

On The Road
From Kathleen Hudson
for March column, 2006

March winds bring April showers, and April showers bring May flowers. I have not seen much rain on this high plain where I live so I expect the transition to spring to be a mild one, much like the winter we just experienced in the Texas Hill Country. In fact, today, Feb. 28, as I write this column, a spring-like day is dawning, with a prediction of over 80 degrees of heat. My parched land wants water; I am loving the ongoing spring of this season.

My musical journey has also been spring-like, in that I've had one warm moment after another. Even though my road stories have decreased this month, my collection of stories about music keeps growing. When Doc Mason from Fredericksburg called me one Tuesday night, as I was teaching children's literature at Schreiner University, I felt joy and warmth as he said, "I'm working the emergency room at Sid Peterson in Kerrville tonight. If you can drop by, my blue suburban is in the parking lot near the emergency room door, and I have three cd's for you stacked up in the back. I left the door unlocked for you."

I met Doc years ago as he played music in the Hill Country scene. Since I come from a family of medical doctors, and my brother, John, the youngest, is also a poet and musician and dancer, I was fascinated with this creative connection with science and metaphor. Doc has played a Willie Nelson picnic or two, introducing his daughter, Ava, to the music scene as well. I heard her sing once and have carried that memory with me ongoingly, a beautiful young woman singing with her dad. Now, according to Doc, she has used this voice to move into the national scene singing. I'll talk with her before the next column. I do want to announce that Doc will have his cd release for "Let's Go Get Cloned" in Fredericksburg on March 11 at Hondo's. How many songs do we have about the possibility of cloning our great lives. I particularly like "A Satisfied Man," and "Higher Voices," an inspirational song that calls us to listen closely. Ava sings harmony with dad, along with Templeton Thompson. Doc thanks them, along with Sam Gray, for coming back into his life. And he dedicates the cd to his dad. Another family story.

I listened to "Dancin' Shoes," a collection of original songs. Most came across to me like standard country dance songs with some interesting lyrical twists. Then I listened a second time, hearing again the song with western flavor called "Write'em Cowboy." He's right, you know. We romanticize the west, head west, look west and yearn for a west that does not exist....except when we "write" the west. I loved the poetry of that vision. In fact, I'll be asking Doc to stop by my creative writing class at Schreiner and talk about his creative process to my class of young writers.

I also loved the song "Feels Like The First Time Again," as I remembered all the time I had stepped back into a relationship when it felt new again. Doc writes music that we can dance to and songs that we can feel and think about.

A native of Vernon, Texas, his musical influences include Marty Robbins, Johnny Cash, The Beatles, Van Morrison, Kris Kristofferson, Woodstock and early Willie Nelson. Yep, a few writers in that diverse group! His meeting with Mance Lipscomb in Navasota in

1972 brought him closer to the source of the music he loved. Doc has been featured on Texas Country Reporter, played a few picnics, Luckenbach and other Hill Country venues, and appeared on Humble Time Radio "Songwriter's Showcase." Go to www.docmasonmusic.com for a sample of his music.

Also March in Fredericksburg brings us the first annual Auslander Spring Music Festival. This week of music overlaps with South by Southwest in Austin, and the state is full of music lovers during this time. Plenty of venues and plenty of people who love the music! KFAN, sponsor of the Thursday night Live at Auslander, is a sponsor, See the website for details, www.theauslander.com. Gary P. Nunn kicks off on March 9, and the festival runs through March 18, including a new favorite of mine, Micky and the Motorcars, on March 14, Darden Smith the 15th, Sisters Morales the 12th, and Shake Russell the 17th.

South by Southwest is almost too huge to even write about. Guess that's why we have the world wide web now. Beginning March 15 with the Austin Chronicle Music Awards, the event brings together the performers, the recording business, the media and the audience. Speakers include one of Doc's favorites, Kris Kristofferson. Judy Collins, KD Lang, Beastie Boys, Neil Young, do these names mean anything to you? Young is the featured speaker on Thursday, March 16. See www.sxsw.com for the lineup of over 1400 artists and for information.

Kerrville, now home to a new record label, Sustain Records, is having a CD release on March 1 at 6:00 p.m. at Hastings featuring the music of Wade Bowen. His music is Texas country which includes a little edge. Also on March 1 from 7-9 p.m. at Schreiner University, the Texas Music Coffeehouse Series features the wonderful Carolyn Wonderland and El-Saleh. We'll hear some rock, some blues and some great guitar. She is a chapter in my book on women at Texas music; she is most humble about her own performance prowess. I love this women and her passion. She makes a stand with her music, willing to play for causes that matter to her. Might as well come to Kerrville for both events March 1.

March 3 at Luxello Hall (8640 Evans Road/the old Cibelo Creek Country Club off 1604 in San Antonio), James Harvey is producing one of his favorite bands, Savoy Brown, keeping the blues alive. Imagine that at a Texas venue! Tickets are \$25 and are available at the door. The show starts at 10:00 p.m. James, former producer at the Hill Country Opry, is passionate about the music and will be bringing music to the Hill Country as often as he can. I've known James since I moved to town 20 years ago, and his passion for promoting Ponty Bone and the Squeezetones was something to behold. We had many a party here with Cajun music, Tex/Mex, and blues. And I have a Frattoire board, thanks to James and Ponty. They brought it back from a trip to Louisiana where Ponty has some deep musical roots.

Time to tip our hats to people with passion! Well, that might just be another column. Ponty and James are the tip of that iceberg. Jimmy Perkins created Sustain Records out of his passion. The next release, Bruce Robison, is scheduled for April 4. "Eleven Stories" is a collection of songs that chronicle the complexity of relationships with an honest simplicity steeped in truth. Tell is like it is! His songs have been featured on over 20 million records by the top names in country music, including The Dixie Chicks, Garth Brooks, Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, George Strait and Lee Ann Womack. Yeah, expect

some great writing on this cd. "Travelin' Soldier" and "Angry All The Time" always bring a tear to my eye.

I've written about his brother, Charlie Robison; I've listened to his wife, Kelly Willis; I've heard both Bruce and Charlie as a duo at the Kerrville Folk Festival. They feel like family to me. It's a Hill Country thing. We all feel like family in the Texas Hill Country. In fact, Chris Collins, a Schreiner graduate, heard about the job with Jimmy in my class one day. Now he's using his English Major to work on marketing and public relations with the artists that Jimmy also manages. Sustain is looking for another good intern. My office, the Texas Heritage Music Foundation, in Kerrville, is looking for a part-time office manager and event producer. The Kerrville Folk Festival uses hundreds of volunteers to bring us the best three-week stint of music in the world! Yep, the Hill Country is a family full of opportunities.

Speaking of family, I've known Monte Montgomery since he was about 16 and playing guitar in small clubs and restaurants in town. Now he's touring with his new release, "Monte Montgomery At Workplay," a recording of a live concert. The best way to capture Monte's unique contribution to the Texas music catalogue is to hear him live and loud. He'll be at Hondo's on Sunday, March 5, for a show. I'll be there. If you read this and attend, look me up. I'm tall and blonde (now!) and will be taking lots of photos.

When I attended the KFAN Windows on Texas show in February, I met Todd Fritsch, a young Texas songwriter, who was heading off on a European tour. Bill Green, a producer and radio promoter, puts out a cd each month called "CD Tex." He sends a compilation of great songs out to get radio airplay. Volume 40, Feb. 2006, starts off with a Fritsch song and also includes 17 more good songs by The Derailers, Johnny Bush (a Texas name to remember, a part of our history), Allie Danielle, Dale Watson, Rachel Williams and more. The young and the old, the new and the experienced. Bill helps them all get some airplay, the name of the game in the music business. And sales, of course. Go to www.cdtex.com for more information. Bill Green created BGM Network Inc years ago, with his wife Debbie. They really work for Texas music. And on the back of the cd, each artist has a website and contact information. What a great promotional tool, showcasing this great Texas music we all enjoy.

Todd's song on this cd, "I Don't Live Here Anymore," brings me to the edge of an emotion that might be memory or nostalgia just at the first three words he sings, the sound quality of his voice carrying me away. And he is a working young rancher as well as a performer. I'm sure comparisons to George Strait are out there. Keep your ears open for the chance to hear and see Todd Fritsch.

I visited the Gruene Hall Tent at the San Antonio Rodeo this year, discovering The Weary Boys, a group of young men playing music and harmonizing in ways that bring the history of Texas music forward to the front of the stage. They played traditional folk along with classic bluegrass country and gospel. Yes, a standup bass and fiddle help create that sound, but the dynamics of this group bring another element to the forefront, authenticity. They are playing music they love, not looking for what "sells." Mario Matteoli, writer, guitarist and vocalist, leads the band with an energy that is absolutely contagious. Small children, dressed in their western clothes were dancing as this grandmother, camera in hand, also had to dance a few steps. Darren Sluyter on standup bass takes the lead on some of the songs, as does Brian Salvi on fiddle. A discovery for me! See www.wearyboys.com

I started out saying that I had not “hit the road” as often this last month. I see that March might just keep me on the road. And I’m finishing my manuscript on women’s voices in Texas music for UT Press in March. And I’m determined to enjoy my little cabin on the high plain for a few days during our spring break. Ils sont partis and down the road. KH