

**Oral History Interview of  
Dustin Six**

**Interviewed by: Curtis Peoples  
September 30, 2015  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*Crossroads of Music Archive***

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## Interview Series Background:

The Crossroads Artists Project encompasses interviews conducted by the Crossroads of Music Archive Staff members. They hope to document the creative process of artists and songwriters from all across the Southwestern United States.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Dustin Six, co-owner of the Blue Light Live in Lubbock, Texas. Six talks about how he became involved with Blue Light as a bartender before becoming co-owner. Six also discusses the trajectory of the Blue Light and his aspirations for its future.

**Length of Interview:** 00:25:35

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**Curtis Peoples (CP):**

Check, check, check, check. All right. We're going here. So this is Curtis Peoples with the Crossroads Music Archive at Texas Tech University Southwest Collection. I'm sitting here with Dustin Six, owner of The Blue Light Live here in Lubbock, Texas. We're at The Blue Light at 1806 Buddy Holly Avenue doing a history of The Blue Light, a little interview here. Do I have your permission to record this, Dustin?

**Dustin Six (DS):**

That is correct.

**CP:**

Okay. So just a little bit about you, where are you from, where did you grow up, and maybe just—when you were born and where you grew up.

**DS:**

Okay, I was born in the heart of Texas, Brady, Texas. It's known more for the world championship goat cook-off than for me being born there, but when I was about four years old, my parents moved to Plains, Texas, which is about seventy-two miles west of Lubbock, lived there from age four until I graduated senior year, moved to Lubbock to go to Texas Tech in 2001, August of 2001, and I graduated—I should know these things. Graduated in 2006, I believe.

**CP:**

What did you study while you were in Tech?

**DS:**

Everything. Took me forever to get out. I had four different majors. I ended up with a—I graduated with a psychology, mass communication minor and yeah, it took me long enough. I had a baby, and I was married the whole time, so pretty much just working the whole time, bartending, actually. I haven't got out of that yet either, so yeah, I got stuck in that world, and that's eventually what led me to Blue Light and Tom's [?].

**CP:**

So were you a bartender here at Blue Light?

**DS:**

Well, I was going to school. Yeah. I graduated—let's see. I started at Blue Light in October of 2006, I believe, and so I guess—actually, I graduated in 2007 because I had been here for almost a year whenever I graduated, so, yeah. My timelines are pretty messed up.

CP:

So, like I said, this is generally a history about the Blue Light. I can remember here at this location when the depot district was first beginning when Don Caldwell others were down here developing, and I believe they started out as Kyle's 88 Key Café first off, and then I can't remember if it was anything after that or not before it became Blue Light.

DS:

From my understanding, it went straight from—Tom's was next door to the 88 Key Café and Tom turned the 88 Key Café directly into Blue Light. That's my understanding.

CP:

Yeah. Who's Tom?

DS:

Tom McDonald. He is the original owner of Tom's Daiquiri and the original owner of the name, I guess, not necessarily the building that had the bar in it, but the name Blue Light. He was the original Blue Light entrepreneur.

CP:

Okay, and was there any owners of the Blue Light after him and Tom's or—?

DS:

Yes. After Tom took off, he sold both businesses to David and Stephanie Brooks, and they had a partnership with Gerald and Teresa Critz, and I believe this happened in 2000. Well, shoot, I could be way off on that actually. No, that had to have been—that's a tough one. I would have to research that one. I'm horrible with dates anyway, but yeah, Gerald and Teresa Critz and David and Stephanie Brooks took over from Tom McDonald.

CP:

Crits. Is that K-r-i-t-z?

DS:

It's C-r-i-t-z.

CP:

C-r-i-t-z. Okay.



DS:

So yeah, David owned it for quite a while, and I guess sort of established what the Blue Light has become these days early on bringing in various acts, local and national acts, I guess I believe, and so that's sort of become a singer, songwriter, Texas country—

CP:

Well, what other kind of genres would you—?

DS:

Oh, we're all over the place. I mean, last night, we had a band called Civil Twilight. They're more considered like a pop Americana type band. We have a lot of blues bands come in here. We generally don't have bands that come in and label themselves as cover bands. We don't stray away from cover bands by any means, but there's just so many good, original artists in Lubbock right now that play covers as well, but I don't think there's any genre except for maybe heavy metal and rap that we don't dive into.

CP:

Okay. So, what made you decide you wanted to buy the Blue Light and what year did you finally take over here?

DS:

Well, it was actually—there was a lot of steps that went into it. You know, I'd been working here under David and Stephanie for a while. Gerald and Teresa had split ways with David and Stephanie. Man, I wish I had my dates better, but eventually, they had split off, and it was just David and Stephanie were the owners, and they eventually got to a point in their life where they wanted to move on, and lucky for me and Lance I believe, I guess, we had been here the longest out of any of the existing employees, and they gave us an opportunity to jump on board and for me, it was a no-brainer. I've always loved this place, and I always kind of treated it as a second home, and I wanted to be a part of the future of the place because I felt like I had kind of an intuition of the way it had been since I had gotten here and maybe the way that they wanted it to continue to be and just felt like a good opportunity for me to do something I love and yeah. It turned into a good deal for everybody, I believe. Our takeover date or our buy date was two years ago in September, so I guess September of—or actually, July, so July of 2013, I believe, yeah.

CP:

So, what was the original vision of The Blue Light?

DS:

For us or for Tom?

CP:

Or for Tom and maybe just the progression of it.

DS:

Well, I think the way that David and Stephanie progressed is it became—that's when everything became more social media. Media lives like our, you know—when I first started here, the website wasn't anything pretty. There wasn't anything that interested people to go check out the website, and once we had people like Charlie Stout come along, and he helped us out with our visual aspects of our social media site, and you know, just the way our website looked and the way we could interact with people online you know, and then even push forward maybe five or six years, and now we have someone like Thomas Mooney with New Slang who was—his daily write ups on Lubbock music in general, and he doesn't have to necessarily—he's not specifically Blue Light, but he does deal with a lot of Blue Light artists. I think it's given us a little more credibility because there's a lot more people reading about it. You don't have to show up to Blue Light to know what's going on at The Blue Light. There's a lot of things that are being said about shows that happen weeks ago, and people are actually able to read up about it. If you're not able to get out of your house or you can't find a babysitter, you have class in the morning, you can still pick up on little tidbits of what our local musicians are doing through people like Thomas Mooney and through Charlie Stout and his photography and even Susan with her Peace, Love—Peace, Love, and Venue, I don't know.

CP:

Peace, love, and Susan who?

DS:

Peace, Love, and Sue. Peace, Love, and Sue. She's—Marinello. She does a lot of photography for New Slang, so. It's Susan? S-u-s-a-n? Her last name is Marinello. M-a-r-i-n-e-l-l-o, I believe, yeah.

CP:

So, what is your vision of Blue Light these days? Do you got a mission statement or a vision or anything?

DS:

Yeah. Really, I mean, my main mission has been to not change anything, except for maybe, you know, the approach we have with artists, being more open-armed towards originality. Not to say that we never were before, but I, you know, there might have been a day six or seven years ago where if we had the option of bringing in, say, what's the name of that band that does all the covers? They're amazing. They bring in people. I don't know. The option between originality and just loud cover music, I guess. My vision would be number one, not to change anything, not



to paint the walls too much even though we have done a little work in some corners of this place. Just to try to keep traditions alive in this place because, you know, all in all, we haven't been around that long, you know. This place has only been sitting here for I guess about seventeen years. In the scope of things, that's really not much considering how much tradition and legacy, I guess if you want to call it, that a lot of people across the state consider Blue Light to have, so my main goal would be to not really change anything and to provide a safe haven for songwriters, maybe.

CP:

Okay. Do you remember the first band that you booked here?

DS:

Yes, I do. The name of the band was Odis and their lead guy is—he's doing some pretty big things right now. His name is Larry g(EE) and the bass player for Odis, his name was Bristen Phillips—well, it still is Bristen Phillips, and he's actually the guy who painted our murals. The big Indian on the sidewall at Blue Light and then the other big Blue Light mural right before you go into the bathrooms, and there's another big mural in the pool room and the mural that is painted at Tom's Daiquiri, and all of his murals have to do with Native Americans and he grew up—I guess he's part Comanche, and so he's very, very into the history of the Indian culture in this area and so it's really neat to hear his stories behind all the stuff that he paints, but it's really—it is odd that the first band I ever booked in here—this was while David [?] was still doing the booking. They let me do the Tuesday and Wednesday bookings during the week just because they realized I had an interest in it, and I had no idea that I was about to make, you know, not only a lifelong friend, but the guy who's going to end up pretty much putting tattoos on this place for the next eight years, so.

CP:

So are they a local band from Lubbock?

DS:

No. They are from Dallas. They're a Dallas-based band, and the best way to describe Larry g(EE) and his style and Odis's style back then would be if you're familiar with Bruno Mars, very popular artist right now. Larry g(EE) looks and sounds just like him, and he's doing some big things. He was recently on Jimmy Kimmel, and I've heard he's got a new album coming out here pretty soon that I'm sure everybody's going to be really excited for. I think he's gotten—they've gotten best funk band in Dallas like two or three years running with the local papers, so, pretty neat, pretty neat band, and that was—back when I booked Odis, that was when we were just starting to get into the Jonathan Tylers and more of the rock-based bands and stuff, so that was a really neat era for us, we were kind of branching out, so.

CP:

So do you got a favorite musical genre of yours, or—?

DS:

Not necessarily. I like the songwriting genre. Red's new album—Red Shahan's new album, he just came out with—I can't get that damn thing out of my head. I've always been a huge Charlie Shafter fan. He's probably one of the first people that whenever I first started working here, my taste in music I have to admit was pretty sour. It was the stuff that was left over from my high school days, you know. I was still jamming to Slipknot and Rancid and stuff like that.

CP:

So a heavy metal guy?

DS:

Yeah, I was more into the heavy stuff in high school, and that's surprising coming from Plains because it's definitely a country town. I guess I was trying to rebel. I don't know, but—

CP:

Well, I grew up in Plainview, and that's what I did was heavy metal music. All my early bands were all heavy metal music.

DS:

Oh, I loved it. I loved it, but yeah, my first taste of I guess the Blue Light style maybe, I don't even know what you would call Charlie Shafter who was awesome because the first time I heard Charlie Shafter's solo on the Blue Light stage, I think that's what turned the switch for me, and I was like, Where has this been my whole life? And then I just got really interested in all the guys who were coming through here and out, you know. I got to meet Brandon Adams and then hearing Shane Rogers coming through here, and I mean, just a handful of artists that my sister was familiar with. She had always been into this, but I've never given it the chance, so I'm definitely happy that I stumbled into another bartending job late in my life.

CP:

Yeah, yeah. So what do you think is the biggest band there—who is the most well-known band that you've ever booked here at Blue Light?

DS:

Ever?

CP:

I know there's been a lot.

DS:

Yeah, maybe along the lines of an Old 97's. I mean, we get—Black Hawk comes in here, and people really enjoy them. I don't think there is big across the nation as maybe like an Old 97's band, but, you know, obviously Wade—Wade considers this home and he—

CP:

Wade Bowen?

DS:

Wade Bowen, yeah, but as far as biggest—man, that's really though.

CP:

I know that I've seen Josh Abbott here, Billy Joe Shaver, and—

DS:

Turnpike Troubadours which their more recently big, but we had a good time with Doug Stone when he came through here, he was kind of a big name. American Aquarium is our big hitter right now. I mean, Lubbock can't get enough of those guys. Johnathan Tyler's done some really big things. We've got him coming up soon, I'd really have to just walk along the back wall and look at all the posters and stickers to—

CP:

Sure thing. So weekends are pretty much devoted to bands and some of your bigger acts and stuff like that or it could be solo acts too I guess happening, but something's that really been taking off the last few years is the Monday night songwriter jams which have now developed into this songwriter competition, and now was that something that you initiated or did that come through New Slang and Thomas Mooney. How did that all—

DS:

That actually started back when David and Stephanie still owned it. We had switched—we were trying to find something for Mondays that would work because, you know, we go through phases where our Monday, Tuesday, Wednesdays are kind of slow, and we used to try to look for ideas and something different, you know, for instance back then before the songwriter started, me and one of my good buddies who doesn't work here anymore, Bobby Schmidt, we started booking strictly rock bands on Wednesdays and they were rock cover bands, and we had a great following. We started doing really big things. Well, our Mondays were still lagging a little bit,

and we had the idea—I believe the guy who used to cook hot dogs out on the front street, his company was called Good Doggie. He approached us and asked if he could put on a karaoke night on Mondays and we thought, Shoot. I mean, we don't have anything to lose. Nobody's showing up on Mondays. It was kind of an open jam on Mondays, tried that out for a little while and realized that wasn't really what this place is here for, you know.

David and Stephanie had gotten together and we all agreed that this should be a songwriter's night dedicated to songwriters, and that's really where it began, and then it wasn't long after that we had our first songwriter competition, had a really good turnout for that. I believe we had eight contestants per night and ended up being three prelims and then a finale which Kenneth Omer [?] went on to win, the very first one, and then I think we might have skipped a season because we've always had one in the fall, one in the spring, and I think we might have skipped a season that year for the first time, or for the only time, and then we've had one every fall and every spring since then, and I guess roughly counting, I guess we've had about nine or ten of them. I would have to look to be sure, but I think we've had nine or ten competitions with our next competition coming up October 26 of this year.

CP:

Yeah, I just saw that. Just came out today. Actually, I saw the announcement for that through New Slang on Facebook there. So how did New Slang get involved in this and are they partnering with you or have they kind of taken it over? What's the—?

DS:

They—pretty much, yeah, they partnered—New Slang and Mt. Vernon Studios and Blue Light, which that would be Thomas Mooney, John Taylor, and us have I guess probably the past three seasons, three songwriter competitions have all pretty much helped to get together and just mesh this all and make everything work, and Mooney definitely helps with, I mean, just doing the sign ups and just pretty much getting it out there, getting the word out there, and he's done interviews with every contestant in the past and every single one of them has really creative answers and you just try to figure out where these guys came from, how long they've been writing songs, who their influences are, and, I mean, Mooney—he's a genius when it comes to putting things down on paper, and so, he creates a lot of buzz about it which is the first step, and I think ever since, Mooney's become a part of it, we've noticed an influx in songwriters who have been able to join and we're actually going to a twelve songwriter format where we're actually allowing twelve per night, and we're going to open the doors an hour early every Monday, so we can start the music a little bit earlier, so we'll be opening the doors at eight o'clock every Monday for this songwriter competition whereas last season and the seasons before we opened at ten, and the music started—or opened at nine and the music started at ten, and then of course John Taylor's got Mount Vernon Studios and he's also got his t-shirt company that helps with the merchandise, so, yeah.

CP:

Well, do you have any plans for the future? Any expansion or just kind of keeping it as is, any great goals or dreams maybe on the horizon?

DS:

We've been asked if we're ever going to expand and move to other cities or anything like that, but I mean, I like to joke around and tell people we've got to figure out what we're doing here first because it's fun, but it's definitely time consuming. I can't imagine being open any more than we are. We have live music seven days a week, but we don't open until nine and we close at two. We do plan on doing more street shows in the future. Those people seem to really enjoy those.

CP:

So what are these street shows? What does it consist of?

DS:

Pretty much we just take—we have Tom's and Blue Light which is 1808 and 1806 Buddy Holly. We take the street in front of us which we're lucky enough it's Buddy Holly Avenue, work with the city, and we shut the street down and we put a huge stage out front and a bunch of barricades and we have a bunch of security out there to help us out, and we just turn it into a huge street dance, and people seem to really enjoy it. I mean, we're learning as we're going obviously. You know, the first go at it that we had, we had turnpike, and we had way more people here than we expected which is a—it was a good thing except for the bathroom situation, but we're getting more bartenders coming in and working with Joe over at the Cactus Courtyard, and he let us use his bathroom facilities last time or rent them out last time, so we're learning as we're going, and we definitely want to do more street shows. We have another street show already scheduled to come up in March with William Clark Green, and then I believe we have another one in May called Cinco de Drinko and it's Dalton Domino's deal that I think he's going to try to make an annual deal.

CP:

Didn't William just do one here recently, a street show, or who was it?

DS:

Yeah, Will just did one in August.

CP:

It looked like it was pretty packed up what I saw from the pictures.



DS:

Yeah. That was the biggest one we've had yet to date.

CP:

Did you have an estimate on the number of attendants or anything?

DS:

Sitting somewhere around sixteen-hundred people which for that street, that's about as much as we can possibly handle unless we were to rent out the Cactus Courtyard and him let us use that facility completely, not just the bathrooms. I don't think we can do a whole lot more than that obviously unless we push the barricades all the way to the street, but, you know, we try to stay mindful of our neighbors. We don't want to completely cut their business down on a Friday or Saturday night, so we try to stay within our bounds. It would be nice in the future maybe to get a—like we used to do that I remember, kind of shut down the whole depot type deal to where everyone can walk around and enjoy everything and be out in the streets. I guess if there was something that I was shooting for, that'd be fun to bring that back and have a lot of people enjoy the depot like they used to.

CP:

Yeah, I could remember gigs where they'd shut down everything and you'd have some music over at Triple J's, something in the courtyard. Something was going on at the Cactus Tornado Gallery and you could just mingle and just could walk in and out of all of these different venues and there was all kinds of music going on. It was a lot of fun.

DS:

I miss those days. That used to be fun. Yeah, I remember plenty of times even before I worked here, there was stuff going on like that, and I always thought it was really neat, and I think that's what the depot needs is a lot of people to come down here and just be able to experience the whole thing, and number one it's feeling safe while they're here, and you know, having plenty of security, but yeah, that'd be really neat to get back to that one day.

CP:

Couple of last questions would be are you the sole owner or are you in a partnership with anybody?

DS:

I'm a co-owner. There's three of us. It's me, Lance Lusk, and Derek Hunter



CP:

Lance Lusk and Derek Hunter.

DS:

Yeah, and all three of us have worked too. Derek worked for Tom McDonald actually, and he worked for David and Stephanie and Gerald and Teresa. He worked here for, I'm going to guess, I'm going to go out on—four to five years, so Derek put in his time up here. A while back, I actually—me and Lance worked with him before he left, so we were the new guys as he was moving out, so he's been here for a while.

CP:

So he's still a partner, but not working here?

DS:

Yeah, I mean he still helps out, but he's not as hands-on, you know, me and Lance are—you know, Lance is up at the door pretty much every night of the week and I'm behind the bar four to five nights—three to five nights a week, so yeah, he comes up and helps out on the weekends, but as far as being hands-on, me and Lance are here more often.

CP:

And I guess really my last question would be if you know, where did the name Blue Light Live come from? What's the inspiration behind that?

DS:

I've been asked that before, and most people, the same answer they give me, and I'm not sure if it's one-hundred percent true, has to do with the blue insert, that skylight that's above the stage, but for some reason, I don't think that's it, and I've never been given a true answer as to what the—you've never heard it, have you?

CP:

I haven't heard, so Tom McDonald named it Blue Light Live?

DS:

Yeah, he was the original. Yeah, he named it the Blue Light, and I'm guessing it has to be that, that loose skyline.

CP:

Is Tom still around or?

DS:

Yeah. He actually—there's a Blue Light in Tom's reunion happening this Friday at The Rustic in Dallas, and he's actually going to that, but I haven't—I probably haven't talked to him in two or three years.

CP:

Okay. Are you going to the reunion?

DS:

We thought about it, but I think we're going to get stuck, you know, babysitter. Yeah, we wanted to go and then go to the Baylor Texas Tech game at Jerry World, but yeah, I think we're going to get stuck here in Lubbock, so—

CP:

Okay. Well, I think that's all I got. I think that pretty much covers the history unless there's something you can think of that I left out that somebody might want to know or something.

DS:

No, not that I can think of off the top of my head, but yeah, if I think of anything, I'll shoot you a message.

CP:

Okay. I appreciate it. Thanks again, Dustin.

DS:

Yep.

***End of Recording***