

On the Road

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By Dr. Kathleen Hudson

Teaching and documenting Texas music seem to go hand in hand; especially now that I am teaching an interdisciplinary course on Texas music at Schreiner University, also home of the Texas Heritage Music Foundation office, an organization that I started in 1987. Did you stay with a sentence that long? Good. Now for more.....the last music adventure was Wednesday, October 1, when Carolyn Wonderland played at the Texas music coffeehouse at Schreiner. She visited my class first, telling them that she started as a teenager playing in bars, her mother played music and inspired her, she plays each Sunday (when in town) at Maria's Taco Express in Austin, raising money for an Austin charity. Her humble attention to these students and their questions only enhanced my already huge appreciation for who she is.

And her talent! She leans over that guitar, seriously playing each note, often throwing back her head to scream out an impassioned song. One compared to Janis, she is now the standard for women who rock! I was thrilled when University of Texas Press used my photo of her hand on the guitar on the cover of my book, *Women in Texas Music: Stories and Songs*. That hand, that red guitar, that blood red background does capture the passion I felt and heard as I collected the stories of these women. More stories live on my website, www.kathleenhudson.net as the oral history continues!

I also spent a weekend in Austin October 4-5 celebrating my Libra birthday. I had the joy of being a tour guide from a non-Texas friend, Italian man who just sailed the Greek Islands. Imagine his reaction to Patsy's Cowgirl Café and the gorgeous Texana Dames with Eric Hokannen on wild fiddle. Imagine his surprise, when, after a meal at Threadgill's (seeing photos of Janis there), we headed to The Broken Spoke, and heard Bruce Robison play a two-stepping waltz dance set. James White, owner, was there to greet us at the door. And my friend said, "I have never seen a crowd like this! Imagine this scene right after an Italian wedding scene." I saw a similarity, actually. A group of people sharing music and dance. One way we create community.

Bruce played classic country along with his own new songs. He played HIS hits ("I don't know why you gotta be angry all the time"), and a Doug Sahm hit, saying, "I miss him all the time." Bruce has roots in Bandera and hits songs hanging from every branch on the tree. I am a huge fan of his brother, Charlie Robison, having written about his rocking edge. Now I have not only listened to Bruce at a house concert singing his songs, but also danced to him at a classic Texas honky-tonk. My Robison experiences expand!

And Bruce has a new album, "The New World, " on the streets about one week with rave reviews including this Billboard review:

"Bruce Robison, who has had his songs turned into mainstream country hits by Faith Hill & Tim McGraw, George Strait and the Dixie Chicks, is a Texas staple. But this latest offering might just turn a few heads in the rest of the new world. While "Bad Girl Blues," which conjures a smoky nightclub, is sonically and lyrically the hands-down winner on the set ("Wish I could have been the bridesmaid instead of always the bride"), "California 85" features another clever turn ("Try the California 85, it goes well with the lies"). Other highlights include the funky "The Hammer," bluegrass-tinged "Only," the throwback "Twistin' " and playful "The New One," which would make Randy Newman proud. Wife Kelly Willis adds her distinctive voice to a number of cuts, and the rich yet spare accompaniment is just right. —Ken Tucker

I still have many stories from my adventure in Nashville at the Americana Music Conference, including a music session at home with Susie Monick and a Station Inn moment with Peter Cooper (who sounded inspired by Eric Taylor and shared some of his stories with Texas musicians). Peter is the music writer for the Tennessean so he knows the stories! Two highlights include hearing an interview with Rodney Crowell, Texas songwriter from Houston, and T-Bone Burnett, a fellow Texas from Ft. Worth. Each of those interviews will need to be a story in itself. Meanwhile, just know....they both said awesome things. A taste: T-Bone said, "Creativity comes from love." Rodney said, "I like being on stage. I am fed by all of you looking at me; it feeds something inside me." Rodney talked about losing himself at one time by all the outsiders "looking" at him. And he told how he found himself and claimed his soul back. He also said, "I'm trying to make sense of my sensibilities and contextualize what I feel when I write." Both interviews were inspiring!

The panel on Lone Star Legacy featured Bruce Robison along with Radney Foster, Rosie Flores and Cody of Cross Canadian Ragweed. We heard these songwriters speculate on Texas music, with nods to storytelling, dancing, writing, textures, and diversity. Gary Hartman (author of Texas Music History) and Casey Monahan (Texas Music Office) were the perfect moderators to weave the words together.

Ahead is the 2nd annual Sculpture on the Main in Marble Falls Texas, an event that also showcases music. Homemade Jamz, a family trio of young people singing the blues, will perform Saturday night at the Uptown Theatre. These kids have gained national attention, including support from BB King. Head to the Hill Country for this weekend in Marble Falls, October 24-25. That same weekend in Boerne I'll be speaking at Texas Nonfiction Writers Conference. Good company with Joe Nick Patoski (Epic Life...his book on Willie Nelson) and Elmer Kelton. Good company for me. I'm sure Belle Starr will make an appearance. An outlaw amongst outlaws! Ils sont partis...kh