

## John Vandiver – Bio

John Vandiver was born in August 5<sup>th</sup> 1945 in Dallas, Texas and grew up there. He attended Sunset High School in the Oak Cliff area of South Dallas, and began playing guitar in his early teens. By the early/mid sixties he was one of a group of budding local musicians that included Ray Wylie Hubbard, Michael Martin Murphey, plus the brothers Stevie Ray and Jimmy Vaughan. In his late teens John accompanied Mance Lipcomb the Navasota based blues man as chauffeur on his tours, and eventually became his opening act. John also performed at Dallas' most famous listening club, the now defunct, The Rubiyat. By 1965 Vandiver was sitting in with the Dallas County Jug Band, an aggregation formed by Stephen Fromholz [then president of the folk music club at North Texas State University in Denton], along with Segal Fry, Travis Holland, Don Brooks, Tak Keck and Murphey. The band broke up when Fromholz was drafted.

Murphey and another Dallas musician, Owens "Boomer" Castleman, later headed for California, formed a band, and in the mid-sixties were signed by the RCA Victor subsidiary, Colgems, best known as The Monkees record label. The resulting album "**The Lewis And Clarke Expedition**" [1967], *almost* named after two of America's best-known explorers, included the John Vandiver song "Chain Around The Flowers." On the album Murphey is listed as Travis Lewis, while Castleman assumes the identity Boomer Clarke. The remaining band members were Johnny Raines, John London [who later worked with another Texan, ex-Monkee, Michael Nesmith in his First National Band] and Ken Bloom.

Later in the sixties Vandiver worked as a solo act at The Flick, a famous folk club, in Coral Gables, Florida. The Flick was home, at various times, to Michael Smith, Jimmy Buffett, David Crosby, Spanky & Our Gang and Vince Martin. In Florida Vandiver met a Chicago band, Ewing Street Times, and after sitting in with them for a time was eventually asked to join the group. In Florida, Don Dunaway, now a solo singer/songwriter was a band member for a time. The line-up at that point consisted of John, Michael Mashkes, Billy Berosini, Rick ???? and Don Harthcock. The band relocated for a time to Kansas City, where they met a young singer/songwriter called Shake Russell who then joined the band. In time Ewing Street Times decided to move to Austin, Texas and became part of the *great cosmic country* scare of the early seventies, which was perpetrated in part by John's old buddies Fromholz and Murphey. In Austin drummer Billy Bucher joined Ewing Street Times, and in the ensuing years they played clubs, festivals, coffeehouses and on the college concert circuit throughout the States. In late 1974 they disbanded and Russell moved to Houston where he formed The Shake Russell Band, which, until the early eighties included Mashkes. Dana Cooper an old school pal of Russell's from Kansas City later joined him in Houston.

Vandiver also relocated to *Space City*, and lived in the Montrose district, where he pursued his first love, *the blues*. Ostensibly now a solo artist, John would appear from time to time with the Russell/Cooper band. Vandiver contributed to the sessions for "**Songs On The Radio**" a 1978 album credited to, Shake Russell with Dana Cooper. Three years later, as a contributing artist, John's name appeared alongside The Shake Russell/Dana Cooper Band and The Michael Marcoulier Band on the album "**Comin' Home**." The title song on the album was penned by Vandiver and the eleven song collection also included John's "It's Against The Law." Although he didn't surface as a solo performer for another decade, it's worth noting that the latter disc also included the David Rodriguez song "Ballad Of The Snow Leopard."

Vandiver was murdered along with his long-time girlfriend/manager Debbie Davis on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1985 at their horse ranch near Magnolia, Texas. Houston based journalist Kathryn Casey subsequently penned an article for Rolling Stone magazine titled "The Blues And Bad Blood" which she recalls, on her web site, was a "*Sad story but amazing tale, mixing music, drugs, and violence.*" Almost two decades later, in the early summer of 2004, Joanna Vandiver, John's daughter by his first marriage, released a posthumous *live* album by her father titled "**I Found A Dream**." The recording was made at Poor David's Pub, a famous [and still vibrant] listening venue in Dallas, during three 1984 performances by Vandiver. On the recording Vandiver is supported on bass by Michael Mashkes.

Discography :

with the Shake Russell/Dana Cooper Band, and the Michael Marcoulier Band : "**Comin' Home**" [1981] :

Solo : "**I Found A Dream**" [2004] :

Arthur Wood  
Kerrville Kronikles 07/04  
[740 words]