

On The Road for September 2008
Kathleen Hudson

My last musical weekend before going to press with this column includes a long-awaited for moment Labor Day Weekend on Friday night at the Kerrville Wine and Music Festival. Monte Montgomery, a hometown favorite, kept the crowd engaged until the closing note. Longtime friends joined together in the audience, with a special greeting for longtime friend, Gail Montana, from the stage. Monte told stories of his early life in the area (and is now listed as one of the top 50 guitar players in the country!) often singing with his mom, Maggie. Then he called her out on stage to join him in the same song, "Chilly Winds," that they sang on that stage his first time here...as a teenager about 20 years ago. He filled the stage with his exquisite guitar playing, great songs, and nostalgic stories. We all loved him for his honesty as well as his talent. Look up this performer. Go out and see him. Buy his next cd, coming out soon! We heard "Moonlight Tango," now being played on Revolution FM Radio (94.3). He will definitely be a part of the new Texas music class I am teaching at Schreiner University.

What a great summer I've had, time filled with travel (On the road!), stories and songs. My July study trip to San Miguel de Allende to study Spanish, also gave me the chance to discover more about our own musical roots. Yes, Mexico is part of OUR story, as Gary Hartman so clearly says in his new book, The History of Texas Music (Texas A&M Press). And September is Hispanic Heritage month, furthering our chance to celebrate and honor our roots. From my trip to the Toltequidad Festival in Pozos, where drums and flutes led the way, to an evening with Javier Estrada telling his stories of Gypsy life through each song he sang, to an afternoon with creative maestro, Tim Hazell, my time in San Miguel opened many new portals to a creative and imaginative world.

The city has NOT been ruined by the many Americans building big houses on the outskirts of town. The beauty of the culture, the people, the food and the music flows through me each time I walk down Ancha de San Antonio to my class with Warren Hardy School of Spanish, each time I sit in El Jardin in front of the Paroquia soaking in the color and image of pink granite spires reaching up to the clear blue sky, each time I share comida con mucha gente muy amable!

Yes, I love my special time here, and connection abound. I have met a Texas legislator who also writes songs! Bob Melton. Of course, July is the month Texans invade San Miguel, not afraid of the cool rainy season, so everyone expects the Texans in July. Not snow birds, rather sun birds. Fleeing the hot Texas sun.

One Friday I saw and listened to an old friend, Javier Estrada, play his gypsy music and talk (a little) about the true gypsy spirit. "You are all gypsies," he explained, "because you are travelling and wandering." I agree with that! His music is straight from the heart, and the audience gathered in the Sala Quetzal room at the biblioteca nodded in agreement. We were surrounded and held closely by the warm red walls, covered with images of all the tribal cultures in Mexico as well as a history of Mexico, painted by the renown David Leonardo.

July was the time for the International Film Festival of "cortas" and music played a role in many of these films, including a stunning display called "El Corazon de Mexico." Yes, while I was here, San Miguel de Allende and a neighboring community, Atotonilco, were declared Patrimonio Cultral de Humanidad de la UNESCO. This designation will make a

huge difference in how these jewels are perceived in the world. One woman wrote a story for the local paper on the relationship as mirroring Bethlehem and Jerusalem! Muy interesante.

Another highlight for me was the annual Toltequidad in Pozos. Hearing the number one Pre-Hispanic band, El Tribu, in all of Mexico out under an almost full moon was an astounding moment, full of the sangre of esta cultura.

My longtime friend, Don Patterson, has a new book out (2007) with University of New Mexico Press on his own journey as an archaeologist. And much more. The seed for the book was planted with his daughter, Jessica, asked him about a direction I life. She survived working in New York on 9-11, returning to Mexico for new directions. I saw her at an art show featuring her sister, Bianca. She is pregnant now...new directions! Meanwhile, dad started his book with a letter to Jessica and continued to tell his story in the metaphor of the title: JOURNEY TO XIBALBA. Each chapter documents a project with the accompanying story. And a letter to Jessica runs throughout. Beautiful piece of work, even if I did not know the family so well. 20 years ago when I first brought Schreiner University students to San Miguel, we stayed at #18 Hidalgo, in the house of Maruca y Alfredo. When they both died, Marisela, the daughter, took care of us. Don was always a guest speaker in my class. Ask Rufus Hayes in Kerrville about those talks!

In his book he talks of the importance of reading the Popul Vuh and uses a quotation by Camus, "You cannot create experience. You must undergo it." That sums up my month in San Miguel de Allende. I was undergoing a transformative experience with each moment. Don also began his introduction by thanking his wife, Marisela Garcia de la Sota, for her help, patience and love. Pick up this book and join Don as he journeys through Xibalba, the Maya underground, facing obstacles along the way. Don is now battling cancer, in a strong way, and thinking of Sareda Miloz, who also edited his book for him as she battled cancer. She motivated him to write even during her last stages of melanoma.

On another note, Doc Severinson lives here and plays weekly at Bella Italia on Canal Street. Yes, this is a music column "on the road" in Mexico. I brought a guitar to play in my apartment, and I carry a rattle and bones to join in when I can. Music plays each night in the square, creating a new community of people singing together each night.

I have the highest regard for Warren Hardy and Tuli, the couple who started a brilliant school, a place to study Spanish and learn the distinctions in this culture. How much I have learned even after my twenty years of visiting here. One detail: saying "Buenas Dias" to all we pass is not just something to do. It is an important acknowledgment of the other person as a human being! Important in this culture. People gather to BE together, not for any other purpose at times. Honoring and respecting each other is first in this culture. I say "Buenas Dias" to many more people now, and the warm smile I get back is acknowledgement that we both exist. Love that form of communication.

A shining highlight for me was discovering the actor Jeff Garrett as he performed in the one-man show called SHIMMER, an autobiographical piece written by John O'Keefe. His stories of growing up in an orphanage, filled with terror and pain, also contained moments that do Shimmer! And, shedding more light on my experience of life in San Miguel de Allende, Atencion, the local paper, is online now. Check it out. Tom Robbins was in San Miguel August 19-21, and I returned to join a workshop with him. "Language is not the icing on the cake; language IS the cake." You know I will love that one!

Not only did Tom give an invigorating and inspiring opening talk on his life and his books, but we had the chance to experience his relationship with his editor, Alan Rinzler. Alan lists Hunter S. Thompson, Bob Dylan, Toni Morrison, David Amram, Leonard Cohen, and many more in his list of works published. Both Tom and Alan gave us huge slices of the cake called language and the first Literary Festival of San Miguel took place. Susan Page, also working with Alan, did a great job of coordinating this festival, and she is the author of several very successful books on relationship. I plan on reading one soon!

During the workshop with Tom, about 20 of us finished the sentence, “Ants don’t sleep.....” As we read our completed sentences aloud, Tom listened. Then he mentioned the fatal flaw of most sentences. “They do not go anywhere. They do not compel the reader forward.” Then we reworked out sentences and added another. I loved being the student with Tom, and I carry back many subtle nuances in writing for my classes this fall. And I have already invited him to come to Schreiner, with Alan, for a spring workshop to promote his new book, *B is for Beer*, due out in February. I am awaiting a response.

And now for September! What a calendar of good music. Luckenbach hosts Mike Blakely and his Fandango, September 12-14, which also includes an afternoon honoring the writers. After all, Mike has over 15 novels behind him, as well as all his songs. I know Mike is working with Willie Nelson on a writing project, and he brings Guy Clark to Luckenbach September 13. Don’t miss this chance to be with a man who has influenced the course of Texas music history and helped create the reputation in Texas of strong writing. Guy, Townes and Billy Joe Shaver create a triumvirate of Texas songwriters that not only add to the contributions of Willie Nelson, but also provide a foundation for the ongoing growth of Texas music in the international scene.

Harold Eggers and I are co-editing a book of essays, reflections on Townes Van Zandt, and the panel on September 26 hosted by the Texas Folklore Society will focus on the songs of Texas. Texas music as a genre is synonymous with great songwriting. Harold is a producer, business partner and former road manager for Townes Van Zandt. He has quite a story to add to the history books! He brought the premier Townes collector to Kerrville one day for a visit with Rod Kennedy and a visit to Blue Yodeler’s Paradise. Patrick Hurly shared his sharp perspective on the Texas music scene, eyes from across the sea. Glad to have this new Irish connection.

I head to Nashville September 19 for the annual Americana Music Conference, where the THMF and our rockabilly radio series will share a panel with host Rosie Flores and several others who worked on the Peabody award-winning series. We have brilliant producer Lex Gillespie to thank, as well as his creative sound technician, Suraya Mohamed.

Be sure and put September 26 on your calendar for a warm experience in communication at the Living History Day on the Schreiner University Campus. All local performers are invited, once again, to come out and perform, volunteer, have fun! Add the afternoon panel on Texas songs with the Texas Folklore Society and some of the students in my new Texas music class at Schreiner. Remember, you can call and audit this class that meets at 6 p.m. on Wednesday night for the Fall Semester.

From the CD pile that keeps growing: “Sing, Sing, Sing,” by Faith Whitfield contains a song and a DVD for this young woman whose voice dances in her songs with the joy of

living. The music video was shot in Hunt, Texas (also home to Marc Benno, a hidden treasure in the Texas Hill Country), and REP (Rising Eagle Productions) is based in Ingram, with Brandt Sleeper listed as producer. More local talent heading to the world wide web where people can download the single at LaLa.com, napster, emusic and amazonmp3. The music video will be available for viewing at YouTube and GodTube. Yes, the world of doing music business is rapidly changing, and we are riding a big wave that seems to be cresting. It's about time for me to hit the road in Kerrville, unearth even more of this local talent (Roy Ybarra and his sound studio, for example) and showcase this scene!

Close to home, SteadyBoy Records, a creation of Texas Music Hall of Famer, Freddie Steady Krc, is featuring interesting Americana music. Not only did they release The Freddie Steady 5, a rock and roll production (Texas style), but also a new CD for Pamela Richardson called "Sainte-Fortunat," which shows this French woman at the railroad station, surrounded by a map that features St-Tropez. My first thought was "A Texas connection?" Well, seems like she recorded this in Austin and the haunting music reminded me of my trips to Cannes, France, for Midem, a worldwide music conference where Texas often had a booth of its own....like another country. Christine Albert of Albert and Gage, also brings a French connection to Texas music (I call her chapter in my book on the women of Texas music "The French Connection), and Gary Hartman covers the French, Czech, German and Jewish traditions found in Texas music. Yes, Gary's book will give readers a broad overview of Texas music, while featuring in each of the 7 chapters a closer look at one tradition. Gary, a history professor at Texas State University and founder/director of the Center for Texas Music History, is a scholar who also plays music and admits to being a "fan." Yes, Gary and I resonate in our love for the music and the songs.

One moving musical adventure for me was the production of "I Used To Dream" at the Hill Country Youth Ranch in Ingram. After seeing "Broken Wings Can Fly" many times, I knew, without a doubt, that this collection of stories and songs written by the young people at the youth ranch would be soul-stirring. My 4 granddaughters, visiting me at Camp Grandma Starr, were transfixed, even Maya (age 3) sat up on the edge of her chair the entire time. Produced by our own Renaissance talent, Tony Galluci, this production featured songs on the new CD, "Heart Like A Flower", songs co-written by Tony Young and other Texas songwriters. Tony's expertise in the recording room as well as the sound box helped create a poignant story of hope and even redemption. I love the way this CD incorporates the children's art as well.

Highlights of the show included the return of Jacob Favoli and Miosha singing "For the Kids," and "Forgiven." I have used his recordings in my children's literature class at Schreiner, and my 16-year-old granddaughter, Jessica, really loves this rap production. So do I!

The CD is available to donors and friends of the ranch by calling 830-367-2131 or ordering online at <http://youth-ranch.org/orderfree> "The 24-page booklet that accompanies the CD is illustrated throughout with artwork, allowing the project to weave the visual, the written, and the musical into a powerful tapestry of inspirational work, telling stories that share common threads of healing and transformation." Yep, those words speak to why we all love working with the power of music.

As Patrick Hurly from Ireland talked with Rod Kennedy, I heard Kennedy also say that he knew the transformative power of the music shared each year at the Kerrville Folk Festival. I loved to hear him say, passionately, that if hearing one song could help someone feel less alone in the world, he knew he had succeeded with the event. I love that description that hearing and sharing music reminds us that we do share in the stories of others. Healing and transformation can arise, and the youth ranch has an active art therapy program based on this.

I a musical adventure August 12 at Southway Pub. Tito and Charley Spirit Walker Allison have started a music jam there, starting at 8 p.m. each Tuesday. “We want to have diversity in the music, making a space for all the good acoustic talent in the area,” explained Charley. Well, I heard a night of many of my favourite songs, some amazing guitar work by Roy Ybarra and Jimmy Peek, some gorgeous harmony by Victor and Tito and, of course, Charley on conga drums throughout the entire set. Ritchie also provided guitar and vocals on many of the songs, and his voice fit each song he did. . What I loved were the faces of the audience members, rapt as they carefully watched each musician perform. John Ike was there, sporting his new 13th Floor Elevator shirts. Check out that website, knowing we have another musical treasure in Kerrville.

www.13thfloorelevators.com

Remember: Sept. 26 Living History Day, free, all invited. Musicians, we need you! Coffeehouse series features Rosie Flores in September, Carolyn Wonderland in October and Walt Wilkins in November. We will celebrate a national theme each month, meeting the first Wed. of the month. If you want to support local music, please consider joining the THMF by giving a low membership fee this year! See www.texasheritagemusic.org for more information.

And, Past is Prologue, an educational program using American Indian wisdom, will have another workshop at Schreiner on Oct. 17-18 at a new location, The Hanszen Fine Arts Cent Stories on Friday night, along with a panel to discuss the environment. The workshop Saturday offers CPE credits, is free, is wonderful! The THMF projects and PIP are also projects for the Center for Innovative Learning at Schreiner University. Ils sont partis and down the road. KH