

Special to Stars of Texas

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Kathleen Hudson, Ph.D.

My donation to the promotion of Texas music

The new year is in full swing now, and Texas music knows about swing! Locally, the Monday night experience at the Inn Pub is often a chance to hear some excellent songwriting. Maybe, with more focus on listening in that room on Monday's, we could have a place for good songwriters to test out their songs. Texas music would not be the same without our strong singer/songwriter component. This same venue provides opportunities to dance throughout the week, another Texas tradition, boot-scootin'. My suggestion is to put chairs on the dance floor on Mondays and invite everyone in the bar on this night to listen up. A mini-concert of sorts. Just me thinking outloud.

I recently heard one of my favorite traditional country acts at the Inn on Monday, Rodney Haden. I remember showcasing him as a teenager at our Easter festival hosted by the Lions Club. His trio knocked me out then. Now he's off to Nashville, searching for that illusive dream. When Rodney sings, I go back in time to other eras. Hank Williams and Jimmie Rodgers come back to life. He is hosting the Monday night Meltdown for the month of January. I know one Kerrville resident who would love to sit and listen if he just knew this kind of music was available, and that's Joe Heffington. Joe can even get up and sing a song with the best of them. Rodney was host the Monday I attended, and singer/songwriter Gordy Quist was the featured guest. Gordy is now based in Austin and has an interesting story to tell. Not only has he traveled around the country, uncovering his family roots, but he also has a degree in economics and religion. Interesting combination. As I talked with him over lunch at Rails, I noticed his road manager, Chad, wearing a t-shirt that said "Guy Clark." Gordy has some heroes in his life, and Guy is one of them. I heard that in the story quality of his songs. The title of his first CD, "Songs Play Me," reflects his own philosophy of the writing. Coming out of a folk tradition, Gordy has written and collected songs that speak to all people. I especially thought of Guy as I heard Gordy sing "Ballad of Gordy Quist," named after his own grandfather. Keep your eyes and ears open for his return.

Robert Earl Keen says, "Rodney Hayden is a Double Eagle, Grand Slam, Black Jack talent. He makes me want to give up my night job." "Living the Good Life" is another collection of wonderful songs performed with the honesty that Rodney brings to any show. He was also a guest at the Billy Joe Shaver Birthday Bash this year at the Paramount Theatre in Austin. Yes, Rodney catches the ears of other great songwriters. If you love traditional country music, do not miss a chance to hear Rodney Hayden. On January 31st he'll be hosting the last Monday of the month and featuring Susan Gibson.,

Susan and her sidekick, Michael O'Conner, wowed the crowd at the Kerrville Folk Festival this year. Her songwriting has already won awards, with "Wide Open Spaces" being a number one hit for the Dixie Chicks. When I interviewed Emily Robison for my book on women, she said, "I love Susan." Seems like everyone who meets her has this to say. If you receive and read this magazine in time, come to the Inn on the 31st! Susan was born in Montana, but grew up in Amarillo, Texas. Now she has a riverfront cabin in Wimberly where she lives with her beloved mongrel, Jezebel, when not on the road in her

“Goodtime” van. I think she may actually drive a jeep vehicle now, but Terri Hendrix, another buddy of Susan’s, made the van famous in one song.

I had lunch at the Hill Country Opry and Grill. Great food. I don’t have a February schedule, but the new website just might: www.hillcountryopryandgrill.com I know January featured some great talent, including the mighty Shelley King! Another woman of stature and grace, now a new mother. You can eat lunch at the grill and enjoy a performance of music. Great idea for a Kerrville venue. It was full of people enjoying the scene when I ate lunch there. Another local favorite, Louis Real, plays there on a regular basis.

Louis also hosts the weekly jam at the Downtowner on Thursday nights. And what a jam that is! Josh Murley, who also has gigs at the Watering Hole on Saturdays, stands out as a unique singer and performer. A distinct voice delivers music that rocks. He will be part of the April 8 Texas Music Coffeehouse at Schreiner, a Friday night of Homecoming. Patched, Melissa and Brian, always get the entire audience involved. And on January 13, Butterfly Sky, Greg and Barb, added some new energy to the field. Living in their touring bus, this duo have been performing on the road for several years. They also opened for the film, Indigo, at the Schreiner Theatre, a production of Unity Church and THMF. Yep, lots of interesting opportunities in Kerrville. I sat at the Downtowner on Saturday night listening to a circle of musicians play and sing. Soon everyone in the room was singing along. Sharing music creates community. I say we do more and more of this, thereby affecting the chaos in the world at an energy level. Too weird for you? Think about it.

I missed the great weekend of music called “Windows on Texas” produced in Fredericksburg by KFAN radio, a Texas tradition. I do enjoy Hondo’s each time I go. The McKay Brothers sang and harmonized in a way only brother scan do one Friday night. The place was packed with enthusiastic fans. Noel and Hollin, originally from Bandera, are working on a new CD, and can they write! I’ve been listening to them for many years, and I always enjoy their show. So does Guy Clark!

I have many new CD’s to hear. Wednesday, February 2 bring us the Texas Music Coffeehouse at the Cailloux Snack Bar at Schreiner University. Student activities is showcasing Preacher Moss, a black activist and comedian, in honor of Black History Month. His show, which begins at 7:00 p.m., will be followed by David LaMotte, a singer/songwriter, sponsored by campus ministry. Then we’ll have the traditional open mike at the end of the evening. What a night this will be! Arrive early for a seat and for coffee. Terri Hendrix will be showcased at the March 2 coffeehouse, honoring Women’s History Month. Open mike first that Wednesday. April 8 is the homecoming coffeehouse, and April 12 is the Texas Writers Conference which also begins with an open mike. Yep, head out to Schreiner as often as you can. Lots to do. Join me for lunch in the Sodexo cafeteria some day!

NEW PROJECT: If ALL local musicians would just send their contact information to PO Box 291945, Kerrville, Texas, 787029-1945, the THMF can compile a listing that might be helpful in getting gigs? I’ve requested this before with little response. The easier we can contact you, the more we can find for you to do! I do get calls all the time. Sending me your schedule a month out is also helpful to this column. Sometimes I just can’t find you! Of course, I’m imagining musicians read this publication?

Back to school for me. Book about finished. What's next? Maybe a book on the important sideman. Nothing I like better than watching a good bass player. Sexy. Or watching a good drummer. Or heading out to the ozone by following an edgy guitar lead. It's not all about the song at times, the music creates the context. Down the road again.
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