reader to enjoy. There are also the day to day requirements of other aspects of running a business that seem to get in the way of doing the journalistic side of things.

Therefore, it is a process that in some instances turns something should be fun into work. However, that is what I asked for when I decided to publish a magazine and it comes with the territory. This month was one of those months. I had a plan and things fell apart due to lack of ability to get the parts put together to make it happen. I had to fall

back on an alternate plan, and I really did not have one.

Then like an answered prayer, my phone rings with a Nashville publicist named Brandy Reed making one of those "how you doing" calls. Just when I had no plan, one was delivered to me. Brandy represents Darren Kozelsky and Darren is someone I have admired and liked since starting Texas Music Times. I have also not given him the coverage in our pages that he de-

serves. Mostly just because of the mechanics of not catching up to him at the right time or that at the time he did not really have anything new or interesting going on. In one case, I was promised a story from a writer that never materialized.

Therefore, immediately with Brandy on the phone Darren clicked in my head. "Do you have any new shots of Darren," I asked Brandy. "Sure we do, we just did his video shoot," she said. I thought, "Video shoot," awesome there is a story that.

So, in a period of 2 days I got the photos and the interview with one of the nicest guys in Texas music. Many people have always been nothing but very nice to me, but Darren has always been a person whom I always want to catch up to when he passes through town. He is sincere and genuine to anyone associated with TMT. Also, it is really kind of appropriate that Darren is on the cover of Texas Music Times as his CD was the first ever CD received by the company to do a review.

I was so excited at the time because we got a CD to review. I did not realize that it would soon be so many CDs that I would not have enough print space to review them all. It is a law of physics that makes saddens me sometimes. Nevertheless, it was Darren's project, "Let your mind fly" that was one of the first 5 reviews we put up when we stood up the website in May 2006.

He is Darren Kozelsky and Texas Music Times is proud to have him as our April 2007 cover story. Thanks my friend for help me out in a pinch.

The Editor

"Many people have always been nothing but very nice to me, but Darren has always been a person whom I always want to catch up to when he passes through town"

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

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Cover Story:
Darren Kozelsky -
Cool Grass

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The Light Crust Doughboys:

HEAVYWEIGHTS OF TEXAS SWING

BY RANDY CUNNINGHAM

Let's play a game. We'll call it the, "The Let's See How Much You Think You Know About Texas Music Trivia Versus What You Actually Know," game.

On second thought, let's just call it "Red Dirt Trivia." Here's how it works: I'll provide a set of clues regarding a famous musician. The player's job is to figure out the name of the celebrity in as few clues as possible. But, we're on the honor system here. No looking ahead to sneak a peek at the answer. Ready? Here goes.

This famous musician was born in Kosse, Texas. During his early years, he alternated careers as a barber and musician before moving to Ft. Worth to perform in a medicine show where he learned a great deal about the comic timing that later became a staple of his live performances. Later, he moved to Oklahoma City and played live shows every Monday-Friday on 50,000-watt radio station KVOO, originating from the stage of Cain's Ballroom. About a year after beginning his daily show, he found himself unable to get along with a man who was not only the host of his show, but also a future governor of Texas. The person in question was eventually fired from his job on the radio show due to excessive binge drinking and missed performances

So, how's it coming? Had any brainstorm? OK, some more clues.

Later, he moved to Hollywood, where his 23-member band was an enormous success, playing to larger crowds than those attending performances by Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman. His strong-willed character ruffled some conservative country music feathers, as he defied a previous ban by the Grand Ole Opry, bringing drums to the hallowed



stage as part of a cross-country tour with his band. In the twilight of his life, he was inducted in the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1968, and later into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1999. In 1970 he was the subject of a tribute album, recorded by Merle Haggard. His musical efforts were not overlooked by today's heroes, as he was identified by Willie Nelson and Asleep at the Wheel as a major musical influence. Sadly, he died in 1975 after suffering a major stroke.

The answer? The king of western swing, the one –and only Bob Wills.

Yep, the fiddle player extraordinaire not only experienced a long and successful career, but additionally influenced such household names as Willie and Haggard, who in turn sparked a musical flame in current Red Dirt heroes, such as Cross Canadian Ragweed.

So, how did this superstar get his start? What was his first claim to fame?

He became a doughboy. Nope, not a baker, but a fiddle-playing phenom for the Light Crust Doughboys, one of music's greatest western swing bands. In 1931, Wills, along with guitarist Herman Arnspiger and vocalist Milton Brown persuaded Burrus Mill and Elevator Company in Ft. Worth to sponsor the band on a radio show advertising the mill's Light Crust Flour. Though canceled after two weeks, thousands of fan requests brought the group back to the air for their own daily show at noon. However, two years later, Wills was fired by Burrus Mill president W. Lee (Pappy) O'Daniel for missing broadcasts due to his excessive drinking. Wills quickly rebounded that same year to form Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, and for the next four decades continued to create such musical classics as "San Antonio Rose," and "Take Me Back To Tulsa," a revered classic covered by many artists, including George Strait and Cross Canadian Ragweed. Sadly, Wills succumbed to a stroke on May 13th, 1975.

Then, what about the Light Crust Doughboys? Did Wills' departure derail the Texas swing powerhouse?

Hardly. Between 1935 and World War II, the Doughboys experienced staggering musical success. By the 1940s they were broadcast over 170 radio stations in the South and the Southwest regions of the United States, with millions of listeners tuning in to dance and



tap their toes to the Doughboys' swing and jazz-based tunes.

By 1942, band members left to pursue military careers or to work in war-related industry, and Burrus Mill decided to put an end to the Doughboys' radio show. In 1946 the mill attempted to revive the band's radio performances, but the broadcast never regained strength. Though attempting to boost ratings through the hiring of Hank Thompson and Slim Whitman as band members, the appeal of television ended the domination previously enjoyed by radio. Though off the air since 1950, the Doughboys still perform at concerts and festival across the United States, entertaining fans with their toe-tapping classics.

In March of 2005, folks from the town of Quitman, Texas (Population of 2,030) had an interest in providing a home to honor the Doughboys' past, as well as a facility available to house exhibits and memorabilia. After conversations with Doughboy member and Grammy winner Art Greenhaw, their dream became a reality, and the Light Crust Doughboy Hall of Fame & Museum was opened to the public. Located on the grounds of Jim Hogg Park, the museum brings to life the history of a band responsible for bringing the swing to Texas Music.

Entering the museum, visitors are

greeted in the same manner that fans of the group were serenaded at the beginning of each radio broadcast, as a large sign at the entrance reads;

The Light Crust Doughboys are On The Air.

Now listen everybody from near and far

If you want to know who we are We're the Light Crust Doughboys From Burrus Mill

Like our song, think it's fine Sit right down and drop a line To the Light Crust Doughboys From Burrus Mill...

With Doughboy music playing in the background to set the mood, a journey through the Hall of Fame brings to life the past of hard-working band that traveled thousands of miles bringing joy to folks during tough times. The 1930s and 40s found a nation in the death-grip of the Depression and World War II, and the Doughboys did their part to bring a momentary smile to those who sorely needed it. Included are musical instruments, such as the Celesta, a small keyboard instrument used by 1930s tenor banjo player Smoky Montgomery to compose songs, and the original Bogen state-of-the-art sound system that was built into the Doughboys' bus and used at various tour stops. Additionally, visitors can view original



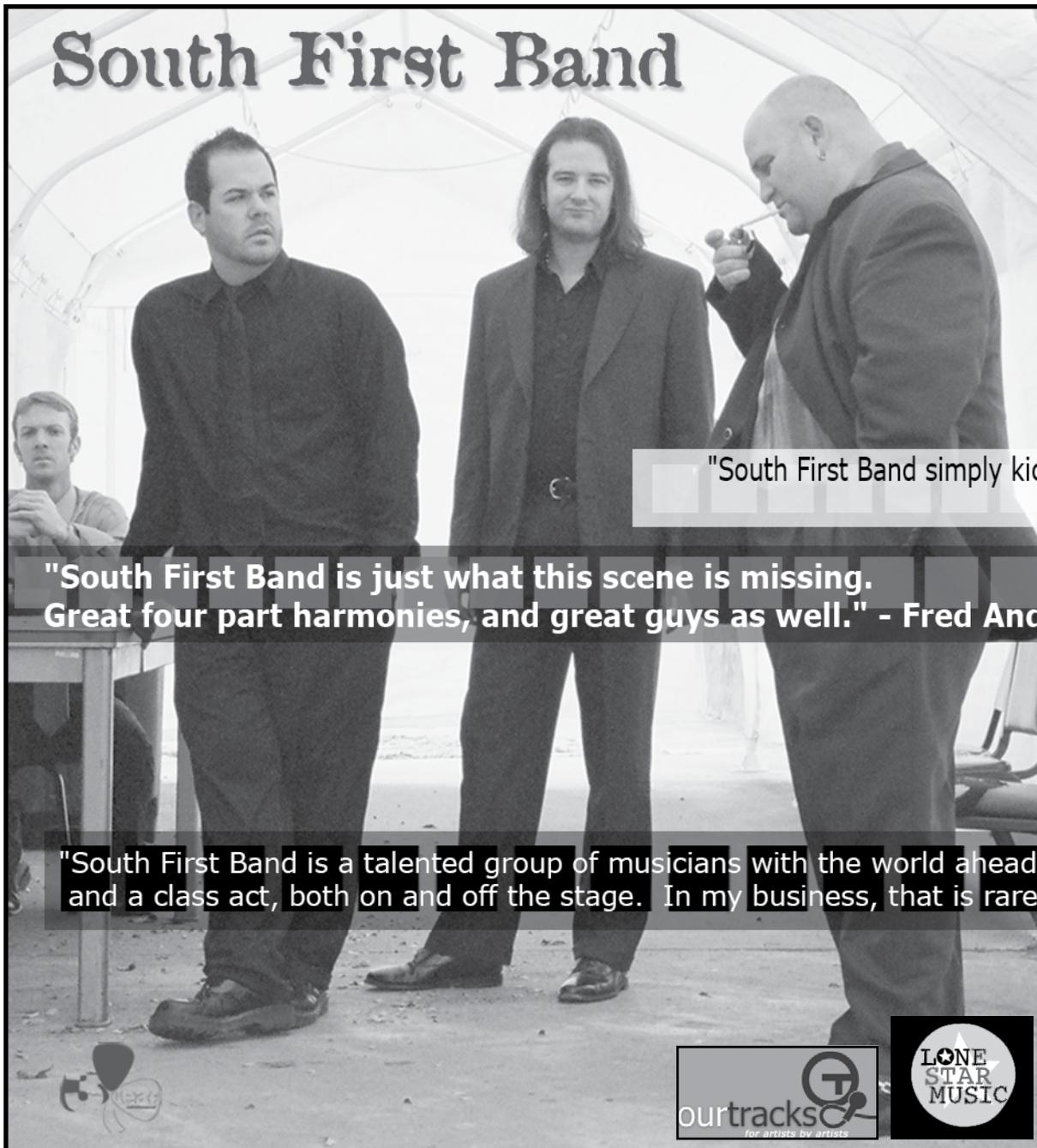
song contracts, postcards, photos, stage outfits, and guitars belonging to band members through the years. A journey through the museum will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. The cost of admission is a mere \$3 for adults and \$1 for students, a small price to pay to keep alive the memories of a band that revolutionized Texas Music. For those wishing to purchase CDs, t-shirts, or other band memorabilia, a gift shop is located inside the building.

Though the museum houses items highlighting the band's past, the Doughboys themselves are by no means history. Still performing at events around the country, the

current band lineup will reunite in Quitman on Saturday, May 5th to perform at the 2nd Annual Spring Swing Festival, taking the stage from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. on the grounds of Jim Hogg Park.

For more information on the museum or the Spring Swing Festival, call (903) 763-2701, visit the web at www.quitmanheritage.org, or write the Heritage Society at info@quitmanheritage.org

Randy Cunningham is a Texas resident and freelance writer who travels the backroads and highways in search of great music and amazing stories. He found this one in Quitman, Texas.



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TOUR SCHEDULE

- April 5- Bostock's, Stephenville
- April 6- Schotzi's, College Station
- April 7- Muldoon's, el Campo
- April 12- Lucy's, New Braunfels
- April 13- Firehouse Saloon, Houston
- April 14- Yagas, Galveston
- April 20- Woody's Tavern, Fort Worth
- April 26-29- Cancun, MX
- May 3- Big Texas Dance Hall, Webster
- May 5- Longview Teen Court, Kilgore



SOUTH FIRST BAND
LIKE THE MOVIES

LOUD PIPES and LIVE MUSIC

BY RACHEL TAYLOR

Growing up, I spent almost every Saturday of my sweet childhood at our local Harley shop. I suppose that after having dealt with us kids all week, at some point my mother informed my father that Saturdays would from that time on, be formally recognized as “Daddy Daughters Days.” His solution was obvious. Watch a few cartoons, throw down some sugar-laced cereal, and head on over to pick up parts at the local H.D.

So, it’s safe to say that in having grown up around bikes, they have always been of interest to me. Call it a result of a conditioned environment. As I grew up and found I had a little more say in what I introduced into my environment, I infused TXRD to the mix. Throw in a full-scale concert for a good cause and I’m there.

Sunday, March 25th, found me at Gruene Harley Davidson in Gruene, TX, for an event that had previously been scheduled for two weeks before. (I was there for that one, too.) The rain had won out on the 11th, but hadn’t beaten the resolve of



those behind orchestrating the show. From beneath the ominous, dark sky, it was obvious that everyone was hoping this event would not be a repeat of the previous attempt. Though the sky threatened, the show went on from underneath the large, white, precautionary tent.

It was important that this show had a fair chance to happen. For the Gruene Lions Club, for Gruene H.D., and for all the local businesses involved, the event was about more than a good time. 100% of the proceeds from the day have been earmarked for Lions Club charities. To make this possible, local businesses and organizations pulled together to provide necessities demanded for a full-scale show. From the stage, to food and drinks, to the Port-O-Potties—these donations ensured that the charities receive the entirety of the promised proceeds. Two specific projects mentioned as recipients of the anticipated donation included the Texas Lions Camp, and landscaping and other needed improvements related to the beautification efforts of a local New Braunfels park.

And the Lions Club wasn’t taking on the challenge alone. Trevor Bird of Gruene Harley Davidson had this to say: “We’re excited about being a part of the music and the community. In order to keep that heritage alive, it’s important that we take advantage of these opportunities to give back.”

Speaking of the music...

The line-up included local New Braunfels residents Wade Bowen, Stoney Larue, Zack Walther and the Cronkites, The Gougers, and The Dredrangers. Local guys for a local cause.

While it seemed that many fans stayed home in fear of another potential rain shower, the music was definitely present. The Dredrangers started the afternoon off with their full band and full sound, while The Gougers followed and laid out some forceful harmonies that had those in attendance talking. Zack Walther enticed members of the crowd up to the stage with the promise of free t-shirts. Sure enough, he delivered, flinging handfuls of tees and copies of his EP *The Death of Roger vol. 1* from the stage. Once given the signal for the final song, he invited former Roger Wilco bandmate Claire Cunningham up to help him close out his set with the soulful duet, “Wrapped for Me.”

By the time Soney took the stage, the crowd had gathered some presence. He delivered a soulful experience with tunes from his *Red Dirt* album, and quite possibly the longest rendition of The Band’s “The Weight” that I have ever heard.

Joined at one point by another local New Braunfels guy, Jason Boland surprised the crowd with a song. From “One Chord Song,” to “Forever Young,” the crowd sang right along, definitely throwing out a sense of the day’s theme of community.

Three songs into his set, Stoney looked out from the stage and called out, “I live just down the road. This reminds me of Stillwater.”

Later in the evening I was able to catch Jonny Burke of the Dredrangers. I asked him for a profound quote related to being a local artist and sweeping in to play for a good cause that benefits his community. He thought for a moment before saying, “Never done any biker things like this before. Glad it didn’t turn into Altamont.” I admit it. I had to ask so you can thank me later. According to my impromptu history lesson with young Johnny, Altamont was a situation where members of Hell’s Angels were hired as security during a Woodstock event. Shocking to all I am certain, it didn’t go so well. For more info on that, Jonny suggests the movie *Gimme Shelter*.

As the stage was changing between Stoney’s and Wade’s sets, the guys from Gruene Harley performed a little intermission entertainment. The sounds and smell of burning rubber intermingled with the air, drawing the crowd away from the stage and towards the parking lot where multiple burnouts were proudly being demonstrated. Ashed rubber streaked the pavement. Plumes of smoke made it impossible to see more than a few feet ahead. From somewhere in all that haze, engines revved, tires squealed—does it get any better?

Ah, but it did. Wade took the stage.

He wrapped up the show with tunes from *Try Not to Listen* and *Lost Hotel*, and came back out to the stage with Stoney for a final encore.

I still spend the daylight hours of many of my Saturdays at the local Harley shop, and the twilight hours anywhere I can find my local music. I also try to jump on a worthy cause whenever I can. Lucky for me and many others on that overcast Sunday afternoon, the Lions Club, Gruene H.D., and other local businesses made sure that we were able to find all of these things at one location.

This was just the first of a series of concerts expected to be held at area Harley Davidson locations. Check out www.grueneharley.com and www.javelinaharley.com for dates of upcoming shows and events.



Zack Walther

Sideman Blues...

ELEVEN HUNDRED SPRINGS' JORDAN HENDRIX

BY STEVE CIRCEO



PHOTO BY ROY DAVIS

I enjoy good fiddlin'. I think it's cool that someone can run a bow over some strings attached to a piece of wood tucked under his chin and make the countriest of sounds. Yup, for my money, fiddlin' is cool and fiddlin' is country.

So when I saw Eleven Hundred Springs for the first time a few years ago, I was drawn to Jordan Hendrix. His bow seemed to glide across those strings so effortlessly, adding the perfect something extra to Matt Hillyer's vocals and guitar. And he looked like he was having fun.

Now, a few years later, I had the opportunity to talk to Jordan about his life in the music biz.

Jordan first took the stage less than a decade ago, in a bar in Nacogdoches, Texas, as a member of his first band, High Lonesome. His brother played bass in the band. "It was a thrilling night. All my friends and family were there for support and it felt good to be on stage," Jordan reminisced.

Making music is a normal pastime for many Texans, but why did Jordan choose to fiddle? While he cites Don Rich, Doug Kershaw, Fiddlin'

Frenchie Burke, and Bob Wills as favorite musicians, it was, quite naturally, his father, south-Texas fiddler Phillip Hendrix, who had the strongest influence on him.

"There is so much to say about my dad, I don't even know where to start. He is a very strong person and has always supported me through whatever choices I have made in my life. I wanted to start playing the fiddle because I watched him play at a younger age. At one point, my dad had a chance to go to Nashville with some musicians he was touring with in Colorado, but he returned to college in South Texas instead, so he never really got to live out his musical dream in full. I wanted to carry the torch, to be able to play some the same places my father once did with the likes of Wynn Stewart and Al Dean and The All Stars."

But Jordan had an obstacle to overcome when he learned to play.

"When I was 14 months old I had an accident and had surgery on my middle finger. Since then I have never really been able to bend it, so I only

play with three fingers. People always think I am shooting them the bird!"

So how did a three-fingered fiddle player become a member of one of the most popular and successful country bands in Texas today?

"I was attending college at Stephen F. Austin and was near graduation. I decided that even though my degree would give me more opportunities for a 'real job,' I wasn't ready to throw in the musical towel just yet. I went to the Eleven Hundred Springs website and emailed them asking if they would be looking for a fiddle player anytime soon – and I got lucky! They set up an audition for me down at Threadgill's in Austin, and one week after graduation I was playing with the band at Floore's Country Store."

And how does being part of a heavily touring band like Eleven Hundred Springs work for Jordan?

"I wouldn't be happy if I wasn't busy. Traveling is one of the perks, and I enjoy the change of scenery. My fiancée is very understanding, because her father played drums for Ray Price and she is used the lifestyle."

If you like staying busy, is playing in the band enough to do that? Are you a fulltime musician?

"No, but only because I choose not to be. I work during the day for a construction company as a senior estimator. They are very supportive of me and work around my schedule with Eleven Hundred Springs."

Jordan also stays busy by continually working to improve his skills on his Barcus Berry violins ('em are fiddles to you and me), and by broadening his musical repertoire by playing drums, guitar, and mandolin.

So now, at 28 years old, Corpus Christi-born Jordan Hendrix is already a very successful musician. What does he see in his future, say, ten years from now?

"In ten years, I would like to be touring around the world, and hopefully be a better player. And married with children to pass the tradition to."

The last part of that should be easy. Jordan will soon marry his longtime girlfriend, Casey, Children, though, are not in the immediate future, because "we're just enjoying time with each other" right now.

As for a future touring around the world, what is it that drives Jordan to want to play all those live shows?

"The music always keeps me going, but it's really the fans. The more they are into it, the more I get into it."

Fiddle on, then, you three-fingered magician, because – just so you know – we're into it!

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SA indie 2007

San Antonio hosted the first SA Indie Festival March 7-13 at three venues -- The Red Room, Revolution, and Rebar -- in the 410 and Broadway area.

Wichita Falls' Steve Bedunah kicked things off as the first act of the new festival, and Hoots & Hellmouth from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, closed things out seven days later.

One hundred seventy independent bands from all over the world performed at the week-long festival, which was sponsored by Dos Equis, MadeLoud.com, and Maxcreative Web Design.

SA Indie founder and organizer Delphine Gunning is already hard at work planning next year's SA Indie. For more information, including video and audio clips of the 2007 SA Indie Festival, you can visit www.SAIndie.com.



Pink Nasty



Stephanie Briggs



Nathan Hamilton



Hoots and Hellmouth



Konrad Wert



Steve Bedunah

SHOW REVIEWS

Shooter in Oklahoma City

By ANDREW WEST GRIFFIN

OKLAHOMA CITY -- One night in early March found me taking in one of the best Southern Rock/Red Dirt shows that I have been to in quite a while, and it was that of Shooter Jennings and the .357s.

Shooter, the 27-year old son of the late, great Waylon Jennings, has picked up the torch in a brilliant way, staying true to his father's down-home Southern roots and forging his own sound of roots rock, hillbilly blues, and, dare I say it, a dash of Red Dirt thrown in for good measure. The boy has undeniably good taste.

Watching Shooter perform in the smoky confines of the well-worn Wormy Dog gave this fan a sense that his father, one-time balladeer for *The Dukes of Hazzard*, was looking down from heaven through his trademark shades and smiling.

Following a somewhat obnoxious opening act, Shooter and

the boys took to the stage with a blistering rendition of his latest studio album's title track, "Electric Rodeo."

In fact, the tight quartet blew through several great songs from *Electric Rodeo*, including "Some Rowdy Women," "Gone to Carolina," and "Little White Lines." He also performed "4th of July," his big hit from a couple of years ago that was featured on his major label debut, *Put the 'O' Back in Country*.

Between songs, Shooter talked about his latest project and about how he and the .357s are polishing up their third studio disc, due out later this year.

Shooter, playing his trademark rebel flag electric guitar, knows his crowd. He gave them what they came for, and without a doubt, the folks in Oklahoma City got their money's worth at the Wormy Dog that night.

For additional info regarding tour dates, check out his website at www.shooterjennings.com.

Rich O'Toole Hits Midland

By LACY DAVIDSON

For anyone who missed the recent performance by Rich O'Toole at the Ranch in Midland, Texas, they missed one hell of a show. Rich and the gang is one of the newer kids on the Red Dirt block, and even though this was the second time I have seen one of their shows, they put on an incredible performance.

Rich opened with a couple of faster beat songs, which immediately got the crowd going and the dance floor busy, but it was his slow tune "Alone," that caught my attention. Lyrics such as needing the "comfort of your hands," and telling the lucky girl to put her body next to his and "make his soul shine," is something that every girl wants to hear.

Rich then threw his rocking Texas side at the audience with songs like "Everything's Legal," and "When Kelly Comes to Town," (which he is doing a video contest for-check out his website for more info). This song has a very Southern Rock feel, and the heavy guitar makes a noteworthy attempt at channeling the spirit of Lynard Skynard.

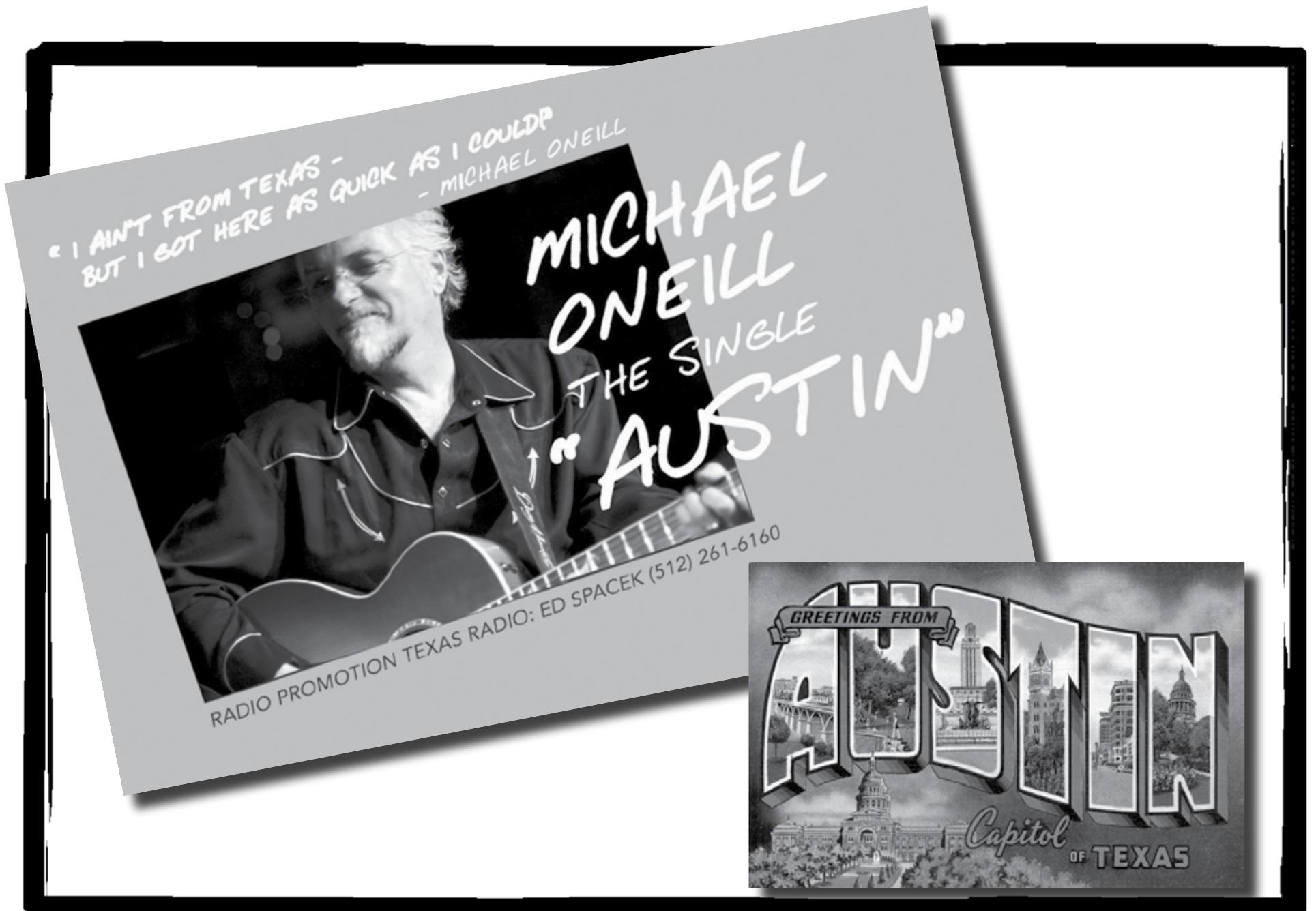
The show and the guys kept the

show at an even, high energy pace; from their originals to the covers they played showing off their influences from Ryan Adams to AC/DC. His version of "Knocking on Heaven's Door," is a creative and appropriate deviation from other covers of the classic tune. The band even did justice in paying homage to Mr. Cash with their take on "Folsom Prison Blues."

Everyone's favorite part of the night was when the guys played their current single "Queen of the Misfits," which is as of this time, sitting at number four on the Texas Music Charts. His voice brings to mind the image of honey-covered sandpaper as he tries to woo the girl with "uncombed hair" and "an unnatural dress."

The whole band was dead-on all night and the set was tight. The Ranch had a great crowd, considering it had booked a band that had only performed at the venue once before. But, when a first single breaks the top five, people are going to notice.

Rich O'Toole's CD *Seventeen* is in stores and online. Don't have a copy yet? FIND ONE NOW!!!



A Stroll through the Cool Grass with Kozelsky



By KEITH HOWERTON

With his 2006 release of the studio album, *Let Your Mind Fly*, Darren Kozelsky established himself as a significant force on the Texas music scene. Produced by Mike McClure, *Let Your Mind Fly* was one of the best country albums of the year.

McClure called it, "The best country record [he has] ever made." That is saying something.

Let Your Mind Fly is a collection of Kozelsky-crafted and other songs that are as refreshing as a spring morning. The record combines mainstream appeal and Texas/Red Dirt influence making songs that are what country music should be.

Songwriters on *Let Your Mind Fly* include McClure, Jonny Burke and Sean Faires (The Dedingers), and Merle Haggard, among others. Burke wrote what became Darren's first single, "Mind Over Matter". The song did very well on Texas radio and landed Darren on the scene as a major force in the region. Also, released as singles to Texas radio were the Kozelsky-penned "Messed up in Love" and the current single, "Cool Grass," which was written by McClure. The three songs are a great portfolio of a record that has placed Kozelsky in a superb position for his next project. In fact, a video shoot of "Cool Grass" was just completed in South Carolina and Nashville.

Darren is excited about the promise of the video. During a recent interview, he commented that the video is a combination of images that reflect mood thoughts and the scenes of coastal South Carolina and Nashville. Darren also gets to drive a jet-black late model GTO muscle car during the shooting. However, when Darren's manager (photographer Todd Purifoy) and Darren's wife first suggested the possibility of doing a video for the song, Darren himself was a bit skeptical.

"Man, y'all are getting way out of hand with this stuff," was his first reaction to the idea. However, Darren (being a man that warms up to good ideas) eventually came around to the idea of adding visual life to "Cool Grass."

"Once we got on site and started shooting, it was great," Darren said. "Driving that car was very cool." Video or no video, "Cool Grass" is a great song that deserves as much exposure as it can get.



During the video shoot trip, Darren and his team stopped in Nashville for some business to set up the studio project planned for later this summer as well as attend a radio seminar. While he was there, Darren visited Jack Ingram where Sheryl Crow was laying down some harmonies and a duet.

He also set up some songwriting appointments. Admittedly, that is a bit of an awkward system for Darren.

“It is strange to have an appointment at a given time to write a song with someone you are just going to meet for the first time,” Darren commented. “But we are going to give it a shot, and see what comes out. We can use it as a tool and meet some good people and writers that I might learn something from.”

The next project is planned for Nashville. Darren’s longtime friend Wade Bowen is mentoring him about the business and creative side of his music including the recent move to [booking agency] Austin Universal Entertainment (AUE) and help with the plans on the new project. If all goes as planned, McClure will be involved as well.

Darren Kozelsky is a great blend of mainstream and Nashville sound. He has the ability to take the Texas and Red Dirt influence to the system that has become country music.

Whether doing his songs or those of some other great songwriter, Darren puts his stamp on every song he performs and makes it his for that moment. No matter if the songs are live or tracked, he makes them his own.

Recording a project in Nashville will not change the simple fact that Darren Kozelsky has cut his teeth, and is still cutting them, in the Texas and Red Dirt circuit. He is part of the Texas music scene and it will always be part of who he is. No matter where Darren tours and records, or writes his songs, he will always be part of Texas music.

In the end, it is more likely that Darren Kozelsky will make an impact that changes those he works and records with than the other way around. He is as real as they come and he makes everyone he meets better with his friendship and talent.

Darren Kozelsky is here to stay and that is a good thing.

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South Plains College Music Program

By BILL ALLEN

Music is playing everywhere on the campus. No, it's not the radio. A look down any hall will likely reveal a young musician dreaming of making a career out of music. In every hallway, available practice room, or recording studio of this building, someone is picking a guitar, banjo, bass, fiddle, or even hitting a practice pad with a pair of sticks. In the rehearsal studios one can hear a bluegrass, top 40 or traditional country, rock, or western swing band rehearsing for their next performance. Someone is recording, what they hope to be, their first big hit in the Waylon Jennings studio. This is not a dream ladies and gentleman; this is South Plains College.

For over 30 years in the small town of Levelland, TX, South Plains College has been teaching musicians the ins and outs of performance, business, and anything else that involves music. The program and the building continue to grow more and more every day. SPC has recently completed a 13,000 square foot addition that now houses more classrooms, a new live sound lab, and more offices for the instructors who, by the way, always have an open door policy for each and every student.

"We're here to help hone the students artistic craft and help further their careers in the music industry," says Cary Banks, Director and Chairman of the SPC Music Department.

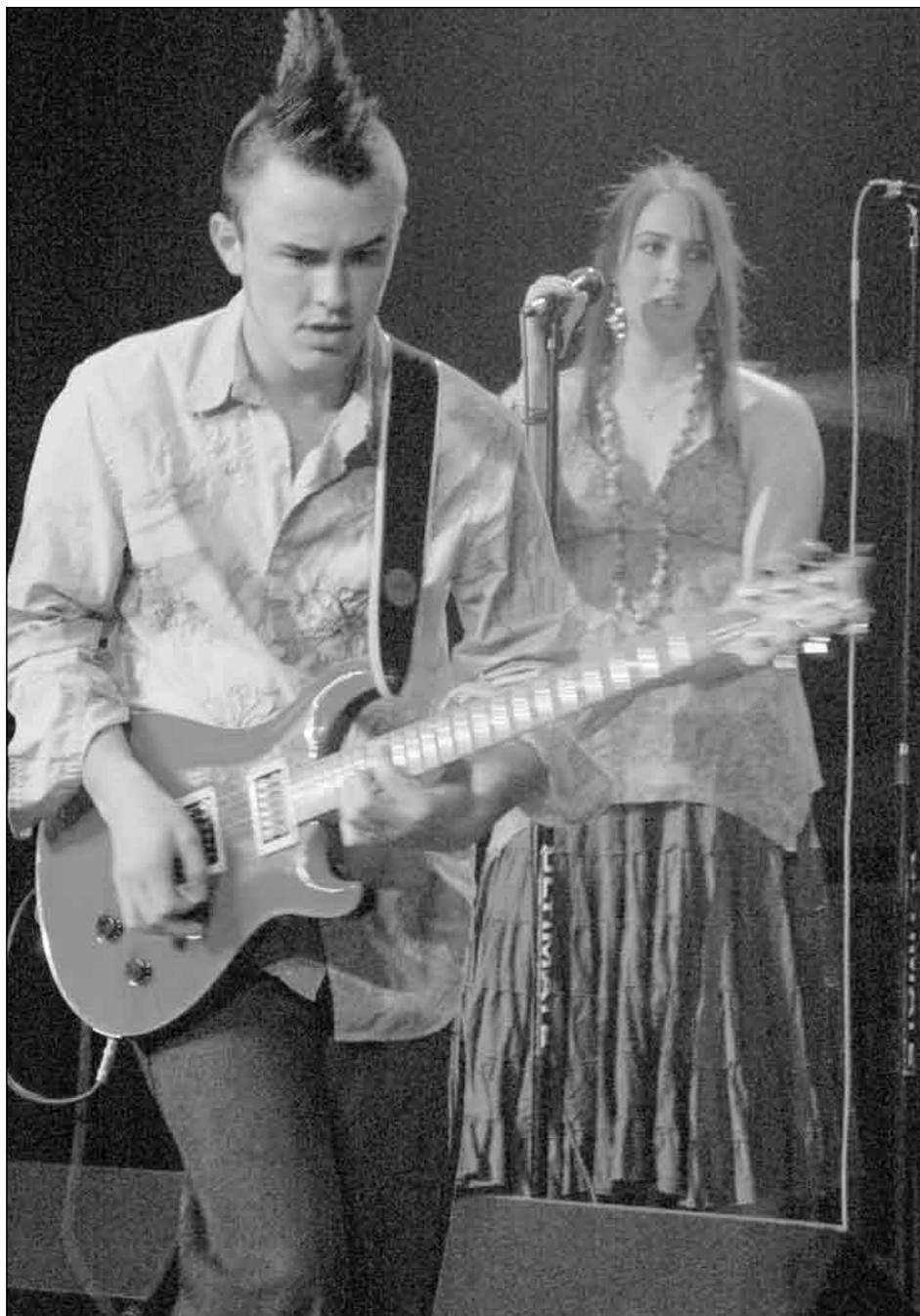
Aside from all of the technical aspects of SPC, such as four recording studios, countless live bands to join and hone performance techniques, and lessons on virtually any instrument one can think of, what brings students from all over the world to this prestigious school? It is obviously the people and the atmosphere. Not only can one get a degree or a certificate in entertainment, live sound, studio recording, video production, music business, and commercial music, it is more than possible to have fun doing it as well.

"SPC has taught students from Australia, Swe-

den, Switzerland, France, Argentina, and Canada," says Cary Banks.

Yes, it is true. People from all over the world come to SPC for their studies and now there are former students in every major market and aspect of the entertainment business across the globe that are proud to call SPC their alma mater.

Another former student is Heath Wright of the Academy of Country Music and Country Music Association award winning band Ricochet. Heath was recently honored at SPC with a plaque naming the Heath Wright Wing for his success. The plaque can be seen in the hallway where most of the students enjoy a session of "sittin' and pickin'."



Though I am not a famous artist or an award winner, I too can proudly say I had the pleasure of attending South Plains College. It was an experience I will never forget. Though the SPC music program is the first of it's kind and was started as a country and bluegrass degree program by John Hartin, it has evolved immensely over the years. SPC now offers country, bluegrass, classic rock, hard rock, Celtic, praise and worship, and pretty much any other style of music one can think of.

Whether a beginner or a master of the craft, there is always something new to learn from the staff and students of SPC. These folks are not the bookworm, know it all, have never been out in the real world, types of people. They have experienced it all first hand. They, in some cases, not only teach for a living. Most of them are producers, engineers, and artist playing and working in the real world as well as bringing their outside experience and knowledge into the classrooms and labs.

"Normally your typical time in any college is 2 - 4 years. When you're a part of the SPC Commercial Music Program, you want to stay for at least 10. The staff and facilities are great and the talent that comes out of that school speaks for itself. I still call it home to this day." - Matt Bowlin, Nashville recording artist/ SPC alumnus

Home is a place that you feel comfortable, relaxed, and you know that family is always there for your support and growth. This is the feeling I got from South Plains College. I know I will always have an ongoing relationship with this extended family and I can take the knowledge that I have gained to further my career in the entertainment industry.

Grammy and Country Music Association award winner LeeAnn Womack is an alum of SPC, and while there, joined the Country Caravan Band which toured the Southwest and Southern Cali-

know I will always have an ongoing relationship with this extended family and I can take the knowledge that I have gained to further my career in the entertainment industry.

Texas Music Awards Announced

Linden, TX - The 5th Annual Texas Music Awards ceremony, hosted by mytexasmusic.com was held March 23 in Linden Texas at the Music City Texas Theater. The Texas Music Awards is sanctioned by the Academy of Texas Music. The following is a list of the winners.

- Male Vocalist of the Year** - John Evans
- Female Vocalist of the Year** - Barbara Malteze
- Producer of the Year** - Mike McClure (CATCH ME - Tyler McCumber Band)
- Singer/Songwriter of the Year** - Robert Frith
- Rising Star of the Year** -

- Ryan T. Briggs
- Musician of the Year** - Al Perkins (HEARTLAND COWBOY - Michael Martin Murphey)
- Song of the Year** - "Close To The Land" (HEARTLAND COWBOY - Michael Martin Murphey - Michael Martin Murphey and Rob Quist, songwriters)
- Album of the Year** - "TOO TEXAS - Live at Cherry Ridge" - Pauline Reese and High Country
- Record of the Year** - "God Bless This Town" - Wade Bowen
- Vocal Duo or Group of the Year** - David Brake and That Damn Band
- Live Band of the Year** -

- Wade Hatton and the Texas Hat Band
- Disc Jockey of the Year** - Justin Frazell (KPLX FM 99.5 - Dallas)
- Broadcast Radio Station of the Year** - KVET FM 98.1 Austin, Texas
- Internet Radio Station of the Year** - RadioFreeTexas.org
- Entertainer of the Year** - Doug Moreland

- Founder awards:**
- Musical Event of the Year* - "A Case Of The Gimbles" - Johnny, Dick, and Emily Gimble;
- Best Seller* - "Deep In The West" - Shake Russell

Texas Music Times sends out warm congratulations to all the winners.

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LIVE

From Tavern in the Gruene with Zack Walther & the Cronkites

On March 9th and 10th in Gruene Texas it is very possible that a piece of music history was made. The double night live recording of Zack Walther and the Cronkites was magical.

In music the "vibe" is often what separates "great" from "average" and on both of these nights a performance was delivered by one of the best and tightest bands in Texas that was beyond the line of spiritual. There is no way to describe the vibe of both of those nights in words, but the buzz is already starting in Austin and around the state in music industry circles about the powerful nature of the tracks that were laid down on those two magical nights.

Zack and his band broke all attendance records those nights with over

400 attending both shows. On March 10th, there were 430 attending with Eli Young Band at Gruene Hall about 800 yards away. Those are big attendance numbers for New Braunfels. Many bands and artists that have regular names in Texas music started with a live record.

The ever-humble Walther is taking it in stride and hoping for a good record that people will like as he and his band take it to the road one stage at a time. With one of the most distinctive voices in music that some have described as the Texas' Bruce Springsteen, Zack and his band are bound to change things and win fans in 2007 and beyond.

Keep up with the Cronkites and look for the opportunity to pre-order the CD at www.zackwalther.com and www.myspace.com/zackwalthermusic.

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JARROD BIRMINGHAM

Music THAT'S GOOD FOR THE Soul

BY RANDY CUNNINGHAM

Try this sometime. Go outside, sit down, and take off your shoes. Then, just walk around in the dirt like you used to as a kid. Yep, there's nothing better. Who cares if your feet get dirty? Sometimes the simple things feel best.

See, our world has become incredibly complicated. Twenty years ago, if someone wanted to drink a Coke, making a choice was simple. Either they bought a regular Coke, a regular Coke, or a regular Coke. Life was good. Today, one has to navigate down an aisle of possible Coke selections, including Black Cherry Coke, Diet Coke, Diet Caffeine-Free Coke, Splenda-flavored Coke, Caffeine-free Coke, and Banana-flavored Coke. OK, I made up the last choice, but you get the idea. Sometimes simplicity feels good.

Sort of like being a *Texas Music Times* reader. Yep, if you love read-

ing this magazine, chances are you're a fan of music that is uncomplicated, straight to the point, and good for the soul. Take a listen to Stoney Larue, Mike McClure, or Brandon Rhyder. Is a degree in Philosophy required to understand their messages? Nope. Their tunes come from the heart. Listening to those guys is like feeling the earth under your bare feet. It's simple, straightforward, and cleansing for mind and body.

Speaking of straightforward, you'll be hard pressed to find a guy more direct and grounded than Jarrod Birmingham. Sometime soon, take a trip to his website (www.jarrod-birmingham.com) and simply click on any page. Across the top you'll see him leaning against a building with a plowed dirt field behind him. Nope, it's not a Hollywood set, or a site scouted out by his representatives to make Jarrod look like the "common folk." This is Jarrod's farm in Tivoli, Texas. He's standing



on his plot of land, in his field, on his dirt. If given the chance, look closely at his black boots. One won't find

the gleaming shine of freshly-lacquered footwear that was once the skin of an endangered animal from



the jungles of South America. Instead, you'll see the scuffed, scratched, and broken-in footwear of a guy whose feet have been firmly planted in the soil all his life. A former professional bull-rider whose songwriting skills and traditional style have spawned comparisons to Waylon and Hank Jr., Jarrod has been labeled "the first real singer of the 21st century." Jarrod Birmingham is an honest, direct man who plays music. Good, solid music for the soul.

What else is good for the soul? One sure bet is a goodtime Friday night in Houston, Texas—one that signals the end of a long workweek. At about 30 minutes before his scheduled showtime, Jarrod ambled into the kitchen area of his tour bus to say hello. After all the introductions had been made, he poured himself a generous Jack Daniels and Coke, leaned back on his couch, and started talking. Immediately, his straightforward, honest nature shone through.

On the state of country music: *You know what I miss about country music the most? I'm not bashing music, but we need more guys like George Jones. We have folks singing about being country, but in a lot of ways it's more like pop music. What do we really know about some of the people making country music? They spit out a hit and then disappear, because some of it's just not real. There are exceptions, like Dierks Bentley. I'm a huge Dierks fan. I hope real country circles back around, I really do. You can look at the circle and anytime something like that returns; it comes back in a huge way. Honestly, the last person I can think of was Dwight Yoakum, and before that, maybe Waylon or Hank Jr. Now, there's lots of good music in between that, but that was when country hit big.*

On Nashville: *I've never bashed Nashville. Never. I go out there quite a bit. You know, Jack (Ingram) and I have always had the same view about it. There's been some great music made there, and there's also been some horrible music made there. But, if someone buys the record, how can you say they're wrong? It's not my job to say, "They're wrong and I'm right." I'm from the country, and I don't like snakes, but if I make shirts that say, "Snakes Suck," and that's all I do, snakes aren't going to go away. To me, bashing someone's music is like talking bad about their kids. I don't have to like your music, just as I don't have to like your kids. But, I also don't think I should tell you that your kids are ugly, because you're partial to them. Some people think I'm bashing Nashville when I say, "Where'd you go, country music?" But that's not it. I'm not taking a shot. I'll never say anything bad about other people's music. It's just that I miss that particular style and the honesty, like I miss a past girlfriend or a past love.*

On critics of his music: *Man, if you take it all personally, it's going to be a long ride for you. The biggest song I've ever had is "If You Don't Like Me, I Probably Won't Like You," (a #1 single and Best of*

Texas top ten hit off his 2006 release, No Apologies). It was a way to underline the fact that we put so much emphasis on what everybody else thinks and not enough on people who really believe in what you do and who you are. Yeah, I've had the critics on it. They called it 'arrogant.' Hey, it's music. It's not an addendum to the Declaration of Independence or anything like that. Loosen up. It wasn't me on my soapbox. If I had written the song in a much deeper way such as, "Well, we pay too much attention to the people who dislike us," hey, who wants to hear that?

On his early days: *Chris Wall became such a mentor to me. I can ask him anything about my music, and he'll be honest with me. Anyway, we had done some acoustic stuff together, and he came to see me play. Afterwards, I asked him what he thought about it, and he said, "Quit defending yourself during a show. People can tell you're country, and they can tell who your heroes are. There are all kinds of guys saying that Waylon is their hero, and if they have to say it, then they're looking for people to see it. With you, it's so obvious. Just leave it alone." After that, I became so much more comfortable with who I was.*

On his hometown of Tivoli: *They've got mosquitoes as big as dump trucks, so good luck in trying to get anyone to live there. Great Mexican food, though.*

On being a performer: *As a writer and a player I'm not so conceited that I think that everything I say has to be heard. I just want the people to have fun. They have to listen to everybody else all week long. It's not about numbers, either. We did a show a couple of weeks ago in Wichita Falls for about 50 people, and they were hanging on every word. I just look for people having fun, and the domino effect can be huge. It's great to be the underdog. I have been all my life. The day when you think you've got this business all figured out is the day you need to find something else to do because you've become too nonchalant.*

On his time off: *Time off? We played two out of every three days last year, so I like quiet. I definitely don't go to bars. I like any type of peace and quiet. I like to ride horses, feed cows—stuff like that. And I try to write. Life on the road can reach a point that I ignore the writing. Your soul gets fed two ways: as an entertainer and as a writer, but it's easy to lose the writing side when you're so busy.*

On writing songs: *I started writing rodeo songs before I got into country music. It was more cowboy-type stuff. Songs like "Holdin' On," that's on the album (No Apologies), but I didn't want to get pinned in a corner where I'd be the next Chris Le Doux. Chris is one of my biggest heroes, God I love him. I thought it would be easy to get caught up in that cowboy singer-type deal, and there's more to me than that. It was only a small part of my life, and it was what I started writing first. Sometimes*

I overthink writing now, so I have to be careful now that I don't lose the fun side of it all.

On his friends: *I've made a lot of friends. I've never met an Oklahoma artist that I haven't bonded to. Jason Boland and I used to tease and say we'd take a bullet for each other. One day during a radio interview we were asked, "Would you really?" And we looked at each other, laughed, and said, "Nah." Boland was quoted as saying that guys like him and me don't play music to kill time. We play music to keep time from killing us. That's why I love him.*

On venues he loves to play: *I always love to go to Billy Bob's. Another one of the coolest places is Railroad Blues in Alpine. Man, you've got 200 people stomping their feet so loud that you can hardly hear yourself. They appreciate it when you go out there. There's places like that everywhere. River Road Icehouse is another. People come there to really listen to music. Everytime we're booked there, I think, "Alright."*

On his influences: *Tell you a story. I got in trouble once when I was playing this venue sometime around early 2000. This guy kept heckling me, calling me Dwight Jackson. My temper at that time in my life was pretty rough, and about the third time he came around dancing and saying "Dwight Jackson," I just kicked him right in the chin. Jumped off the stage, you know, the whole bit. After I got back on stage, the first thing I said was, "Alright, I'm here to play music, and I hope you like it. If you don't like it, I hope you shut up." I didn't know about the big Waylon quote when he was in New York when somebody said, "Who are you?" And he said, "I'm Waylon f*&king Jennings and I'm here to play country music. I hope you like it, but if you don't, just shut up." That's how all that came about. I had one of his old road managers, say, "Man, your personalities are the same. I can tell you're influenced by him, but it freaks me out how similar the two of you are." For me, being a singer and having someone say, "I can see Waylon Jennings in you," is a helluva compliment. As long as people know it's not contrived. If you think it's contrived, I'd rather you not think at all.*

With his glass empty and the interview over, Jarrod excused himself to head over to the stage. The weekend had begun and the good times were just about to roll.

Talking with Jarrod Birmingham is a great experience. Ask him any question, and he'll give you an honest answer. He's sincere, direct, and makes no apologies.

Jarrod's also waiting for "real" country to return in a big way.

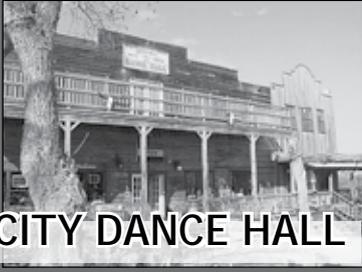
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THE TALE BEHIND THE TUNE

BY GEORGE BANCROFT

The Tune: *Lord Loves a Drinkin' Man*

The Tale Teller: *Kevin Fowler*

I don't know if Kevin Fowler did it by design or if it just came naturally, but however it happened, he's managed to create a sound, an image, and a body of work that epitomizes Texas honky tonk. I've listened to his music quite a bit, and I always have the same thought when I fire up one of his CDs: Nobody can do honky tonk better than that. Somebody might do it differently, but they're not going to do it any better.

Fowler reminds me of George Strait in at least one respect. They can both operate in what is seemingly a very small box and find limitless ways to make interesting music. For years, it has amazed me how George Strait can continue to sing songs that are very similar in length, instrumentation, production, and subject matter and still manage to turn out records that a lot of folks, myself included, enjoy. Kevin Fowler does the same thing, but unlike Strait, Fowler writes most all of his tunes; tunes that are best suited for the roadhouse whereas Strait's are more at home in a dance hall. That may seem like a hair-splitting contest to someone who hasn't been to the Broken Spoke and Gruene Hall in the same evening.

I interviewed Kevin Fowler last fall during which time I asked him to tell me the tale behind *Lord Loves a Drinkin' Man*. I kind of got a three-for-one special. Here's what he had to say:

"That's been the song that's been one of our anthems for the last four or five years. I wrote that one just driving around in my pickup truck. When I first started this (the music business), I had a job delivering newspapers or periodicals to stores, the Austin Chronicle. I worked for them for about eight years while I was getting this thing going. It was the perfect part-time job. It allowed me to have the time to work on my music career. The main thing it gave me was time. When I'd drive around delivering these papers, I'd write a lot of my best songs. I wrote "Lord Loves a Drinkin' Man," "Senorita Mas Fina," "Beer, Bait, and Ammo." The whole Beer Bait and Ammo record I wrote, pretty much, drivin' around in my truck. I started joking with somebody the other day; it was my management. They said, "You're a little behind on gettin' this record written." I was like, I gotta find me another part-time job delivering papers so I can get a record written."

I really don't think Kevin's going to need a part-time job anytime soon, but if that's what it's going to take for him to continue writing the kind of songs we've all come to expect from him, I'm sure the *Chronicle* would take him back. If not, maybe I can get him to do the driving the next time I need to transport my family from Big Spring to Corpus Christi. I've got two daughters who can find something to fight about from start to finish every time we make that drive. I wonder how Kevin Fowler would operate within that little box.

Lord Loves a Drinkin' Man

KEVIN FOWLER

Chorus:

Lord Loves a Drinkin' Man
 He sent honky tonk angels to the promised land
 I hear that He can turn the water to wine
 Any man that can do that, he's a good friend of mine
 Been baptized in beer and I'm here to testify
 I was speakin' in tongues when I came home last night
 Some folks say I'm livin' in sin
 But I know the Lord loves a drinkin' man

Verse:

Yea, the preacher man he told me boy you ain't no good
 The Devil's gonna getcha best start actin' like you should
 Oh the cold beer and bright lights stayin' out all night
 Good book it tells me boy your soul's gonna burn
 My momma says "son, you're headin' down the wrong road,
 "They don't let honky tonkers up in heaven," I been told
 Well don't you worry Momma I'll see you up in Heaven
 I been thinkin' 'bout it I've come to this conclusion now

Repeat Chorus

Verse:

Well my daddy said son you're livin' your life all wrong
 Lighting's gonna strike you down before too long
 The Man upstairs He don't like what you do
 And when you reach those pearly gates you ain't gettin' through
 Now I been thinkin' got a brand new plan
 I'm gonna start a little church down at the Stumble Inn
 Yea that's right I'm gonna start my own religion
 We'll be drinkin' and a dancin' at The Church of Hank Williams,
 yea

Repeat Chorus-twice

I know the Lord loves - I hope he does -
 the Lord loves a drinkin' man

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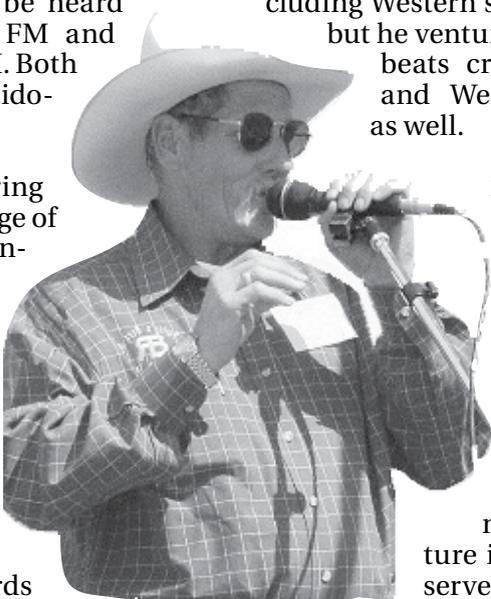
Preserving Texas Music and Western Heritage in New Mexico

A PROFILE OF JOE BAKER

Joe Baker has for almost 30 years been in the business of supporting Western music and Western Heritage. His current radio show project is known as the “Backforty Bunkhouse” and can be heard on KNMB, 96.7 FM and KWMW, 105.1 FM. Both stations are in Ruidoso, New Mexico.

Joe's shows bring back the golden age of radio where listeners actually had live contact on the air with the DJ and could talk about the music that was being played.

Joe has been nominated and won several awards



over the years including DJ of the year as selected by the Academy of Western Artists 2004. His radio shows focus on the more traditional sounds of Western music including Western swing and shuffle, but he ventures into the newer beats crossing the Texas and Western landscapes as well.

His show is a radio spin reporter to several Western music related charts including the Texas Music Chart. Texas Music Times salutes Mr. Joe Baker for his service to music and our culture in a way that preserves both for us all.

Radio Lonestar signs new broadcast, web affiliates

San Antonio, Texas -- Radio Lonestar (www.radiolonestar.com) announced today it has inked agreements with new affiliates KRVL-FM 94.3 Kerrville, Tx, KOOK-FM 93.5 Junction, Tx, and KYXX-FM 94.3 Ozona, Tx. All three stations will run both “The Radio Lonestar Concert Series” and the “Texas Music Minute” programs.

The Radio Lonestar Concert Series is a one-hour radio program featuring live recorded music performances from the John T. Floore Country Store in Helotes, Texas, and other renowned music venues. A different artist is featured each week. Produced and hosted by San Antonio radio veteran Jerry Clayton (aka Fred Zeppelin), the program includes high-quality live record-

ings and in-depth artist interviews.

Jerry Clayton also hosts “The Texas Music Minute”, a daily music news update featuring artists from the Texas and Red Dirt music scene.

Additionally, “The Radio Lonestar Concert Series” and “The Texas Music Minute” are now heard on the popular streaming Texas Music internet radio station Radiofreetexas.org.

Subscribers to Texas Music Times enjoy a different Radio Lonestar concert each month in the premium members area of the magazine website.

For additional information, contact Jerry Clayton at 210 710-3759, or jeremy@radiolonestar.com.



A Songwriter Profile: Steve Simmons

Steve Simmons fully admits that he may not have the best voice in Texas music but no one could ever deny that he has “magic” in his songwriting pen.

His songs are humorous, serious, real to life, and above all reflect the genuine feel of small town and rural Texas lifestyle. No one could deny that after hearing his latest record “Broadway”. The record is a journey through the back roads and highways of Texas via the stories that Steve tells.

There is not a song on the record that does not share one of the many emotions that are indicative of everyday life in Texas. From the humor of “Christi's Avon and Tex Mex” and “Ace Hardware Cowboy” to the seriousness of “Casey” and “TV Preacher” Steve's “Broadway” is a down-home cool record.

Encouraged by his long time

friends Houston Marchman and Adam Carroll, Steve is back in the studio with Producer Paul (Pappy) Middleton (Bonnie Raitt's Road Engineer) at the production and board controls working on his next project.

Steve is not a young gun on the scene, but as his friend Billy Joe Shaver says, “Get used to being the senior guy on every stage”. He may not be young and may be getting going at an odd time in life, but Steve's songs are quality and he is respected by serious musicians and talented people. Recognition by the public is bound to follow.

For more information on Steve Simmons check out his website at www.stevesimmons.com or his myspace at www.myspace.com/thestevesimmonsband. Give the tunes a listen, you will not be disappointed.

ALBUM REVIEWS

Nathan Hamilton *Six Black Birds*

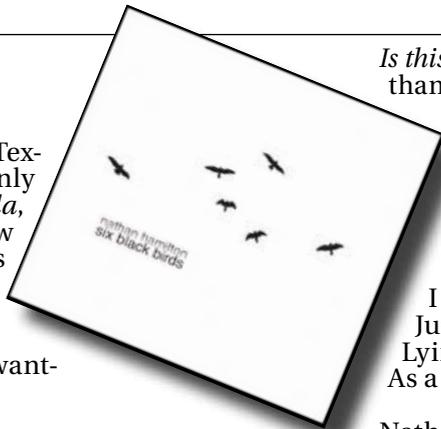
Nathan Hamilton is not the most prolific of our Texas singer-songwriters. After all, until now, his only other studio release since his 1999 debut, *Tuscola*, was 2002's *All for Love and Wages*. I don't know if Nathan leaves so much time between records because he is a meticulous craftsman or simply because he doesn't have the money to sink into a record every two years. Maybe he's just following the old show biz adage to "leave them wanting more."

Anyway, it was with great anticipation that I unwrapped Nathan's latest album, *Six Black Birds*. I slid it into my CD player and sat back for a listen.

Nathan has always gone back and forth easily between the rock and folk camps. He did, you may recall, win the Kerrville New Folk award in 2000. But, as if to erase any doubt about which side of the fence he's now on, *Six Black Birds* jumps out of the gate with a straight rocker, "Sooner or Later." This song displays some beautiful guitar work, and the subtle, but unusual, background instrumentation makes me think that Nathan may be exploring new ground with this record.

And he is. The second tune, "Enough," features strong percussion as the primary musical accompaniment to Nathan's haunting vocal. "Teeth" then takes us back to straight rock. It has a subtle organ backtrack and gives us Nathan's best guitar hook since *Tuscola*'s "Two-Penny Vengeance."

But lets stop right there. I don't want to do a tune by tune breakdown. Instead, let me answer a few questions that may have arisen in your mind about this record.



Is this a different kind of Nathan Hamilton album? Yes, it is. If you've been a Nathan Hamilton fan, though, and followed his solo career, been to his live shows, you had to expect this was in him. Musically it's quite different from his previous releases, but lyrically it's really an expansion and extension of the broader themes he began exploring in *All for Love and Wages*.

Is there any sign of the folk-y Nathan Hamilton on this record? Hell yeah! In "Green & Gold" Nathan sings:

I saw a broken, black umbrella,
Just like a fallen newborn bird.
Lying in the street, just as useless
As a song gone unheard.

Nathan the poet is alive and well. Musically, the album's last song, "Hanging On," is a beautiful acoustic number. There is a longer than normal gap between the previous song and "Hanging On," as if to signal that it should be considered a stand-alone. Perhaps he put it on there to show his more laid-back fans that he hasn't totally abandoned his folk roots.

What's the best song on the record? That's always a hard one to answer, because it really takes many listens over time for the songs to age properly, but, gun to my head, if I'm picking just one, it'd be "Teeth." It's the kind of song that I think will still sound as fresh ten years from now as it does today.

Six Black Birds is Nathan Hamilton with attitude. In "The Cut" he explains:

I don't mean to be so angry.
Truth be told, I am just scared.
Lashing out at anybody
That has the bad luck of being there.

I can't say I felt "lashed out at," but *Six Black Birds* grabbed me from the first guitar lick and didn't let me go until the last note almost forty-five minutes later. And then it left me wanting more.

-Steve Circeo

The Dust Devils *Change In The Weather*

LITTLE TRAIN RECORDS

Change In The Weather, recorded primarily last October at Third Coast Studios in Port Aransas, offers 12 tracks and is a solid third effort for the band formerly known as The Cosmic Dust Devils.

The title track is a soulful ballad to lead off the offering. On "Hurry Sundown" and "Turn up the Music," Barbara Malteze wails with considerable passion. Sounding suspiciously like Ann Wilson and Heart, Malteze's vocal presence is showcased as well on "We're All In This Together." Kevin Higgins' pop arrangements on the first 4 cuts of this CD allow her to explore her range.

Track 5 finds Higgins handling the vocals on the easy listening number "Amazing Sense of Calm." He and Malteze offer up a sweet duet on "Home." "The Hottest Day of the Year" is a cool instrumental allowing George Quiroga to lay out some cool bluesy dobro licks.

"Backroads" is another duet where the tempo swings up. Quiroga again shines with some excellent acoustic lead work. This is probably the most commercially acceptable track on the CD, sounding more like what the listener is accustomed to from this band. On "Robert Rolled His Pickup Truck Again," a tale of woe regarding the preferred mode of transportation in this great state, Higgins again proves the classic Dust Devil sound with the help of a little Led Zeppelin flashback in the intro!

"Four Friends at the Bar" is a raucous number extolling the virtues of life on the road with the band. It appears as a pseudo-autobiographical sketch, describing the rags to riches to rags rise and fall of a band trying to make it, and not too willing to conform to anything.

"Coastal Bender" is an innuendo-filled number with references to fishing, women, drinking, and the other "normal" things that take place on a week-long vacation on the coast.

The sound is varied from beginning to end. Exploring totally different production styles, The Dust Devils are sure to be able to lasso a very wide and diverse audience with *Change In The Weather*. Check them out at www.cosmicdustdevils.com, and www.myspace.com/thedustdevils.

Gordon Ames is the music director for KRVL, 94.3 "Revolution Radio" in Kerrville Texas.



Renegade Rail *Ragged*

The importance of track sequence seems to be lost on many bands these days, or maybe it's their "people" who always seem to want to frontload the "hits," artistically defined sequencing be damned! I can't tell you how many albums I've been listening to and come to a song that I know must be the last, only to find that it's only track seven of twelve.

Sequencing is part of what makes a record an album, rather than just a collection of songs. If for no other reason, Renegade Rail's *Ragged* would be notable for its spot-on sequencing. Young bands, please listen to this record and note the way the tracks, when played in their proper order, pick you up, put you gently back down, and how the final song, "Crazy," really feels like the final song.

A quick look at the liner notes tells me that Mike McClure produced *Ragged*. McClure at the helm does not necessarily ensure the record will be good, but he is one of the producers, along with Adam Odor and Mark Addison, whose names let me know that I could be in for something very special.

"Cardboard" is the opening track. It's a catchy, country-rock tune about a guy escaping from an unhealthy relationship. "Fat Girls And Weed" is a tongue-in-cheek ode to just what the title says, and it's surely a favorite at live shows. "Teach You How To Fly" makes great use of a fiddle and a plucking banjo as the backtrack demonstrates that this band's country roots can shine through when needed. "Red Dirt" is a rocker that

immediately appealed to me with its chorus, that shouts:

*Nashville there's a thing or two
That I really want to say.
I'll take Red Dirt any day.*

Hear, hear!

Ragged has one definite standout track, though, and it's "Need For Speed," which is a pure rock tribute to NASCAR drivers. With its driving backbeat, screaming guitars, and fast pace, this is old-school rock at its best.

The songs were all written by lead singer Mike Munsterman, with drummer Eric Kullman co-writing three (most notably "Need For Speed"), and producer McClure assisting on "Teach You How To Fly."

As much as I like this album, there is one song that could have been left off. "If This Ain't Texas" provides a nice musical bridge between the softer "Just You And Me," and the rocking "Need For Speed," but there's something about the song that seems out of place. I dunno, maybe I've just heard too many songs that declare Texas to be the motherland. Hell, tell me something I *don't* know.

Even with that slight misstep, though, Renegade Rail has reached some kind of pinnacle with *Ragged*. They have produced a record that is satisfying to both the country and the rock sides of me, and, most of all, they've produced a real album, complete with a beginning, an end, and a satisfying center. In these days of one-song downloads, that is a true accomplishment, and I thank them for it.

-Steve Circeo

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TMT FIVE

Amanda Graves

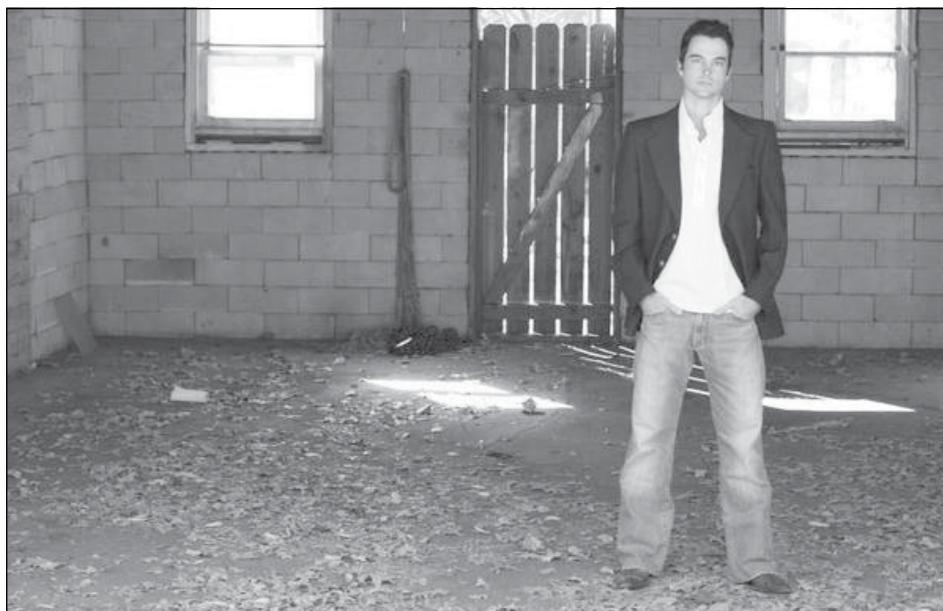
Amanda Graves is a north Texas native who grew up with music in her blood. The daughter of touring musicians Amanda grew up touring with her parent's band. Because of stage fright, Amanda became an accomplished golfer instead of a musician in her formative years.

With her fear of the stage long gone Amanda is fully into the Texas and Red Dirt music scene as a well known studio and live harmony singer. She has shared the stage and added harmonies to the likes of Mike McClure and Tyler McCumber. Out with her own CD titled *Nobody's Fool* and a band, Amanda is gigging around Texas and turning heads with a voice and pipes that stops people in their tracks.

Her in-your-face attitude and ability to belt out vocals with perfection have given her a cult following among other musicians in the area. She is also gaining fans everywhere she sings. No one can listen to Amanda Graves and not say, "Wow what a voice"! For



more information on Amanda log on to www.amandagraves.com or www.myspace.com/amandagraves.



Stewart Mann

Austin's Stewart Mann is a singer songwriter of extraordinary character. Mann's confidence and swagger is only matched by his ability to make an immediate friend of everyone he meets.

Stewart is a self-described entertainer who extroverted personality warms up any audience. Stewart has spent some time in Nashville and recorded a project with Tracy Lawrence's longtime producer Flip Anderson. The project was a solidly traditional country record and he supported it with gigs around Nashville. After his Nashville stint, Stewart moved back to Austin to finish school and continue his music in Texas. He toured and recorded two records with 5-Mile until the band ended its relationship in late 2005.

Stewart's new project is an EP titled "Stuck in Here." The project offers a great set of southern rock ballads and rockers that profile Stewart's vocal range and diversity. In addition to his touring with his new band and EP, Stewart finds time to lend support to the "Wounded Warrior Project" that brings music and support to wounded veterans. Check out www.stewartmannmusic.com or www.myspace.com/stewartman for more information.

Steve Bedunah

Even from the beginning, songwriter/singer Steve Bedunah received high praise for his work. Robert Oermann, Nashville's most acclaimed critic, wrote in Music Row about Bedunah's "The Johnstons" in his first CD *Hand Me Down Land*, "The first thing that catches your ear is the band laying down a twangin', thumpin Cash-like groove. The second thing that you notice is that you're in the presence of a major songwriter. This dark dramatic word portrait will haunt you."

The best advice about listening to Bedunah's second album *Plug It In and Play* is indeed to "plug it in and play, play loud as you can" as the verse says.

Plug It In and Play mesmerizes with an assortment of country and suburban characters who value their land, their music, their relatives, and their whiskey as they battle their way through a life they didn't choose.

These carefully crafted vignettes capture the pathos of our times perfectly. *Plug It In and Play* offers a variety of styles ranging from blue grass to country to blues, but may be best classified as Americana. Bedunah's songs create a tension between a dark, overwhelming world and the sometimes fiery but always individualistic characters who seek to gain some margin of hope.



The CD's foreboding atmosphere is balanced by its high energy and Bedunah's superb use of imagery and metaphoric language, raising his songs to poetic heights.

Despite their dark trappings, the songs uplift the listener and make him think. Get more info about Steve and listen to his music at <http://myspace.com/stevebedunah>

Taking Back Texas

Joey Pruski's band Taking Back Texas with Amy Hermes, Travis Vela, and Rudy Diaz filling out the stage is a solid country rock band that is set to make a difference in 2007. The band's current project titled *Unexpected* is a solid collection of Pruski songs telling tales of Texas life including his upbringing in the Polish hamlet of Kosciusko.

The Pruski's are a strong and well known family in the Kosciusko area. The rest of Taking Back Texas comes from the greater San Antonio and Hill Country region. There songs are a reflection of the central south Texas lifestyle without being stupid or cheesy.

Unexpected will undoubtedly set this group on the Texas music map in the near future. The original material is a collection of solidly crafted songs that are blend of dance style country along with well written ballads and country rockers. The band already enjoys a full schedule of shows in the



south Texas region and it almost a certainty they will be playing farther away from home soon. Information on Taking Back Texas can be found at www.myspace.com/takingback-texas.

Billy Bourbon

The question most often asked by people who've never heard of the Billy Bourbon brand of music is, "What kind of music do you play?" In asking the man himself, one is met with a conspiratorial and sheepish grin.

"My latest name for it is 'Texas Gumbo Music'--Red Dirt country, rock and blues with a rue of humor." Humor is a big part of Billy's music, as evidenced by songs like "Bongo Dry," "Women, Whiskey, and Weed," and the infamous "Vaseline."

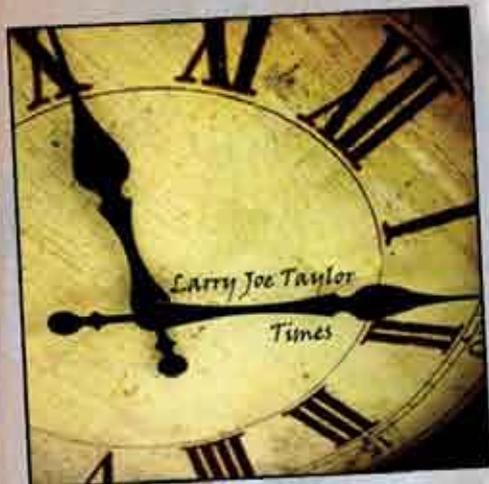
Live, he often covers Jason Boland's "Nymphomaniac," Charlie Robison's "Barlight, Bar Bright," and Guy Clark's "Home Grown Tomatoes." Born in Missouri, Billy moved to

Texas from Nebraska (which he often refers to as "North Texas," thus lending credence to his rumored his sense of humor). "I moved here *on purpose*," he noted with emphasis. "This is where the music I love is being made and played, and I wanted to be a part of it." His single, "Quick As I Could," (currently #41 and rising on the TexasTop40.com) is about his dream and search for the Texas lifestyle.

Billy continued, "I met my wife here, she's a Houston native, and she's my biggest music fan. I named an instrumental after her, Flutterbuttin'. Once the music starts my baby has a hard time sittin' still." She has the right idea. With a sound a stage presence such as this Billy Bourbon, there is no sittin' still. For more information on Billy Bourbon, check out www.billybourbon.com.



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