

On The Road
For November 2010

As I write this I am filled with memories of the road this last weekend, October 8-10. Heading up Highway 16 again to Ft. Worth always fills my head with stories. Many of them music stories! I went straight to Colleyville to visit David and Annabel Pillow, my parents. Then I headed to Weatherford to pick up rock and roll Carol (a friend for 40 years), and we headed to the Musicarte festival in Sundance Square in Ft. Worth. Ramon Luera was our guide, a man who hosts music at his house in Laredo each Friday night and a man who knew the featured band leader, **Poncho Sanchez**, also from Laredo.

I had my first taste of a distinct Latin jazz rhythm that was an amalgamation of rhythms put together by conga player Poncho. I also have his new cd, "Poncho Sanchez, Psychedelic Blues." After an hour of dancing and filming with my new handycam recorder (a birthday gift), we went backstage to talk with Poncho. Footage for my Texas music composition class. What a gift!

Poncho was born in Laredo, moved to Los Angeles at age 8, moved back to Laredo for Junior High, and then back to LA. I discovered that he is a musicologist and collector. His stories revealed an interest in the history. And I love that! I first saw him on a documentary film that Ramon took at his house. Ramon documents everything! A real Texas Country Reporter show that gathering on Fridays! Beautiful men singing in trios, romancing the evening with songs after a big barbecue. How Texas is that?

The road has led me to Luckenbach where I saw **Fabrezzio** one September Sunday afternoon, an avid Texas music fan from Italy who has written a book on blues and has recorded with many giants in Texas music history. He told me that he heard an interview with Muddy Waters that included that comment that Jimmie Rodgers was an influence.

Chicken Mambo is the name of the Italian band with Texas players. **Donnie Price** and Debbie Walton toured Italy following their appearance at Luckenbach. Ah, a world music scene here. **Ponty Bone, Tommy Elskes, Debbie Walton, Donnie Price, Shannie, Scott Bowlin and Bill Lewis** were also playing that Sunday afternoon. Eclectic is my own middle name and a word that describes the amalgamation of players that show up on any given day in Luckenbach, Texas.

The road also led me to my own backyard, the Schreiner University campus on September 24. Our tribute to Hispanic Music included a set by **Sol Patch, Terri Sharp,** and **Max Baca and Los Texmaniacs** at 10 a.m. What a treat for all present! We can easily see why Max has that Grammy! Terri sang some of her own songs, some co-written with Ramon Luera (who also hosted her several times at Noches de Trios in Laredo), and some classics. Sol Patch plays most venues in the Hill Country, hosting an open mike each Wednesday at the Guadalupe River Club, and I have a story about when I first heard the impressive voice of Melissa Weatherly! Melissa and Brian were once part of the Downtowner Jam, hosted by the late **Cindy Terry** on Thursday nights. That is the spot where sister Carolyn insisted I get up and dance alone in the aisles. My life was changed forever in that moment! After all, I do want to dance like no one is watching.

Other highlights include the students reading and performing at the afternoon seminar on songs of Texas hosted by the Texas Folklore Society in the Union Church on campus.

Jonathan Kingston read a paper on the “Yellow Rose of Texas” and “The Illiad.” Jean Schnitz shared the significance of the Texas Folklore Society.

Herb Arbuckle presented and preformed on the various types of yodels in the songs of Jimmie Rodgers. Ken Baake, an professor of English at Texas Tech, provided information on voyages across the country and played the banjo, jamming with Lee Haile, a Texas storyteller and singer. Kaitlyn Paradiso (student) created two rap interpretations from a Rodgers song, and Nathan Munoz (student) sang in Spanish, the beautiful sound reverberating inside that old church. Jennifer Whetstone (student) read her paper on the power of songwriting. We had so much fun I have decided to do that again next year! Jennifer’s paper is on the THMF website as a sample of students writing about Texas music.

And the three great-grandsons of **Jimmie Rodgers** were present at the noon tribute, with Benjamin Court, now living in Austin, singing at his first Jimmie Rodgers tribute! Austin and Cody joined him, along with the group of Mason’s as Herb Arbuckle lead the audience in a version of “Frankie and Johnny.” Yes, I said Masons. Jimmie Rodgers was a Mason, and Herb has invited the local group to join in at our tribute. Herb Arbuckle, retired teacher from Corpus Christi and the man who donated his entire J. Frank Dobie collection to the library at Schreiner University, is also the research assistant for the THMF. He brings us good stuff!

The long and winding road, Highway I-10, takes me to and from each day, a meditation journey. I love the daily trip I make, and I stopped to take photos of cloud formations last night as I headed west from Kerrville. Many musicians have stories of the road, and Willie Nelson captured my life with his song, “On the road again, making music with my friends....” The CNN special on him, re-run October 15, captured his life as he sang his songs, some with Larry King.

One day I headed to San Antonio and the **Blue Cat Recording Studio**. I was greeted by a painting of **Doug Sahn** and a photo of young Max Baca with two of the Rolling Stones. Seems he was on a gold record with them! **Joe Trevino**, sitting behind the sound board, greeted us warmly, and we started making some history. Terri Sharp, a local musician now (once from Houston, once holed up in Nashville), had some songs to record in Spanish, her passion in life. Ramon, who helped transcribe some of the songs and acted as co-writer for several, was also with us.

I watched the process on the first song, one Terri had written and performed at the September coffeehouse. “Pasa Lo Que Pasa” is the name. I watched her show the song to the studio musicians; I watched them play around with the tune and presentation. I was there when we heard the final cut...minus voice tracks. What a great experience for me. I remember being at the Pedernales Studio when Willie recorded with Jimmy Day and Wayne Kennemer. I remember being at Ardent Studio in Memphis when the Fabulous Thunderbirds were recording. And I remember taking my 15 radio shows into a studio in San Antonio over 20 years ago to create a dream project I had. Stayed up all night working on the recordings and returned to teach all day. I was in tune with Terri’s high energy for this and her passion! More on the final cut later. Great tunes and a full expression of one person’s dream. El Corazon de Terri Sharp!

I am loving the composition classes I teach on the theme of Texas music. And I have several musicians in each class who are willing to play and sing at the coffeehouse. Nathan Munoz sang a song on his ukulele at the October coffeehouse. This was after we

had a classroom visit with **Rattlesnake Annie**. Ryan and Michael, two freshmen, both added songs, and the student driven open mike was a great introduction for the appearance of Rattlesnake Annie. Jacob Ames, a student and local musician, is the emcee, and he also plays some of his own musical interpretations each coffeehouse. Dad Gordon Ames, THMF board member, Texas music aficionado, is hosting a “real deal” radio show on KOOK FM 93.5. Check that out!

The November 3 coffeehouse features the **B-sides**, a trio put together by Jacob featuring his brother Lucas and his friend Zach Salchich. I have heard this rocking, interesting group play at a Schreiner theatre production. Jacob also hosts an acoustic jam at the Ole Waterin Hole on Broadway on Wednesday nights.

A big FLASH: Carolyn Wonderland is returning to the November 3rd coffeehouse, held in the Lion’s Den at Schreiner University. She was an important chapter in my book on the women of Texas music; my photo of her hand playing her red guitar appeared on the cover of this book; she is the woman I want to be when I grow up! Well, that might take another lifetime to catch up with her youth.

Not only is she a powerful singer and musician, but her activist heart has lead to some significant writing! Know that she tours the world, playing blues festivals in Amsterdam and Japan. Her work with Shelly King is stunning, and the show I saw at **Casbeer’s** one night reinforced my interest in documenting the voices of women in Texas music.

When Carolyn started her career, she was once told not to keep singing so much Janis Joplin (which she nails!) but to keep exploring her own distinct voice. She does it all.

October 14 I took a group of my writing students to Casbeer’s to hear another female who rocks my world, **Michelle Shocked**. First met her at the Kerrville Folk Festival campfire many years ago. Her history includes a recording of that campfire moment turning into a record deal with Polygram Records and a world-wide presence in music. At Casbeer’s she talked to my students before the show. “Let me pontificate a moment. What do you think about the economy now? The people in need now?” Yes, she is an activist in the finest sense of the word.

“Let me pontificate more on Texas music. Place is what sets up apart. I have had fans go out and visit East Texas just looking for the flowers and scenes I described in a song.” We heard her song about East Texas; we enjoyed the Dollar Bill Hillbilly Band led by her dad; we listened to her opinions on the state of the world. She takes no prisoners and never holds back.

After the show she explained to fans again how important it is to be true to yourself. I was thrilled when she invited **Nathan Munoz** on stage to jam with her, create a song in the moment. He was a brave man to do that! I did catch it on my new handycam, and Nathan will be glad to have that one day! Jamming and singing with **Michelle Shocked**. I was also present that night, again, to the power of sharing stories and songs. This is a possibility with the live music scene, the chance to BE with someone. I came home with a new digitized cd of the original Campfire Tapes. Michelle has all her own music back and has a story about working with major labels too! Her spirit inspired me, just as the spirit of Carolyn Wonderland will inspire me on November 3. I am blessed to be able to BE with these people.

Jim Leavell has asked me to do some internet tv in conjunction with his Hill Country Calendar. Each show is put up new on Thursday with my speculations and ruminations on the upcoming week of shows in the Hill Country. Don’t be too hard on us as we start

this new way of sharing stories. See www.the-hill-country-calendar.tv or just go to his tourism website at www.hill-country-visitor.com for complete details. I get my information from the musicians and venues who contact me, the schedules in this magazine, and from his website.

Let's end this with a big bang---the **Big Band Bash on November 13 in Fredericksburg**. Tickets are \$75 and include a dinner before the show. Always a sold out event, get your tickets now. The event raises money for music programming in schools. Marcia Ball returns this year, along with Johnny Nicholas (founder and producer), Al Gomez on his wild horn, Cindy Cashdollar on steel guitar, Floyd Domino on the black and white keys, and introducing Clay McClinton, the son of Delbert. If you know Texas music, you know Delbert! A showcase of some of the best, a chance to dance, an opportunity to experience the Texas music scene at its fullest. Contact carolr@fisd.org for info and ticket sales. Ils sont partis. KH