

Special to the Texas Rising Star
Donated by Kathleen Hudson, Ph.D.
Texas Heritage Music Foundation and Schreiner University
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Starting the new year out with a bang! My stories from December travels are full of connections with Texas music. I went to San Miguel de Allende for the annual **Thanksgiving Jazz Festival**. Texas was all over that stage when David Fathead Newman began his saxophone solo. His upbringing in Dallas parallels the era of Freddie King, a bluesman who influenced Stevie Ray Vaughan, but David's musical path took him, finally, on the road with Ray Charles for about 12 years. For a quick backstage moment, David told me that his nickname was given to him by a teacher who did not think he could learn. Imagine that. I will certainly keep that in mind as I start a new semester at Schreiner University on January 12. I know that I've never met a student who could not learn, only student's who think that maybe they can't.

Henry Brun and the Latin Playerz not only played the festival, but also brought along about 40 guests and their own tour bus. I remember the THMF did that for two years. What a road trip! I still have some extra "Road Warriors" buttons from our trips. Maybe that's something to look into again for 2005. Henry, seated amidst drums, in the middle of a stage full of great musicians, took over in a rhythm Latino way. Not only did his second CD, "Spiritual Awakening's," take three Grammy nominations, but Brun is also in negotiations to produce a nationally syndicated Latin Jazz show, along with those currently heard in San Antonio on KRTU-FM and KSTX-FM. Hearing Al Gomez on his soulful trumpet and Louis Bustos on that huge sax were two highlights for me. Nothing like San Antonio soul!

I loved the variety presented at this festival, I loved the Texas connections. After all, Mexico and Texas are certainly family. I've visited San Miguel three times during my semester sabbatical, writing each day on my second book, without having to answer any phone calls! The book on women in Texas music is almost finished. As I am writing, I am awaiting a call from Emily Robison, one the last interviews to go into the manuscript. She is 45 minutes late for the appointed call. I wonder if this book will contain a Chick voice? If not, I'm willing to say the collection of voices I have will stand alone as a piece of documented and important history.

My December visit to San Miguel included a 5-day workshop on awakening the divine feminine with Life Path Retreats (www.lifepathretreats.com). Jeanne Slobod, a local visionary, joined me. She did not let the 87 years she's been on earth hold her back! I returned with some new eyes vision, a look at partnership in all areas of my life. I have a partnership with this magazine! I give them words each month, and they give me a place to be heard, a place for my words to live out in the world.

Other December adventures included an evening a **The Saxon Pub** on South Lamar listening to Carolyn Wonderland. I think this is the woman I want to be when I return here as a musician. Her partnership with her guitar and her voice portray music in a way that would have been understood clearly by Janis Joplin. Both women become the song that they sing. Carolyn has her own edge, one that includes finger picking an electric guitar. The musicians who join her one stage provide the perfect setting for her songs, and they take the lead when the time is right. The Saxon Pub has a lineup of my favorite musicians each month, including regular gigs by Stephen Bruton and The Resentments. If I lived in Austin, I could be found way too often at the Saxon Pub. My memories of great performances there would fill a monthly column. Later on that.

Ahead is the **THMF Coffeehouse Series** at Schreiner University. Feb. 2, Wednesday, we'll feature Preacher Moss first, then David Lamotte. A tribute to Black History Month. Open mike will come at the end of the event that runs from 7-9 p.m. Terri Hendrix will perform on March 2, for Women's History Month. We'll begin with an open mike paying tribute to women. Need I say more? And our April coffeehouse will be moved to Friday, April 8, to coordinate with Schreiner homecoming. Keep posted for the surprise guest.

Ahead is the re-opening of **The Java Pump** on Water Street in Kerrville. During Christmas Ken Gaines played at the opening of South of the Border, right there in the Java Pump. Great Mexican food. This was always a favorite listening and eating place for me. A place I loved to take students for a writing class. Glad to see some action in the joint.

Ahead on January 21-22 is a birthday gala for Mr. Music of our generation, Rod Kennedy. Held at the Inn of the Hills Resort, the shoe begins on Friday with Terri Hendrix, Lloyd Maines, Chuck Brodsky and Harry and the Hightones. Tickets are \$25/person. A dinner and concert follow on Saturday, featuring a dance to the music of Ted Conerly Quintet. That event is \$60/person. The entire weekend is \$75, and that includes a private picking party. Call 792-9830 for reservations. Rod says, "No presents, just your presence." And Rod knows best!

And ahead is a series at the **Hill Country Opry and Grill**. After a couple of evenings in December, a soft opening, the Opry gets into full swing in 2005 at their new location on the Junction Highway, Highway 27, the Ingram Highway....whatever you choose to call that road. A beautiful building of Texas stone is only shadowed by the intimate setting, good food and great lineup of Texas music. As James Harvey says when he introduced Billy Joe Shaver on December 18, "If you love Texas, you'll love Billy Joe." Paul Tennison said, "The magic is still here; it's just bigger." Wes Waters from Houston is managing the restaurant and bar. This venue has the possibility of being the best in Texas. The first run of Hill Country Opry was at a venue that held about 90 people. After Kerrville realized the joy of an "intimate" setting, the venue expanded to hold about 230 at the new location. The venue is still intimate. Check out the website for schedules: www.texasopryandgrill.com

One Christmas joy for me was to pull up to the Opry and see Billy Joe out front, talking with my son Clayton. Clayton, now 30, began listening to Billy Joe when he was about eight. Billy Joe was full of light and love. In fact, after his stunning show, the best I've seen, I asked him what he carried around now. "Water and Jesus Christ," he replied, beaming. He told me that he writes more when he travels. And he's been traveling all year. "When I travel, the brain has to think. Moving makes the brain work. Sitting is more like conjuring. I write when I travel." He also responded, "There's no fool like an old fool. I'm living proof of that." His own book, **Honky Tonk Heroes**, will be out in March with University of Texas Press. "I was talking to Kris the other day, and he was jealous that I'm getting my book out before he gets his out," Billy Joe added. "And, it's dangerously good."

His show was also dangerously good. I've been listening to him for over twenty years, and I believe this was the best. He was full of love and joy. We heard his classics, each preceded by a great story. We laughed and cried along with him. "Most of my songs were written about trying to get back in the house," he quipped. He reminded couples not to break up during the cold winter months then sang a gorgeous ballad on the space it takes to be a woman, to be a man. "Hold on to yours, and I'll hold on to mine....The bottle is full enough for two." We heard a tribute to the late, great, Johnny Cash when he sang "That's why the man in black sings the blues."

Compadre Records has just released a new CD called “Billy and the Kid.” “All of the tunes are my son’s, Eddy’s. I have put words to many of them,” Billy Joe explained. Except the first one I wrote called “Fame.” The photo of Billy Joe and Eddie on the front will bring tears to the eyes of all who knew this father/son team. Losing Eddy was a blow to all of us. Billy Joe’s letter on the back of the CD cover says it all, “Eddy and I went to a church in Austin, Texas on 51st street. The Promised Land. Near the end of the service the preacher asked Eddy what in this world he loved most. Eddy quickly replied, ‘my father.’ Then the preacher asked me who I loved the most, and I quickly told him, ‘Eddy. He then asked us both if we would give what we loved the most to God. We both answered yes. Shortly thereafter Eddy died of an overdose in a motel room in Waco, Texas with some bad companions. I have never heard their names nor seen the police report. He died New Year’s Eve of 2000. God took him home.”

Carrie Cogan, a writer who also attended the show had this to say: “After ten years out of Texas, Billy Joe greeted me: “You’re still alive!” And I greeted him, “You’re still alive!” He looked like a pile of diamonds. He opened up his buttons and showed me the seam down his chest. Everyone was coming back from the dead. Even Kinky Friedman came back from the dead, out from the campaign calls and the dogs at echo hill ranch, the black fringe on his leather jacket shaking so when you walked behind him it was being in a car-wash. When Billy Joe got up on stage someone yelled out, “We love you, Billy Joe!” And without missing a beat he hollered back, “Well, I love me too!” Billy Joe reminded the audience: “Being a mother is a harder job than being a president.” And he reminded me: “God loves you when you’re dancing.” But that was all just talk between the singing, and no reminder seemed as important as the one Shaver sang: “It’s just an old magnolia tree, but friend, it means much more to me.” If the dead were among us, they were having a good time. People look different, lighter, at a Shaver concert. Were we all floating ? Or is it just that everyone smiles brighter when they’re facing Billy Joe.”

Yes, Carrie is one of my favorite writers. She sees through surfaces and underneath layers. I love her vision and her words. I want to add that Kinky did announce, again, his bid for governorship of Texas. And he said, “I’ll make Billy Joe Shaver Poet Laureate of Texas.” I’ll go for that.

Go out and buy Billy’s Joe’s latest CD. Enjoy the music of his son Eddy, brought back to life by producer Tony Colton. This is real rock and roll. Ils sont partis and down the road. KH

Kathleen has a book of interviews out with UT Press focusing on Texas songwriters, TELLING STORIES, WRITING SONGS: AN ALBUM OF TEXAS SONGWRITERS. Both Billy Joe and Kinky are important chapters in the book. Purchase from the THMF website for an autographed copy.

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