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Volume 1 • Number 12 • April 1991 • FREE

# ELECTRIC EAR PRODUCTIONS

*'They Make The Stars Shine At Night'*

BY SHANE WEST

The storyline reads something like the childhood odyssey about the little engine that could. How the diminutive, but resourceful train kept on keepin' on 'til he finally made it to the top of the hill.

Of course, that familiar scenario, more often than not, sums up many small business success stories to be sure, but perhaps none better than the pro sound source known as Electric Ear Productions. Tom and Sammie Prather have indeed parlayed what began as a part-time "hobby", into one of the most widely-recognized and certainly respected sound and lighting businesses found anywhere under the bright lights of the entertainment world.

So how did it all begin? As they say, it began long ago, in a galaxy far, far away...in what Prather described with a grin as a "portable disco mobile."

Ah, yes, in a traveling party van outfitted with the latest in hi-fi equipment. The year was 1972.

"We had a mobile disco. We'd come out and do parties and banquets for people. That was our original foray into the business of trying to take big speakers and sound equipment into a place and provide the music and lighting. And we did it all for only \$15 an hour."

Working mostly private parties and local Jaycees functions, The Electric Ear did rather well, working in excess of 130 engagements during the height of the disco-era of the mid-to-late 1970's. But just how did that peculiar name come about?

"There was an article in Time magazine about a disco in the Woodstock area called the 'The Electric Circus'. It talked about how they didn't have live music in that club but were using recorded music and lighting. We were looking for a name and knew we weren't a circus," Prather added with a grin, "but that we were the 'hearing aids' in a disco... that's where the name 'Electric Ear' came about."

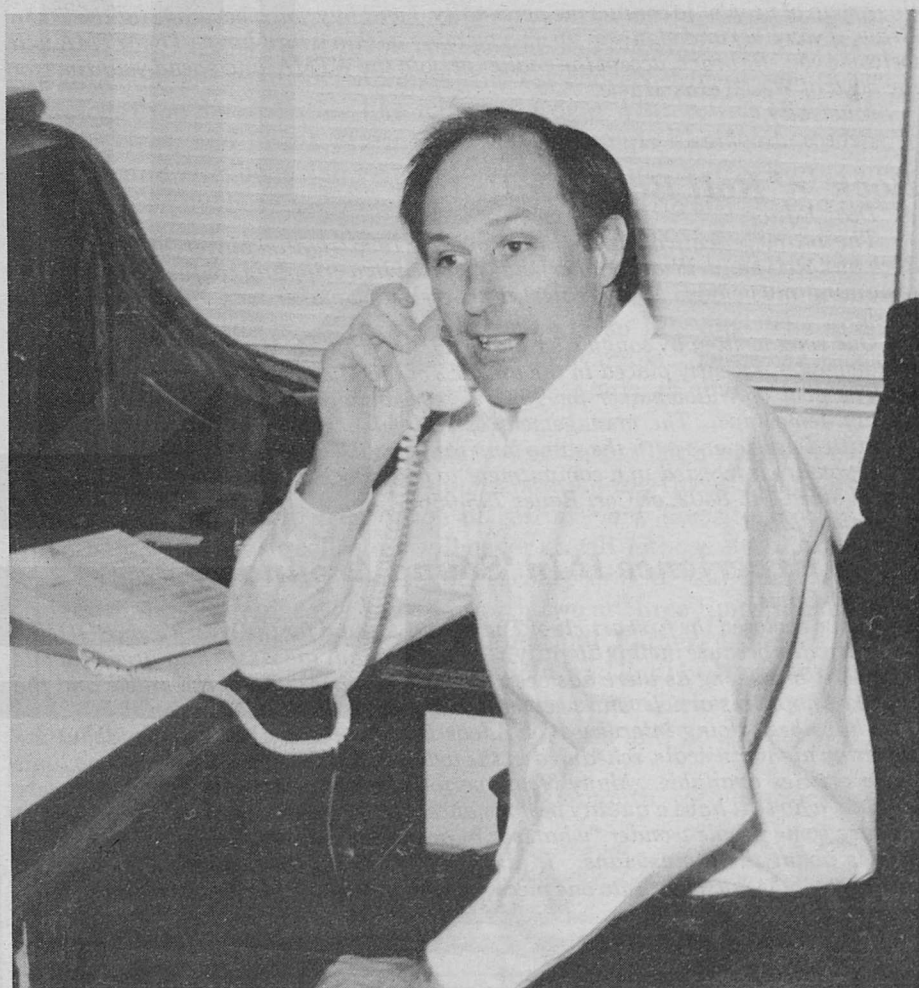
He added, "At the time, me and Russ Wilkinson were talking about how we didn't want to open a club but that we ought to be able to take stuff to parties...in fact, we were already custom-recording 8-track tapes and playing them for functions like the Jaycees, who we were working with a lot. That went on from about 1972 to '76."

It was then that Prather sold his original disco, which was a van full of gear, to Ronnie Johnson who now runs Southwest Lighting. He used the equipment for three years before selling it to Clyde Shannon. Amazingly enough, Prather says "basic pieces of that original disco are still being used today."

After that "traveling disco" period, the Prathers expanded into the retail music center business, taking over Lubbock Music Center upon its closing. Thus began a long string of business expansions.

"Basically, we were doing P.A. work as a small, part-time thing. The retail music store was the main focus of what we were trying to do. As Lubbock kept bringing in more and more live stuff, there wasn't much live, pro sound equipment available. We started out doing the lighting end of it and let someone else handle the sound."

See McENTIRE pg. 6



Tom Prather, owner of Electric Ear Productions



# • 'SOUND OFF' •

## Tommy Hancock's Apology to the Town Draw...

In my live look at the Traumaties at Oliver's article in this paper (Jan. 91), my reference to the Town Draw was simply because I consider the Draw to be the other end of the spectrum from Oliver's insofar as live music places in Lubbock. (Would you supporters of the Draw have it any other way?)

My respect for clubs is only in proportion to the fun I have in them. I've had fun at the Town Draw from the time it was a fancy restaurant, through Joe Ely in the 70's (or was it the 60's), all the way to a recent Traumatic experience there. I'm glad it exists and I appreciate the venue. (See you at the anniversary party, March 16.)

So no problem with an apology. Sorry I assumed everyone would know that the Town Draw is on the end of the spectrum where I chose to spend my youth in Lubbock.

The Editor of this paper did not solicit this apology. I sincerely want to be friends. If not, \*\*\*\*\*

Tommy X. Hancock

## The WTMA Deserves Your Support...



These photos were taken by Rebecca at a "Family Music Festival" sponsored and conducted by members of the WTMA.

Dear Editor,

I was looking through some pictures my mom and I took at different concerts. We came across these that are clearly WTMA events that I attended, well before I became a member of the organization and a Board member.

The WTMA was a vital part of my past, is a great part of my present, and will be an even better part of my future. The beauty of this organization lies in our dedication to music, especially West Texas music, and the great people I have met in my endeavors with the WTMA are an added benefit.

I would like to challenge anyone who doubts "the sincerity and good intention of this group of people" to contact me personally, I will buy you a beverage (at the Town Draw, if you like) and sign you up as a member within a half hour. The WTMA will welcome you. Be brave, accept the challenge, join the WTMA, and spend your time for the good of West Texas Music.

Musically,

Rebecca Hopkins

## Rock 'n' Roll Band Calling...

Dear Editor,

The untimely death of Randy Bauer in early 1990 (rhythm player for the Lubbock Rock and Roll band, Widowmaker), has resulted in a crippling confusion among the remaining musicians. The greatest asset of Widowmaker was, and still is, their music.

One song written by songwriter and lead singer, T. J. Moen, and performed by Widowmaker, recently placed in the top 10% of the Music City Song Festival.

The goal of Widowmaker for 1991 is reorganization and the production of a quality demo tape. The management of Widowmaker is therefor hoping to find committed musicians with the same long range goals.

If you are interested in a commitment to good Rock and Roll music, please call James Moen 745-8402, or Cori Bauer 795-0563.

James Moen

## Now, Experience It In 'Sound Around'...

Dear Chris:

I have enclosed the first article of The Sound Around for the West Texas SOUND. It is titled this because there is literally a "sound around" the West Texas area that has been here for as long as there has been music. It is the sound of the music and the people. I hope this article will meet with your approval for publication.

I have been doing interviews for Adobe Records for the last month, about the Saturday night musicals, scheduled in the towns around Lubbock. There is no limit to the articles available. Many of the performers are good musicians, once very popular, who still have a quality performance, but on a less demanding schedule. I am sure some people wonder "whatever happened to..." I am interested in doing articles about these musicians. I, also, would like to combine these articles, of Saturday night musicals, into one piece for publication in the SOUND, and include a schedule of events.

Sincerely,

Sue Swinson

Sue, thanks for the article on Clarence Nieman. I found it very interesting and well written. I look forward to future installments. CH

## And Poetic Justice For All...

Dear Chris,

I noticed the poetry column in the last issue, so thought I'd send some. Don't feel obliged to use any of these, but some of them refer to music, song, dance, and bands, etc. and may be appropriate. Your welcome to use any that you think are good enough. Maybe if you get in a pinch and need to fill some space.

You may have opened a bag of worms! So called "poets" are about a dime a dozen around here, I think. You may have to change the name of the publication to West Texas Journal of Poetry!

The best one of these poems is by a friend of mine - Derek Holden. Although not about music, I think it's one of the best West Texas poems I ever read. "A Tale of a West Texas Penguin - a true West Texas classic." He has given me permission to publish it anywhere. I'd be honored if you want to publish any of these.

Gene Brock

Gene, I enjoyed reading your poetry. I've entered a few of your pieces into my computer and as space becomes available - we'll see. Thanks for the contributions. CH

## Death of the Harmonica in Lubbock...

Folks, for the second time, one of our local talents has slammed, defamed, and stereotyped the harmonica in our local newspaper. The harmonica, once synonymous to Delta, Chicago, and Texas blues is an unwelcome instrument in Lubbock.

It seems some of our more successful musicians have decided the biggest pest to the local bands is a harmonica with a drunk attached to it.

Oh well, who needs to support or encourage harmonica players anyway? Lubbock doesn't need the likes of Willie Dixon or James Cotton anyway. Not that anyone, of their caliber, could ever develop here in Lubbock.

Any of you young people in Lubbock encouraged to take up an instrument seriously, stay away from the harmonica or you may be stereotyped as a pest or a drunk. I have listened to some of the best harp playing I have ever heard right here in Lubbock, and if he was drunk, he was the best drunk harmonica player I have ever heard in this town.

It doesn't matter now. I wouldn't blame him or any harmonica player if he never got on stage again in Lubbock. Its sad that our local musicians can't keep the subject of their interviews positive without stereotyping or slamming an instrument they obviously have no understanding of or respect for. So farewell harmonica, your death here in Lubbock will be a sad void in the music of West Texas.

Signed - The WRONGWRITER

Wrongwriter, I don't think the harmonica will ever die, in Lubbock or anywhere else, for that matter. I believe the reason the instrument has received bad press is in the fact that almost anyone can afford one, and just possessing the thing gives the owner a ticket to get up on stage. In some cases this has resulted in a "musician" crashing an open jam and showing everyone just what little talent he has. There are great harmonica players out there, it's just that the bad ones seem to be more visible. I own a harmonica and can even play "Heart of Gold" along with the best of them, but I Don't! If you're one of the good players, I hope you will continue to show the world what a great instrument the harmonica is. If you're not, I wish you a speedy farewell. NO, seriously, if you can't play the thing, practice, practice, practice, then let talent, not beer, be your motivation to get up on stage. CH

## "Hub-Bub"

MUSIC MUSING & ASSORTED WHAT-NOTS

BY CHRIS HARMON

Managing Editor

I'm not going to take up a lot of room here this month. I think it is more important to make as much space as possible for letters. I will, however, take up a little room for welcoming our new members.

**FIRST OFF...** I neglected to mention Ground Zero who joined our ranks last month. Thanks to Chuck Green, Darren Welch, Merlin Angle, and Richard Rico for signing on. Also, last month Susan Grisanti renewed her membership (sorry for misplacing your application.) Members joining this month include: Curtis McBride, Tony Adams, Geoff Gentry, Jimmy Glick, Bruce Riley, and Adam Aaron. Adam wrote, "Just a little note to thank you for your hospitality at the last meeting (Tommy's Jan. 16) and to let you know how excited I am about becoming a member of WTMA. Please let me know if there's anything I, or "The Traumaties," can do. Well, as everyone who attends the meetings knows, there is a lot going on, and there will be a lot to do...

Until next month, keep those cards and letters (and MEMBERSHIPS), coming in...also, **THERE WILL BE NO MONTHLY MIXER THIS MONTH!** — CH



## Alan Munde and Country Gazette Placed On Texas Touring Program

LEVELLAND, TEXAS (Special) The Levelland, Texas-based bluegrass group Alan Munde and Country Gazette have been placed on the prestigious Texas Touring Artist Roster of the Texas Commission on the Arts for the 1991-1992 touring season. As part of the program, the well known, national touring group's concert fee, for qualifying presenters, will be supported in part by a grant from the Commission.

1991 marks the twentieth year of blue-

grass recording, touring, and performing for Alan Munde and Country Gazette. In addition to their normally busy performance schedule, the group has many special audio and video projects scheduled for release, to highlight this landmark year.

For more information, contact Alan Munde at: Alan Munde and Country Gazette, P.O. Box 8240, Levelland, Texas 79338, 806-894-2932 (evenings), 806-894-9611 ext. 277 (daytime).

## Polka Music Festival Set For March 15-17

HOUSTON, TEXAS (Special) In Texas, the use of superlatives has almost reached the point of becoming cliché, yet nothing else will do in describing the events about to take place in Belton, Texas. March 15-17 will be the date of the greatest Polka Music Festival ever held in Texas, of anywhere else in the county, for that matter.

Thirty-five of Texas' greatest Polka Bands have committed to play in the First Annual Texas Polka Music Awards Festival. Present will be the Vrazels, the Litt'l Fishermen, Ed Kadlecik and His Village Band, Harry Czarnek and the Texas Dutchman, the Jodie Mikula Band, the Czech Harvesters, the Seven Dutchmen, Alpenfest, and Valerio Longoria and his Conjunto Band, just to name a few. Rounding out the entertainment will be appearances by the Czech Folk Dancers of West, the Fire on the Mountain Cloggers, the East Bernard Czech Singers, and more

singing and dancing groups yet to be named.

Festival promoters expect between thirty and fifty thousand people to attend the three day event. The festival, sponsored by the Texas Polka Music Association, has attracted two major corporate backers — Bud Light, and Paulaner Brewery of Munich, Germany.

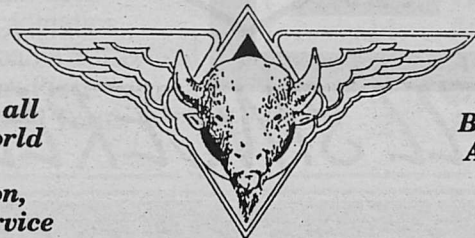
Tickets for the event are moderately priced at \$22.00 for three days, \$16.00 for two days, and \$8.50 for a single day. Tickets may be purchased by calling Dillard's Ticketline at 1-800-800-8399. Tickets, and hotel/motel information, may also be obtained from the Expo Center by calling 1-800-444-9309. The TPMA has established a Festival Hotline at 1-800-447-3653.

For more information about the Texas Polka Music Association or the Awards Festival in Belton, call (713) 556-9595.

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Tuesday Specials 7-11 pm  
Thursday - Open Jam 9 pm - 2 am  
Friday Specials 9 pm - 11 pm

# • TEX SLIM'S • CLASSIC WAX

## COMPACT DISC REVIEWS

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Tex Slim is a former disc jockey and retired harmonica player. He owns and operates a compact disc library (600 discs) in Shallowater, Texas. He can be reached through this address: P.O. Box 1207, Shallowater, Tx., 79363.

## TEX SLIM'S MUSIC COLLECTION PROCESS

As 1991 begins, local music collectors have seven basic music stores, as well as numerous department store music racks to choose from. All of these outlets share two common factors, high prices (\$9.99-\$15.99), and little variety. Compact Disc collectors will get about half the CD's for the same amount of money they spent on records. Compact Discs are almost impossible to find for less than \$10.00 per disc (records can be as cheap as \$1.99 in cut-outs). Pawn shops (used) and mail order catalogs (new) can help reduce the expense of collecting compact discs. Columbia House and BGM offer a good selection and "less than music store" prices, on two or more discs. In addition to these mail order suppliers, two local pawn shops (Empire), now buy & sell discs (cheaper than both local used music outlets).

New music on CD is a real sticker shock. Old LPs on CD are more affordable, and sometimes hard to get (special order). Local special order catalogs, such as W/M & One Stop (Hastings) and Valley (Sound Warehouse), can quench most any Rock, Jazz, or Blues music appetite, and all three catalogs have a 90+% available rate. Variety in special order catalogs is far superior to the selection on most racks. Two local used music outlets do offer some music (imports & used) for collectors who can afford high priced imports or those who change used discs. New music on CD can be either a new issue or an old LP just being made available on CD. Some record companies will distribute an old LP on CD at a discount store (Target) and then later it will appear in a music store catalog. Several local stores (Target, Wal-Mart, etc.) sell old LPs on CD at a cheaper rate than music stores.

Variety, in both styles and artists, is still a problem after 10 years of Compact Discs. 1991 should begin an early 90's flood of 70's music on CD. Artists need to replace the wealth they spent from your old records and tapes. Some big record companies are now owned by Japanese conglomerates, CBS (Sony) and MCA (Panasonic.) This could lead to more recorded music products emphasis and less concert promotions. Artist catalogs from the seventies, like Johnny & Edgar Winter, Rick Derringer, Leslie West, and Frank Marino, as well as groups like Canned Heat, Cactus, and Wishbone Ash, remain to-be-released in the 90's. Europeans currently enjoy these and other catalogs because of a royalty subsidy (tax) on home recording tape. No such "black tape tax" exist in the U.S..

For those on a limited income, Compact Discs can be transferred to any home recorder (cassette or reel-to-reel), just like record albums were recorded. CD's do not skip, crackle, or pop like LPs did. The music collector who only wants to invest in certain Compact Discs can record those "not worth buying, but listenable" discs on high quality tape, and enjoy that CD clarity in both their home and car.

Music collectors will still have bad selection and high prices at every music outlet, but special orders and discount houses (local & mail order) can ease the cost and frustration of getting your favorite records on Compact Disc. Music collectors will never see all of those old LPs on CD, but no one ever said they would. Music collectors can take heart, in five years that old album cover may be worth two or three times the album inside it. One such collectors item is the original "Fathers & Sons" mosaic cover. This Muddy Waters, Mike Bloomfield, and Paul Butterfield double LP is now on Compact Disc and the original album jacket is worth over \$100.00. Old albums in stockpiles disappeared and no company mass produces albums much anymore.

The Tex Slim CD Reviews returns next month with classics from Journey, Steve Miller, and Jeff Beck.

**NOTE:** Most compact discs reviewed in the Tex Slim Classic Wax column were acquired as a special order from Hastings or Sound Warehouse.



# The Phoenix Rises From the Ashes

(...Don't Be Misled Folks)

BY LANDA GAMBLE-JONES

A very favorite musician, as well as friend of mine, and by the way, who is finally coming into his own, is the one and only Jesse "Guitar" Taylor. Here's a tib-bit on this guy for those who will appreciate personality trivia on this "great" guitarist, and a really good man.

Jesse was born in Lubbock (how many have we lost) on April 10, 1950. His parents are Homer Hugh Taylor and Martha Werly Silhan. Hugh, a diversified fella in his own right, was a sailor, guitar player, police officer, and much more; while his mom was the homemaker and probably the "rock" for the family.

Jesse was educated at McWhorter Elementary, Matthews Jr. High, and Lubbock High.

In fact, Jesse made his first public appearance in 1963 at the tender age of 13 at the Matthews Jr. High gym, in an eighth grade talent show. Stardom came at age 14, when he performed again, at Matthews Jr. High; his first paid performance, at the prom.

Life scooted along, guitar in hand, marriage, and children. In 1973, Jesse married Connie Boyd (C.B. in the Hob Nob days), then Linda Cullum 1981-1987. His children are Chelsea Taylor (19), Nicole Taylor (16), and Carrie Young (15).

Keeping the "riff," Jesse was influenced by Jimmy Dale Gilmore, The Ventures, Lonnie Mack, B.B., Albert, Freddie King, and John X Reed. Jesse made his first recording with

Joe Ely (MCA, 1977), and went on to "Big Guitars from Texas" (Amazing, 1985), and "Jesse Taylor: Last Night" (Cassette, 1989; Bedrock, U.K. CD/LP, 1990). He's played on records by Joe Ely (first 5 albums), Terry Allen, Butch Hancock (currently: Butch Hancock and the Sun Spots), Ponty Bone, Marcia Ball, Maines Brothers, Kimmie Rhodes, and the Supernatural Family Band.

Jesse's favorite venues are (Lubbock be proud) Stubb's B.B.Q. and the Cotton Club - makes you have happy feet, don't you think? Then there's the Vulcan Gas Co., Armadillo, Il Club, Soap Creek Saloon, and (one of my favorites) the Continental Club, and Hole in the Wall - all in Austin, of course. In San

Francisco, there's Slim's, and Milky Way in Amsterdam (another take the bull by the horn kind 'a place, and what a blast); and to be your own self, check Jesse out at the Half Moon and Weavers Arms in London, U.K., or the Breedon Bar in Birmingham, England. He is on the Lubbock International Expressway!!

Jesse's reason for living in Austin? "Sucked in by intellectual gravity - lots of places to play (come on Lubbock, we can do it, too!!). I love living in the Hill Country and by the lake (can we make some cardboard pet mountains to set around?)."

Jesse, be bigger than life - I'm proud for you, Big Guy!!!

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# MARCH LIVE MUSIC CALENDAR

## BASH RIPROCK'S

2419 Main St.

- 9 Stony Pony  
30 Traumatiks

## BELLY'S

5001 Ave. Q

Wednesdays....Nite Owls  
Thurs-Sun....P.J. Belly & The  
Lone Star Blues Band  
with Elvis the Busboy  
Fridays.....Don Caldwell &  
Mainframe

## BORROWED MONEY

910 E. Slaton Hwy

- 6-9 Slide Bar  
8 Little Texas and  
Slide Bar  
13-16 Larry Cagle and  
Crazy Fox  
20-23 Redneck, The Band  
27-30 Texas, The Band  
28 Canyon and Texas,  
The Band

## CHELSEA STREET PUB

South Plains Mall

- 4-6 High Gear  
7-9 Traumatiks  
11-16 Ronnie Satterfield  
18-23 Say Pleaz  
25-30 David Trout

## DEPOT WAREHOUSE

19th & Ave. G

- 3 Ricky Hendrix with  
Buddy Miles  
8 Ground Zero  
27 Concrete Blond

## GREAT SCOTT'S BAR-B-Q

FM 1585 & Hwy 87

- 8 & 9 Mike Pritchard  
15 & 16 Wind River  
22 & 23 Boonie Ratt Band  
29 & 30 Sweat Addicts  
Sundays Graham Warwick  
Open Mike Jam 6-8pm

## JAZZ

3703 19th

Thurs & Sun Tommy Anderson &  
Jazz Alley

## MAIN STREET SALOON

2417 Main St.

- Sunday John Sprott Jam (Rock)  
Monday Accoustic Jam hosted  
by Tim Closs  
Wednesday Johnny Ray Jam (Rock)  
7 Hickoids w/Hardcore  
8 & 9 The Mike O'Waves  
14 Air Biscuit with  
Tragic Machine  
15 & 16 Wizard  
21 Ed Hall w/Hardcore

## MAIN STREET SALOON (Cont.)

22 & 23 Envoye Express

- 28 Junk Monkeys with  
Dead Cat Alternative

## ORLANDO'S

2402 Ave. Q

- 12 A Class Act  
18 Susan Grisanti  
26 Susan Grisanti

## SILVER BULLET

5145 Aberdeen

Fri - Sun Chuck McGuire and  
the Country Squires

## SPORTS FORM

3525 34th

Thrs. & Sun Todd Holley Jam

## TACO VILLAGE

6909 Indiana

- 9 Bobby Shade with  
Noland & Jo Harmon,  
Matthew McLarty and  
guest Joey Bird  
16 South Plains College  
Bluegrass Night  
23 Bobby Shade with  
Noland & Jo Harmon,  
Matthew McLarty and  
guest Joey Bird  
30 Andy Wilkinson

## TEXAS CAFE

3604 50th

- 7 Marsha Ball  
8 & 9 Electric Gypsies  
15 & 16 Ground Zero  
22 & 23 Robin Griffin  
29 & 30 The Nelsons

## TOWN DRAW

1801 19th

- 9 Eddie Beethoven and  
Ventley James  
16 17th Anniversary  
Party with Big Foot,  
Envoye Express,  
Traumatiks and  
Eddie Beethoven

## WEST LA

34th & Brownfield Hwy.

- 13 World War III  
(former members  
of Black Sabbath  
and Dio)

## Please Note:

Times and dates are  
subject to change.

Remember to call ahead  
to confirm listings.

# LIVE SHOT

BY REBECCA HOPKINS

Saturday, February 2nd, three "live shots" of rock-n-roll were in order for me to recover from the "Lubbock Crud" and a strong case of cabin fever.

My first stop was Chelsea Street Pub, in South Plains Mall. Steve O'Neill was everything his promo pack said, and more. He and his band, S.O.B. (Steve O'Neill Band), provided a unique, thumpin', pumpin', kickin', rock n roll performance. The versatility of this act is hard to define. They play such a wide range of music. Crow, Lynard Skynard, Neil Diamond, and even a "white boy" version of M.C. Hammer's "U Can't Touch This" were part of the set I enjoyed. The endless energy of Steve O'Neill on keyboard/synthesizer, Chris Hughes on thunderous bass guitar, and Marty Cotinola on percussion, was very refreshing. Steve and the band were very much in touch with the audience on stage and chatted with everyone in the audience during their breaks. They were three "sharp-dressed" men with "electrifying stage presence." They were definitely "as much fun to watch as to hear."

Touring, releasing two albums, and making an MTV video, have consumed much of the last seven years. In 1983, Steve's first album, "Watch Out" was released and subsequently sold over 7,000 copies regionally. Billboard magazine and American Bandstand featured a single from that album, "When the Mountain Falls."

In 1984, MTV added the video of that same single to their lineup after its debut on the "Basement Tapes." The video enjoyed eight weeks on the charts and won acclaim at the 1985 Cannes Film Festival.

His second album, "What's Your Pleasure?"



Steve O'Neill

was released in 1989. It was concrete proof of his musical versatility and featured a more latin/reggae collection of tunes. He is planning to release a third, even more powerful album, soon.

Steve O'Neill has toured constantly for the past five years playing concert halls and clubs alike. He has opened for Chicago, the Romantics, and the Smithereens. He has played such clubs as The Limelight in Chicago, Club

Television in Memphis, and Madame Wong's in Los Angeles. Based on what I observed at Chelsea Street Pub on February 2nd, the sky is the limit for these guys. The next time they are in West Texas, don't miss them. They are SUPER!!!!

## • Dennis Ross & The Axberg Bros. •

My second "live shot" of West Texas music was obtained at Texas Cafe (we are very glad to have them back in the live music line-up). Dennis Ross and the Axberg Brothers out of Longview, Texas, were playing. The Texas-shaped drum cymbal on John Claude Axberg's drum set was a dead giveaway that these guys are Texas-born, Texas-bred, and Texas-proud. Dennis Ross played lead guitar and provided awesome vocal accompaniment. Playing bass guitar and taking lead vocal at times, as well as providing harmony vocal, was Jim Axberg. And, Lubbock's own Tony Adams jammed with the band. On "Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay," Tony had the guitar talking. Excellent job, Tony! Their musical presentations included ZZ Top, Marshall Tucker, and Hank Williams. A foot stompin' version of "Sweet Home Alabama" was good to get the crowd's attention. All in all, Texas Cafe was rockin' that night. I even saw a guy drinking those "blue thangs" fall off of his chair. What is the secret ingredient in those, anyway? Hats off to Wayne and Kenra for bringing live music back to the Cafe.

## • The Traumatiks •

The Traumatiks can even play the Town Draw and did on February 2nd. Featuring Ben Shacklette on keyboard, Adam Aaron on bass guitar, Mike West on guitar, and Richard Barnett on drums, as well as lead vocals, played their last set with as much energy as they played their first. It was energetic, forceful, full, and rockin'. These four guys have only been together since November, but they sound like they were born jamming together. Their instrumentation was flawless. The Traumatiks are a rock n roll party band. Their musical menu included the Allman Brothers' recent chart climber "Good Clean Fun," "Memphis," some ZZ Top, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, and to close the show, Wilson Pickett's classic "Midnight Hour."

The TABC had thinned the crowd with their appearance, which was prompted by the previous night's fire (suspected to be arson). But those of us remaining for the last set, enjoyed a final hour of fine entertainment. It made me wish I had gotten there well before the last set.

The Traumatiks have played at Tommy's Place, Great Scott's Barbecue, Oliver's, and lots of parties in addition to other clubs. They are definitely making a great name for themselves on the West Texas music scene.



# McEntire Affiliation Led 'Ear' To Major Expansion

Continued from page 1

Gradually, Electric Ear Productions branched into the sound arena after Prather's working arrangement with Tom Woodruff of Jer Com Sound led to a buy-out deal in which Prather assumed both ends of the concert production business.

Operating as only a small, regionally-known entity at first, Prather's fortunes took a turn for the better in the early 1980's.

"We ran into a group called A.D. (a contemporary Christian rock band comprised of former Kansas members) who liked us real well. They took us on a six week tour which took us to a new level. We'd just been doing one-up shows here and there."

As news of Electric Ear's dependable, professional business spread, a call in April of 1986 figuratively took the small engine to the top of the mountain.

Prather said, "We got a call from Reba McEntire's management who said that she was not happy with the people she was working with. We were asked to do three shows on a trial basis. We seemed to get along real well and became her production statewide and across the Southwest."

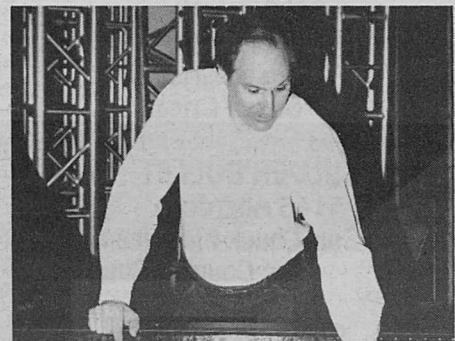
From there, her star continued to rise. As the increasingly popular Oklahoma red-head began sweeping every possible award offered by the music industry, the Electric Ear was asked to expand its operations once again. That year, no doubt partly to the credit of the production crew, Reba McEntire accomplished a rather monumental milestone by capturing the Country Music Association's prestigious "Entertainer of the Year" award. It marked only the fourth time in CMA history that a female was awarded the honor.

"After Reba won (that major award), it caused a real turning point for us because we realized we didn't have the capital to try to do two different things. At that time, we sold our retail operation to Tarpley so we could concentrate on touring," Prather said.

For the next four years, Electric Ear Productions was a mainstay on tour with McEntire. During that time, the company opened a Nashville division to allow its crew another "base".

"The majority of our big stuff now comes

out of Nashville. We've got a place there so we can commute," Prather explained. "I can't run it by remote control...and I don't want to. I try to be a hands-on owner who knows what's going on and can take care of business. But the biggest thing for us is having great people to run things. Bob Langois, who manages the Nashville office, is a major part of our operation. Because of good personnel, we can



**TOM PRATHER works with a mixing board used by Electric Ear Productions.**

continue to expand our accounts because we are solidly-based. And, now everyone has heard about us."

So, is there any chance that Electric Ear Productions will re-locate entirely to Music City? It's not likely anytime soon.

"I'm a real West Texas guy," said Prather. "I'm here most of the time...except when somebody wants to find me; then everybody says I'm in Nashville," he laughed.

One last question. Where would you say your success lies?

"(For) one, the opportunity was available for us to work with Reba; and two, we had to make some big decisions and take advantage of the opportunity when it came up," Prather said, adding, "What we did was just go by trial and error...what we thought was best until we ran into somebody else who was doing it right. That's how we got the knowledge, over a long period of time, of how to do things. Since we began, I've had some guys who've gone on to work with Paul McCartney, The Rolling Stones, Linda Ronstadt, Miami Sound Machine and recently 'Rock in Rio II'. Like anything... it's just evolution."

Photographs by Chester Marston

## Sound Around

BY SUE C. SWINSON

The Sound Around this month had an opportunity to listen to some wonderful music and meet some great musicians. I have discovered a "sound" culture or fellowship of singers, musicians, and fans. These people have been echoing country, western, bluegrass, and gospel music across the Plains for years, and they are continuing this musical tradition today. This is the sound of instruments, singing, hand clapping, and toe tapping. Clarence Nieman, of New Home, has been a part of this culture for twenty five years and he can't explain it except to say, "I just love country music and I'll be playin' and singin' until I can no longer perform."

Clarence recalls his first public appearance at a New Home School talent show. Eight-year-old Clarence sang the Webb Pierce song "Slowly" and to his surprise he won! The prize was fifteen dollars and he spent it all on a watch. He was then "big man on campus."

In high school, Clarence formed his first band with Marlow Rudd, Mike Fillingim, Ronald Wyatt, Wesley Dean, and Larry Edwards. They played the 'school function' circuit and went to the regional play-off in San Angelo as the New Home FFA Band.

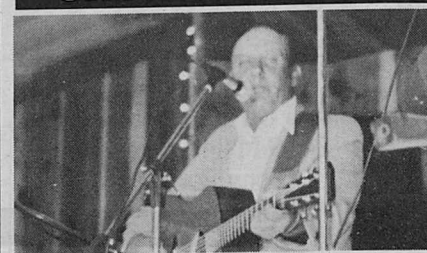
After graduation and marrying his high school sweetheart, Darlene Lowrey, Clarence moved to Meadow to farm. Never far from a music gathering, he began playing at the home of George and Bobbie Ashburn (this gathering evolved into the Meadow Musical). There Clarence met Bob Suggs, an exceptional fiddler with his own band. Impressed with his voice, Suggs asked him to join the band.

Clarence was lead vocalist and played rhythm guitar for the Bob Suggs band from 1970 until 1975. The band cut an album at the Caldwell Studio of Lubbock in 1971. The album title was "Meet Bob Suggs and the Rangers featuring Clarence Nieman." His first time in a studio, Clarence says he was fascinated by the equipment. Clarence laughs as he explains the studio was "state of the art" with four tracks. Incidentally, this was the first recording session that Lloyd Maines played steel guitar for anyone other than the Maines Brothers.

Suggs' band played many musicals, bluegrass festivals, country clubs, night clubs, and

## Spotlight On:

### Clarence Nieman



VFWs in Texas and New Mexico during the next five years. Clarence says they also played "nineteen million" Treffan/Elanco chemical sales meetings in every farm community in the Panhandle and South Plains.

In 1975 Clarence and Bobby Willard (who Clarence also met at the Meadow Musical) formed Midnight Cowboys. The Midnight Cowboys played the Sunday Matinee at Bigger'n Dallas for several years. Their album "The Midnight Cowboys at Bigger'n Dallas" was cut at Caldwell Studio.

Clarence and The Midnight Cowboys can be enjoyed two weekends each month at the Lubbock VFW. They also play each August in Roaring Springs for the Motley County Old Settlers Reunion. They have played many other venues including: Altus, Oklahoma; Clovis, Lovington, and Hobbs, New Mexico; and Sweetwater, Lubbock, Brownfield, Littlefield, and San Angelo, Texas, just to name a few. Their band members are Weldon Turpin (fiddle), Donnie Dunnigan (bass), Harvey Wilson (steel), Darlene Nieman (drums and harmony), and Clarence (lead vocal and guitar).

In 1987, Clarence wrote and recorded "Shadow of My Pride," a very good, up-beat country/western song. The song received air-play on the Maines Brother's "West Texas Music Hour," and other area programs. The song climbed from 75 to 60 on the Cashbox Chart in 1987 and stayed on the charts from the end of March through July. This is very good considering it was cut as a single, by an unknown artist/songwriter.

Clarence has performed with many of the best artists in the Panhandle area: Bob Suggs, Royce Suggs, Stan Dunagan, Nickey Smith, Chris Stutzer, Weldon Turpin, Bobby Willard, Gary Stephenson, Vic Molinar, Rod Huenegardt, and the late Wally Moyers, who was also a member of the Midnight Cowboys.

Since his first performance at the New Home talent show, people have sung along with, danced, listened to, and most of all, enjoyed the music of Clarence Nieman. He is definitely a star in the musical flag of West Texas, continually keeping the "sound around."

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# The Essentials of Chord Charts and Tablature

BY SUSAN GRISANTI

Oh those guitar charts! Whether you're a beginning guitarist, or a seasoned performer, deciphering the myriad of available published guitar music in charts and tablature, and applying each system to your own playing, can be very frustrating indeed. Remembering the following basics may help you get started.

Standard chord charts usually appear in published music with the guitar strings pictured vertically and the frets horizontally. Of course this is very misleading visually, as is so much of our musical notation for guitar (Fig. 1).

The "open" strings (no left hand finger required) may or may not be listed as "O" at the top of each string, and strings not to be played may or may not have an "x" above the respective string. Your discerning ear will have to be the deciding factor in such cases (see Diagram 4).

Some charts, however, list the strings horizontally, as in Diagram 2. This system may list the fret numbers instead of note letters as in Diagram 3.

Some charts may or may not list string and finger numbers, and you may see stripped down versions like Diagram 4a.

Diagram 1

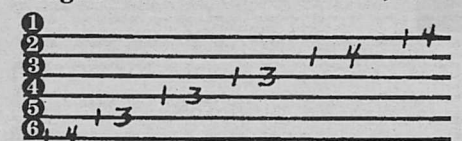


Diagram 2 "F" Blues

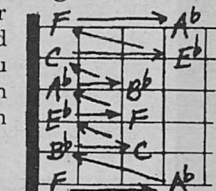


Diagram 3 "F" Blues

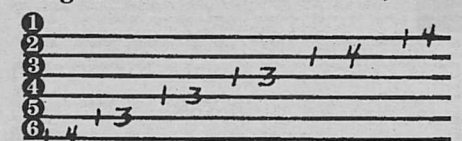
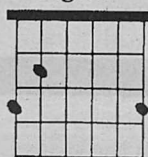
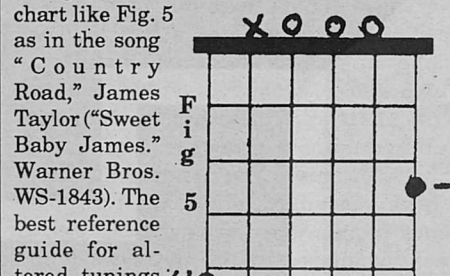


Fig. 4a



"G" Chord

Another key factor in reading chord charts is knowing whether standard tuning (EADGBE), or one of the more than 50 altered tunings is being used. For example, a "G" chord in standard tuning would chart like diagram 4, but "Drop D" tuning (sixth string tuned to "D" instead of "E") would chart like Fig. 5 as in the song "Country Road," James Taylor ("Sweet Baby James," Warner Bros. WS-1843). The best reference guide for altered tunings is, GPI Collector Edition, Vol. 4, No. 5, Sept. 88. The address is: GPI Publications, 20085 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino, CA 95014. This guide lists several published songs to each of the 50 altered tunings.

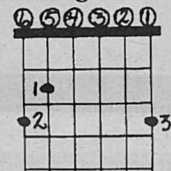


"G" Chord using "Drop D" tuning

Also you'll want to get Mel Bay's Deluxe Chord Encyclopedia, Mel Bay Publishers, Kirkwood, MD 63122. This is available at local music stores and lists over 7000 chords, with very concise diagrams.

The next article will take us on past the first fret. Until then, keep on practicing and remember: the 'big guitarist' in the sky is watching you!

Fig. 4b



"G" - All Labels

Fig. 5



"G" Chord using "Drop D" tuning

## Rhyme & Reason

### A TALE OF A WEST TEXAS PENGUIN

a true West Texas classic  
by Derek Holden

This tale is not new  
But I swear that it's true  
Of an unlucky lad I remember.  
The fates did not shine  
On this good friend of mine  
On a rainy dark night in September.

It's dove that we hunted  
We moaned and we grunted  
But only three birds did we gather.  
As night then drew near  
We all opened a beer  
And recounted adventures together.

Then clouds they did loom  
On the horizon and soon  
A great West Texas squall had begun.  
We raced for the trucks  
Thru the mire and the muck  
Tho' the mud made it harder to run.

Now Billy Roy Hays  
Took the dirt road that plays  
Past the elm trees that line old man  
Clyde's.

But this old road's been graded  
So much that it's faded  
The fields rise six feet on each side.

Soon Billy's all stuck  
In that old pickup truck  
And the rain's comin' down like a tide.  
So he figures he better  
Get on out in this weather  
And find a tractor to pull out his ride.

But now I'm a feared  
That this story gets weird  
There's a critter Billy Roy gets to  
tangle in  
Said at first "It's a duck  
Waddlin' right past my truck"  
Looked closer, said "Damn it's a  
penguin."

It was all black and white  
And it waddled upright  
And to Billy it paid little heed.  
Stood two feet high  
And kept walkin' on by  
"What a wonderment" Billy thought,  
"Yes indeed!"

So Billy bent to his knees  
To make sure what he sees  
Was somehow really a lost Arctic-an  
bird.  
But as it drew nearer  
Things soon got much clearer  
The name "penguin" was not quite the  
right word.

Billy flicked a small stick  
But the bird turned and spit  
And produced a most odorous funk.  
"Weren't a penguin at all!"  
Screamed Billy Roy in the squall  
"But a gosh danged half pissed off  
old Skunk!"

Well Billy Roy finally got home  
Tho' he was soaked to the bone  
And he trailed that perfume 'round  
for days.  
And most times at the gin  
The old men stop and grin  
At the man known as Penguin Billy  
Roy Hays.

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# RHYTHM, RHYMES & ROYALTIES

BY CARY C. BANKS

## "Love Songs"

Since the moment Adam first laid eyes on Eve, no single concept has brought the human race more intense pleasure or pain than "Love". Probably since Adam's day, men and women have been professing their love to one another with words and music, i.e... the "Love Song." I've been accused of being a blatant, sentimental romantic, and that's probably true, but I've always been a sucker for a great torch tune. I suppose it's because, to me, love songs are not so much about what is, but what could be.

Everyone has felt the powerful emotions love brings. Joy, despair, hope, longing, jealousy, anger, melancholy, and peace. Songwriters through the ages have described love in many ways.

In "Greensleeves," the writer laments, "Alas, my love, you do me wrong to cast me off discourteously." Centuries later, Nashville tunesmith Cowboy Jack Clement, would describe the same feeling by saying, "I've Been Flushed From The Bathroom Of Your Heart." Modern writers have described love as - "Love Is Blue," "Love Is a Rose," "Love Is a Many Splendored Thing," "Love Is a Gamble," "Love Is a Battlefield," "Love Is Real," "Love Makes The World Go 'round," "Only Love Can Break A Heart," "Love Will Lead You Back," "Love The One You're With," "Jesus Loves Me," "Love Hurts," and "Love Stinks." What conclusions

about love can we draw from these few examples?

Love defies conclusions. I suppose that's why there are so many love songs.

The best love songs, in my estimation, are the simple ones. Some of the greatest love songs have been instrumentals (originally) and some never mention the word love. David Gates' "If" is a classic example. The elements that make the great love songs so appealing are the honest one-to-one conversational tone of the lyrics and the bittersweet anguish of the melodies. Some of my favorites include, the ever popular "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," Neil Diamond's "Play Me," Lionel Ritchie's "Hello," Bacharach/David "This Guy's In Love," the Hammerstein/Romberg Classic "When I Grow Too Old To Dream, and the Weber/Rice jewel, from Jesus Christ Superstar, "I Don't Know How To Love Him."

The trick in writing an original love song, is to take your particular experience and communicate it in such a way that it becomes a universally recognized feeling. As you may guess, this is no easy task. It's been said, if you make the personal intense enough, it becomes the universal. Two wonderful examples of truly original love songs are Jud Strunk's song vignette "A Daisy A Day," and Randy Newman's humorous yet poignant song "Love Story." Another noteworthy ex-

ample of how the "moon/June" style of writing has been replaced with a more direct piercing lyrical mode is Bruce Springsteen's "One Step Up and Two Steps Back." The title alone suggests a great dichotomy of feelings within the writer.

Singer/songwriter Steve Earl relates a story of being a staff writer for a major music publisher. His comments are somewhat exaggerated but the point is well made. Steve says that he was commissioned, by the publishing company, to write a positive up-tempo love song everyday. That's a couple of hundred positive up-tempo love songs a year. (Time off for weekends and holidays.) Steve said he soon discovered (I'll paraphrase) "If you're writing a couple of hundred positive love songs a year, one thing's for sure ... You're not in love."

Love is complex, ethereal, and sometimes indefinable. I guess that's what keeps us interested, the mystery of it all. One way we can help ourselves and our audience understand love is by being honest in our writing, and digging deeper into ourselves to express our insights, insecurities, and even our ambiguous feelings. We don't always have to know the answers, sometimes just understanding the question is enough.

Till next time ... Write a love song. After all, what the world needs now is Love!

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