

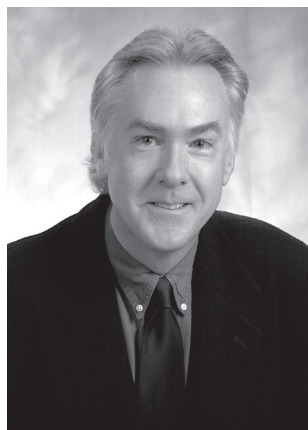
The Journal of
TEXAS MUSIC HISTORY 2014



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Comic Cowboys, Thunderbats, and Funks

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Letter from the Director



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2016 has been another very successful year for the Center for Texas Music History. We continue to offer graduate and undergraduate music history courses through Texas State University's History Department. This includes our popular class, "The History of Rock & Roll" (at both the graduate and undergraduate-level), which is part of the History Department's "Study Abroad in Chester, England" program. We plan on continuing to offer this and other courses on an ongoing basis as part of the university's Study Abroad program.

In addition to developing new courses and other educational programming for students, the Center for Texas Music History continues to provide student scholarships at Texas State. This year, we awarded the third annual Michael R. Davis Scholarship to graduate history major Lindsey Waldenberg. We are very grateful to Greg Davis for establishing this distinguished scholarship as a way to honor his brother and help support our students' educational endeavors. This year, we also awarded the first two student scholarships from Old Settler's Music Festival. Thanks very much to everyone at Old Settler's Music Festival for making this possible!

The Center's award-winning *John and Robin Dickson Series in Texas Music* (produced in collaboration with Texas A&M University Press) published three outstanding books in 2016—*Kent Finlay, Dreamer: The Musical Legacy Behind Cheatham Street Warehouse*, by Brian T. Atkinson & Jenni Finlay with a foreword by George Strait; Tamara Saviano's *Without Getting Killed or Caught: The Life and Music of Guy Clark*; and *Pickers and Poets: The Ruthlessly Poetic Singer-Songwriters of Texas*, edited by Craig Clifford & Craig D. Hillis.

As part of our core mission, the Center for Texas Music History continues to develop a variety of innovative programs

designed to educate students and the general public about how Texas music reflects the unique history and tremendous cultural diversity of our state.

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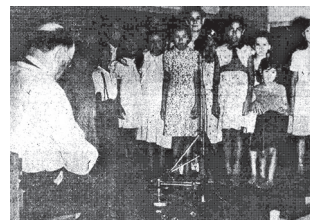
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In order to continue this success, we need your help. Your contribution will help fund publication of *The Journal of Texas*

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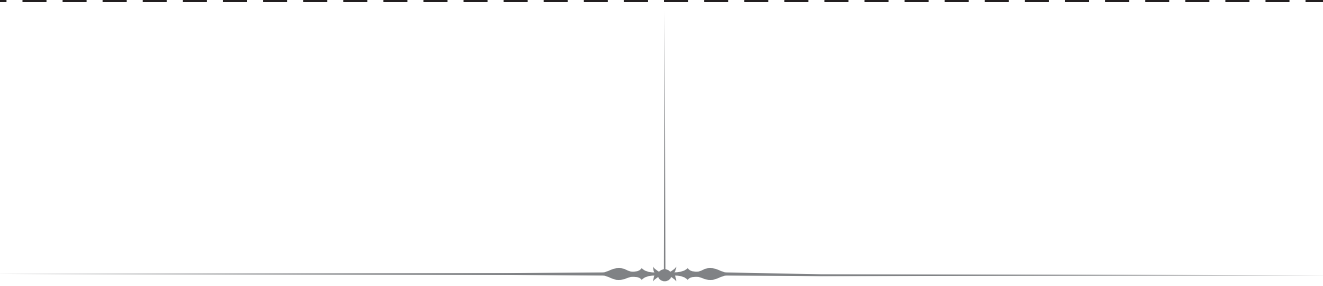
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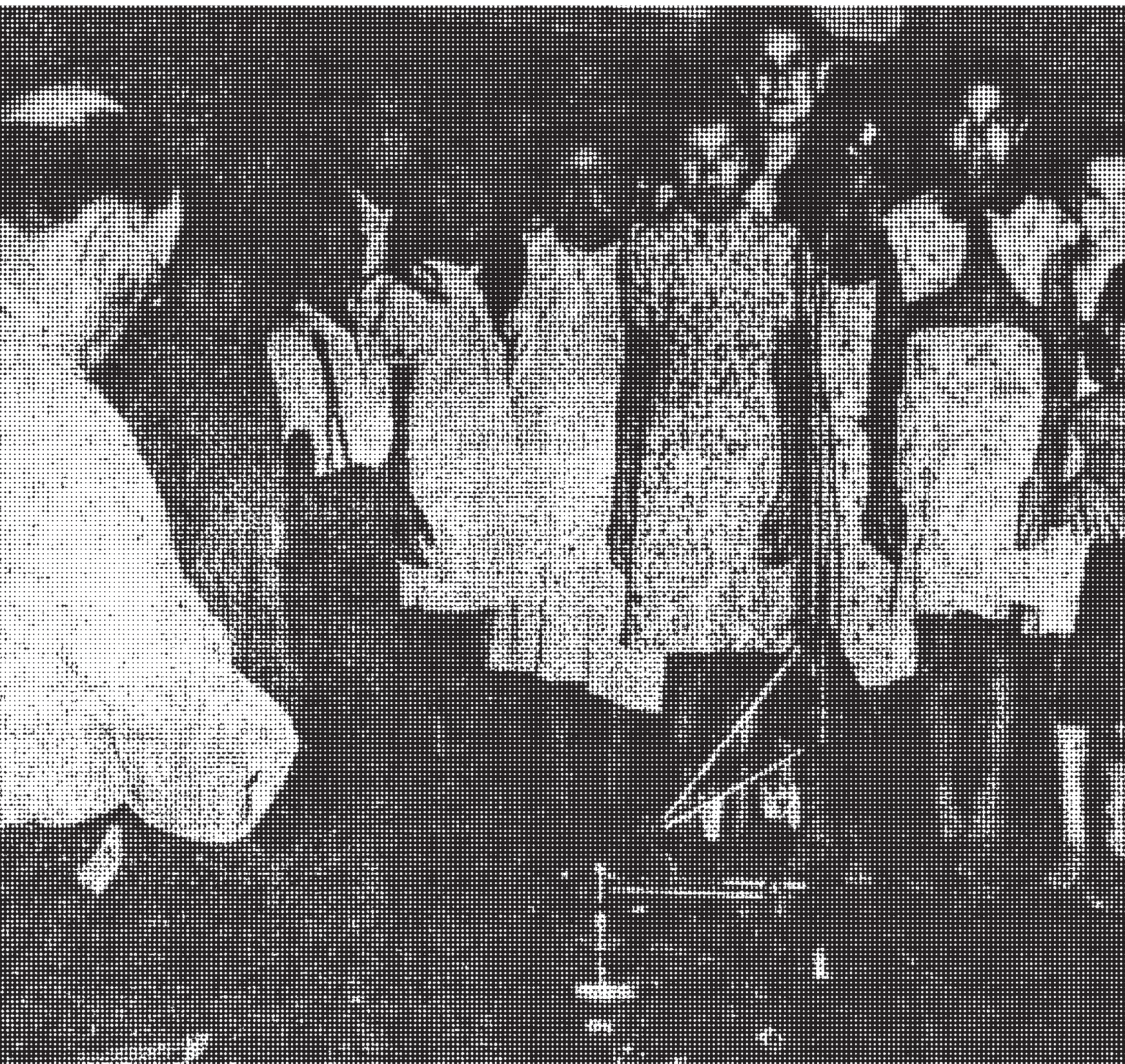
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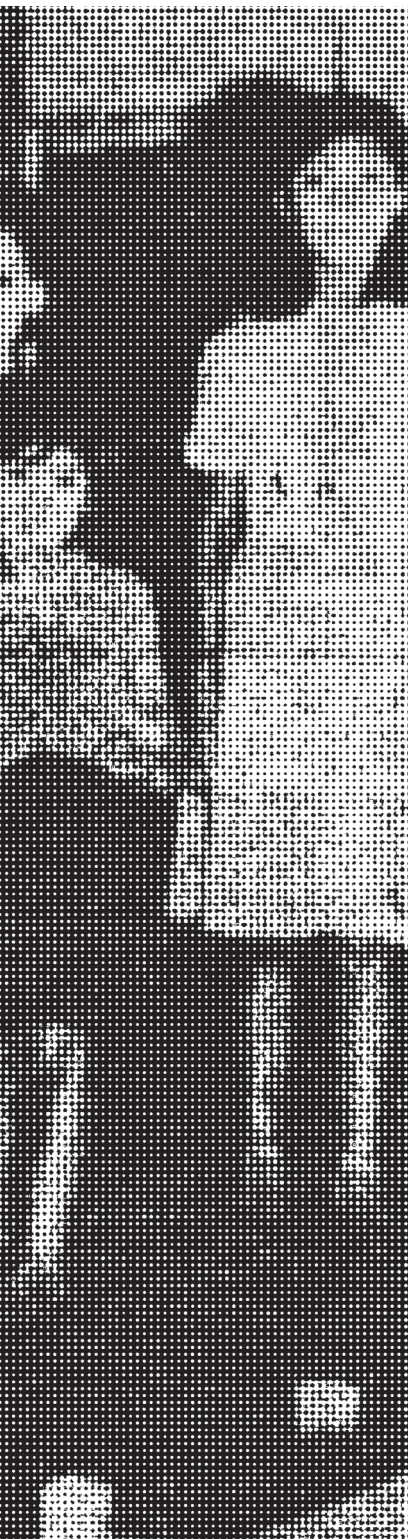
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John Lomax's Southern States Recording Expedition: *Brownsville, Texas, 1939*

Alberto Rodriguez and Rene Torres



John Lomax recording the children of Blalack School. Courtesy Brownsville Herald, February 11-14, 1939.



In the spring of 1939, Texas folklorist John Avery Lomax began his Southern States Recording Expedition, focusing primarily on rural Texas and Louisiana. One of the main goals of this and other recording forays into the South and Southwest by Lomax during the 1930s was to document the musical landscape of the nation as it rapidly transformed from a mostly rural-agrarian society to an increasingly urban-industrial one. In part, Lomax wanted to preserve examples of regional folk music before they were “lost” to the growing commercialization of American music. However, Lomax also had another important goal in mind, and that was to prove that American folk music was distinct from the folk music found in Europe and elsewhere.

Prior to Lomax’s groundbreaking work, the prevailing academic view toward folk music in North America, as argued by Francis James Child, Cecil Sharp, and others of the late 1800s and early 1900s, was that American folk music was not unique but, instead, was almost entirely derivative of British Isles folk music dating back centuries.¹

Although he certainly understood that American folk music borrowed extensively from the ballads, sea chanteys, and dance music of the British Isles (and, indeed, much of Western Europe), John Lomax was convinced that, by the twentieth century, American folk music had evolved into something more complex and nuanced than simply an extension of earlier European folk music. Lomax recognized that the nation’s increasingly diverse ethnic population had reshaped American culture, including music, in important ways over the previous two centuries.

So, in order to prove that American music was unique and had evolved well beyond its European roots, Lomax searched for remote locales, often in rather isolated rural settings, where he believed he would find authentic American folk music that was unspoiled by commercial or “mainstream” influences. He also focused on the music of African Americans and Mexican Americans, since neither had direct connections to the musical traditions of the British Isles and, therefore, Lomax believed, would best represent the unique characteristics of American music.

John Lomax’s quest to document and preserve “pure” folk music was admirable, even though it may have been a bit misguided at times. Since he had his own preconceptions of what “authentic” music was, and because he was determined

Texas, (on the U.S.-Mexico border) where he recorded more than a dozen local residents singing songs in Spanish.

John Lomax’s interest in folk music started when he was a child living in Bosque County, Texas, near a branch of the famed Chisholm Trail. It was there that he heard the ballads and campfire stories of passing cowboys as they herded cattle north to railheads in Kansas and elsewhere. By the time he graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1897, Lomax had been chronicling regional folk music for nearly a decade. In 1906, he won a scholarship to attend Harvard University. With funding and encouragement from some of his professors, Lomax began traveling throughout the West gathering a remarkable collection of ballads and other types of music popular among cowboys. His 1910 publication,

Although much of Lomax’s work is well known, little attention has been paid to his Spanish-language recordings in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, conducted as part of his 1939 Southern States Recording Expedition.

to prove Child, Sharp, and others wrong, Lomax sometimes sacrificed true objectivity in his research in order to achieve predetermined goals.

For example, in some cases, Lomax staged artificial settings, in which he recruited local African Americans to pretend to be field hands singing in unison in an attempt to replicate the rhythmic work patterns of earlier field slaves. In at least one instance, Lomax allowed a white prison guard to use a shotgun to intimidate a black prisoner into performing a song that Lomax wanted to record.² Despite such questionable practices, the net result of Lomax’s efforts is an impressive body of musical recordings, covering a broad range of ethnic and regional styles, which otherwise might have never been documented and preserved for future generations.

Although much of Lomax’s work is well known, little attention has been paid to his Spanish-language recordings in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, conducted as part of his 1939 Southern States Recording Expedition. What Lomax uncovered during this expedition was a vast canon of Spanish-language folk music, including children’s songs, *canciones*, *corridos* (ballads), and other musical traditions that had been passed down for generations throughout South Texas. From April 26 through 29, 1939, Lomax visited Brownsville,

Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads, was one of the earliest, and most comprehensive, efforts at collecting and preserving examples of American folk music.³

Along with Leonidas Warren Payne (from the University of Texas) and others, John Lomax also helped launch the Texas Folklore Society, a branch of the American Folklore Society, in 1909. The organization held its first meeting in 1911, and it continues to support research, publishing, and a variety of programs aimed at preserving and celebrating the folk culture of the Lone Star State.⁴

As mentioned earlier, John Lomax had long been an admirer and collector of cowboy music, but it was fellow Texas folklorist and writer J. Frank Dobie who helped spark Lomax’s interest in the Spanish-language music of South Texas.⁵ Dobie was involved in studying the culture of the *vaquero* (or Mexican cowboy). This intrigued Lomax, since he was fascinated with cowboys in general and was always looking for opportunities to study the music of those groups whose ancestry was not rooted in the British Isles.

In addition to Lomax, J. Frank Dobie also recruited others to help document and preserve the musical culture of the American Southwest, including Jovita González. A native of South Texas, González served as President of the Texas

Folklore Society from 1930 to 1932 and proved to be an asset for John Lomax's Southern States Recording Expedition into the Rio Grande Valley.⁶ From the Great Depression of the 1930s until 1950, Lomax served as the Archivist of American Folk Song, securing funds from the federal government to record and archive music throughout the United States, the Caribbean, and Europe, with the help of his wife, Ruby Terrill Lomax, and his son, Alan Lomax.⁷

For John Lomax, South Texas, and Brownsville in particular, was an ideal "laboratory" for studying the overlapping folk cultures of the United States and Mexico. What Lomax found in this area was a rich and diverse sampling of music, which,

and ethnic groups have faced to assimilate into "mainstream" American society. As with virtually every other immigrant and ethnic community, Texas Mexicans practiced selective assimilation, through which they retained certain aspects of their own cultural traditions while also selectively adopting traditions and practices from other groups.⁹

On April 24, 1939, John Lomax recorded Manuela Longoria singing "La Chinaca," an old Confederate song handed down from her father, Crisostomo Longoria, who had died in 1935. "La Chinaca" provides some insight into the experiences of Mexicans and Mexican Americans during the American Civil War. Crisostomo had been a Confederate

In a variety of ways, the complex musical landscape that Lomax encountered in South Texas was a reflection of the region's rich culture, its long history of ethnic and racial tensions, its stark socio-economic disparities, and the ongoing efforts by Tejanos (Texans of Mexican descent) to reconcile their bicultural identities as both Americans and ethnic Mexicans.

at the time, even he could not have fully understood. In a variety of ways, the complex musical landscape that Lomax encountered in South Texas was a reflection of the region's rich culture, its long history of ethnic and racial tensions, its stark socio-economic disparities, and the ongoing efforts by Tejanos (Texans of Mexican descent) to reconcile their bicultural identities as both Americans and ethnic Mexicans.⁸

Two women who were especially important to Lomax's Spanish-language folk music recordings in the Brownsville area are Manuela Longoria and Otila Crixell Krausse. Manuela Longoria, who recorded twelve songs (most in Spanish) for Lomax's Southern States Recording Expedition, was the principal at Blalack Mexican School, located at Paredes Road and Coffee Port Road near Brownsville. The rural school served nearby Mexican-American children, who were only allowed to speak and write in English while at school, although Longoria did allow students to sing songs in Spanish.

The Longoria family had been in the Brownsville area since the American Civil War. Like most Tejanos, Manuela Longoria had spent her life trying to reconcile an ethnic and cultural "duality," balancing the desire to preserve and celebrate her ethnic Mexican heritage with the pressure all immigrant

soldier stationed along the U.S.-Mexico border. By contrast, Manuela's grandfather served in the Union Army at the same time. Such divided loyalties between the North and the South, as represented by members of the Longoria family, are a reminder of the often-overlooked impact of the U.S. Civil War on Mexican Americans.

To better understand how the American Civil War (1861-1865) influenced Mexican and Mexican-American society, it is important to consider events that were taking place within Mexico around the same time. In 1861, some 6,000 French troops landed at Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico in hopes of establishing a new government that would support France's colonial interests in Latin America. As French soldiers marched toward the capital of Mexico City, they encountered stiff resistance from a hastily-assembled group of about 2,000 troops under the command of General Ignacio Zaragoza near Puebla de Los Angeles. Although poorly equipped and vastly outnumbered, Zaragoza's forces defeated the French on May 5, 1862 (a day of great ethnic and national pride for Mexicans and Mexican Americans now celebrated as "Cinco de Mayo.") However, the following year France sent a second expedition of 30,000 troops, which successfully captured Mexico City

and installed the Emperor Maximilian I as ruler of Mexico. For the next five years, Mexicans resisted French occupation and, in 1867, they finally expelled the French and executed Maximilian.

These political struggles in Mexico, lasting from 1861-1867, affected Texas-Mexican society in a variety of ways. Since Ignacio Zaragoza, the victorious commander of Mexican troops at Puebla on May 5, 1862, had been born in Goliad, Texas, he became a hero on both sides of the border and a potent symbol of triumph over adversity for Mexican Americans who found themselves increasingly marginalized at the hands of the rapidly growing Anglo population in the Southwest. At the same time, there were some Tejanos who believed that they might benefit from French occupation of Mexico because it would allow for a potentially lucrative political and commercial alliance involving France, Mexico, and the Confederate States of America. However, as the Confederacy sought to reinforce France's presence in Mexico, the U.S. government worked with Mexican forces in their efforts to defeat the French and prevent France from aiding the Confederate war effort.¹⁰

This struggle for control of Mexico and the American Southwest helped create political and ideological rifts among Texas Mexicans. Those who hoped for a French-Mexican-Confederate alliance supported Maximilian's government and sympathized with the American South's efforts to establish its independence from the United States. Some Tejanos, including Crisostomo Longoria, enlisted in the Confederate military, while Manuela's grandfather joined the Union Army.

The few lines of the song "La Chinaca" remembered by Manuela Longoria reflect these divided loyalties present among Tejanos:

"La Chinaca"¹¹

Por hay viene la chinaca
Toda vestida de griz
Preguntandole a los mochos
Donde esta su Emperatriz

Si vien puebla se perdió
No fue falta de valor
Fue por falta de elementos
Para la Confederación

Recent works on Cinco de Mayo reveal the complex dynamics involving the United States and its people in the conflict between Mexico and France. For example, historian David E. Hayes-Bautista's *El Cinco de Mayo: An American Tradition* documents the role Mexican Americans and the Union played in California during the American Civil War. Hayes-Bautista states that many Mexican Americans understood that a victory by the Confederacy would result in the establishment of a political and social system based on white supremacy and might encourage the spread of slavery into the American West. For Mexican Americans who were leery of living under Confederate rule, support of the Union would help ensure greater social, political, and economic freedom in the West and Southwest. By contrast, those Tejanos who served in the Confederate army believed that the best interests of Texas and the entire region lay in stronger political and commercial ties with France, Mexico, and the Deep South. Consequently, most Tejanos who supported the Confederacy did so more for economic and geopolitical reasons than because of slavery or racial attitudes.¹²

Union blockades of Southern ports during the war forced the Confederacy to export more and more of its goods (especially cotton) through Mexico under a Mexican or French flag.¹³ As a result, Confederate troops patrolling the Rio Grande were helping protect and facilitate international trade that greatly benefitted the Southern economy. In many ways, Crisostomo Longoria and other "Tejanos in gray" were hoping to guard their investments and future trade with Mexico and the French by serving as Confederate soldiers along the Texas-Mexico border. Others went even further in their attempts to aid the Confederate cause. For example, Santos Benavides of Laredo became a colonel in the 33rd Texas Cavalry, or

There comes the revolution
All dressed in gray
Asking the people of Mexican descent
(Mexican Americans)
Where is your empress?

Yes, fine, Puebla was lost
But it was not for lack of valor
It was lack of food (elements)
For the Confederacy

what locals called the Benavides Regiment, raiding Mexico to capture and return fugitive slaves.¹⁴

Historian Jerry Thompson was one of the first to shed light on the Mexican-American soldier during the American Civil War. In his 1976 work, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray*, Thompson documents the role that Mexican Americans played on both sides of the war effort.¹⁵ In his most recent work, *Tejanos in Gray: Civil War Letters of Captains Joseph Rafael de la Garza and Manuel Yturri*, Thompson tells the story of affluent Texas Mexicans from San Antonio who, like Crisostomo Longoria, saw themselves as having more in common with the Confederacy than the Union.¹⁶

In addition to Mexican Americans, African Americans played an important role in the American Civil War, both as civilians and soldiers, and many became part of the social,

At the time, Mexico and the United States did not have any formal agreements regarding fugitive slaves. The U.S. Congress had passed fugitive slave laws as early as 1793, but they were not enforceable in Mexico. Although such local leaders as Santiago Vidaurri, José María Jesús Carbajal, James H. Callahan, and John S. (Rip) Ford repeatedly lobbied both the U.S. and Mexican governments for a fugitive slave act, none was ever enacted that applied in Mexico. However, this lack of laws did not stop former slave owners or bounty hunters from making raids into Mexico to retrieve fugitive slaves. Although this situation finally ended with the 1865 Union defeat of the Confederacy and the official abolition of slavery, the racial, ethnic, political, and economic environment of Texas only grew more complex following the Civil War, as an increasingly diverse influx of English, Irish, Scottish,

Texas Mexicans chose to selectively assimilate by preserving certain aspects of their heritage while also working toward more fully integrating into mainstream society.

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political, and economic dynamics that were at play along the Texas-Mexican border. For example, black slaves sometimes helped transport Confederate cotton to Mexico. This allowed the Southern cotton industry to continue exporting to the outside world, but it also meant that slave owners ran the risk of slaves attempting to escape to freedom in Mexico. Sallie Wroe, a former slave from Austin, told the story of how her father and three uncles went to Brownsville, Texas:

One day pappy and Uncle Paul and Uncle Andy and Uncle Joe was taking bales of cotton on [an] ox wagon down to de Rio Grande. Each men was driving a ox wagon down to Brownsville, where they was to wait to meet Massa Burdette. But pappy and de others left along wagons long de river bank and rolled a bale of cotton in de river and four of them got on the bale and rows with sticks cross over into Mexico. This was during the war. Pappy come back to us after freedom and say he done got long fine with Mexico. He learn to talk just like them. . . . He brought some money from Mexico and taken us all to Brenham and bought us some clothes.¹⁷

French, German, Czech, and other immigrants poured into the American Southwest.

Just as it had happened elsewhere throughout the United States, the mass migration of immigrants into Texas during the late 1800s and early 1900s led to organized efforts by public officials and community leaders to “Americanize” these new arrivals. This involved everything from subtler forms of social pressure aimed at convincing immigrants to assimilate all the way to blatantly racist and bigoted legislation designed to marginalize immigrant communities. In South Texas, with a large Spanish-speaking population, “Americanization” often meant pressuring Tejanos to speak English (instead of Spanish), abandon long-held ethnic traditions, and submit to a rather vaguely defined (and highly subjective) process of becoming “100% American.” Like virtually all other immigrant groups and ethnic minorities, Texas Mexicans chose to selectively assimilate by preserving certain aspects of their heritage while also working toward more fully integrating into mainstream society.

As the principal of Blalack School, Manuela Longoria was directly involved in this process of Americanization along the Texas-Mexican border, especially in relation to her (mostly Spanish-speaking) students. In 1915, Brownsville I.S.D. opened its first schools—Brownsville High School,

City Grammar School, Blalack School, Las Matanzas School, Media Luna School, Nopalita School, Linerro School, and West Brownsville School—all of which included curriculum aimed at encouraging students to further assimilate into the increasingly dominant Anglo culture.¹⁸ Consequently, Manuela Longoria was expected to teach her students to speak, read, and write in English and not allow them to use Spanish in the classroom.¹⁹ However, she refused to enforce

English. Maria Rodríguez and others, including the children, sang “La Indita,” “Señora Santa Anna,” “A La Mar Fueron Mis Ojos,” and “Ya Me Casé Con Usted.” By permitting both the children and their parents to sing traditional Mexican folk songs in Spanish, as well as some tunes in English, Longoria allowed the community to celebrate its ethnic heritage while also making certain that her students pursued their regular English-based curriculum.²¹

Manuela Longoria was expected to teach her students to speak, read, and write in English and not allow them to use Spanish in the classroom. However, she refused to enforce a strict “English only” policy.

14 a strict “English only” policy at Blalack. In fact, her students recorded several Spanish-language songs for John Lomax (“La Pájara Pinta,” “Las Águilas de San Miguel,” “Los Florones de la Mano,” “Maria Blanca,” and “Señora Santa Anna”), although when Lomax asked the children to write out the Spanish lyrics to these songs, he learned that this was not allowed.²⁰

Manuela Longoria is a remarkable example of an educator who tried to meet the demands placed on her by policymakers to assimilate her students. At the same time, she fully understood that she was operating within a social environment that relied extensively on the Spanish language to communicate information and culture. Longoria’s actions reflect the same determination seen among many ethnic and racial minorities to play an active part in “negotiating” the terms of their assimilation process.

Manuela Longoria’s willingness to defy the rules and permit the use of both Spanish and English in her classrooms, even if only on a limited basis, had an impact on the larger community beyond just her students. The fact that she allowed her pupils to sing in Spanish helped strengthen ties between the school and many of the mostly poor Spanish-speaking parents. This paid off for Lomax when he invited some of the parents to sing at the Blalack School. Had it not been for Longoria’s efforts at relationship-building within the community, it is likely that many of the parents would not have felt comfortable setting foot in the school, much less singing in Spanish for an Anglo stranger.

Atanviro Hernández, a local farmer, recorded “El Corrido de Leandro Rivera” and “Manuel Le Dice a Juanita” in Spanish before his children sang “We Are Children of America” in



Charro Days poster. Courtesy Rene Torres, Private Collection.

Manuela Longoria expanded her bilingual educational efforts into the local community in other ways as well. In 1938 and 1939, she took part in the planning of the children's parade for an annual community event known as "Charro Days." The first Charro Days celebration took place in Brownsville in February 1938 and lasted four days. Promoters hoped that the pre-Lenten celebration would attract winter tourists to the Rio Grande Valley. According to past president John Patriarca, Charro Days were intended to "celebrate life on the border and the culture and history that we have in common" between Mexico and the United States. The Charro Days event has always been promoted as a twin-cities celebration between Brownsville and nearby Matamoros, Mexico, immediately across the Rio Grande. The 1938 celebration included "fireworks, parades, street dances, boat races, a bullfight and a rodeo—on both sides of the international bridge. Soldiers from Fort Brown [Texas] marched in formation, horse-drawn floats paraded through the streets, and the town's finest dressed up for the Grand Ball." Manuela Longoria made sure that the Mexican-American children of Blalack School also participated in the Charro Days celebration.²²

Longoria helped her students celebrate their Mexican-American identity in other ways as well. For example, during World War II, she fashioned a military service flag honoring past Blalack schoolchildren. The red and white flag included twenty blue stars, one for each of her former students serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

In a number of ways, Manuela Longoria tried to help her students and the local Texas-Mexican community integrate into mainstream society while still maintaining a strong connection to their own ethnic heritage. She understood that her students needed to learn English in order to more fully assimilate, but she did not believe this required abandoning the linguistic or other cultural traditions of their ancestors. As a result, she devoted much of her time and energy to helping negotiate the assimilation process for her students and other Mexican Americans in the Brownsville area. It is not clear how much, if any, of this was evident to John Lomax, but the recordings he made in connection to the Blalack School provide a glimpse into the bicultural and bilingual experiences of Longoria and those with whom she interacted.

Otila Crixell Krausse is another South Texas native who recorded for Lomax. Her song selection, and her life experiences, offer additional insight into the complex and sometimes volatile ethnic, social, and linguistic dynamics at play throughout the Texas-Mexican border region at the dawn of the twentieth century. She performed "El Corrido de Los Rinches" for Lomax. (*Rinches* is a derogatory term for Texas



Vicente "Tito" Crixell. Courtesy Brownsville Herald, February 11-14, 1939.

Rangers and other Anglo law officers.) This song describes the tensions that existed between the Texas Rangers and the Brownsville municipal government during the early 1900s.²³ Otila was the daughter of José Crixell, who was killed in 1912 by a former Texas Ranger named Paul McAlister, working at the time as a deputy sheriff. The killing of José Crixell was part of a larger political feud that plagued Cameron County and the city of Brownsville for years and reflected the level of distrust and animosity that had developed between Anglos and Tejanos in the area.

In the early twentieth century, two political parties dominated Cameron County and the Brownsville city government. The Democrats (locally known as the “Blues”) were led by political boss and County Judge Jim B. Wells, who controlled essentially all matters at the county level. By contrast, the Independents, also known as the “Reds” (many of whom were Tejanos), ran Brownsville’s municipal institutions, including the Police Department, which often clashed with county law officers and others associated with the Blue party. Several of Jim B. Wells’s men were former Texas Rangers who went on to serve as county deputies. The Mexican-American community in and around Brownsville already had a long history of negative encounters with the Texas Rangers, so tensions between local Anglos and Texas Mexicans only

escalated as the Red and Blue factions competed for power in the area.²⁴

In 1910, José Crixell became City Marshall in Brownsville, a prominent position within the municipal government that put him in charge of city police forces. His election helped set in motion a chain of events that are at the center of Otila Crixell Krausse’s “El Corrido de Los Rinches.”²⁵ The *corrido* (or ballad) describes a shooting on December 16, 1910, involving county deputies Alfred R. Baker and Harry Wallis and a Brownsville police officer named Ignacio Treviño. The conflict took place in downtown Brownsville at the White Elephant Bar, owned by Vicente “Tito” Crixell, the brother of José Crixell.²⁶

Although Alfred Baker and Harry Wallis were working as county deputies, both were former Texas Rangers. Officer Ignacio Treviño had already had a few run-ins with the Texas Rangers, so when Baker, Wallis, and other county officers converged on the White Elephant, Treviño barricaded himself inside. After a lengthy gun battle, in which no one was injured, Treviño negotiated a temporary truce, left town, and sought refuge across the border in Mexico.²⁷ Soon afterward, “El Corrido de Ignacio Treviño” became a popular ballad among the Texas-Mexican population of South Texas.

“El Corrido de Ignacio Treviño”²⁸

El dieciséis de diciembre
apestó a pólvora un rato,
donde encontraron los rinches
la horma de su zapato.

Cantina de El Elefante
donde el caso sucedió,
en donde Ignacio Treviño
con los rinches se topó.

Cuando las primeros tiros
la cantina quedó sola,
nomás Ignacio Treviño
su canana y su pistola.

Decía Ignacio Treviño
con su pistola en la mano:
No corran, rinches cobardes,
con un solo mexicano

Entrenle, rinches cobardes
que el juego no es con un niño,
soy purito mexicano,
me llamo Ignacio Treviño

On the sixteenth of December,
it stank of gunpowder a while;
that was when the *rinches*
found the last that would fit their shoe.

At the Elephant Saloon,
that’s where the events took place;
that’s where Ignacio Treviño
locked horns with the *rinches*.

At the sound of the first shots,
the saloon was deserted
only Ignacio Treviño remained,
with his pistol and cartridge belt.

Then said Ignacio Treviño,
with his pistol in his hand,
“Don’t run, you cowardly *rinches*,
from a single Mexican.”

“Come on, you cowardly *rinches*,
you’re not playing games with a child;
I am a true-born Mexican,
my name is Ignacio Treviño.”

Ignacio Treviño's brother, Jacinto Treviño, also became involved in a conflict with Texas Rangers and county deputies that would inspire an even more well-known ballad, "El Corrido de Jacinto Treviño." This incident started in 1911, when a local Anglo named James Darwin beat Treviño's younger brother so severely that he died of his injuries. Treviño tracked down Darwin and killed him before escaping into Mexico. Within a few months, Jacinto Treviño crossed back into Texas to meet with a cousin who, unbeknownst to Treviño, had arranged an ambush involving both Texas Rangers and county

officers. Treviño managed to evade the ambush and in the process kill his cousin, a Texas Ranger, and a deputy, before escaping back into Mexico where he lived to an advanced age. Because Jacinto Treviño prevailed against overwhelming odds and managed to elude capture for the remainder of his life, he became a folk hero of sorts to Mexican Americans throughout South Texas. "El Corrido de Jacinto Treviño" soon became another popular musical celebration of one man's ability to prevail over the dreaded *ranches*:

"El Corrido de Jacinto Treviño"²⁹

Ya con ésta van tres veces
que se ha visto lo bonito,
la primera fue en Macalen,
en Brónsvil y en San Benito.

Y en la cantina de Bekar
se agarraron a balazos,
por dondequiera saltaban
botellas hechas pedazos.

Esa cantina de Bekar
al momento quedó sola,
nomas Jacinto Treviño
de carabina y pistola.

Entrenle, rinches cobardes,
que el pleito no es con un niño,
querían conocer se padre?
¡Yo soy Jacinto Treviño!

Entrenle, rinches cobardes,
validos de la ocasión,
no van a comer pan blanco
con tajadas de jamón

Decía el Rinche Mayor,
como era un americano:
-¡Ah, que Jacinto tan hombre,
no niega el ser mexicano!-

With this it will be three times
that remarkable things have happened,
the first time in McAllen,
then in Brownsville and San Benito.

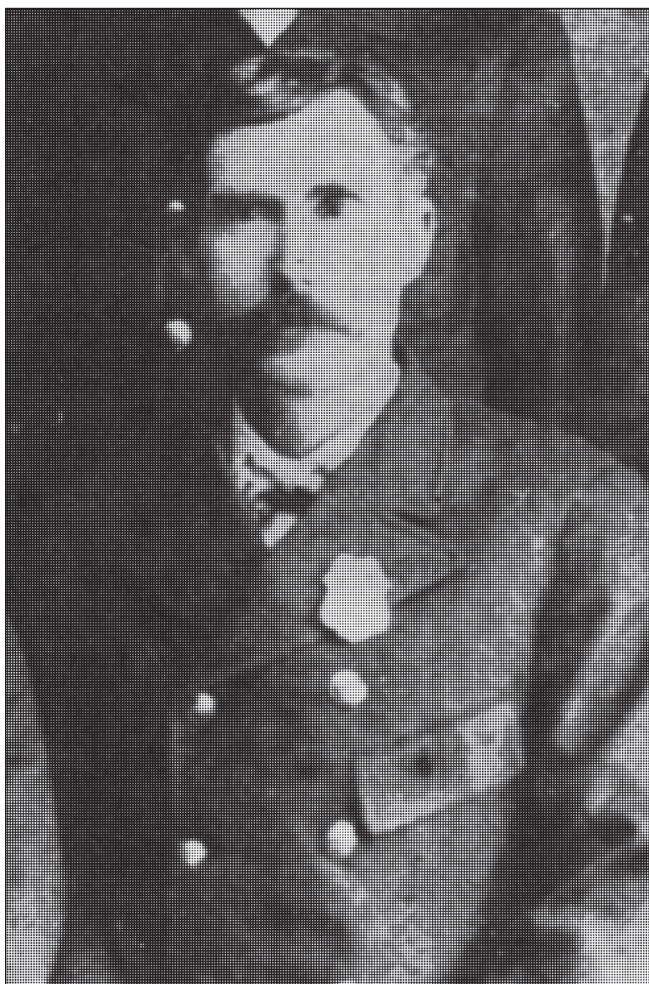
They had a shootout
at Baker's saloon;
broken bottles were popping
all over the place.

Baker's saloon
was immediately deserted;
only Jacinto Treviño remained,
with his rifle and his pistol.

Come on you cowardly *rinches*,
you're not playing with a child.
You wanted to meet your father?
I am Jacinto Treviño!

Come on you cowardly *rinches*,
you always like to take the advantage;
this is not like eating white bread
with slices of ham.

The chief of the *rinches* said,
even though he was an American,
"Ah, what a brave man is Jacinto;
you can see he is a Mexican!"



José Crixell. Courtesy Rene Torres, Private Collection.

On the night of August 9, 1912, former Texas Ranger Paul McAlister gunned down Brownsville City Marshall José Crixell inside the White Elephant Bar owned by Tito Crixell. This incident was more than a mere skirmish between two men. It reflected a much larger dispute between the “Blue” (mostly Anglo) associates of Judge Jim Wells, who wielded power at the county level, and the “Red” (mostly Tejano) officials, including José Crixell, who were increasingly exerting their influence at the municipal level. Ultimately, Paul McAlister was found not guilty of murder because of testimony that Crixell had drawn his gun first in an attempt to kill McAlister.³⁰

So, although the local Tejano population, as represented by José Crixell and others, was gaining greater political strength despite the dominance of Jim Wells and his Blue political party, it came at a great cost to Brownsville’s Texas-Mexican community. Conflicts between Tejanos and *rinches* persisted throughout the first half of the twentieth century. As a result,

the Texas Rangers and county deputies figure prominently in the *corridos* recorded by Lomax during his Southern States Recording Expedition, although it is unclear as to whether Lomax understood at the time the ethnic, social, and cultural subtext of these songs.

Another Brownsville area resident, José Suarez, recorded two songs for Lomax that provide additional insight into the racial, ethnic, and political environment of South Texas during the early twentieth century. One of these songs, “El Corrido del Soldado,” tells the story of the so-called Brownsville Raid of 1906, which involved an armed clash between local citizens and African-American troops stationed at nearby Fort Brown.³¹

On July 28, 1906, 170 black soldiers from Companies B, C, and D of the Twenty-Fifth United States Infantry arrived in Brownsville with orders from then Secretary of War William Howard Taft to replace the white soldiers currently garrisoned at Fort Brown. Although many of these black troops had distinguished themselves on battlefields in Cuba, the Philippines, and elsewhere—and counted six Medal of Honor recipients among their ranks—they encountered a hostile reception from most residents of Brownsville. Both Anglo and Tejano townspeople seemed to harbor a mistrust of these African-American servicemen and resented the fact that the federal government had “forced” them upon the community.³²

Dr. Frederick J. Combe, who served with black troops as a medical officer, stated, “These people will not stand for colored troops; they do not like them . . . these Mexican people do not want them here.” Victoriano Fernández, a Mexican-American police officer, reportedly told some townspeople, “I [would] like to kill a couple of them when they get here. . . . The colored fellows will have to behave themselves or [I] will get rid of them and all we have to do



The White Elephant Bar where José Crixell was killed. Courtesy Brownsville Herald, February 11-14, 1939.

is to kill a couple of them.” There was a handful of African Americans already living in Brownsville, and a few of them warned the arriving soldiers that local Anglos and Mexicans “didn’t want these damn niggers down here.”³³

The first openly violent confrontation between black troops and locals occurred on August 5, 1906, when an Anglo customs inspector named Fred Tate pistol-whipped Private Frank J. Lipscomb for supposedly bumping into Tate’s wife while passing her on the sidewalk. Around the same time, other black troops began experiencing similar problems. On August 5, Private Clifford I. Adair was crossing the Rio Grande bridge back into Texas after shopping in Matamoros when U.S. customs officials confiscated a pen he had purchased in Mexico because, according to the officers on duty, Adair had not paid the tax on it. Several days later, A.Y. Baker, a local Texas Ranger, pushed Private Oscar W. Reid into the Rio Grande at the same border checkpoint. On August 12, Mrs. Lon Evans, an Anglo

The recordings made by John Lomax in Brownsville, Texas, as part of his 1939 Southern States Recording Expedition, provide important insight into the complex racial, ethnic, political, and social dynamics along the U.S.-Mexican border region during the first half of the twentieth century. The songs performed by Manuela Longoria help illustrate the experiences of many Texas Mexicans in relation to education, cultural assimilation, and conflicting loyalties during the American Civil War. Likewise, Lomax’s recordings of Otila Crixell Krause, José Suarez, and others reveal the sometimes violent political history of Cameron County.

For John Lomax, the recordings he made in Brownsville, Texas, were simply “race music sung by racialized bodies.”³⁷ There is no clear evidence in his subsequent writings or recordings to suggest that Lomax truly understood the complex social, cultural, racial, and political issues reflected in the Spanish-language music that he helped document.

The recordings made by John Lomax in Brownsville, Texas, as part of his 1939 Southern States Recording Expedition, provide important insight into the complex racial, ethnic, political, and social dynamics along the U.S.-Mexican border region during the first half of the twentieth century.

resident of Brownsville, reported to local officers that she had been attacked by a black soldier, an accusation which was later dismissed in court.³⁴

At midnight on August 13, 1906, the growing tensions between local citizens and the black soldiers stationed at Fort Brown erupted into a brief but violent flurry of gunfire. More than 200 shots were fired within about ten minutes, leaving one person dead and injuring another. Although several reports stated that it was Brownsville residents who initiated the attack, black troops were soon implicated in what became known as the “Brownsville Raid.” Evidence later demonstrated that it was nearly impossible for black troops to have been involved in the raid since they had never left their barracks. However, the War Department removed the soldiers from Fort Brown on August 21, 1906, and, in November of the same year, dishonorably discharged 167 men of Companies B, C, and D of the Twenty-Fifth United States Infantry.³⁵ When the Nixon Administration finally reversed the dishonorable discharges in 1972, only one of the 167 soldiers was still alive to witness the long overdue exoneration.³⁶

As a result, he largely overlooked the role of Tejanos in the American Civil War, the use of educational institutions to assimilate Mexican-American schoolchildren, and the often troubled relationship involving Anglos, Tejanos, and African Americans in South Texas. However, because Lomax did preserve some examples of the music that originated along the Texas-Mexican border during the early twentieth century, he at least provided future researchers with important material to help us better understand this volatile and transformative period in American history. ★

Notes

- 1 See Benjamin Filene *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) and William A. Owens *Tell Me a Story, Sing Me a Song: A Texas Chronicle* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983) for more on the decades-long debate over the uniqueness and “authenticity” of American folk music.
- 2 Benjamin Filene, “‘Our Singing Country’: John and Alan Lomax, Leadbelly, and the Construction of an American Past,” *American Quarterly* 43, no. 4, (1991), 618.
- 3 Wayne Gard, “John Avery Lomax,” in the *Handbook of Texas Music*, 2nd ed., ed. Laurie E. Jasinski, (Denton: Texas State Historical Association, 2012), 368.
- 4 <http://www.texasfolkloresociety.org/index.html> (accessed April 25, 2016).
- 5 See Texas Folklore Society History 1909-1997, http://www.texasfolkloresociety.org/TFS_History.html, and Southern Mosaic: The John and Ruby Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip, <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9908/lomax.html> (accessed June 1, 2014).
- 6 For more on González, see the Jovita González Mireles Papers at the Wittliff Collections, Texas State University, San Marcos (http://www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu/research/a-z/gonzalez_mireles.html).
- 7 For more on the life and career of John Lomax, see Nolan Porterfield, *Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); see also the “John Avery Lomax Family Papers” at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.
- 8 One of the best sources on Tejano musical culture and efforts by Texas Mexicans to selectively assimilate is Manuel Peña’s *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).
- 9 See Peña’s *Música Tejana* for an in-depth discussion of how pressure on Tejanos to assimilate came from both inside and outside of the Texas-Mexican community.
- 10 For more on the interplay of French, Mexican, Confederate, and Union interests in the U.S.-Mexico border region during this period, see John Tutino, ed., *Mexico and Mexicans in the Making of the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012).
- 11 Manuela Longoria performance of “La Chinaca” recorded in Brownsville, Texas, by John A. Lomax, April 24, 1939. From Library of Congress, *The John and Ruby Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip*. Real Audio, MP3, Wave. <http://memory.loc.gov/afc/afcss39/260/2607a2.mp3> (accessed June 1, 2014).
- 12 David E. Hayes-Bautista, *El Cinco de Mayo: An American Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
- 13 David Montejano, “Mexican Merchants and Teamsters on the Texas Cotton Road, 1862–1865,” in Tutino, ed., *Mexico and Mexicans in the Making of the United States*.
- 14 Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); John Denny Riley, “Santos Benavides: His Influence on the Lower Rio Grande, 1823–1891,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Christian University, 1976); Jerry Thompson, “A Stand Along the Border: Santos Benavides and the Battle for Laredo,” *Civil War Times Illustrated*, August 1980; Jerry Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1976); Robert N. Scott, H. M. Lazelle, George B. Davis, Leslie J. Perry, Joseph W. Kirkley, Fred C. Ainsworth, John S. Moody, and Calvin D. Cowles, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880); J.B. Wilkinson, *Laredo and the Rio Grande Frontier* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Co., 1975)
- 15 Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray*.
- 16 Jerry Thompson, ed., *Tejanos in Gray: Civil War Letters of Captains Joseph Rafael de la Garza and Manuel Yurri* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011).
- 17 “Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938,” Interview of Sallie Wroe, ([https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/S?ammem/mesnbib:@field\(AUTHOR+@od1\(Wroe,+Sallie\)\)](https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/S?ammem/mesnbib:@field(AUTHOR+@od1(Wroe,+Sallie)))) (accessed April 25, 2016), 2.
- 18 The Records Management Department: Brownsville Independent School District, <http://www.bisd.us/Records/html/History.html> (accessed June 1, 2014); the term “Anglo” can be problematic when used in discussions of immigrant and ethnic communities. Technically, an Anglo is someone whose ancestors came from the English-speaking parts of the British Isles. However, in recent years “Anglo” has become a commonly used term in the Southwest for anyone whose ancestors were white Europeans, even if those ancestors originally spoke German, French, Italian, Irish, or any number of other European languages. For the purposes of this article, the term “Anglo” is used in this more recent, generic way.
- 19 For more about educational policies toward Mexican-American children in the Southwest, see Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press), 2001, and Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Let All of Them Take Heed: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011).
- 20 John A. Lomax and Ruby T. Lomax, *1939 Southern Recording Trip Fieldnotes*, March 31-June 14, 1939, Images 61-78, Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/resource/afc1939001.afc1939001_fn0001/?q=&sp=1&st=slideshow#slide-61.
- 21 Lomax and Lomax, *1939 Southern Recording Trip Fieldnotes*: Images 63-78, https://www.loc.gov/resource/afc1939001.afc1939001_fn0001/?q=&sp=1&st=slideshow#slide-63.
- 22 “The History of Brownsville Charro Days,” www.charrodays.org/history (accessed June 1, 2014).
- 23 Otila Crixell Krausse performance of “El Corrido de Los Rinches,” recorded in Brownsville, Texas, by John A. Lomax, April 28, 1939. From Library of Congress, *Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip*. Real Audio, MP3, Wave. <http://memory.loc.gov/afc/afcss39/261/2617a1.mp3> (accessed June 1, 2014).
- 24 Peña’s *Música Tejana* provides additional information on how long-simmering tensions between Texas Rangers and the Texas-Mexican community have been articulated in numerous corridos.
- 25 Krausse, “El Corrido de Los Rinches.”
- 26 Tito Crixell also recorded in Spanish for Lomax. For an example of this, see Tito Crixell’s performance of “Las Manañitas,” recorded in Brownsville, Texas, by John A. Lomax, April 28, 1939. From Library of Congress, *Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip*. Real Audio, MP3, Wave. <http://memory.loc.gov/afc/afcss39/261/2617b1.mp3> (accessed June 1, 2014).
- 27 Américo Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 31-32.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 67-68.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 69-71.
- 30 Charles H. Harris and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 106-107.
- 31 José Suarez performance of “El Corrido Del Soldado,” recorded in Brownsville, Texas, by John A. Lomax, April 28, 1939. From Library of Congress, *Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip*. Real Audio, MP3, Wave. <http://www.loc.gov/item/lomaxbib000074mp3> (accessed June 1, 2014).
- 32 For more on African-American conflict with ethnic Mexicans, see Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of Negroes in Texas, 1528-1971*, Negro Heritage Series (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Co., 1973); James N. Leiker, *Racial Borders: Black Soldiers Along the Rio Grande*, 1st ed., South Texas Regional Studies (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002);

Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920*, American History and Culture (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Thomas E. Simmons, *Who's Shooting Firecrackers? : The "Riot" at Fort Ringgold*, Texas, (Self-published 1996).

- 33 John Downing Weaver, *The Brownsville Raid* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 21-23.
- 34 Ibid., 26-29, 89-90.
- 35 Ibid., 15-17.
- 36 Garna L. Christian, "The Brownsville Raid of 1906," *Handbook of Texas Online*: <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pkb06> (accessed on June 26, 2016).
- 37 Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 5.

Eddie Stout, Dialtone Records, and the Making of a Blues Scene in Austin¹

Josep Pedro



The Dynaflores at Rome Inn, 1982. (L-R) Eddie Stout, Stevie Fulton, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and David Murray. Courtesy Eddie Stout.



Austin, Texas, native Eddie Stout's dedication to the preservation and celebration of the blues over the past four decades has earned him tremendous respect and admiration within the local blues community. A performing bass player since 1972, Stout has been active in the global expansion of blues. He also has been a prolific producer of African-American roots music, including blues, gospel, and jazz, with the creation of labels such as Pee Wee Records (1984), Dialtone Records (1999), and Dynaflow Records (2014). Stout has served as an international representative, distributor, and publisher for several companies, such as Justice Records, Independent Artists, Doolittle, New West, Antone's Records, and Malaco Records. Because of his broad knowledge and experience in the field of blues, he is frequently invited to serve as a panelist and label representative at music conventions throughout the world, as well as a producer and director of forty episodes of the popular television show *Songwriters across Texas* (2012-2013).

STEREOPHONIC

A.C. LITTLEFIELD
& the original bells of joy



SECOND TIME AROUND

A.C. Littlefield & the Original Bells of Joy album cover.
Courtesy Eddie Stout.

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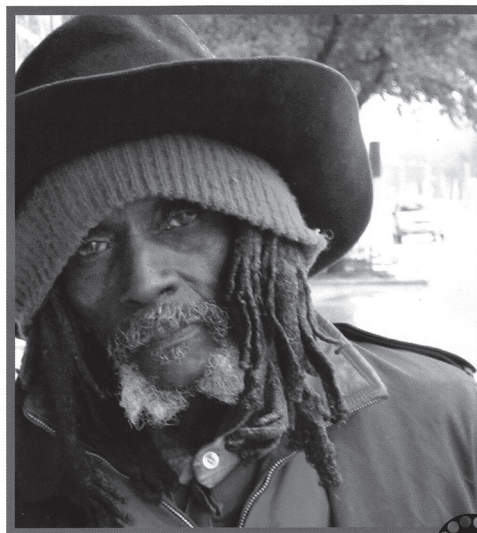
Thus, Stout has contributed from different angles to the collective construction of a specialized blues music scene in Austin, the self-proclaimed “Live Music Capital of the World,” and has channeled emotional communicative bonds among musicians, audiences, and cultural industries.

Eddie Stout is an accomplished musician and has played bass with such popular artists as the Dynaflores, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Anson Funderburgh and the Rockets, Sammy Myers, Katie Webster, Lou Ann Barton, Hubert Sumlin, Elvin Bishop, Barbara Lynn, Gary Clark, Jr., and Eddie & the Evereadys (Stout’s current band). He also has backed many of the artists signed to his iconic Dialtone Records, a label that has become a benchmark of quality and a popular source of historic Texas music for blues lovers around the world.² Dialtone has released twenty-six recordings to date, producing an archive of some of America’s greatest living legends. With great passion, and an enhanced level of creative freedom available to a small, independent company, Stout has developed an impressive “stable of stars” that includes African-American artists from across several generations and genres, including the Bells of Joy, Lazy Lester, Milton Hopkins, Bobby Rush, Jewel Brown, Cornell Dupree, Barbara Lynn, Hosea Hargrove, Lavelle White, “Little” Joe Washington, Matthew Robinson, and Reverend K.M. Williams, among others. In addition, Stout has produced international tours for a number of blues musicians, thereby creating opportunities for authentic intercultural encounters between the artists and their audiences.³

The artists and recordings that Eddie Stout and Dialtone Records promote are rich in spatio-temporal bonds resonating across different historical periods and geographical regions. On one hand, Stout’s fondness for urban post-war blues allows us to view his contribution as the continuation of a long series of influential record labels from this era, such as Houston-based Duke-Peacock Records, led by the pioneering and controversial African-American businessman Don Robey; Chicago’s Chess Records, which arguably epitomized the development of urban blues; Excello Records, which established the canon of Louisiana’s swamp blues; and Atlantic Records, whose ascension from its New York City headquarters was pivotal in the development of rhythm & blues and soul music.⁴

Locally, Stout also has documented the post-war blues scene tradition and legacy in East Austin. This is most clearly illustrated by such ensemble records as *Texas Eastside Kings* (2001), which effectively blends music, history, and identity expression.⁵ As observed in the liner notes, “this community [East Austin] was the heart of the most thriving time of Blues and R&B in Texas, hosting some of the hottest live shows in the state. Touring musicians such as T-Bone Walker, B.B. King, Amos Milburn, Guitar Slim and Lightnin’ Hopkins would frequent the area because of its hoppin’ clubs and the great local talent they could use as support.”⁶ Furthermore, Stout has recently created the Eastside Kings Festival (2013), an annual celebration that brings together the musicians on his label, as well as other veteran and upcoming local and regional artists.⁷

MONOPHONIC



LIL JOE WASHINGTON

Houston Guitar Blues

Lil Joe Washington album cover. Courtesy Eddie Stout.

In many ways, Eddie Stout's "labor of love" is an extension of the work done earlier by Austin-born folklorist and ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax. The son of pioneering folklorist John Avery Lomax, Alan Lomax produced a remarkably large and diverse body of field recordings and other research.⁸ Over the years, Stout has "(re)discovered" many unsung heroes within blues culture, contributing to their artistic revitalization through recordings and live performances. Older bluesmen such as "Little" Joe Washington (1939-2014) and Joe Doucet (born 1942)—both linked to the Houston blues scene—and Mississippi-born Sherwood Fleming (born 1936), whose recording was Dynaflow Records' first release, are examples of this.⁹ However, instead of following the ethnographic field-recordings tradition, Stout brought these artists to his Austin studio, where he organized a recording session with veteran local musicians, including Kaz Kazanoff (sax), Nick Connolly (piano), Johnny Moeller (guitar), Jason Moeller (drums), Mike Keller (guitar), and Corey Keller (drums), among others.

Stout's recording experiences and inspiration, as well as his understanding of Austin's musical identity, his opinions about the disputed definition of blues music, and topics such as musical composition, originality, and authenticity.

Recording Texas Blues

Josep Pedro: Why did you found Dialtone Records?

Eddie Stout: This was in my blood and it just started bubbling up. First I was just jumping in, doing what I knew I could do. This was my life. I first started with Pee Wee Records. It was something I always wanted to be involved in—a record label, do European tour dates, just to be involved with all the guys. It's just a blessing recording with them. We have so much fun in the recordings with Omar [Dykes], Mike Keller, Jason Moeller, Kaz Kazanoff—all the guys. It's just a blessing. I'm getting the sound that I like, which is reminiscent to the Duke Records

Over the years, Stout has "(re)discovered" many unsung heroes within blues culture, contributing to their artistic revitalization through recordings and live performances.

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Stout's efforts to document and preserve this music reflect both a scholarly impulse of blues-related folklore and the more pragmatic need to achieve at least some level of commercial success within the modern music industry.

Eddie Stout has witnessed the profound transformations that have affected Austin's musical history, from its nascent 1960s image as a socially and politically progressive "college town" to its more recent global ascension as the "Live Music Capital of the World." His life and career exemplify the overlapping of different musical sub-scenes that contributed to the complex historical construction of Austin's blues scene—the Eastside black music scene, which he has nourished through recordings and festival productions; the folk and psychedelic rock scene, which he helped shape as both a musician and a blues fan; and the 1970s-present Antone's scene, in which he was involved primarily as a producer and international music promoter and representative.¹⁰ The following interview with Eddie Stout was conducted via Skype on August 14, 2013, and is divided into three sections: "Recording Texas Blues," "The Austin Blues Scene," and "Defining the Blues Genre." The interview provides additional insight into

and Chess Records type of post-war blues. I love that sound, so that's what I'm trying to capture but with today's technology.

JP: What are your feelings towards the famous African-American impresario Don Robey (Duke-Peacock Records) and his contribution to Texas blues?

ES: Well, it's a mixed bag. I love what he did. Don Robey was aggressive, he knew what he was looking for; he went out and found it. I mean, these old guys would have been playing around these joints everywhere across Texas unless Don Robey shows up. How cool is that? This is a guy that, without him, a lot of this stuff would have been lost. He was right there with all these guys, and so, in that respect, I really dig him. The other respect is the low pay the artist got back then. It's changed somewhat right now, and it's always changing and evolving with all the new technology. [But] Don Robey was—that part of him was a total hero in my eyes. And he was so fortunate, too. He was living at the right time, the

right place, in the right position. It's in Texas, just outside Houston, man. Houston was a hotbed of some of the best players in the world—Joe [“Guitar”] Hughes, [Clarence] “Gatemouth” Brown, Albert Collins, even Little Joe [Washington]. [Long John] Hunter was out there, Lavelle White, Junior Parker, “T-Bone” Walker—all these guys were in his camp. I just really love what he did and really like the sound he got.

JP: How has the recording of blues changed since?

ES: The business has changed dramatically, and, of course, that goes with the technology. Also, it's changed for the better. With technology comes a change in everything. Back in the Don Robey days these guys were only getting a penny a cut, one cent for a cut. That was standard back then. These record men like the Chess guys [Leonard and Phil Chess] and Don Robey were making a lot of money.

JP: What help do you get with the work at the label?

ES: My wife helps me a lot; my daughter helps me. Mostly, I run the whole thing myself. I do have a partner—Randy Reagan. He is just spiritual guidance. I have run [Dialtone Records] for the last sixteen years. We have twenty-six recordings right now.

JP: You have recorded musicians from all over Texas and released different geographically-grounded albums such as *Texas Eastside Kings* (2001); *West Side*

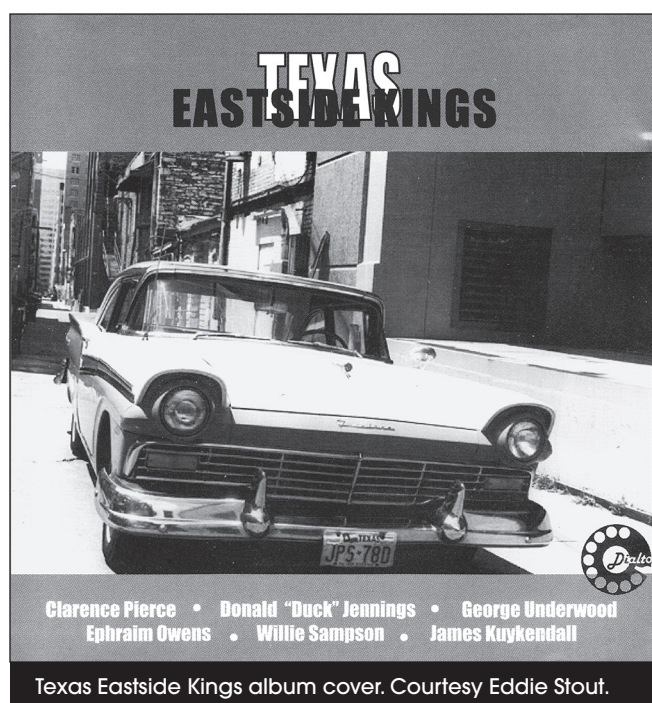
Horns (2002), *Texas Southside Kings* (2006), and *Texas Northside Kings* (2007). Is this the mission behind Dialtone?

ES: It's part of a mission and also part of economics. I just really can't afford to go out of town. I'd love to start going into Mississippi, Louisiana, and Georgia looking for these guys that are still out there playing. Much like what Broke & Hungry Records are doing. I love what they're doing. I'd love to, but Texas has a lot of great blues, so I'm real happy and fortunate to be close to music I grew up listening to. I can go out there and find these guys. Houston still has a lot of great guys in there. And communication is so much better. It's not too hard to find what you're looking for. I've got friends all over the country with whom I talk all the time, like my friend at *Living Blues* [magazine] Scott Bock. He said, “Man, you gotta record Birdlegg.”

JP: Many blues musicians in Austin, like T.D. Bell, Erbie Bowser, “Blues Boy” Hubbard, or Matthew Robinson, have had long careers but have made few recordings. What balance is there between live performances and recordings, and what has been your role in this situation?

ES: In the '60s and '70s “Blues Boy” was all over with Blues Boy Hubbard & the Jets. But he's never aggressively been focused on recording. The musician's goal, if they have a goal, is to get into the studio. That's the end of our line. To record what we've been learning all these years, put it down for posterity or documentation, or just for the love of the music.

Yes, they're under-recorded. But the type of blues they're playing is doing copy songs, not writing original songs. They're just in there to have fun, to play their music, and do what the audience wants. It's been how they've been molded over all these years, to play what the people want in the juke joints. As far as recording, one of the Eastside Kings and I said to “Duck” [Donald Jennings], “Man, how can you not record more?” He said, “Man, I was waiting for you to grow up!” These guys are just really sitting there. They're not aggressive, they all got homes, they all got day jobs. They've never got out of the circuit—never wanted to. They just wanted to do their gigs. There's a few diamonds down here like Matthew [Robinson] and the Eastside Kings, but we're losing some like Clarence Pierce, T.D. Bell, Erbie Bowser. They're leaving us, and the only person here that I can see recording them is me. So I document them



Texas Eastside Kings album cover. Courtesy Eddie Stout.

and I get them out, but I can only do like one record, because the rest of them it's just juke joint blues, what they're playing for the audience; it's copy songs. They have no passion to go any further, because it's just not happening for them.

JP: What role does composition play in blues and what difference might it make?

ES: If they write their own material, they have a chance of recording for a record company to be interested in. A record company needs two things—original material and a tour. If you don't do that, there's no reason for them to sign you. But myself, I'm a lot different. I find artists that I really like in the blues vein that I love so much, and I record them in the Dialtone sound. And, if you've noticed, none of my artists tour, because they are local artists. But it's a passion with me that I love the music.

and how important it is to have a house band for a specialized label?

ES: I'm so fortunate to be in Austin because all of these great players all around me. The Keller brothers, the Moeller brothers, Kaz Kazanoff, Nick Connolly, Riley Osborn. I choose different people for different projects, different people for different sounds—for instance with the Earl Gillian and Joe Doucet. With the Birdlegg one I don't think I really hit it just exactly right, but I think we did a really good job. His sound was a bit more lowdown, and I still worked with the same guys because they are such great musicians. I wanted to make sure that we got a good record the first time, because it costs so much these days. So I worked with the same guys. That's the reason why I got them twice or almost three times in a row with that Cornell Dupree [album].

I want the artist to be happy, then I'm happy, and then everybody's happy.

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JP: As a listener, it's really interesting to hear so many instruments in your recordings, especially piano and sax, which sometimes fall aside live due to economic reasons. How would you describe that "Dialtone sound"?

ES: Well, if you notice on the recordings I always break them down, too. Like on the Birdlegg album (2013), I got them down to just doing a duo, and I also did a three-piece with drums, guitar, and harmonica. Some songs are with piano, and then some songs I bring Kaz [Kazanoff] to play baritone and sax and double up. So the Dialtone sound really comes from the warmth-ness of the recordings, not just how many people are involved. It's a sound I'm looking for. It's a feeling that you get and that I like to keep consistent throughout all the recordings.

JP: Your featured artists are usually backed by a versatile house band that includes musicians such as Kaz Kazanoff (saxophone), Nick Connolly (piano), Mike Keller (guitar and bass), Corey Keller (drums), Johnny Moeller (guitar), and Jason Moeller (drums), among others. What can you tell me about them,

Using these guys and bringing them in and out.

The drummer, I think, is the most important person in a session. Like Jason Moeller—nobody can shuffle like Jason Moeller. He's got a great Texas shuffle, also like a Jimmy Reed kind of beat, Freddie Below or something. He can do that, or play the straight whack. Jason is a certain type of drummer, and Corey Keller is a straight whack, great timing. You bring these guys in depending on the artists that you have. I do like using Nick [Connolly], because we're so familiar with each other. He's probably the guy that I probably stick the most on the sessions 'cause he's versatile playing B3 [organ] and piano. He's great at both. He's the only steady, and I always mix with him, because he's got a freaking great ear and knows exactly what I'm looking for.

JP: What expectations do you have?

ES: I don't really have any expectations other than being able to make myself happy. I want the artist to be happy, then I'm happy, and then everybody's happy. The expectation is to capture a moment of time that's going on right now with the guys I'm working with, and also to be able to capture that in

the way that it should be. Like you said, if you go and see Matthew [Robinson], he's doing three-piece because of the economics. But his real sound comes from having an organ player, a guitar player, bass, drums, maybe a sax. That's his real sound; that's what he wants. If he could, he would carry that with him every night. So my expectation is to capture that sound with what the artist would like, and also with myself in there as a producer. It's got to be a happy medium. I'm walking a fine line of making everybody happy but still making it high quality, and also choosing the right songs to make it marketable, too. So I put it all together, juggle it up, and make a great martini.

JP: Where does the audience come from?

ES: They're not coming from nowhere. I don't sell records. Period. You've got a few of them over there

why vinyl is coming back. They're fans who are collectors. Nowadays it's collectors.

JP: Why do you think blues is not in demand?

ES: Everything evolves and changes. I mean, now they call Gary Clark, Jr. blues. We don't call that blues, but people do. Blues has just taken a different shape. For the real blues, what we call blues, it's just—it's not going anywhere. It's always there. Hopefully one day it will be picked up—and I'll be there when it does! [Laughs]

The Austin Blues Scene

JP: What do you think of when I say "Austin blues scene?"

ES: The Austin blues scene is still here, and it just evolves. It doesn't have to be black to be blues. We still have the east side entity which is growing smaller

If it wasn't for my good friends in Japan, Dialtone would not (be the same).

but my recordings don't sell a whole lot. There's not a real big audience. They come from Japan first of all. If it wasn't for my good friends in Japan, Dialtone would not [be the same]. That's a fact. The Japanese audience has really been big for me. Some European audience is helping. But my releases sell a few hundred copies. We just go record by record, and then put it all together to do another record. So there's not a big audience for Dialtone.

JP: How hard is it to distribute your records in well-known local record stores such as Waterloo Records or Antone's Record Shop?

ES: It's available. I got good distribution. It's just there's no demand. If the demand was there, then the records would be there. That comes with having an audience. That's still a big hurdle I'm trying to figure out, like everybody else—how do you sell your product? My product is blues, so it's not a very big commodity that's sought after. People love to listen to blues at clubs, at the radio, at festivals, but [they don't] go to the record store and buy a CD. I think it has all come down to just selling to the fans. That's

everyday but also the west side is doing great with Greg Izor, the Keller Brothers, the Moeller brothers. These guys are heavy into the blues and they sound freaking great. I go to see a band called The Peacemakers—that's with Greg Izor, Mike Keller, and Corey [Keller]. They're a really great band. I watch those guys a lot. And then, sporadic bands around Austin play blues really good. On the east side there's the Eastside Kings with "Blues Boy" [Hubbard] and Matthew [Robinson] playing, Sugar Brown & the Brothers—a little different blues, it's not really "blues blues," but it's some in there. There's also Pamela Allen; she's singing blues, too. They're trying to keep it alive and I'm trying to do the same with this festival, the Eastside Kings Fest.

JP: How would you describe the Victory Grill's current shape?

ES: That's a tough one, man. [It's] such a great place. I love the Victory Grill. I love what Harold McMillan is doing, keeping it alive. In the forties, fifties and sixties that was a jumping place, man. But in the eighties, nineties, and the last ten years have just

not been good to it. It's been overlooked. It's just been sporadic with people showing up. It hasn't had any appeal for some reason. It's a nice club. I love the place. Shit happens. Sometimes there's no reason at all, a club will just dry up. Nobody will go there. But hopefully something will happen and turn again. That's what everybody's waiting on because they're really great. That's a landmark in Austin.

JP: How much is the east side changing now?

ES: The east side is getting pushed out, and with no blues—no real juke joints like there used to be. As far as the music scene, every year is being pushed away. There's just a few pockets left. Downtown is slowly being taken over by all these brand new condominiums, housing, the rich people moving

The Rolling Stones helping with it, even Led Zeppelin. All these people recorded the blues and were trying to find out where they came from. Thanks to people like Don Robey and Chess records all these guys had something to go back and learn from. So the next generation of blues players came up white. I think that's how it happened.

JP: In my research I conceptualize Austin's blues scene through three big moments—a post-war black music scene in East Austin (1945-1975); a folk-psychedelic scene (1960-1980); and the Antone's club scene (1975-2006), which specifically defined itself through blues.

ES: Antone's was an anchor. The Soap Creek was here, too. And another Creek where they had blues

You got Amos Milburn, Bobby Bland, BB King, Ike & Tina (Turner) would come through and always pick up side guys here in Austin. Austin was a great place for these musicians to come through, make their money, and don't have to bring the band, because there's plenty of side guys here. That was really great for touring musicians right then.

in, because the people living there just can't afford the land taxes. Everything changes and develops, like blues. Blues used to be all black blues and now it's just developing into all white. Thank goodness somebody is around to keep it going.

JP: How do you understand the ethnic or racial "shift" in blues from blacks to whites?

ES: Blues clubs have never been a place to take your kids, so black blues players when they're playing at night they would leave their kids at home. They were not going to take them down there. So a lot of kids did not grow up learning how to play what their dad did. 90% of dads did not pass it on, because they didn't want to take their kids to the club—unlike Cajun music. Cajun music they bring their whole family, play all day, and make the kids play. So you still see black people playing Cajun. Thank goodness that the next generation of young white guitar players picked up the blues and that's generally thanks to people like Eric Clapton,

[Castle Creek?]. But Antone's came in, and with his money was able to bring the Chicago guys down and rejuvenate what Austin had lost for so many years. 'Cause the Eastside was happening. You got Amos Milburn, Bobby Bland, BB King, Ike & Tina [Turner] would come through and always pick up side guys here in Austin. Austin was a great place for these musicians to come through, make their money, and don't have to bring the band, because there's plenty of side guys here. That was really great for touring musicians right then.

JP: Where would you place yourself?

ES: I missed the first part. The psychedelic [era] I was around to see Shiva's Headband, 13th Floor Elevators. Then when Antone's opened up I was like the first one down there, before he even opened up on Sixth Street. I place myself just a little bit later after Clifford [Antone] opened. About twenty years ago I started Pee Wee Records in Dallas. I was trying to do blues. When I came down here [to Austin],

I worked for Antone's for a while and started my own label, just to fill my own niche, and record what I thought should be recorded and how I thought. I don't know how I fell into all of that, but I fell in as part of it, documenting music here in Central Texas. You know, like "the Smithsonian of Texas Blues," they call me the "Ambassador of Texas blues."

JP: How would you describe your relationship with local musicians from other genres?

ES: Well, it's real good. You don't get very far in this business if you're a fuckup. From the jazz community here I am real good friends with Ephraim Owens, Brannen Temple, Red [Young]—the jazz cats. We're all good friends; we all run together and respect what we do. And, of course, everybody in my label—we're all good friends. We stay in communication throughout the years.

Everybody gets along here. Everybody plays some of the same venues. Some of the cats play blues gigs, like Mike Flanigin. He can do a blues gig or a heavy jazz gig. Same with Ephraim Owens. He's a really

great player, as well. And Brannen Temple—he does his heavy jazz thing, and he is playing blues with The Peterson Brothers. Yeah, everybody intermixes here and plays the same gigs, and they'll know each other. So everything is real cool and laidback. They're just all musician cats. There's always been camaraderie here, and when you see people from Austin out on the road, there's always camaraderie, too. There's no friction.

JP: What role does the Austin Blues Society play?

ES: The Blues Society here in Austin is a work in progress. Austin is a very different community. Each person feels like they're the big man on campus, so it's real hard for everybody to come together. It's great to have a blues society. Hopefully, something would stick someday, and maybe it's gonna be now. These guys seem pretty aggressive in what they do. They're always down at Antone's on Monday night and do their meetings and jams. Blues societies come along, but it is working progress.

JP: It hasn't reached the point where everyone in the blues music scene is involved?

ES: Well, it hasn't reached that point. Everybody hasn't really joined in and helped yet. And they haven't reached out to like the Oklahoma blues society or the New Orleans blues society. They haven't really put in a big connection. Each one should be having touring bands that come through, and support it. They haven't done that yet. They haven't started a festival. They're hosting jams, pressing T-shirts, stickers and stuff like that. I think it should be coming along soon. Hopefully they'll get something together.

JP: Austin's growing global popularity is primarily linked to big festival events such as South By Southwest (SXSW, founded in 1987) and *Austin City Limits* (ACL Fest, founded in 2002). What role is blues playing in this ascension?

ES: Blues isn't playing any part of it. SXSW I really very much support and love. We're so lucky to be here. Roland Swenson is a great guy with a really big heart. I really dig it, but there's not much blues. 90% of all music is played by kids that are 12 years old. All the bands are just so—they're very different and diverse, and they're from all over the world, from Australia to Spain. But the blues is just very small. Alligator [Records] came down and did a show one time, which was great. But if I'm not putting a show



Poster for Arctic Border Blues Festival. Courtesy Eddie Stout.

at South by Southwest, there's really no blues at all. It's just what's in demand, what's popular, and that's what comes up. And there's just not a lot of people playing blues anyway.

JP: Would you say that Austin's musical identity is traditionally related to country and blues music?

ES: No, I wouldn't say country and blues. You got Gary Clark, Jr. He doesn't play blues. He can, but he doesn't play blues. His music is totally different. He is exploding, but I wouldn't really label Austin as having some particular kind of music. I can't think of any really big band apart from Stevie and Jimmie [Vaughan] that's come out of Austin. Well, [singer] Robert Plant has lived here, which is crazy. It's a place for all genres of music but no single band has brought it all together.

Back in the seventies Austin had a movement. I saw all this going on. A lot of people from Port Arthur came up and moved to Austin. Also, a lot of people from Corpus Christi, like Chris and Tom, a lot of people from Fort Worth, like Mike Buck and Jackie Newhouse, people from Lubbock, like Joe Ely. They all moved here in the seventies. From then it just really became a big thing. That's what caused it. That was right after the blues fell off in the east side at the end of the sixties. And then in the seventies this big movement came in here from all over. Marc Benno moved here. Stevie and Jimmie [Vaughan] came down from Dallas. There was a huge movement and that kind of revived the music. There was music everywhere. It was really cool back then, and it still is. There's a lot of music. But there's no one genre of music you can pin to Austin. That's why they say it's the "Live Music Capital of the World."

JP: What do you think of the tag "Live Music Capital of the World"?

ES: Well, there's plenty of live music capitals of the world, but it's a pretty good tag and it's sticking for right now, that's for sure. It's great to have a record company here because I got so many people I can call on to come down and play on the record.

JP: How similar and how different is Texas blues from other geographically-grounded subgenres?

ES: Well, it used to be more defined back in the early days when transportation wasn't so much around and communication was limited. It was all different sounds back then because of the location and how

TEXAS HARMONICA RUMBLE



hear these harp-huffing heavyweights:

- Gary Primich
- Paul Orta & the Kingpins
- Keith Dunn with John Packer, guitar
- Walter T. Higgs
- Lewis Cowdrey
- Steve "Hook" Herrera
- Memo Gonzalez
- Allen Hamilton



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13th ANTONE'S on Guadalupe in Austin

Poster for Texas Harmonica Rumble. Courtesy Eddie Stout.

everybody was in their own [community]. They didn't move around much. But now that everybody moves around, everything is all blended together. Back in the early days, you had the Chicago sound. Then you go out to California and you got this big jump swing sound. And then you come down to Texas, and you got people like Lightnin' Hopkins, dirty old blues stuff. Also "Gatemouth" Brown and the Upsetters. [But] especially with harmonica players, it's easy to say "West Coast harp," "Chicago harp," or "Texas harp." They are all very different and that's a way to pin them.

JP: What are the particularities of the Texas tradition?

ES: It's kind of tough to say. Everybody talks about the horn players, because we had great horn sections, back when everybody had horn sections. If you

wanted three horn players, you'd always come to Texas and get it. I think hot guitar players too, like Albert Collins, Cornell Dupree, and stuff like that. I'd have to say that the horn players were what made Texas different back in the days. [But] I think it just really stands for the record labels that were recording the guys—Chess Records, Federal Records, and Duke-Peacock Records. I think they're the ones that made our distinctions.

Defining the Blues Genre

JP: In recent years, the success of blues-related bands such as the Black Keys and Gary Clark, Jr., has exposed the different ways in which blues is understood and defined. Some say they're blues, others say they're not. What are your feelings towards these debates?

ES: You got the traditional people who love the blues, who are traditional. And then you have the people who are more open-minded, and this is the way they were introduced to it. Black Keys were what they thought was a blues band. Somebody told them that. So, this is how they perceive a blues band. That's just different people's takes on the same thing. The traditionalists would not call the Black Keys a blues band. Or I wouldn't call Gary Clark a blues band either.

There is one thing that is true that I found out, and that's why I created my label to start with blues. If you start with blues and you play blues, then it's easier for you to go to other genres in music. Then you can go to other music like Gary Clark's done. Or if you need to, like Eric Clapton, you can go back and play blues. But if you don't start with blues, then you find it much harder to go to blues. People that started playing rock like Led Zeppelin and then want to record a blues album, I wouldn't call that blues. You can come from the blues and be able to play blues, and go back to the blues for the rest of your life, but if you don't come from the blues, then it'll be something else. So, if you come from the blues, you'll be a blues player forever, 'cause you can play whatever you want and then go back and play blues, and it's acceptable. If you don't come from the blues, like Led Zeppelin or something, and you do a blues album, well they wouldn't call that blues. They'll just call it rock, which is probably what it is.

JP: What tag would you use to describe Gary Clark's music?

ES: I'd just call it—just new music. The way blues evolves. His own inspiration, indie pop is what he's doing now. But Gary can play blues. He could go back to the blues and he will be accepted, of course. He's playing good music, there's no doubt about it. Or he wouldn't be where he is today. He's a great player. The type of music he's playing now I don't know what you call it, but you don't go into a music store, look in the blues records, and find Gary Clark. You go to the pop records, and then you find Gary Clark.

JP: How would you define the blues?

Oh, I don't know how to define it. There's no words to just put in what music is really. I can't answer that because I really don't have an answer for how to describe it in words, other than by naming artists. I can name different artists—Sunnyland Slim, Big Walter Horton, Muddy Waters, you know—that's blues. Gary Clark and the Black Keys—that's not blues. [Laughs] I can describe like this, but as far as putting what it is in words, I just don't know how to do that.

JP: What role does originality play in blues?

ES: Originality would just be mostly their feelings, their interpretations of the old blues, and how they're changing up a few riffs and stuff. And then, writing their lyrics. Lyrics is a big thing. I think this is part of why everything is evolving and blues is changing so much, and why Gary Clark is changing so much. All these guys, they're coming up, and they're making changes. This is where you get people like Gary Clark and Johnny Lang. They're taking the blues and moving it into a different way, and it changes the whole thing. They're wanting to do something. They're experimenting, and this is where it's taken them.

JP: What makes blues authentic?

ES: Well, it's not the blues. It's the person itself that makes it authentic and makes it stand out. You're only as good as you are. So being different brings attention to yourself. People recognize this, and they either feel attracted or not. Being different, standing out still in the same vein, brings notoriety. You're either a great guitar player like Stevie [Ray Vaughan] was, or a great singer. It's just a personality that brings it out.

JP: How different is the perception of blues in the U.S. and overseas?

ES: Not perception—respect. There's a lot more respect for the blues in Europe, and especially in

Japan, than in America. In America there's just a few festivals around and few sales. But over in Europe and Japan, respect is there. Look at the audience. People in Europe will sit and listen, you know. Or stand and listen. They come, and they're quiet, paying respect. In Japan they won't say a word until you're finished, not even clap. It's just respect. But in America, they're just used to it. As I've told other people, we are still living our history. America is still very young, and especially our music. There's still some of the guys who invented the blues. It's still around. You know, Lazy Lester, Bobby Rush—some of these guys are still around, and they're still

teaching the guys. We are still in our second generation of real blues guys. They're still here teaching the new guys like the Moeller brothers and the Kellers.

JP: How much do you know about the blues traditions in Europe or Japan?

ES: I know some. There's blues in Europe and in Japan. Blues is an American roots music. It's where it came from, and so it started to spread, which is great. Everybody should share everybody's music. This is how we communicate. One of the best communications is music. It came along later on, and it's still coming together. It's a new music. ★

Notes

- 1 This work was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports ("Ministerio de Educación Cultura y Deporte") under the contract FPU ("Formación de Profesorado Universitario").
- 2 Despite limited attention in scholarly books about Austin and Texas music, Eddie Stout and Dialtone Records have received considerable coverage from blues writers and specialized media throughout the United States and Europe. See, for instance, Patrick Beach, "Labor of love: Eddie Stout's on a mission," *Austin 360*, February 19, 2011; Gene Tomko, "Birdleg: I Never Lost Sight of My Dream," *Living Blues*, Issue 227, Vol. 44, No. 5, October 2013, 18-25; and Scott M. Bock, "Eddie Stout and Dialtone Records. 'This is What I Was Supposed to Do,'" *Blues & Rhythm*, No. 284, November 2013, 22-25. Stout's recordings have also been repeatedly played and reviewed in blues radio programs in Spain, including *Blanco y Negro*, directed by Eugenio Moirón, and *La Hora del Blues*, directed by Vicente Zúmel.
- 3 Authenticity and its relation to race has been an important object of study for blues and popular music scholars, as illustrated, among others, by David Grazian, *Blue Chicago. The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Roger Gatchet, "I've Got Some Antique in Me': The Discourse of Authenticity and Identity in the African American Blues Community in Austin, Texas," *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2012, 207-229; and Josep Pedro, "The Globalization of Blues: Rural, Urban, Transatlantic" in Brian Goss, Joan Pedro, Mary Gould (eds.), *Talking Back to Globalization: Texts and Practices* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016). Race, geographical origin, and age are arguably the most dominant factors in the sliding scale of authenticity within blues culture.
- 4 Don Robey remains a controversial yet inspirational figure in African-American culture and popular music history, as reflected by author Nelson George in *The Death of Rhythm & Blues* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 56-57. George states, "You might not like all their methods—Robey's 'songwriting' is particularly objectionable. Still, as urban models for balancing black capitalism with the realities of a white-dominated society (whites of course even owned most of the black labels and stations), this 'rhythm & blues world' had real merit"; for more on the Houston blues scene in general, see Roger Wood's *Down in Houston: Bayou City Blues* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); another good source of information about a variety of record labels that specialized in African-American music is Bill Wyman's *Blues Odyssey: A Journey to Music's Heart and Soul* (New York: DK Publishing, 2001).
- 5 For an extended-analysis review see Josep Pedro, "Texas Eastside Kings: Texas Eastside Kings," *All About Jazz*, November 23, 2012. Other representative recordings of the East Austin tradition include *Texas Trumpets* (Dialtone, 1999); Hosea Hargrove, *Tex Golden Nugget* (Dialtone, 2010); and *Matthew Robinson & The Texas Blues Band* (Dialtone, 2011).
- 6 *Texas Eastside Kings* (Dialtone, 2001).
- 7 The 2015 edition of the Eastside Kings Festival was celebrated on September 12th and 13th. The line-up included a wide variety of blues-related artists, such as Lavelle White, Jewel Brown, Milton Hopkins, Sonny Rhodes, Hosea Hargrove, Mel Davis & The Blues Specialists, Harold McMillan & The Eastside Blues Syndicate, Jabo & The Old Dogs, Andrea Dawson, Pamela Allen, "Soul Man" Sam, Ray Sharpe, Orange Jefferson, "Blues Boy" Willie, and Dempsey Crenshaw.
- 8 The expression "labor of love" is used in Patrick Beach's "Labor of love: Eddie Stout's on a mission," *Austin 360*, February 19, 2011; and in Scott M. Bock's "Eddie Stout and Dialtone Records: 'This is What I Was Supposed to Do,'" *Blues & Rhythm*, No. 284, November 2013, 22-25. Furthermore, similarities between Eddie Stout's recording activities and the folklore research of Alan Lomax have been emphasized in several articles. For instance, see Robert Gabriel's "Sheiks of Industry. Austin record labels, part 1," *Austin Chronicle*, November 14, 2003, which states that "[t]he genuine feel of each Dialtone release reflects label co-owner/in-house producer Eddie Stout's role as Austin's modern-day Alan Lomax." See also David Mac's "Eddie Stout: The Blues Junction Interview," *Blues Junction Productions*, n.d., who describes Eddie Stout as a "folklorist for the new millennium" and as a "21st century Alan Lomax."
- 9 Having had limited economic success in their careers, "Little" Joe Washington, Joe Doucet, and Sherwood Fleming remained largely unknown, even within blues culture, before Stout produced their album recordings *Houston Guitar Blues* (Dialtone, 2003), *Houston's Third Ward Blues* (Dialtone Records, 2006), and *Blues Blues Blues* (Dynaflow Records, 2015), respectively. Rhys Williams's "Sherwood Fleming – Blues Blues Blues, Album Review," *Blues Blast Magazine*, July 29, 2015, exposes Fleming's story of hardship and perseverance from the early years of cotton picking in Mississippi, and the failed attempts to become a professional musician in California, to his unexpected and triumphal comeback through Stout's Dynaflow Records.
- 10 The conceptualization of Austin's blues scene through three historical sub-scenes—East Austin's black music scene (1945-1975); the eclectic folk-psychedelic scene (1960-1980); and the specialized Antone's scene (1975-2006)—has been proposed in Josep Pedro, "An Intercultural History of Blues in Austin, Texas: From the Negro District to the Global Rock Circuit," forthcoming. The idea of a music scene that includes different sub-scenes has also been used in Barry Shank's *Disonant Identities: The Rock 'n' Roll Scene in Austin, Texas* (Lebanon, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994). For more information on these scenes, see Alan Govenar, *Texas Blues: The Rise of a Contemporary Sound* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 485-532; Jason Dean Mellard, "Home with the Armadillo. Public Memory and Performance in the 1970s Austin Music Scene," *Journal of Texas Music History*, No. 10, 2010, 8-21; and Ryan A. Kashanipour, "Antone's," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 9, 2010.

Cosmic Cowboys, Thunderbirds, and Punks:
*From Austin Countercultures
to the 'Live Music Capital of the World'*

Jonathan Watson





The complex musical traditions of the American Southwest reflect the vastly diverse ethnic cultures long present throughout the region. For hundreds of years, the Southwest has been a cultural crossroads for Native Americans, Hispanics, Anglos, African Americans, Germans, Czechs, and many others, all of whom have left an important imprint on the area's musical history. As historian Gary Hartman notes, "The number, variety, and placement of the state's ethnic communities are unique in all of North America, and they have allowed for a prolific cross-pollination of musical cultures that has given Texas music its special character."¹ Today, music continues to be a vital cultural element in defining what it means to be Texan.

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In recent years, there has been a growing body of scholarship that highlights music's prominent role as a cultural force within society at the national level. For example, George Lipsitz's *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music* and Diane Pecknold's *Hidden in the Mix: The African American Presence in Country Music* look at how music has played an important part in articulating and redefining racial and gender roles in American society. As valuable as such studies are, there is a need for further examination of musical history at the regional and local level, including within specific urban communities.²

Central Texas, and Austin in particular, can be seen as a microcosm of these larger trends throughout the Southwest of blending together disparate musical traditions and creating new forms of music that reflect the unique cultural history of the region. This article will look at

the proliferation of several musical genres in Austin and the surrounding area from the 1960s to the 1980s and examine how the dynamic cultural environment of that period helped give rise to the eclectic live music scene that flourishes in Central Texas today.

Ethnomusicologist Manuel Peña suggests that most music can be categorized as either “organic” or “superorganic.” By “organic” he means music that has evolved “organically” from within a society and is typically used for non-commercial purposes. Examples of this include music performed by local residents themselves as part of community rituals, such as religious ceremonies, family gatherings, political rallies, or other events that are part of the communal exchange of culture within a society. By contrast, “superorganic” music is usually intended to generate financial profit or be exchanged for money, goods, or services of some type.

Peña’s organic versus superorganic paradigm is helpful

in a mostly organic manner as a grassroots effort by local artists and audiences to find a form of musical expression that would allow them to articulate their own sense of individual and collective identity.

Of course, as is so often the case, these musical genres eventually became more commodified, as record companies, club owners, and musicians themselves began to recognize the potential for financial profit. It is important to remember, however, that the merging of organic and superorganic qualities in music or any other form of cultural expression is not inherently negative. After all, artists and club owners have to be able to make a living in order to continue providing the music that is essential to the organic, communal exchange between musicians and audience. As historian Barry Shank explains, “[A]t the very moment when [the artists] were singing the pleasures of immediate, un-commodified, collective difference, they were also dependent upon the

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for better understanding the often complicated role music plays in human societies, but there are also flaws in this theoretical model. The single biggest problem is that most forms of music do not fit neatly into either the organic or superorganic category but, instead, lie somewhere in between. For example, music that arises organically from within a society can be commodified, just as superorganic music that was originally created for commercial purposes can be adopted by local residents and repurposed for organic uses within the community.³

The music scene that developed in Austin and the surrounding Central Texas region during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s certainly reflects the dynamic interplay of “organic” and “superorganic” forces at that time. After all, it was this period that gave rise not only to progressive country (which would revolutionize country music on a national level), but also a reinvigoration of the long-standing local blues traditions and the proliferation of a new genre that would come to be known as “punk” and would take on its own uniquely southwestern flavor. All three of these musical styles originated

recognition and economic support of a system that produced a commodity from their performances.”⁴

Throughout its history, Austin’s music scene has involved a complex interweaving of organic and superorganic elements. Even today, there are a number of locations, ranging from nightclubs to backyard “picking parties,” in which musicians are allowed (and even encouraged) to create, experiment, and engage in an organic exchange of culture with others. At the same time, there are several venues that strive to attract large crowds and generate a substantial profit for the owners and artists. Such internationally acclaimed festivals as Austin City Limits and South by Southwest bring in thousands of fans and musicians each year. As might be expected, city officials have done their best to capitalize on the perception of music as being an integral part of the community’s cultural identity. In 1991, the City of Austin adopted the slogan “Live Music Capital of the World” as part of a marketing strategy aimed at promoting Austin’s music scene.⁵

Of course, music has had a strong presence in Central Texas since long before the 1960s. Prior to the arrival of Europeans

in the area, local Native-American communities included song and dance in a variety of activities and events. Soon after officials designated the tiny settlement of Waterloo as the Capital of the Republic of Texas and renamed it Austin in 1839, a diverse influx of settlers poured into the region, each group bringing with it rich and vibrant musical traditions. By 1900, the population of Texas had grown to more than three million as an increasing number of immigrants from Europe, Mexico, and elsewhere in the United States arrived.⁶

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the booming population helped forge a unique musical environment that reflected the remarkable ethnic diversity of the region. Tejanos (Texans of Mexican descent) borrowed the accordion-based polkas and schottisches of German and Czech immigrants and blended those together with their own mariachi, corridos, and other forms of Mexican folk music. French-speaking black creoles migrated across

musicians combined black jazz and blues with fiddle hoedowns, pop, and ragtime to form a lively new genre that came to be known as western swing. Steel guitar player and Texas Western Swing Hall of Fame member Tommy Morrell described western swing as “jazz, blues, big band, polka music, country music . . . everything.”¹⁰ Jean Boyd, Professor of Musicology at Baylor University, states, “Because it is a crossroads for diverse cultures, including Native American, German, French, Cajun, African American, Czech, and Polish, Texas was the birthplace of western swing.”¹¹

Western swing not only became nationally popular during the 1930s and 1940s, but it also had an important impact on the emergence of rock & roll in the 1950s, as well as on progressive country in the 1970s. During their early years, such rock & roll pioneers as Buddy Holly and Bill Haley borrowed from the western swing tradition of blending diverse ethnic cultures and combined country music with black R&B

Buddy Holly and Bill Haley borrowed from the western swing tradition of blending diverse ethnic cultures and combined country music with black R&B to help give birth to rock & roll.

the Louisiana border into Texas and blended their “La La” music with the blues and R&B of African-American Texans to help create zydeco.⁷

German settlers established some of the earliest live music venues around Central Texas. One such venue, built in 1870 and known as the Twin Sisters Dance Hall, remains a vital part of the local community around Blanco, approximately 50 miles southwest of Austin. Scholtz Garten in downtown Austin opened in 1866, followed by Dessau Dance Hall thirteen miles northeast in 1876.⁸ Gruene Hall, located about 40 miles southwest of Austin, dates to 1878. These venues served as gathering places for all kinds of events within the German-Texas community, although most are now dance halls featuring country, Tejano, rock & roll, blues, and other types of music. As author Gail Folkins points out, these “halls often served as meeting places where fraternal organizations gathered to conduct business in support of local farmers, merchants, and other residents.” This, she says, “provided an important cultural identification for immigrant communities.”⁹

By the 1920s and 1930s, jazz was quickly gaining popularity across North America and around the world. In the Lone Star State, Bob Wills, Milton Brown and other white country

to help give birth to rock & roll. In fact, one of Bill Haley’s first successful bands was Bill Haley and the Four Aces of Western Swing.¹² Likewise, during the 1970s, Willie Nelson, Asleep at the Wheel, Marcia Ball, and many others drew from western swing to create the eclectic progressive country sound that put Austin on the national music map.

Another example of the type of cultural cross-pollination that took place in Texas during the first half of the twentieth century is “The West Side Sound,” which originated in San Antonio during the 1950s but would have a major impact on the Austin music scene by the 1960s. Although Texas, like all southern states, remained racially segregated following World War II, racial segregation in San Antonio was not as deeply entrenched or as vigorously enforced as it was in most other major urban areas in the South at the time. Much of this was due to the city’s long history of racial and ethnic diversity. From the 1700s through the early 1900s, San Antonio’s population included high numbers of Hispanics, Native Americans, African Americans, Germans, Czechs, and others. The Alamo City also was home to several large military bases. When President Truman desegregated the U.S. Armed Forces in 1948, it had a significant impact on San Antonio, where

military personnel and civilians of all races mingled rather freely in many of the city's nightclubs.

The result is what historian Allen Olsen describes as “intercultural congeniality,” in which musicians and audiences of all racial backgrounds gathered in local venues to enjoy a diverse range of musical styles, including blues, jazz, country, R&B, and pop.¹³ This had an especially important impact on certain young San Antonio musicians, including Doug Sahm, Augie Meyers, Randy Garibay, and others, who eagerly absorbed this wide range of ethnic musical influences and melded them together into what became known as the West Side Sound. Throughout the 1960s, the West Side Sound continued to mature, as it incorporated rock & roll, conjunto, and other styles to form a remarkably eclectic regional sub-genre of Texas music. By the 1970s, Doug Sahm and other San Antonio musicians were bringing the West Side Sound north to Central Texas and making it an integral part of Austin's burgeoning progressive country music scene.

In some ways, progressive country is also rooted in earlier musical traditions dating back decades in Austin. Perhaps the best example of this is Kenneth Threadgill's bar and gas station on North Lamar Boulevard, which became a gathering place for musicians and music fans not long after it opened in 1933. By the 1960s, “Threadgill's Tavern” was a popular place for locals to gather and jam or just listen to music and drink beer. The most famous Threadgill's patron was then University of Texas student Janis Joplin, who sang folk, country, and blues, sometimes accompanying herself on autoharp. Music historian Travis Stimeling writes, “Kenneth Threadgill personified the ideals of the progressive country scene in Austin. By creating a safe space for the city's emerging counterculture in the early 1960s, Threadgill served as the patriarch of its music scene, a role that was underscored by the common knowledge that the recently deceased Janis Joplin had referred to him as ‘daddy’”¹⁴

Threadgill's developed a reputation as a place where musicians and audiences could experiment with a wide range of musical styles. Threadgill himself often acted as a teacher and mentor for younger musicians, as he encouraged them to infuse new sounds with traditional Texas country and gospel music. Threadgill's emerged as a cultural incubator of sorts, in which intellectuals, poets, artists, and hippies could all gather to share ideas and music. One regular participant in the scene at Threadgill's was current owner Eddie Wilson, who remembers:

Mr. Threadgill was a fairly ordinary redneck beer joint operator until Janis [Joplin] and Julie [Paul] and some of the gals somehow sneaked the word to him that the “N” word was just not cool. And as

soon as he heard that, he adopted it as a philosophy, and the first black ever to come into Threadgill's, that I know of, was Mance Lipscomb . . . East Texas blues player who's got some real good stuff. Mance was one of the best finger-picking guitar players that you have ever heard.¹⁵

As an entrepreneur and music fan, Eddie Wilson saw great potential in the dynamic and culturally diverse scene at Threadgill's. He also drew inspiration from Austin's primary psychedelic rock venue, the Vulcan Gas Company, which opened in 1967 and began attracting a large and youthful audience. When the venue closed in 1970, Wilson put his vision into action by securing local investors—including Mad Dog Inc., a group of famous Texas novelists and playwrights—to purchase a former National Guard armory and transform it into a “Cultural Arts Laboratory.”¹⁶

With the help of local artist Jim Franklin, Eddie Wilson dubbed the new venue the “Armadillo World Headquarters.” According to Franklin, the small, indigenous mammal known as the armadillo symbolized the very spirit of Austin's emerging counterculture, since it was native to the region, odd in appearance, and mostly nocturnal. Historian Jason Mellard writes, “[W]hile progressive country percolated up out of Austin's larger live music scene (including Soap Creek Saloon), the Armadillo provided the most high-profile arena in which the diverse elements of progressive country came together to reach the largest audiences in Austin and beyond.”¹⁷

From the very beginning, Eddie Wilson booked a diverse musical lineup that included national acts, such as Ravi Shankar, Bruce Springsteen, and the Pointer Sisters; local artists, such as Freddie King, Freda and the Firedogs, Greezy Wheels, and Asleep at the Wheel; and an assortment of performances



Armadillo World Headquarters in 1975.
Photo by Jim Richardson. Courtesy of South Austin
Popular Culture Center.

by the Austin Ballet Theater and several jazz groups. Wilson recalls that the Armadillo was “this remarkable, awkward size that caused us to have to marry, in that location, every single kind of audience that we could, and so everybody gives it a lot of credit for being [the birthplace of] progressive country music, but we did a lot of stuff that was a lot more progressive than that.”¹⁸

Although the Armadillo World Headquarters regularly featured a wide variety of music, it is perhaps most often associated with the rise of progressive country during the 1970s. Progressive country was a unique, regionally based amalgamation of honky tonk, folk, rock & roll, western swing, boogie woogie, and other styles heard at the Armadillo, Soap Creek Saloon, and a variety of venues throughout the Capital City. However, the progressive country phenomenon that so captivated Austin audiences and went on to redefine country music at the national level was about more than just the music.

intending to return to “Music City” once the house was rebuilt. However, he soon re-discovered the thriving dance hall scene he had left behind in Texas and began performing throughout the area. After playing at the Armadillo and other Austin-area venues, Nelson decided not to return to Nashville but, instead, to remain in his home state and pursue a new, more independent career path that would allow him the creative freedom he craved. Although he was not the first artist to don the progressive country mantle, Nelson was the most nationally prominent. He soon came to embody the non-conformist, free-spirited, and eclectic essence of progressive country.²²

As important as the Armadillo and Willie Nelson were to the proliferation of progressive country, the PBS television series *Austin City Limits* introduced the city’s burgeoning music scene to millions throughout North America and around the world. The first episode of *Austin City Limits* aired in October 1974 (featuring Willie Nelson), and eventually became

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This new “cosmic cowboy” culture also was reflected in more liberal social and political ideals, the open use of drugs (especially marijuana), a “laid-back” lifestyle, and an outward appearance that blended Texas tradition with hippie counterculture, including cowboy boots and western shirts worn with beards and shoulder-length hair.

The progressive country scene received an unexpected boost on August 12, 1972—almost seventeen years to the day after Elvis Presley played in the same building—when a Texas born singer and songwriter named Willie Nelson walked out onto the Armadillo stage.¹⁹ As Eddie Wilson later remarked, that night “changed everything.”²⁰ Author Joe Nick Patoski concurs that “[Willie Nelson’s] performance in front of a mixed crowd of hippies and rednecks is recognized as the starting point of the modern Austin music scene.”²¹

Nelson, from Abbott, Texas, had established a successful songwriting career in Nashville but was frustrated with creative constraints placed on him and other country music artists by record label executives. When his Nashville home burned down in 1970, Nelson moved his family to Bandera, Texas,

the longest-running nationally broadcast music show.²³

While progressive country may have been the most nationally prominent genre in the Austin music scene during the 1970s, the blues also reached an unprecedented level of popularity in the city around the same time. This was due mainly to the efforts of a former University of Texas student and blues aficionado named Clifford Antone, whose nightclub, Antone’s, bolstered the careers of both veteran and novice blues artists and played a major role in further enhancing Austin’s reputation as a hotbed for live music.

Of course, the blues had been popular throughout the Lone Star State since well before the 1970s. Such Texas-based musicians as Blind Lemon Jefferson, Huddie “Leadbelly” Ledbetter (born just across the state line in Mooringsport, Louisiana), T-Bone Walker, and Mance Lipscomb honed their musical skills in the Dallas neighborhood of Deep Ellum and elsewhere around the state during the 1920s-1940s.²⁴

Other Texas blues musicians, including Lavelle White, Robert Shaw, Albert Collins, Freddie King, W.C. Clark, and Roosevelt Thomas, often played the so-called “Chitlin’

Circuit” during the 1940s-1960s. This was an informal network of nightclubs throughout the South that welcomed black musicians and audiences during a time of widespread racial discrimination and segregation. As Roger Gatchet explains, “Decades before Austin christened itself the ‘Live Music Capital of the World,’ the city held a small yet prominent place on the national blues scene by virtue of its location on the ‘Chitlin’ Circuit.’”²⁵ East Austin was home to such popular Chitlin’ Circuit venues as the Victory Grill and Charlie’s Playhouse. By the 1960s, these clubs began attracting large numbers of white university students who helped create a broader demand for blues music throughout the town.

Dallas also had a thriving blues scene, which attracted young white listeners. For many of these fans, blues music seemed exotic and somewhat rebellious, similar to rock & roll. Dallas native and current Austin-based blues musician Denny Freeman recalls:

[In] Dallas at the time, there was a blues awareness, and there was one radio station that had—in the daytime, it had adult programming, kind of like Big Band stuff—but at night, there was a radio program called *Cats Caravan* that came on. The DJ played a lot of blues that you just didn’t hear any place else on the radio, and so that kind of furthered my education by hearing a lot of blues artists, like Muddy Waters and people on Excello Records. They played Lightnin’ Slim and Lazy Lester, people like that—Lonnie Johnson—just all kinds of lowdown blues.²⁶

By the late 1960s, many young Texans from Dallas and elsewhere were drawn to the vibrant and eclectic music scene emerging in Austin. Again, Denny Freeman remembers:

Some people said, ‘Hey, let’s go to Austin for the weekend.’ So, I came down there in [19]69 with some friends. And the first day that I was here, I just fell in love with the city. . . . There was music here, and there was an important kind of hippie psychedelic venue right down on Congress Avenue—the Vulcan Gas Company. It was just a hippie joint. I mean, Muddy Waters played there. Freddie King played there, some other blues guys. It wasn’t a blues joint, it was just that back in those days, it was just a hippie joint, but some hippies were aware of blues guys. I mean, whoever played there. It was just a cool place. . . . [Austin] was a small town. It was so much smaller than now, and there was a community of

longhaired people. At that time, UT [The University of Texas], that was the nucleus of it; that’s where it kind of started. In a lot of towns, all of the hippie communities, all the hippie crap, emanated from the universities in the [19]60s. When I got here I moved to Central Austin. Not everybody went to UT, but that’s where a lot of the stuff emanated from and it hovered around that part of town. There was just a lot of longhaired people and people that were living like hippies. Whatever that was—I don’t know what that was—it was just people that had kind of dropped out of the normal thing.²⁷

By the 1970s, an increasing number of young blues musicians migrated to Austin, including Jimmie Vaughan (and his younger brother Stevie), Lou Ann Barton, Kim Wilson, Doyle Bramhall, and Paul Ray. As the local blues community grew, the need for a blues venue emerged that would link the traditional artists of the Chitlin’ Circuit to the new generation of musicians flooding into Austin.

Clifford Antone, from Port Arthur, Texas, opened just such a venue, Antone’s, on a then nearly vacant Sixth Street in downtown Austin on July 15, 1975. He had noticed a growing number of young white blues fans flocking to nightclubs on the East Side and believed that he could create a venue that would cater to that audience while also providing a place in which veteran blues players could mingle with up-and-coming musicians as a way of keeping the blues traditions alive and relevant to the city’s younger white population. Blues singer and radio personality Paul Ray says, “Antone’s has been more than a club; it’s been a home to the blues, where white and black performers could jam and learn from each other.”²⁸

Perhaps ironically, Antone’s drew away much of the young, white crowd that previously frequented more traditional East Side venues, causing them to lose money. As musician Jesse Sublett explains, “The East Side scene was kind of like So Co [South Congress], and like Sixth Street when it was happening and not ‘dirty’ in the early 1980s. . . . Things started to decline after Austin became more integrated. An ironic, weird, sad fact.”²⁹

Antone’s would launch the careers of several younger musicians, just as it helped reinvigorate the careers of many older artists. Dallas guitarist Jimmie Vaughan and vocalist Kim Wilson, from California, founded the blues and R&B group the Fabulous Thunderbirds in 1974. They became the house band at Antone’s, which gave them the opportunity to perform with a number of blues legends who came through on tour. Jimmie Vaughan’s younger brother, Stevie Ray Vaughan,

soon began playing at Antone's, along with Paul Ray, Angela Strehli, and a number of other young white musicians. Although Clifford Antone died in 2006, his namesake club continues to serve as an incubator for the evolution of the blues, as well as a cornerstone of Austin's live music scene. In recent years, Gary Clark Jr., Eve Monsees, Jackie Venson, and others represent the newest generation of successful blues musicians to emerge from Antone's.

Unlike progressive country and the blues, punk is less well documented in the historical narrative of Austin music. The exact beginning of the punk scene in Central Texas is difficult to pinpoint, although its roots extend, at least in part, to the psychedelic sounds produced in the 1960s by Austinite Roky Erickson and his band, the 13th Floor Elevators.

Such songs as "You're Gonna Miss Me" and "Tried to Hide," from the landmark album *The Psychedelic Sounds of The 13th Floor Elevators*, showcase a new, harder-edged style of music and lyrics that reflected a growing use of "mind-altering" drugs. To celebrate and publicize psychedelic rock in Austin, the Vulcan Gas Company's art directors, Jim Franklin and Gilbert Shelton, as well as other artists, created posters that captured the more abstract psychedelic culture of the



Bluesman Eddie Taylor with The Fabulous Thunderbirds at Antone's. Courtesy of South Austin Popular Culture Center.

Austin's punk scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s emerged in large part as a backlash against the "peace and love" message often expressed in progressive country and psychedelic rock. Barry Shank, who produced one of the few academic studies on the early Austin punk scene, writes, "[The 13th Floor

The exact beginning of the punk scene in Central Texas is difficult to pinpoint, although its roots extend, at least in part, to the psychedelic sounds produced in the 1960s by Austinite Roky Erickson and his band, the 13th Floor Elevators.

period. Joe Nick Patoski writes, "[Music posters] were aimed at hippies, a new cultural phenomenon growing in numbers around the country. These posters advertised music concerts that appealed to a long-haired, counterculture audience that championed peace, love, and understanding as moral virtues and embraced marijuana and psychedelic drug consumption as pleasurable accompaniments to their concert-going experience."³⁰

By the mid-1970s, a new style that would come to be known as punk was rapidly gaining popularity in New York City and across Great Britain. Such British bands as the Sex Pistols and the Clash, along with New York-based artists the Ramones and Patti Smith, ushered in a new sound combining loud, frenetic rhythms with a decidedly non-conformist attitude and physical appearance.

Elevators'] music helped define the genre of psychedelic punk. . . . An unrelentingly simple yet purposive beat drove the song through this unexpected harmonic transition, emphasizing the feeling in the song."³¹ These elements from psychedelic rock, combined with starker lyrics expressing the frustration with one's own place in society, helped give rise to an organic punk movement in Austin during the mid-1970s.

One of the first punk bands to gain a substantial following in Austin was the Skunks. Comprised of Jesse Sublett on bass and vocals, Eddie Muñoz on guitar, and Billy Blackmon on drums, the Skunks formed in the summer of 1978. Sublett, a native of Johnson City, Texas, often visited Austin during the late 1960s, reveling in the vibrant and eclectic musical culture found throughout the city. Sublett remembers, "I went to several shows at the Vulcan Gas Company right before it



The Violators' first performance at Raul's in February 1978. Photo by Ken Hoge. Courtesy of Jesse Sublett.

closed. And that was really cool. It was really over my head. I was just a young teeny bopper. . . . It was just really neat, because it was a cultural experience. You know, it was hippies.³²

In 1976, Sublett formed a garage blues/rock band called Jellyroll, featuring lead guitarist Eddie Muñoz. However, since progressive country and blues were so popular in Austin at the time, Jellyroll faced stiff competition in finding gigs. Sublett decided to form two different groups and commit himself fully to playing punk music. In December 1977, he formed the Violators, featuring singer Carla Olson, guitarist Kathy Valentine, drummer Marilyn Dean, and Sublett on

bass.³³ Around the same time, Sublett and guitarist Muñoz decided to create the Skunks. Sublett remembers:

So, the Violators' first gig was New Year's Eve, 1977, at Soap Creek [Saloon] opening for the Uranium Savages. . . . Eddie and I agreed to back up this guy by the name of Charles Ray who had a little project called the Tools. . . . He came up with this opening slot, and we said, 'Yes, we will do it,' but [we] wanted to showcase our bands, too. By that time Eddie and I decided to start our new band called the Skunks.



All this happened really rapidly. So, at that gig on New Year's Eve, the Tools played, then in the middle of the set, we did a mini set by the Skunks and a mini set by the Violators. So, that was actually the first Austin debut of two punk bands from Austin. And the people there hated us . . . but the hatred we felt told us we were doing something right and we had something.³⁴

Although Sublett believed that any audience response to his music, whether positive or negative, was a good thing, club

owners were reluctant to offer the Skunks regular bookings. As the band continued to look for venues, Sublett remembered a club located near the University of Texas named Raul's. As he recalls, "We had played there as Jellyroll. It was not a strict formatted club. They had country, they had country rock, and hard rock—whoever. When we started our punk bands, we thought, well, that place we could play."³⁵

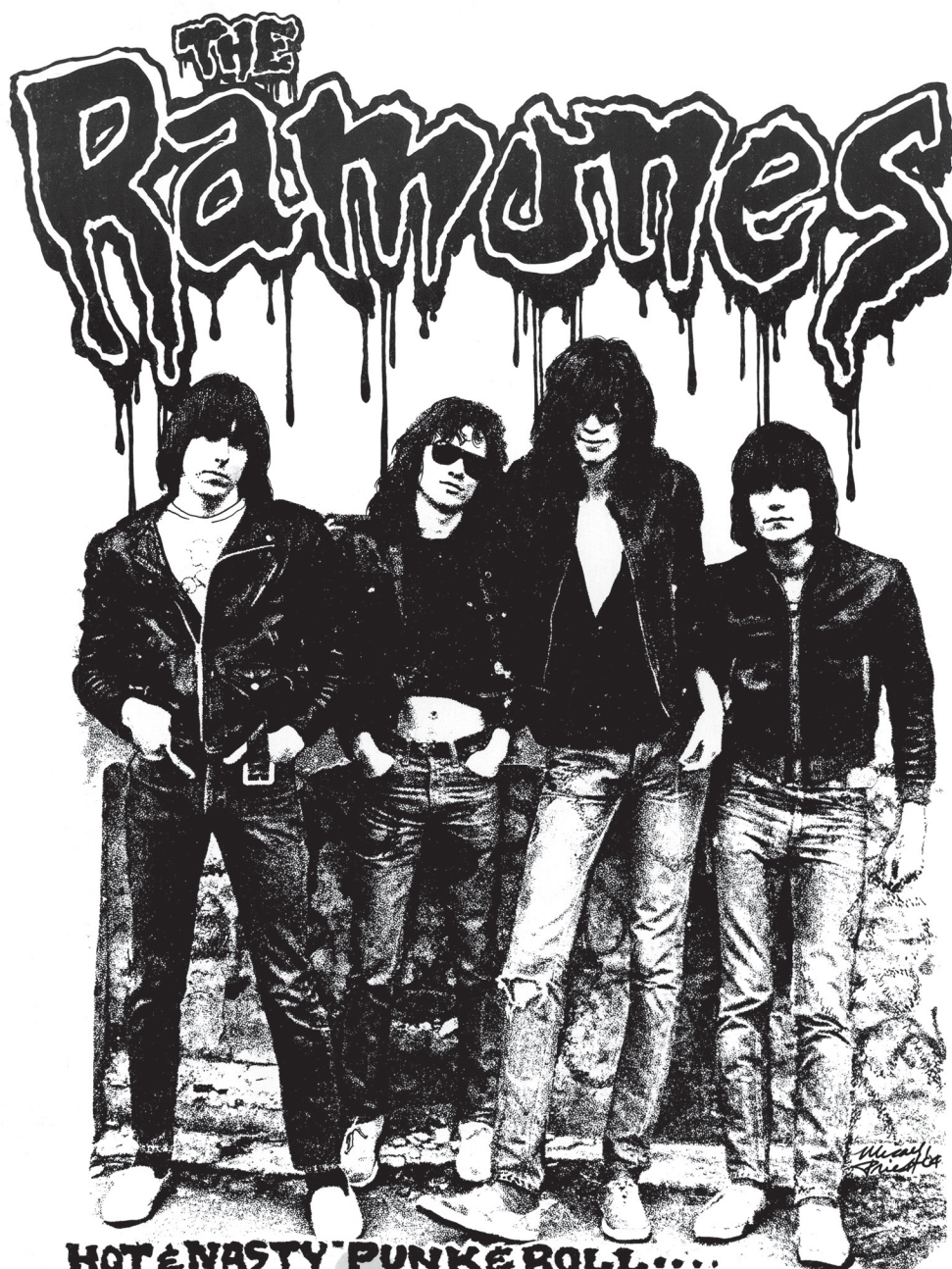
The owners of Raul's, Joseph Gonzales and Roy "Raul" Gomez, initially intended for the bar to be a home base for the up-and-coming Tejano music scene. However, when this proved slow to develop, Gonzales and Gomez began looking for other styles of music to showcase. After some initial hesitation, they agreed to give the Skunks a try. The Skunks and the Violators quickly proved their ability to attract college crowds when they first performed at Raul's in early 1978. Sublett remembers those first shows:

I know he [Joseph Gonzales] didn't expect anything. I think he thought it was a joke or something really weird. So, at the first gig it was a big success. It was less than 100 people there, maybe 50 or 70 at the most, but there was a lot of excitement. It was wild and everyone could see there was something.³⁶

The success of the Skunks' first few gigs at Raul's helped create a burgeoning punk scene in Austin. Similar to Antone's and the Armadillo, Raul's became a cultural hotbed that helped "solidify the foundation of a unified, alternative network of fans and musicians."³⁷ With the success of the Ramones playing at the Armadillo in February 1978, Raul's booked the Violators and the Skunks as regulars on Monday nights.³⁸ Soon Raul's became very popular with the college-aged crowd. In the summer of 1978, the Violators dissolved, leaving Sublett, with new guitarist Jon Dee Graham, to concentrate fully on the Skunks, spreading their anti-establishment message through punk music to Austin and beyond.

Raul's soon gained national fame during a show in the autumn of 1978. One of the many new bands on the scene, the Huns, made up of University of Texas students, performed to a large crowd. When the lead singer exchanged words with a local Austin police officer, a small riot broke out, ending with a total of six people arrested and charged with inciting violent behavior.³⁹ After *Rolling Stone* magazine published a story on the incident, Raul's enjoyed international exposure, and "attendance and participation increased significantly after that."⁴⁰

Raul's only existed for three more years, closing in 1981. More than any other local punk venue, including Duke's Royal Coach Inn, Club Foot/Night Life, and Liberty Lunch, Raul's helped define the Austin punk scene. Through the early



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success of the Violators and the Skunks, Joseph Gonzales formed a reputation for showcasing newly formed punk bands. This drove the creation of numerous new punk bands in the Austin area during the early 1980s. Brett Bradford, guitarist for the Austin-based post-modern rock band Scratch Acid, recalls, "Austin was a city with a small town atmosphere. For some reason, the underground music scene just took hold and exploded. That whole 'go start your own band thing' was real."⁴¹

With the growing numbers of musicians and music fans moving to Austin by the 1980s, venues featuring live music

became more abundant. Austin eventually had "more live music venues per capita than anywhere else in the nation," further bolstering its claim as the "Live Music Capital of the World."⁴²

The notion of Austin as a "Live Music Capital" is relatively new, but it is built upon decades of a dynamic, eclectic, and ever-evolving music scene. The music found in and around Austin reflects a complex mix of cultures and of organic and superorganic elements, all of which have blended together in unique and sometimes unexpected ways to help earn Austin an international reputation as a mecca for live music. ★

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Austin in the Jazz Age

By Richard Zelade (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2015)

In Richard Zelade's introduction to his *Austin in the Jazz Age*, the author claims that "as heady as the Austin music and arts scene is today, it has not equaled the explosion of talent that marked Austin's Jazz Age." This assertion proves to be no empty bit of Texas braggadocio, for Zelade's book presents ample and quite remarkable evidence from the 1920s of a wide range of creative activity, from music and literature to the arts of dance, film, and design. Not only did a number of University of Texas students become at the time up-to-date performers in a variety of fields, but most went on to enjoy nationally acclaimed careers as singers, band leaders, writers, dancers, actors, and designers. It always surprises me to learn from where in Texas such talented young men and women come to study in Austin; in the 1920s many arrived from small and smaller towns throughout the state, and this still seems to hold true today for students who attend the capital city's flagship university.

It was gratifying to me as a fan of native Texas jazz musicians to find that Zelade's book includes two early University jazz figures, Jimmy Maloney and Sykes "Smith" Ballew, the former from Mount Vernon and the latter from Palestine. These two musicians had each organized his own band, known respectively as Sole Killers and Texajazzers, but later they would combine their groups to form Jimmie's Joys, which first recorded in 1923 in Los Angeles. The Jimmie's Joys recordings are historically significant, since their versions of "Sobbing Blues" and other tunes were only recorded previously by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings in 1922, with almost no other jazz recordings made prior to that date, except for the first ever jazz records produced in New York by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, beginning in 1917. Furthermore, the Jimmie's Joys recordings appeared in the same year (1923) as the first recordings made by Louis Armstrong, then with the seminal King Oliver band in Chicago. Maloney and Ballew were but two out of a dozen or more student artists who made a name for themselves during the Jazz Age, and like others to come, both continued for decades as successful entertainers, the latter as an actor in twenty-four films, including *The Red Badge of Courage* of 1951.

One of the biggest discoveries for me was that Tex Ritter of Murvaul, who was an early singing cowboy movie star and subsequently sang the theme song in the film *High Noon* of 1953, graduated with honors from Beaumont's South Park High School, my own alma mater, after which he enrolled at UT in the fall of 1922. Another discovery for me was Eudora Garrett, a reader of the poetry of Walt Whitman and Rupert Brooke, who lived in a tent near Lake Austin while a student at UT. A musician and later a writer on Native American folklore, Garrett was profiled in 1925 in *The Daily Texan* by student Vivian Richard, whose description offers but one example of the high level of writing by students in the 1920s: "Even the most prosaic acknowledge that no more fitting place could

be found to write or dream than in this hermit maid's canvas home. From the rustic table, piled with books, to the magic rug on the floor, the whole room breathes of originality." Another fine example of student writing comes from the 1921 humor magazine, the *Scalper*, in which an apparently anonymous poet depicts vividly a jazz band's early performance: "Now louder boom the drums / And wilder grows the rhythm / And a snarling flutter-tongue / From the cornet, sends my skin a-tremble." The poet's use at this early date of the term "flutter-tongue" stunned me, but it should not have, for students were then, as they are now, quite up with their times.

In considering the nature of the Jazz Age in Austin, Zelade has divided his book into two parts. The first is an overview of the period: its jazz talk ("Jazz Baby: a woman of easy morals"; "Jelly Bean: weakling, a coward"; "buffos: dollars, and plenty of them"); its sexual revolution (shorter dresses and a braless, androgynous look); bootleg drinking in Austin's then conservative bastion and the authorities' vain attempts to police such lawless consumption; the return to the University of soldiers from the First World War; and the effects of the "Spanish Flu." The second part offers a series of portraits of "Jazz People," from Jewish football star and airplane stunt flyer Ike Sewell, who in 1943 invented deep-dish pizza pie in Chicago, to cowboy song collector John Lomax and his and J. Frank Dobie's impact on Tex Ritter's career; dancer Janet Collett, who starred with the Pavlova Company; pageant designer Jack "Shakey" Tobin and costume designer Ralph Jester, the latter a contributor to some of Cecil B. DeMille's most spectacular Bible-based films, like *Samson and Delilah* of 1949; novelist Ruth Cross, whose *The Golden Cocoon*, "a story of Austin and University life," took "the country by storm" in 1924; actor-singer John Boles, who starred in *The Desert Song* of 1929, "the first 'talkie' screen musical romance"; and pianist Rollins "Buzz" Edens, who performed in 1925 with Steve Gardner's Texas University Troubadors, which would be recorded in San Antonio in 1930 and would include the extraordinary Bix Beiderbecke-sounding cornetist Tom Howell from Cameron. Later in New York "Buzz" Edens, a native of Hillsboro, played for seven years with the Red Nichols Orchestra. Each of Zelade's portraits captures a unique character who made Austin and the University a lively place in the heyday of jazz and the cultural changes it reflected and even in some ways brought about. Many of the striking photographs and visual materials are from the author's personal collection, and they add immensely to his overall presentation of those innovative times that in so many respects have influenced our own.

Dave Oliphant

Weird, Yet Strange: Notes from an Austin Music Artist

By Danny Garrett (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2015)

Weird Yet Strange: Notes from an Austin Music Artist showcases prolific Austin poster artist Danny Garrett's work from the 1970s to the present. Those looking to admire Garrett's detailed and attractive art that college students used to steal off light poles on the Drag as collectibles is an understandable impulse and well worth the price. But like the folk music that Garrett claims is a major source of Austin's musical renaissance of the 1970s, the words matter.

Between the high quality reproductions of decades of Austin music art, Garrett weaves a story of his life, his work, and his adopted hometown that provides context and adds nuance and meaning to his visual art. For casual fans, *The Weird Yet Strange* will provide what has become the canonical version of Austin music history. Garrett argues that what made Austin special was a collision of the conservative country sensibilities of Texas past and the progressive, rock and roll culture of the University and "the ability to synthesize and amalgamate these disparities. It's been a place where new common denominators have been forged from the interplay of the old ones."

The Threadgill's, North Texas Folk Club, Vulcan Gas Company, and Armadillo World Headquarters narratives presented by other writers such as Jan Reid and Travis Stimeling are retold here, but what elevates Garrett's work is his expanded scope and decidedly different perspective. While Garrett began doing music posters for the legendary Jim Franklin in the Armadillo phase, his most significant work was for Clifford Antone's legendary and nomadic blues venue. Consequently, after paying appropriate homage to the progressive country movement, Garrett produces an intimate portrait of Austin's second great music scene with the emotion and insight only a participant could provide. His account of Antone's role as a nationally revered temple to the disappearing elder statesmen of the blues, such as Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, and Alberts King and Collins, is a highlight of the book. Stevie Ray Vaughan's rise from anonymity at the Rome Inn to worldwide praise is chronicled lovingly in these pages. Other Austin blues icons get their due as well, such as Stevie's brother Jimmie and his Fabulous Thunderbirds, Lou Ann Barton, W.C. Clark, and Angela Strehli.

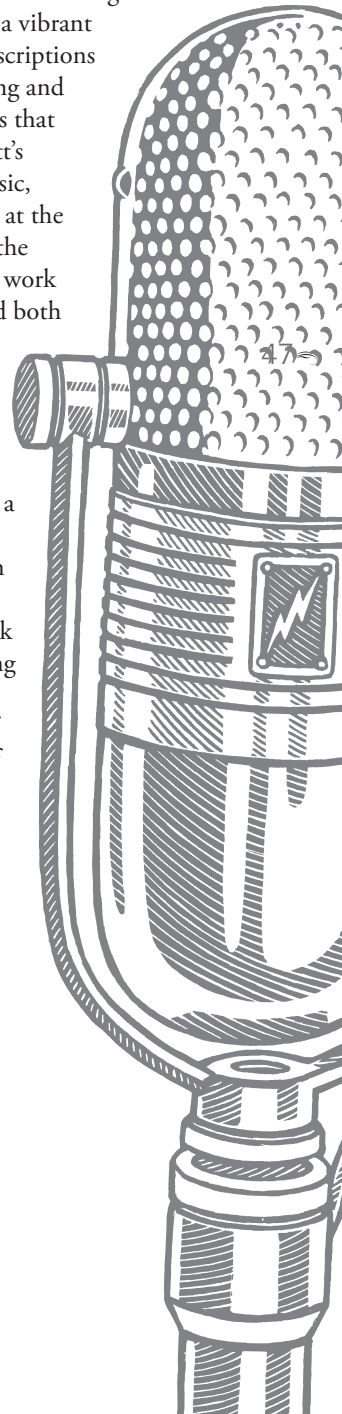
Through his poster work Garrett goes beyond the local blues and country scenes. Garrett touches on festivals such as Willie's picnics, the Kerrville Folk Festival, Spamarama, and Eeyore's Birthday, as well as the punk and rock scenes of the late 1970s and 1980s. Garrett also includes many of his posters and experiences of national touring acts that visited Austin over the decades, providing a much needed national context to a scene so often presented as insular.

Garrett does not just expand the scope of Austin music to other scenes; he also presents a new and valuable perspective, that of a working graphic artist. While much ink has been

spilled trying to describe Austin music, Garrett offers three simple elements for Austin art—elements of the bizarre, Texas or Austin iconography, and a sense of fun. The book is filled with details and recollections of what it was like to work with the people, materials, and spaces he encountered in those years as an artist. His memories of his time at Sheauxnough studios, mentors Franklin and Micael Priest, and colleagues such as Guy Juke and Kerry Awn both add a personal touch and expand the reader's understanding of the inner workings and complex acts and actors that constitute a vibrant music scene. This extends to his detailed descriptions of both the mechanical techniques of creating and printing his posters and the artistic decisions that constitute the design process, such as Garrett's continuously evolving attempts to draw music, and his use of sand and snow motifs to hint at the prevalence of cocaine in the mid-1970s. In the end, Garrett succeeds in bringing to life the work and the vibrant community that surrounded both Austin's musicians and graphic artists.

Garrett's status as an insider fondly recollecting his life's work is clear in his purple (or violet?) prose and occasional inside jokes. The language conveys the quirkiness associated with the scene he goes a long way towards recreating. That *Weird Yet Strange* works well as a nostalgic piece for an audience of former scenesters is no surprise, but the quality and breadth of Garrett's work and the passion and knowledge of his writing make this work a valuable volume for anyone seeking to gain an understanding of the Austin musical landscape of the last half century. Garrett's emotional link to Austin's quasi-mythic past comes through clearly, allowing even younger readers to capture the feeling of a time when "live music in the 1970s became almost an ether of sorts, in that it constituted a pervasive medium in which the most significant communication occurred—from the interpersonal, through the communal and tribal, to the esoteric."

Rich Kelly





Without Getting Killed or Caught: The Life and Music of Guy Clark

By Tamara Saviano (John and Robin Dickson Series in Texas Music. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2016)

Chronicling a human life is a daunting task, made even more difficult when that life is celebrated, beloved, and revered by devoted family, friends, and a multitude of fans. Guy Clark has been called one of Texas's greatest songwriters, a poet who honed his songs to perfection and opened his home to countless other songwriters throughout the course of his career, serving as a mentor, a collaborator, and a friend to many. Prior to this book, little had been written about him beyond the time-worn narratives and well-crafted public image of this rough-hewn "craftsman" of songs—a term he was saddled with but never liked.

Tamara Saviano is uniquely qualified to write the Guy Clark story. She is a GRAMMY-winning record producer, publicist, manager, talent booker, and former television producer and music journalist. She has known and worked with Clark for years and, through this project, became one of his closest friends. Saviano says:

There are hundreds of ways one can approach writing a biography of this breadth and scope. I hope I have conveyed how important Guy is as an artist, as well as shed some light on how his lifestyle and relationships fed his artistry. For every story, I found at least one additional source to confirm Guy's side. If Guy and Susanna Clark told me the same story separately, I felt comfortable writing it as their truth.

Saviano has organized Clark's often chaotic life into a well-researched and written study that reaches beyond the songwriter himself and delves into the culture and landscape of his childhood and his development as a musician; this includes the musical and business sides of his career, as well as her own relationship with the man.

Clark was brutally honest in sharing his story with the author, sometimes relating experiences and feelings he had never before revealed. For example, Saviano describes the unique and sometimes painfully uncomfortable relationship involving Clark; his best friend, Townes Van Zandt; and Clark's wife, Susanna. Saviano writes, "Guy and Susanna were married. Guy and Townes were best friends. Susanna and Townes were soul mates."

Joe Nick Patoski's *An Epic Life: Willie Nelson* (Little, Brown and Company, 2008) and Peter Guralnick's two-volume Elvis Presley biography *Last Train to Memphis and Careless Love* (Little, Brown and Company, 1994 and 1999, respectively) set high standards for musical biographies. Each author brings a unique voice to the stories of two of the world's most well-known entertainers. Although Saviano's subject may not be as famous as Elvis Presley or Willie Nelson, she also provides an intimate, behind-the-scenes look at the making of one of the Lone Star State's most beloved and influential songwriters.

More than eight years of research and interviews with two hundred people bring the private world of Guy Clark out of the shadows. The book divides Clark's story into three sections, and within these sections, each chapter could stand alone as an essay about that period in his life. Saviano's close personal relationship with Clark allows her to provide intricate details, along with broader brush strokes, that make for a damned good story. In the end, it seems that Saviano may know more about her subject than he knew himself.

When Guy Clark agreed to this project, Saviano asked, "Are you sure you're up for this? I want you to spend hours and hours with me and let me interview you about your life. I want you to introduce me to your family and friends and cowriters and colleagues and anyone who is important to your story and tell them to speak honestly with me. Then I'm going to write the book. And you can't read it until it's published."

Guy Clark died on May 17, 2016, five months and one day before the book was released. He did not read it, but if he had, he might have said the same thing he told Saviano when she explained to him how she intended to write the book. "He took a long toke off his joint, held it, and exhaled—unfazed. 'Sounds fair to me, Tamara,' he replied."

Diana Finlay Hendricks

Comin' Right at Ya: How a Jewish Yankee Hippie Went Country, or, the Often Outrageous History of Asleep at the Wheel

By Ray Benson and David Menconi (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015)

Ray Benson is quick to point out that he is often in the wrong place at the wrong time, but if his autobiography is any indication, that's mostly because he is somehow in so many places at once. The 6'7" frontman for Asleep at the Wheel is a self-professed expert in hanging out with the right folks, so it is no surprise that *Comin' Right at Ya*, which he co-wrote with David Menconi, is a free-ranging and often hilarious ride through forty years of American music history. Commander Cody, Willie Nelson, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Junior Brown (who might be the only person besides his ex-wife that Benson has a negative word for), James Hand, Dolly Parton, and a host of other musicians and industry folks populate Benson's autobiography and provide valuable insight into his influences and worldview. Like his longtime friend Willie Nelson, who encouraged Benson, Waylon Jennings, and others to move to Austin in the early 1970s, Benson is a country music industry outsider who has long since proved himself the ultimate insider. But the book isn't just stories about other people. Benson's ruminations on his life and work are thoughtfully sprinkled throughout, so that his experiences as a "Jewish Yankee Hippie" in the country music world adjoin bigger questions about individualism, performativity, irony, and identity in American culture. The result is a readable, funny, and thought-provoking book whose juicy details sit well with more academic studies of country and alt-country music.

Benson's autobiography is, in a sense, a study of a character rather than a person. As he tells it, Ray Benson Seifert was born to Jewish parents in Philadelphia in 1951, but Ray Benson was created on a farm in Paw Paw, West Virginia, in 1970, when Seifert and the original members of Asleep at the Wheel decided their real names weren't "colorful" enough for honky-tonk. East Coast college dropouts, they moved to Paw Paw to connect with the rural working class, play music that was genuinely of the people, and pay as little rent as possible while they did it. Their West Virginia neighbors found their Bob Wills-inspired performances too modern (an irony not lost on Benson), but the band was able to gain some traction in Washington, D.C., and later in San Francisco. There, however, their main paying gig was as the backup band for a country singer named Stoney Edwards, criss-crossing the country and booking as many of their own gigs as they could. The "Wheel" gained national attention when Van Morrison mentioned them in *Rolling Stone*, and by late 1972 they had a record deal with United Artists. Their first album, *Comin' Right at Ya*, was produced by Tommy Allsup (who had once worked with Bob Wills), but it garnered mostly confused reviews and little airtime; like Wills, Asleep at the Wheel drew on so many different genres that they didn't fit neatly into any of them.

The larger paradox, of course, is one that has impacted countless country musicians since the Wheel, the Byrds, and

other alt-country acts. The more traditional or "real" country the band performed was in direct contrast to the pop country coming out of Nashville and L.A. at the time. With flagging record sales, Asleep at the Wheel moved from record label to record label, trying to find a good fit. Native Texan Willie Nelson convinced the band to move to Austin in 1973, arguing that the Wheel's eclectic mix of Western swing, boogie woogie, and honky tonk would fit nicely into the city's burgeoning Progressive Country music scene. In Austin, Benson and the group finally felt at home. This led to more touring, recording, and finally a charting album with *Texas Gold* on Capitol records in 1975. With the band's first Grammy in 1978, the same music that had long been rejected by the music industry was finally embraced. Benson felt vindicated, remarking that, if the music industry had only let the Wheel be their "weird-ass selves" rather than trying to force them into a particular genre, they would have had a lot more hits.

While Benson emphasizes the importance of individual self-expression throughout the book, this isn't his main message. The project he is by far most proud of is Asleep at the Wheel's 1993 *Tribute to the Music of Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys*, which made it into the pop album charts, sold 400,000 copies, and netted two more Grammys. Drawing on decades of connections, he assembled an all-star cast, including Vince Gill, Chet Atkins, Huey Lewis, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Dolly Parton, Garth Brooks, George Strait, and as many of the original Bob Wills Texas Playboys and Asleep at the Wheel alums as he could find. Wills had long been a shared influence for these artists, and the album revealed that Asleep at the Wheel was the conduit connecting past and present.

In *Comin' Right at Ya*, Benson is light on negativity and lighter still on some of the darker moments of his life—the drugs, the near disintegration of the band, the darker years of the 1980s, his difficult divorce, contracting Hep C—these are all here, but treated with humor and minimal detail. Ever mindful of the importance of connections, Benson mentions countless people, and the stories he tells are often funny, sometimes loving, rarely damning. Ultimately, the authors create a fascinating portrait of who Ray Benson is and who he wants to be. His values are clear—work hard; know what you want; value your social connections; and know that, by not fitting in anywhere, you actually fit in everywhere. As Benson writes in his acknowledgements, "If I'm not the American dream . . . well, sir, at least I did the soundtrack."

Kirsten Ronald

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