

# KERRVILLE KRONIKLE

No. 15

## Shake Russell



SO WHO IS JO CAROL PIERCE, ANYWAY?



Shake Russell/Jack Saunders

Jalapeno Records

Kerrville - kompacts,  
kassettes & other  
coincidences.

## Robert Earl Keen



Kompact Reviews incl. Bitchin' Babes, Tom Russell, Bill Morrissey/Greg Brown, Vigilantes of Love, Robin Greenstein, Richard Dobson, Greg Trooper, Robert Earl Keen, Gary P. Nunn, Cosy Sheridan, Jimmy La Fave, Tamarack, James Keelaghan, Toni Price, David Allen Coe, Janis Ian, Santiago Jiminez Jr, Jack Hardy, Steve Gillette, Eric Blakely, L.J. Booth, Slaid Cleaves, Delores Keane, Threadgill's Supper Session, Mark Heard.

5th. Year



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They're back ! In these austere days, that's a truly fine and comforting thought. This time around, **"Buy Me Bring Me Take Me: Don't Mess My Hair..." Life According to Four Bitchin' Babes, Volume 2** (Philo via Topic in UK) features Christine Lavin, Sally Fingerett, Julie Gold & Megon McDonough. On Volume 2, the Babes perform in the confines of a recording studio - so there's no audience on which to *bounce those improvisations*. The original line up has been depleted by the departure of Patty Larkin to pastures new on the West Coast, with Windham Hill subsidiary, High Street Records. The new recruit being, Julie Gold - she of that eighties anthem. Yes, you know the one which Nanci first brought to the planet's attention.

McDonough opens Volume 2 with a Kronikle favourite, her Native American influenced **"Oh Great Spirit."** The song first appeared on Megon's **"Day by Day"** solo set. Here it is augmented by a spoken coda at the close of the cut. Till it finally comes to pass, I'll continue to campaign for Christine Lavin's canonisation (Folk Division). Her sharply focused angle on humour, draws inspiration from the observation of modern society's fads. Then she debunks them. Totally. That sense of fun comes to the boil once more, with her affection for **"Bald Headed Men."** Elsewhere, Lavin continues her ice skating song series with the atmospheric **"As Close To Flying,"** while her love of sixties pop is given vent on the Brian Hyland hit **"Sealed With A Kiss."** The harmonies on the latter cut, are at the very least, heavenly.

To be honest, I could have done without yet another version of **"From A Distance,"** even if this is the writer's interpretation. If Gold deserves the dreaded *black spot* for that *faux pas*, she makes good on the closing, anthemic cut **"Good Night, New York."** The song subjectively stands astride the last six decades of American history, since Gold's mother came to America and *"sailed through the harbour of hopes and dreams."* Elsewhere, her **"Try Love"** and lighthearted **"(Fun To Be) Perfect"** mark her out for a solo record deal, sooner or later.

There's a culinary flavour added to the proceedings, with McDonough's past passion for **"Butter"** and Sally's **"Take Me Out To Eat."** As far as encapsulating the magnificence of the human spirit, try Fingerett's paen to the hearing impaired in **"Graceful Man"** or Megon's hymn to womankind, **"The Choice."** Come to think of it, the title of the latter cut precisely defines the Babes' secret weapon on their second outing. That is, **the panoramic choice** of subject matter in this mostly self composed set. Excepting the aforementioned clunker, this is truly *another aural pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.*

History has proved that last year's **"Hurricane Season"** was the final in a trio of **Tom Russell Band** albums. If I recall, I marked it down as *possibly* Russell's best to date - in truth, the guy has never released a poor set

of songs. **"Cowboy Real"** which followed it was a solo recording, though a conceptual project in execution. With **"Box Of Visions"** (Round Tower), the consummate storyteller returns *a man alone, creating* in the process, new peaks with his compositions and collaborations.

In the *"new to me, new to you too"* division of the latter activity, Russell teams up with Steve Young [**"Angel Of Lyon"**], David Buskin [**"Annette"**], Tom Pacheco [**"Purgatory Road"**], Greg Trooper [**"Hong Kong Boy"**] and there ain't a single dud there. In fact, they've been quarried from that ol' diamond mine of durability and excellence. And there's more....

**"Box Of Visions"** features the final link in the *inevitable triangle of fate*. Andy Hardin has picked guitar at Tom's side for over a decade. Through it all, Andy has also shared record production chores with the boss. It has taken till this set, for the duo to record one of their own compositions. Memories of that *road not taken* and those *few essential words never spoken* are explored in **"Coney Island Moon."** The relevant question being - What took you so long guys ? Thing is, the song is a damned masterpiece and we haven't even sighted the summit....

Tom's long time *compadre of the pen*, Katy Moffatt, helps out with **"The Extra Mile."** The lyrics tell of sixties US music legend Mitch Ryder, and his continuing *addiction to the road*. With the line *"He shed another layer of skin, then he left us with a smile,"* Katy and Tom have encapsulated the secret of the song - a creation which, executed properly, uplifts the spirit of all who share it.

If only space allowed, I'd also take time out to recommend Tom's own tunes **"Heart Of Hearts,"** **"Manzanar,"** **"Waterloo,"** **"Wedding Dress Mary"** and **"Blood Oranges."** And if you have diligently been searching for that *cornucopia at the end of the rainbow*, I'd suggest you press the repeat button on the closing, title cut. Dedicated to his daughter Shannon, it's a deeply personal, yet uniquely universal exaltation to live your life fully. The guy who said *"There ain't no tens"* was lying.....

**"Friend Of Mine"** (Philo via Topic in UK) is a project album, in which two of America's premier folk songwriters [*and knights of the carbon fibre rod, the nylon line and the spinning reel !*] agree on a recording studio assignation. The master plan, an acoustic pickin' n' singin' session of their favourite tunes by other composers. Well almost, as **Greg Brown's** personal commentary about his pal **Morrissey** in **"Fishing With Bill,"** makes the final trawl.

For flavour, the boys run the gamut of blues, country and rock n' roll, while as expected, a folk undercurrent dominates the proceedings. Casting right into midstream, Ferron's **"Ain't Life A Brook"** opens this expedition and is followed by the Willie Dixon standard **"Little Red Rooster."** The Stones connection bobs to the surface again later, with the Glimmer Twins song **"You Can't Always Get What You Want,"** while the guys net some good ol' rock n' roll with Chuck

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# ROBERT EARL KEEN



*I first interviewed Robert Earl Keen during the early summer of 1989, on the seemingly endless back porch of his home in the heart of the West Texas Hill Country. One of a handful of properties located within a golf course complex, it was enveloped by a shady copse. The complex boasted an airfield, and appropriately enough for someone raised in the ways of a true Texan, a swimming hole and a river. Armed with a fishing pole, you could while away long, hot Texas afternoons by the river's edge. Scenes snatched from memories of an idyllic afternoon, and I didn't even namecheck Kathleen Keen's wonderful sandwiches !* [ED. NOTE. Once you're familiar with some of the lyrics on Robert's latest album, you'll probably understand why I chose some of the words in the introduction]. The following interview was conducted by telephone between Kronikle Headquarters and Robert's home, on the evening of Friday 2nd April 1993. Thanks to John Martin, all the folks at Topic in London and Sugar Hill in North Carolina, for making the right connections. So read on.....

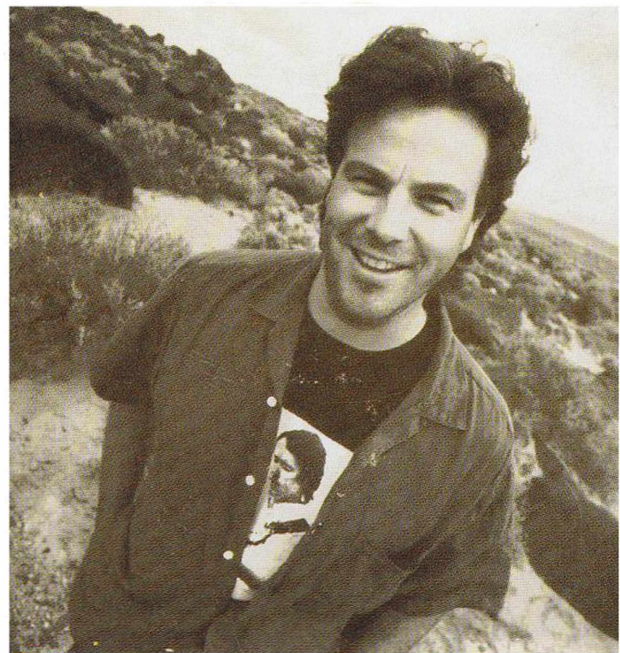
Are you in Kerrville ? I thought you maybe wanted to come by and have a sandwich.

**And don't I just wish that I could. Anyway, can I begin with the opening and closing tracks on the new album. There seems to be a worldly wise resignation in the lyric of both songs. Was that sequencing deliberate.**

You know how old movies used to begin with the curtain drawing back, and end with them closing. That calm period, and then the action all takes place - that's how this new album works. That's the idea behind it, if you like. It opens with a gentle universal lyric in "So I Can Take My Rest," and ends with "Paint The Town Biege," which has a real personal, yet calm sort of lyric. Then we've got all those guns and stuff !

**We'll get to them later. You co-wrote "Night Right For Love" with Greg Trooper. How did you run into him.**

He was writing for some people that I know. They called me up and said, "We've got this great writer living in Austin at the moment, and he wants to write with some people." I went to Austin, met Greg and we wrote that song. I didn't really know him. I'd met Greg one time - but that's not really important - when you write together, it kind of depends on personality. I just happened to get along with him. Greg had some really good ideas and some nice music. We were able to do that song. In fact, it was a song that I already had about half written. I needed some help on it and he did the job. I had the melody and the first verse, but I wasn't sure where I was going with the song. All I knew I wanted to do with it, was make it as beautiful as possible. A real sensitive, warm and loving sort of lyric. I didn't want to get into the area of talking about any kind of hardship as far as the characters were concerned. *The moment*, is what I was trying to define.



Peter Figen/Sugar Hill/Special Delivery

Robert Earl Keen 1993

**On the liner of Greg Trooper's current album "Everywhere," he namechecks a lady who appears on your new album. That's Maura O'Connell. Did you already know her .**

When we were getting ready to do this record, I decided that I wanted to do "Night Right For Love" as a duet. I had been trying to think of some people to do it with, and Garry Velletri suggested Maura. That was great, because I already knew Maura and had done a lot of shows with her. We also the only members of a real exclusive club, called The Martini Club. It was for people who had genuinely never drunk Martini's. Anyway, I called her up and she said that she'd love to do it.

**Maura also has a solo on "Blow You Away," as does Michael Snow. Who is he.**

He's an Irish guy who lives in Nashville. One of the other musicians in the band knew Michael, and said that we should get him in to play the Bodhran. He's got a real raw, earthy feel to his voice and I love it. [REK *Immitates Snow's line "She drops your room key in the tray".*]

**Let's check out those guns and stuff, and in particular, two cuts in the middle of the album. "Blow You Away" and "Here In Arkansas." They're both quite dark songs lyrically. "Blow You Away" focuses on an attitude which is very prevalent in society, here in the ninties.**

I'm glad to hear you say that about society. Many people can't see that. I didn't mean it as an anti-gun law song, but something really more basic - kind of a *beware* song. I don't have any particular bias, one way or another, against guns. I do think that it's kind of a scary world these days, with fourteen year olds out there blowing people away. The song describes all these situations, which in one way could be a normal situation. In another way, there's always this trouble just bubbling beneath the surface. The message of



that song, is that there is always a dark side to most of life's experiences.

### **What about "Here In Arkansas."**

That's one of those songs, where you're about half asleep when you write it. You just let your mind roll with what is going on. You could say that it's a destiny oriented song. I made the story up as I developed the lyric. The victim in the song, is a regular person. Here's the scenario. You're out in a really, really rural place, where there's still some very superstitious people around. It's very remote and removed from the rest of the world. They have these old superstitions. The main character, who is the seventh son of the seventh born, is considered to be a jinx, or a bad omen, and they decide to get rid of him. They conclude through their superstition, that he will cause their destruction. What actually happens, in their attempt to get rid of him, is that they cause their own destruction. That's where the line about *"the fire across the prairie"* comes from.

### **Why did you decide to cover "Amarillo Highway".**

Because I love the song and I'm a great fan of Terry Allen's. Part of the thing about being a songwriter who makes recordings, is the opportunity to pay tribute to other songwriters that you really like.

**There's a certain degree of humour in the *Texas travelogue* lyric of the latter song. The only song of yours in this set, which employs humour is "Daddy Had A Buick." Did you father actually own a Buick.**

Oh yea. The first car that I remember we had, was a giant, copper brown Buick with holes on the side and huge chrome bumper on the front. I guess Buick's are pretty much the standard American kind of car. We're talking about basic middle America, and what that is about. It just describes how young people on the road react, when they have the opportunity to own a car. Not like the Tom Joad thing, but that real happy go lucky sort of thing. I still write funny songs, but I didn't put many on this record. I didn't want to diminish what I was trying to project, with some of the more serious songs. For instance, on *"West Textures"* - I get more requests and more hoopla about *"The Five Pound Bass"* and *"It's The Little Things,"* than I do for songs like *"Mariano,"* or even *"Leavin' Tennessee."* I think the latter pair of songs are just as great, but somehow people kind of pick out the funny stuff. I'm kind of glad, because part of what my act is about, is that I want to make people laugh. On the other hand, I also want to be taken seriously. On this new album, I decided to drop the funny stuff. The new humorous songs I've written, wouldn't have fitted in anyway.

**Last year, Joe Ely covered "The Road Goes On Forever" and "Whenever Kindness Fails." What did you think of his versions.**

I just loved them. I'm just a huge fan of Joe's, and I thought he did a really great job. Even though I lived in Austin for a spell during the early eighties, I never got to know Joe at all. I met him at a show in Philadelphia. He heard me do the songs and decided

to record them.

**The cover art for "A Bigger Piece Of Sky" features a painting by cowboy artist Ray Strang, titled "Slow Poke." Do you own the original.**

No. I own a print of it. This painting had a real particular, sentimental significance for me. It was a print that was in a frame, that hung above my grandmother's bed. She lived in this old, rickety house out in West Texas. I used to spend the summer out there with her. When she passed away, kind of like the *"Randall Knife"* thing [ED. NOTE. This is a reference to the Guy Clark song of the same name. The knife, owned by Clark's late father, became Guy's prized link with the past, after his father passed away], they asked me what I wanted. I told them that I wanted that painting. They gave it to me. When we did the record and I decided on the title, I thought that I'd like to have the painting on there, because it means a lot to me. I've found in this whole business, that if you do what means a lot to you, you never regret it. I do have a small collection of western books, that I pick up at junk stores. I've also got a bunch of little cowboy trinkets, here and there, but it's not like my life revolves around them. I know people who go into the western thing, so deep, that they even sleep in their Wranglers.

**In "Jesse With The Long Hair" who shot Mr. Brown, the banker. Was it the sheriff.**

Right.

**Three things attracted me to this song. The storyline, the quartet of characters and the need to find the solution to that mystery.**

That was my whole idea. I've always wanted to write a really good western song. I started banging around with the guitar one day and that song came out. I was really glad. It wasn't that simple though. I had to put in a lot of work on that song, because I wanted strong characters. I also wanted that element of intrigue. I didn't want it to be really, really obvious. The thing is about Marty Robbins' western songs, which I love, and would like to be able to even approach in terms of quality, as a writer - songs like *"Big Iron"* and *"El Paso"* are fairly straight forward - with *"Jesse..."* and unlike Marty's lyrics, I wanted the answer to be a little bit of a mystery. That applies to the chorus as well - *"Flesh and blood it turns to dust, Scatters in the wind, Love is all that matters in the end"* - the idea about the chorus repeating, is that it applies to Jesse and Luann, throughout most of the song [ED. NOTE. Jesse is cast in an outlaw/folk hero mould]. At the end, what it applies to really, is the sheriff's love for his old comrade Jesse.

**The principal character in "Crazy Cowboy Dream" is pretty restless. Does that type of lifestyle hold any appeal for you.**

No. That's a song about a rodeo rider. When I perform it onstage, I often think that the lyric kind of parallels my life as a musician. When I'm on the road, I see people that I love for a very short period of time, and



then I *jump the fence again*. That's what that song is really about. I wrote a rodeo song, because I used to ride the rodeo some, and I've always been really intrigued with it. I enjoy it quite a bit, so I just drew from my experiences. That element of having to keep moving on, is exactly how the music business lifestyle can be as well.

**Having listened to your album regularly over the last couple of weeks, I can hear Willie Nelson performing this song. I reckon that Willie should record an album which only contains material penned by Texas born writers. "Crazy Cowboy Dream" should certainly be one of the tracks.**

That would really be a great song for Willie to do. I understand that he has just issued a new record, which includes a couple of Lyle's songs. And a couple by John Hiatt. I haven't heard it, but that sounds like a good idea.

**There's a powerful story and a colourful group of characters in "Corpus Christi Bay." It struck me that it could have been a Larry McMurtry novel. I've already seen the movie in my minds eye. Was writing the song in that style deliberate.**

Well, thanks for that compliment. "Corpus Christi Bay," is a sad song about having fun. A lot of that song is exactly how my life was. I lived in Corpus for a while and worked in the oilfields. Obviously I'm not in Corpus still hanging around in a bar, but when I was there, it seemed like those were the only places I ever saw.

**Since the lyric features a *blacktop county road, a swimming hole and a fishin' pole*, the closing track "Paint The Town Biege," can only be autobiographical.**

It is. To be honest, since you've visited us here, I would have hoped that you would have been able to draw that conclusion. Actually, I've had several people tell me that the song is precisely a reflection of feelings which they have. It's a song about moving out of the city, forgetting *the fast lane* and mellowing out a little bit. The country life undoubtedly does that for you.

**Gary Velletri who produced "A Bigger Piece Of Sky," is a new name to me. Where did you find him.**

Actually, I've known Gary for about eight years. He runs Bug Music in Nashville, who I write for. He helped me out when I first cut these songs as demos. When we were ready to do the album, I asked him if he wanted to produce it, and he said "Yes." We worked real well together and I enjoyed the whole experience.

**You recorded this album at The Board Room in Nashville. Is that a new studio.**

No. It's an old house. One of those kind of shotgun style houses. Actually it went out of business right after we cut the album. We did it there, because I really like the work which the engineer Jeff Coppage does. It's only a small, three room house. One room is where the engineer works and the other two rooms, were recording studios. We cut some of the songs on 16

track and the remainder on 24 track.

**You've already made a video for "Daddy Had A Buick." Do you plan to do any more.**

That becomes a matter of how much money you have, and I've spent all my money. I was either going to spend money on advertising, or on a video. I chose the latter. In fact it's the first video I've ever made. It mostly shows me in performance, with some black and white shots of a couple driving a Buick around. The wind is blowing in their hair, and they're playing the radio and stuff. It's mainly me and some musicians playing together. It's real good and I like it. I believe they're showing it on CMT Europe.

**Your new album was released Stateside in later February. Have you done any television shows, or tours to promote it.**

Yes. For television, I did *Nashville Now*, *Crook N' Chase* and *The Texas Connection*. *Crook N' Chase* is a Nashville Network show. Like a country version of *Entertainment Tonight*. This was all in March. I also went out on the road and opened up for Lyle [Lovett]. The tour consisted of seven days in Montana, Oregon, California and also in Canada. While we were there, we did a TV show out of Edmonton, called *Country Beat*. We performed in Vancouver, and they came down and shot it. Lyle was touring with his Acoustic Quartet.

**Two of your songs have been included on the soundtrack of the latest Peter Bogdonovich movie "The Thing Called Love." "Daddy Had A Buick" and "Corpus Christi Bay" being the songs in question. I believe that Trisha Yearwood, K.T. Oslin and Webb Wilder appear in the movie. Do you also appear on the big screen.**

No. It's only my songs which you can hear in the background. The film comes out in the States this July, I understand. Mark Roswell who did *"The Commitments"*, is the music director for this movie. He was in Nashville when we were cutting this record. He came by and I played him a couple of songs and he liked them pretty well. Then I was in Nashville last October, playing at The Bluebird Cafe. Mark, a guy named Stephen - I can't remember his last name, plus the actor, River Phoenix came to see me play. The next thing I knew, they said they were thinking about using my songs. Then I heard that they had decided not to include them. The next thing I knew, someone told me that Peter Bogdonovich had heard my songs and wanted them on the soundtrack. The movie is about a young songwriter who arrives in Nashville, experiences some hardships, has a buddy that's an old crusty songwriter who helps him through - I don't know where it goes from there - the young guy probably falls in love with somebody and becomes a great big star.

**An odd question next. Are you a big Bill Morrissey fan.**

You mean the T-shirt I'm wearing on the liner photographs. Yes, I am a fan of his music. I've known Bill for a long time. Probably since 1986. I played at a



show which was, Tom Rush's "Club 47," at the Kennedy Centre in Washington DC and met him there. I talk to Bill two or three times a year. I stayed at his house last year. See him at festivals and stuff like that, and just happened to be wearing that shirt the day they shot the liner photographs. If the opportunity presents itself, I like to spread the word about other writers, and I'm certainly a fan of Bill's.

**Have you been working with other writers lately.**

I have a friend Dan McCoy, who is a real great guitar player, that I write with pretty often. He used to play with Clay Blaker and the Texas Honky Tonk Band. We haven't ever written anything that has wound up on a record yet. I also write with Fred Koller on occasions. I don't do a lot of co-writing, but I always enjoy it. It's always a good reason to get around and play guitar.

**There's a twelfth, unlisted track on your new album. Initially, I thought it was the Seven Dwarfs down in the mine. Then a strong Irish influence crept in. Should we read anything into this.**

It's kind of an out-take. We were just banging around with this thing on the "**Blow You Away**" song, and we came up with that out-take. Then we decided to tack it on there, just for grins. It was mainly coincidence that the track ended up sounding Irish.

**Finally, you appear to have dropped Junior from your name.**

It got too complicated. I'd see my name advertised at various venues as Robert Keen Jr., Robert E. Keen Jr., Robert Earl Keen - they'd leave out the Junior. I figured people are really kind of used to this three name thing now, so I decided to stick with that.

*Come to think of it, during our conversation, I forgot to let Robert know what I thought of "A Bigger Piece Of Sky." Quarter way into 1993, I can attest to having heard some damned fine albums, REK's being one of those. If that high quality level is maintained for the remaining nine months, that old chestnut, the end of year **Best of.....** is going to involve some real conscientious selecting this year.*

*Kerrville-kompacts,  
kassettes & other  
koineidences.*



Berry's "**Memphis, Tennessee.**"

It's twenty years since Danny O'Keefe's "**The Road**" appeared on the latter's "**O'Keefe.**" Jackson Browne subsequently caught it for his live set, "**Running On Empty.**" Here, Bill & Greg's dual acoustic attack enriches an already powerful melody, while the lyric tells of a lifestyle with which the protagonists are thoroughly familiar. I doubt if there's a KK reader who hasn't heard Guy Clark's "**New Cut Road.**" It'll make you wonder where the traditional "**Duncan And Brady**" came from [!], while all you Lonnie Donegan and Kingston Trio fans out there, will warm to the original "**Tom Dula.**" Before signing off with "**Baby, Please Don't Go,**" the cowboy portion of the show consists of

Ian Tyson's "**Summer Wages,**" segued with Hank Senior's "**I'll Never Get Out Of This World Alive.**" And ain't that the truth.....

Let me regale you with the tale of how I stumbled across the **Vigilantes Of Love**. Divesting their New Age image, the Windham Hill label's foray into the singer/songwriter field has been spearheaded by their compilation series, "**Legacy.**" To date those recordings, number two. The latest disc included the Mark Heard tune "**Look Over Your Shoulder.**" Struck me that the guy was a damned fine writer. Thankfully the accompanying CD booklets are detailed to the degree of obsession, in terms of artist biographies and contact addresses. Mark recorded for the Fingerprint label and was also a discerning record producer - as in Pierce Pettis' 1991 Windham Hill/High Street album "**Tinseltown.**" Among his other production credits, were the **Vigilantes Of Love**. Maybe I should add at this point; sadly, Mark passed away last Fall.

Sporting the title "**Jugular,**" this VOL recording dates from 1990. Initial impressions of the liner cover shot of Bill "Malice" Mallonee, brought back memories of the more unappetising, unmusical aspects of '77. Be cautious friends, you should never pre-judge the book by the cover. The press kit, provided further disturbing evidence however. Subsequent **Vigilantes** releases included "**Driving The Nails**" and "**Killing Floor.**" The latter set being a co-production by the band, Mark and some local muso called Peter Buck.

So we're talking Athens. The one in Georgia. The state of America. Recently reissued by Fingerprint, Mallonee describes the VOL, mostly self produced, debut album as "Real stripped down and immediate. *Folkier* than "**Killing Floor**." These guys definitely lean heavily toward the *get it done in one* style of recording. What pierces the fog like a beacon of laser light is Mallonee's songwriting, aided and abetted by Mark Hall's accordion and Jonny Evans' harmonica. If your flavour to savour, is a slice of life ala early Dylan and The Violent Femmes, with more than a dash of Uncle Tupelo's most recent musings, then go get some \$ and mail 'em to **Fingerprint Records, P.O. Box 197, Merrimac, MA 01860-0197, U.S.A.**

"**New York Blues,**" the opening cut, immediately gives away the geographic position of **Robin Greenstein's** home turf. This fourteen track, Brambus debut finds her musically in that area previously occupied by Laura Nyro and Carole King. Self penned originals such as the *love gone bad* in "**Me And My Daydreams**" and her European influenced duo "**The Magic Of Paris**"/"**When You Leave Amsterdam,**" are ably supported by the standards "**Someone To Watch Over Me**" and "**Bye Bye Blackbird.**" An appealing debut.

**Richard Dobson** has a second recording available from Brambus. Stateside, a cassette only, version of "**Blue Collar Blues**" was issued on the Church Street label last year. The fourteen cuts include the Dobson/Rodney Crowell composition "**Uncertain Texas**" with Townes Van Zandt making a vocal appearance. Other collaborations of note, are "**Hole In My Heart**" co-written with Steve Earle and the carnival



fantasy **"Pony Ride"** penned with Hal Ketchum. **"Foley"** meanwhile, is a tender eulogy for the late Austin music legend. And for that added borderland flavour, there's **"Mexican Honeymoon."** All in all, another darned fine set from Don Ricardo and his band, State Of The Heart.

The name **Greg Trooper** has been cropping up in despatches more and more of late - and for good reason. He's a damned fine writer. Examples of his work are featured on the latest Robert Earl Keen and Tom Russell albums. There's a rumour that a Garry Tallent produced Greg Trooper album, featuring numerous Tom Russell collaborations, is gathering dust in a US record label vault. In the meantime, Greg Trooper with the Flatirons **"Everywhere"** (Black Hole) will do very nicely. There's an undoubted similarity with the Tom Russell Band, though I'd add that Trooper is less intellectual in the lyric stakes. Among Greg's co-writers on the dozen cuts are Don Henry, Steve Earle, Claire Mullally and Sid Griffin. Sadly, this album is only available via mail order currently [no label address appears on the CD liner], and I only have the Toll Free US number for the HEAR catalogue which is 800-959-4327. Hopefully, more details in Issue 16. When Terry Clarke performed at the 1992 version of Austin's South by South West Music Festival, he met California writer **Jerry Giddens**. Giddens is leader of Los Angeles band, **Walking Wounded** who have cut three, rock oriented albums. The material contained on their 1986 self titled debut (Chameleon), the **"Raging Winds Of Time"** (Chameleon - 1989) and **"Hard Times"** (Doctor Dream -1991) was principally composed by Giddens. His first, solo effort **"Livin' Ain't Easy"** dates from 1989 and is available on the German Line label. **"The Devil's Front Door"** (Doctor Dream), Jerry's second solo album appeared last Fall. As literate writers go, this is Jerry's most accessible work to date. Just check out the title cut, **"A Million To One"** and **"The River's Song"** and you'll be hooked. Available from **Doctor Dream Records, 841 W. Collins, Orange, California 92667.**

Two albums into his recording career, you would have almost certainly marked **Robert Earl Keen** out as the Houston born humourist in the pack of contemporary Texas songwriters. Released during 1990, the material on his third set, **"Western Textures,"** indicated a stylistic change of direction for this former Aggie. The latter being historical fact, **"A Bigger Piece Of Sky"** (Special Delivery/Topic) is the yardstick by which Keen graduates to the major league of modern American songwriters.

Through a decade of self penned cuts, augmented by a strident rendition of Terry Allen's Texas travelogue **"Amarillo Highway,"** Keen attains a new found high in the maturity of his material. Subjectively *world weary*, **"So I Can Take My Rest"** opens the proceedings, and is followed by **"Whenever Kindness Fails."** Joe Ely covered the latter tune on his 1992 MCA album **"Love And Danger."** Where the acts of violence described in the latter lyric are passed off in a somewhat *lightweight* manner, there is a subjective darkness and doom contained within **"Blow You Away"** and **"Here In Arkansas"** which accurately focuses on *how we coexist* in the ninties.

Keen freely admits that as a youngster, he held that master of the gunfighter ballad, Marty Robbins, in great esteem. From that genre comes his own, mysterious and intriguing **"Jesse With The Long Hair,"** about an outlaw, his lady and the banker who was about to do them wrong. A modern day wrangler, on the move between jobs, reveals his state of mind in **"Crazy Cowboy Dream,"** while **"Daddy Has A Buick"** is the only song which hints at Keen's early career penchant for repartee.

The album title is drawn from a line in the closing cut, **"Paint the Town Biege."** For a spell during the latter half of the eighties, Robert Earl was a resident of Song City USA - Nashville. In the end, Keen settled for a hideaway in the Texas Hill Country. There's little doubt that this song draws inspiration from the experiences of that period. While this album opens with a "world weary" tune, it closes in triumph with a "worldly wise" synopsis, and finds the Keen at a new zenith as a songsmith. That Keen's *ascent in that area* is not yet complete, can only be the subject of speculation - if the view from this *bigger piece of sky* is anything to go by, the prospect that Keen will conquer even higher peaks, is almost a certainty.

There's a couple of new **Gary P. Nunn** albums available. If you're into the old Gonzo's brand of Texas *gung ho* country, then you'll know what to expect. Titled, **"Totally Guacamole"** [Campfire] **"Live At Poor David's Pub"** [Poor David], they're respectively available from **Campfire Records, 303 Happytrail, San Antonio, Texas 78231** and **Poor David's Recordings, 1924 Greenville Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75206.**

You know those damned albums - *the once in a while kind*, where you can't help yourself. You just can't resist hitting that **REPEAT** button. Point is, this form of addiction, thankfully, only results in aural pleasure. Which brought me to muse upon another facet of this affair. It was late on the Monday afternoon of the first weekend at Kerrville '92, near the Kertree Store, when I first set eyes upon **Cosy Sheridan**. Rod MacDonald and I had just made some telephone calls to England, and were returning to the *Tents of C.A.L.M.*, when Cosy engaged Rod in conversation. It was soon obvious that they knew each other. But for being present at that casual meeting, I might still be completely unaware of this fine songsmith[ess] and "her offspring." That Quiet Valley serendipity has much to answer for. *I thank her. Continually.*

Since I only purchased it last year, there hardly seems to have been enough time for the dust to settle on Cosy's 1991 set **"Late Bloomer."** These days, she's **"Quietly Led"** (Waterbug). If you find pleasure and fulfillment in length, I would point out straight away, that Cosy tends to keep it short. The ten songs here, run out at a shade over 32 minutes. In the quality stakes, Sheridan *works out* in that quantum zone peopled by "superb songwriters."

Part of Sheridan's secret, is her ability to come up with melodies which are enriched with that instant hummability factor. Augmented by Steve Fisher's **"Love's Lullaby,"** the opening, title cut lyrically focuses



upon the confusion of living in these modern times. Therein Cosy explains that *she has a history of chasing rainbows, only to run into thunderstorms at their end. What's more, if you've ever felt a little bit lost, and don't know what's passing thro', from what's here to stay, then you've been quietly led.* And don't I know it !

Cosy is also one of life's more energetic souls. In **"Too Much Time,"** she explores her lust for living life to the hilt, and then some. If you're searching for a *let it hang out* anthem for the ninties, with that added quotient - humour - **"The Losing Game"** is your song. It lays waste to that *"You too can be Size 8,"* myth which swamps the pages of numerous glossy women's magazines. The love ballad **"I'd Fall For You"** which follows, is my favourite cut, while **"Sharp Objects"** explores the dangers which the Almighty built into our environment. From the latter cut, the *"Childproof cap on the big wide world"* is one hell of a concept. According to Sheridan, be wary when you're presented with the opportunity to get some **"Therapy,"** as your life can be turned upside down in the process. Life can be a self created and perpetuated hell ! With the hymn like closing cut **"Lullabies,"** Cosy explores fondly retained memories of her childhood. Mark this recording down as, **not to be missed.** Available on CD and cassette from **Waterbug Records, P.O. Box 6605, Evanston, Illinois 60204.** I'd also recommend that you check out Andrew Calhoun's solo recordings, which are available from the Waterbug label. In fact Andrew, is Mr. Waterbug. Look out for some interesting releases from this label during '93.

**Jimmy La Fave's "Austin Skyline"** [Bohemia Beat], is a seventy five minute long, sixteen track recording. It merges around a decade of self penned originals, with a handful of cuts from the pen of Robert Zimmerman, plus a couple of tunes from other scribes. Thing is, the whole damned thing fits. Coming from a lifelong, self confessed Dylan agnostic, that surely amounts to tall praise. Add to that, the sterling quality of Walter Morgan's engineering and you'd hardly realise that you're listening to a *live album.* That said, the recordings source from four Austin, Texas venues - hence the title. They find LaFave covering the rhythmic spectrum from loud n' rowdy, through to gentle n' reflective. LaFave's achingly emotional interpretation of the latter song category, amounts to nothing less than *possession of a lethal weapon.* In the former grouping, rest his hard edged **"Thru' The Neon Night"** and **"Deep South 61 Delta Highway Blues."** To those you can add **"Rocket In My Pocket"** - I'd swear that a cut of the same title turned up on an Evan Johns album last year. In the tenderness stakes, the arrangement and interpretation of the Michael Brown/Left Banke classic **"Walk Away Renee,"** entrusts the old evergreen with a whole new lease of life more. Add in LaFave's **"Only One Angel,"** and **"Measuring Words,"** and we're talking major new talent. A couple of pivotal axemen deserve a *mention in despatches.* On electric lead, there's Larry Wilson; while on the acoustic front, Brian Wood's contributions are a restrained delight. LaFave released a tape titled **"Highway Angels...Full Moon Rain"** back in 1989, and went on to almost [!] cut a Bob Johnson (Yes, the Bob) produced album for the Tomato label.

The latter *piece of product* never saw the light of day for legal reasons. What the hell, it's water down the river now ! On the strength of **"Austin Skyline,"** Jimmy LaFave's next album, is an awesome prospect. **"The Town South Of Bakersfield"** series, was part initiated by Pete Anderson; he has been rumoured as producer of the next Jimmy LaFave set (well, time will tell!). In the meantime, get there early. **"Austin Skyline"** is available on CD and cassette from **P.O. Box 2500, Austin, Texas 78768.** LaFave and his Night Tribe also turn up on the KLBJ 93.7FM **"Local Licks Live 1992"** [KLBJ] CD, performing John Lee Hooker's **"Five Long Years."** The latter recording is available from the premier Austin record store, **Waterloo, 600-A North Lamar, Austin, Texas 78703.**

Time to credit some of the finest ears in Illinois; they belong to Tom Russell's No. 1 fan, Ed Becker. Without Ed, I'd still be unaware of the Canadian folk band **Tamarack.** Their latest offering **"Fields Of Rock And Snow"** [SGB], actually dates from 1991. The group manage to sound traditional and contemporary at the same time, with much of the material coming from group members, James Gordon and Alex Sinclair. Available from **SGB Record, P.O. Box 714, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1H 6L3.**

I saw **James Keelaghan,** [also] a Canadian born artist, perform at Kerrville last summer. As usual, the full impact of his work only hit me once I returned home. **"Orion's Belt,"** his contribution to the 1991 Kerrville "Live Highlights" cassette, being the vehicle. I purchased his reissued debut set **"Timelines"** [Dirty Linen] soon afterwards, from **Dirty Linen, P.O. Box 66600, Baltimore, Maryland 21239-6600.** Turned out to be a case of back to square one, as I was somewhat underwhelmed by the contents. As usual, *nothing ventured nothing gained,* I obtained **"Small Rebellions"** [Tranquilla Music] from Danna Garcia at **Canadian River Music, 4106 Tyler Street, Amarillo, Texas 79110.** With the latter recording, Keelaghan redeemed himself. From the opening **"Hillcrest Mine,"** an appeal not to gainfully toil at winning coal from the bowels of the earth because of the dangers involved, through to the closing paen of *living to fight on another day,* in **"Gladys Ridge,"** the album is chock full of great songs. A new Keelaghan album has been issued on the Green Linnet label. More of which in Issue 16.

**Toni Price "Live"** [Homespun Stuff] is a four track cassette, forerunner to her forthcoming solo debut disc on Antone Record. It was cut at Pearl's Oyster Bar last summer during a KLBJ live broadcast. Thanks to those truly fine folks at **MUSIC CITY TEXAS,** I managed to obtain a copy, since Toni is only selling this tape at her local gigs. By the way, MCT makes for essential reading for any KK subscriber, the annual fee being \$12 (US) and \$20 (Abroad) to **1002 South 1st Street, Austin, Texas 78704.** Toni's, supported by Jud Newcomb from Loose Diamonds and acoustic picking ace, Rich Brotherton, also gets her bluesy vocal chords around **"Run, Run, Run"** on the **"Local Licks Live 1992"** CD which I mentioned earlier.

Bear Family have once again reissued some superb double sets. The songwriter involved on this occasion



being, **David Allen Coe**. His first quartet of albums for CBS, **"The Mysterious Rhinestone Cowboy"/"Once Upon A Time"** and **"Longhaired Redneck"/"Rides Again"** being the titles. The care taken with the presentation and contents of the CD booklets being an outstanding facet of the packaging. And the guy cut a Michael Smith tune!

**Janis Ian** appeared at the 1991 Cambridge Folk Festival and returned to the UK a few months later for a one off, London date. As I recall, her new material struck me as was well up to Ian's previously exemplary standards. **"Breaking Silence"** [CBS Holland & Japan], her first studio recording since **"Restless Eyes"** in 1981[?], is unfortunately something of a disappointment. Notably missing is the wickedly amusing **"Cosmopolitan Girl,"** although I can probably guess the stumbling block there. A guy has been advertising regularly in **GOLDMINE** of late, for a 1985 Chrysalis of New Zealand recording by Janis Ian, titled **"Uncle Wonderful."** Anyone out there know anything about this title?

For those of you with a taste for melodies from South of the border, I highly recommend the Santiago Jimenez Jr. album on Watermelon, **"Corazon de Piedra."** The twenty two cuts featured, run out at around sixty minutes, and the CD booklet features liner notes by Mark Rubin, ex-Killbilly and currently with Austin acid bluegrassers, The Bad Livers. See the other Watermelon Records review at the end of this section for mail order details.

The latest **Jack Hardy** album is a twelve track, acoustic adventure titled **"Two Of Swords"** [Great Divide]. It was cut on May 11th/12th, 1991 at his home in Greenwich Village. Available from **178 W. Houston Street #9, NYC 10014.**

**Steve Gillette** long a bastion of the Kerrville Festival stage, and a folk music legend, has surfaced with a couple of CD releases lately. **"The Ways Of The World"** [Compass Rose] was recorded in Nashville with Jim Rooney at the controls. The twelve tracks include already familiar Gillette standards such as **"Grapes On The Vine"** and **"Bed Of Roses,"** plus new songs including the title cut and **"Share Me With Texas."** **"Steve Gillette"** [Vanguard] is his 1967 debut album, which featured the soon to become classics - **"Darcy Farrow," "Back On The Street Again"** and **"Molly And Tenbrooks."** Both recordings are available from **Canadian River Music**, whose address is given on the previous page.

The following discs come from a trio of former Kerrville New Folk participants. Some have won that competition in the past; some may just carry off that prize in the future. **Eric Blakely** made the forty last year, but not the final six. **"Growing Into My Father's Clothes"** [Folk Reel] his latest release, is mostly set in a folk/country mode. I clearly recall the *down home* feel of Eric's **"Grandma Likes A Tin Roof"** from last year's competition, and it is amply supported here by other fine tunes such as **"Forever's Not Forever,"** the rockin' **"The Bottle Knocked Me Over"** and the duet with Sarah Elizabeth Campbell, **"Love Is A Feather."**

Other Austin based, supporting players number **Jesse Taylor**, **David Mr. Bassman Heath** and from the Loose Diamonds drumstool, **Ron Erwin**. **L.J. Booth** was a New Folk contender and winner back in 1989. **"Big Hourglass"** [Agua Azul], is the follow up to his 1986 cassette **"Yams."** Included on both recordings is L.J.'s best known song **"Akasha Wind"** [Anne Hills included it on her 1988 Flying Fish album **"Woman Of A Calm Heart"**]. Booth performs in what could be best described as a folk swing style - well, there's certainly an element of jazz afoot. **"Book Report"** is an amusing anecdote from his schooldays, while the title cut focuses on the hereditary legacy of life and the inescapable passage of the seasons. Booth's style is far from easy upon the ear, but with perseverance you will discover great lyrical riches. Available from **Waterloo or Agua Azul, P.O. Box 33429, Austin, Texas 78764.** **Slaid Cleaves** made the final six last year, and I understand that **"Life's Other Side"** [Play Hard] is his second recording. Cleaves spends part of the year working in Austin and the remainder in his native North. Interesting characters such as **"Willie Of The Wind"** people his song, while Cleaves wears his politics on his sleeve with **"Justice."** The latter cut highlights how Joe Public can be a source of profit for the corrupt element in society. Available from **Waterloo or Play Hard, 352 Miller Avenue, Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03801-5137.**

Having just read an article in a recent issue of **GOLDMINE** which focused on Barbra Streisand's recording career, a number of parallels came to mind. Streisand's 1970 cover of Laura Nyro's **"Stoney End,"** was her first pitch at contemporary material. It introduced Barbra's work to a whole new audience. With her sixth album, **"In My Life,"** Judy Collins took a similar, fullblooded tilt at covering material by modern songwriters. Collins' albums, previous to that 1967 folk tinged classic, had mainly concentrated on renditions of traditional material.

**Delores Keane's** previous live and recording work has focused principally on that rich vein of tradition, Irish music. In that area, she has shared stages with The Chieftains, DeDanann and Planxty. With **"Solid Ground"** (Shanachie 8007), Keane has accomplished a marriage of marvellous strength, maturity and integrity, in the process, merging the traditional with the contemporary. The arrangements and instrumentation here, lean predominantly toward the former area, while most of the writers covered source from the latter.

It's reassuring to consider that the television series which sought to enhance our awareness of *"bringing it all back home,"* has resulted in further fusions. Two vocal contributions are included here from country queen, Emmylou Harris. The first being on the tender ballad, **"Never Be The Sun"**; the other, on the Guy Clark/Roger Murrah collaboration **"Immigrant Eyes"** [titled "Emigrant Eyes" here and credited to Clark/Stannah]. Given the history of the Irish nation as immigrants, it's appropriate that voices from *the old and new world* should be *in harmony* on this lyric.

It would appear that one of Keane's favourite writers



currently is Scot, Dougie McLean. Last year she covered his "Caledonia" on the mega selling Dara compilation "A Woman's Heart." The album title track here, includes the line "you cannot own the land, the land owns you." From the words of a contemporary Celt, to one of the most precious Native American beliefs, mankind retains innumerable common bonds. Closing this eleven cut set, is McLean's "Until We Meet Again," a song of parting and declared eternal friendship.

Elsewhere, Dolores covers Nashville based writer, David Mallett's "Summer of My Dreams" - which finds the narrator at peace with himself and his life. "The Finer Things" Steve Winwood's chart success from 1987 is given the Keane treatment, as is Kieran Halpin's tale of a weary traveller returning home with "Nothing To Show" for his journey. Delores also reflects on her early recording career, with the traditional sounding "I Courted A Soldier."

"Solid Ground" is the first recording by a female artist to appear on Shanachie's new contemporary singer/songwriter 8000 Series of releases - it's already a contender for my end of year *Best of...* list. What does that tell you.....

Just when you thought that it was time to put the Kronikle to bed, another goodie slips through the letter box. On this occasion, it's a CD version of a cassette featured in Issue 13. Watermelon Records have released the sixty six minute long "Threadgill's Supper Session," which featured the talents of **Champ Hood, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Christine Albert, Sarah Elizabeth Cambell and Butch Hancock** backed by the cream of Austin pickers. Available from Waterloo or Watermelon, P.O. Box 402088, Austin, Texas 78704.

And finally, we return to **Fingerprint Records**. **Mark Heard** currently has five albums available via the label. I purchased a trio of them - "Dry Bones Dance," "Second Hand" and **Satellite Sky** - a few months back. Each disc deserves a place in your collection, as they are chock full of melodic and lyrical riches. Rather than take a track by track overview of these albums, you'll probably gather more about Heard as a human being and writer, from the following "Second Hand" liner notes extract - "There are days when you suddenly glance around as if awakened from a stupor and are struck by the great magnitude of life, the realities of mortality, the ironies of our time. I suppose songs written in these circumstances become a bit of a personal catharsis for the writer. Friendships and kinships take on new light and are understood to be something one should never take for granted. You cringe at your stupidity. You cower under the future. You fear for the world of your children." I rest my case. The mailing address is four pages back.

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*Shake Russell* ❄️❄️❄️❄️❄️

The interview with Shake Russell took place in the restaurant of the Inn Of The Hills, Kerrville, Texas on the morning of Saturday 6th June 1992. Thanks to

Merlin Condry for all his help. The interviewer misplaced some notes early in the proceedings. As a result, what is reproduced below, is precisely as the interview happened. No remixes. No cut and paste. Though it lacks finite chronilogicality, it is readable, nonetheless. And if you don't own at least one Shake Russell recording, the interviewer feels you should put that omission to rights a.s.a.p. The mailing address is **MC Agencies, P.O. Box 36152, Houston, Texas 77236-6152**. Include a couple of IRC's to assist them with their postage costs.

**Where do we begin.**

It starts near Kansas City, Missouri. That's where I grew up and became interested in music and met the key influence in that field for me, the late John Vandiver. I joined his band in 1970. He was from Dallas originally. He and B.W. Stevenson and all those guys, grew up together. When he finally decided to return to Texas, he asked me if I wanted to come along. That was my opportunity to get out of Missouri and play music for a living. I couldn't have done that if I had stayed in Missouri.

**When were you born.**

1949.

**How did you become interested in music. Was it through your parents.**

Through elementary school. The teachers come round with musical instruments when I was 8 or 9 years old and I got interested in the trombone. I played it in the Elementary School orchestra and High School band. Then The Beatles came along, when I was about 13 or 14.

**That's the trigger which many people mention, in terms of becoming musicians.**

I've also found that's what most people tell you - The Beatles and Dylan - and for all kinds of reasons. Fun. You can express yourself. Lots of girls and parties. You might even manage to make a living.

**Were you parents interested in music.**

Not professionally. My father was a minister. He played as a hobby. In fact at home, music was always around me. He played harmonica and sang to me when I was a child, and I always remembered that. My mom always had the radio playing. My father listened to records - Hank Williams, all that stuff. Between that and going to church on Sunday - the choir was my favourite part of church at the time - the singing part - all those elements, encouraged my interest in music. When I became a teenager and pop music come round - The Beatles - I thought, "Maybe I could do this."

**Were you performing in clubs in Missouri before you met John.**

Yes, I was performing in coffee houses. When I first



started, I played guitar in a Top 40 band. We played covers of the chart songs. I think I was about 15 or 16 years old. Then I got an acoustic guitar, so I quit playing in the band and started playing in coffee houses by myself. That's when I met Dana Cooper. He's also from Missouri and was playing the coffee house circuit as well. That became my main interest. Being in a band was OK, but I wanted to be a songwriter.



Kerrville Kronikle Katalogue/Arthur Wood

Shake Russell - Kerrville Folk Festival 1989

**Were you already writing by this stage.**

Seriously, yes. I had written a couple of things for my Top 40 band, to try to emulate what I was playing.

**What was your band called.**

Different names - **Odds and Ends**, was the first one. **The Mandells**. As time passed, we changed names. When psychedelic music came along in the late 60's, we were called **Love Street Affair**. It was a case of anything that fitted the times.

**In which town were you raised.**

Independence, near Kansas City. A suburb really. It's close to Kansas City, like Dallas and Fort Worth.

**The first band you were in with John Vandiver, was that Ewing Street Times.**

Yes. They were operating out of Kansas City and they were the hottest thing that Dana Cooper had ever seen. We didn't know why, or what made them so unique, but we soon found out. It was Vandiver. The way he played guitar. He was the leader in that group.

**That was a four piece band wasn't it. You, John and Michael Mashkes and.....**

Billy Beaucoup became the fourth member, when we

moved to Texas. He was the drummer. Before we moved to Texas, we spent some time in Florida. In Missouri, the fourth band member played tambourine, kazoo and was politically outspoken. He liked to talk more, than he liked to sing. He was kind of a front man. Between him and John. We had no drummer. In those day, we were more like a Jug Band.

**What was his name.**

Don Harthcock.

**I believe you moved to Texas in 1970. Where did you base you base yourselves.**

No, we first moved to Houston in 1972. We lived and worked there for a summer, and finally found a couple of houses in which to live. All of John's friends - Fromholz, B.W. and Michael Murphey - were living out by Lake Travis at that time, North of Austin, so we migrated there. Luckily, we found another couple of houses and lived next door to each other, from 1972 till 1975 and worked out of Austin.

**When did you first play Kerrville.**

1973 was the first year I played here. In 1972, I had only just arrived in Texas. Since then, I've made every one.

**Where did you perform. Did you concentrate on Texas venues.**

No, that was the funny part, once we were living in Texas we mainly worked out of state. We travelled a lot. We'd go back to the Mid-West where we'd been stationed and work the college circuit. Through Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas as well. Then we'd come home for a while and play some local clubs. At that time, there were about half a dozen clubs in Austin. Every night there something to do. It's getting that way again, but now it's more Collegiate. Back then, it was just music lovers going out, night after night, to listen to different people. Everybody from Gary P. Nunn to Rusty Wier. Willie [Nelson] finally moved here. Jerry Jeff moved here, and it became a big scene.

**While you were in Ewing Street Times, did you continue to write songs.**

John was the front man, and I was the bass guitar player in the band. On maybe 3 or 4 songs out of each set, he would feature me singing my songs.

**At that stage in your career, who were your main writing influences.**

Lennon and McCartney, Dylan - the whole folk movement. I was also getting into Randy Newman. He was still fairly new to me. Tom Waits - any good songwriters. Back then it was Dylan, The Beatles, Tim Hardin, Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, Paul Simon and Stephen Stills.

**Would you describe yourself as an autobiographical or observational writer.**



Both - I observe and then I write, because I have this need to express myself. I just wrote a song about John called the **"Ballad of Angus Mustang."** It was one I had to write. It took me years to digest it, and figure out how I wanted to present it. The song is on my newest album, which just came out.

**How long did you work with John.**

I knew John for 15 years, until his death. In 1975, Ewing Street Times broke up. I left Austin. John stayed here in Texas. I went to Chicago with Michael Mashkes, because I knew there was a good music scene up there - John Prine, Steve Goodman. I went there, to see if I could break into the scene. It didn't work out, and we moved on to New York.

**How long were you in Chicago.**

From August 1975 till about the end of March 1976 - a little over 6 months - the cold part of the year. Eventually, I went back to Houston. I called Vandiver up, and said nothing was going on in Chicago. Nothing was happening in New York. I told him that I was thinking of going back to Missouri and getting a regular job. Getting out of the music business. I was 26. I'd been hitting managers, publishers and different people asking if they wanted to handle me. They'd go, "Well we like you, but you're not what we're looking for." I thought that maybe I was wasting my time. For a while, I lost my confidence and finally I called Vandiver. He was in Houston and said "Come down and play with me, because I'm doing a solo act and you can play bass." He told me that there were a lot of other songwriters working there. I'd get the opportunity to hear and meet them. He even thought that we might put another band together. That's pretty much what happened. I went down there and played with John most of the time. There were also a number of clubs where I could play solo, where I met other songwriters.

**At what stage did you start putting your own band together.**

After I got some recognition in Houston. A number of local radio stations began playing my tapes. I decided to put together the Shake Russell Band in about 1978. Coincidentally, about that time, I hooked up with my old buddy Dana Cooper. I hadn't seen him since I left Missouri. He'd gone off on his own to California and got a record deal. I told him to come down to Texas. He came down for a visit and we did some live radio spots. One of those, wound up being part of our album **"Songs On The Radio."** Segments of it. You know where the disc jockey is interviewing us and saying, "I hear you wrote a song." Anyway, we did that and got such a strong response from people. They already knew me. They liked both of us together that much more. Dana was sort of scratching his head and saying, "Maybe I ought to come down to Texas." So he moved here. A while later, I got a record deal with MCA. They asked me what I wanted to call the band the Shake Russell Band. I said "No, it should be the Shake Russell/Dana Cooper Band," because I felt we were equal.

**At one stage you cut a single which coupled "Temper, Temper" with "Silver Hearts." Was that the first recording you ever issued.**

Yes. We used to test the waters back then, to see if we'd lose money or if anybody would really want to buy anything I put out. Anyway we put them on a 45 and it sold really fast.

**I bet there's none of those left either.**

Just a couple in my living room. Not many.

**How did the MCA deal come together. Was it because you were involved with Michael Brovsky.**

No, I got involved with Gary P. Nunn. He was a big fan and he was going a couple of my songs. He heard I was stirring up a lot of dust in Houston. Building up a big following. He asked me to come to Austin, because he wanted to produce me. Eventually Gary took me to Michael Brovsky in order to pursue a record deal. I went up to Austin with all this in mind. Through Michael Brovsky, I ended up on his South Coast label, which was distributed by MCA. At that time South Coast was me, Joe Ely, Jerry Jeff - the three of us together. It sounded like a great deal to me. Then it all fell apart.

**During the same year, you cut the "Comin' Home" album.**

As soon as the fiasco of the MCA album was over with, we had to buy our way out of the contract. In order to heal the pain, went back into the studio immediately. I made that decision, because the **"Songs On The Radio"** sessions were so much fun. All our friends were playing on that, so I said "Let's do another album like that, with the same people." That's how we got the name **"Comin' Home"** - we were back where we started, and were through with all the bullshit.

**Can I backtrack a little. The MCA album features Eric Johnson's guitarwork. Did you meet him while you lived in Austin.**

Yes, we're mutual friends. The guy who owned the studio knew Eric. One of the first nights we came to town, he took me down there and we jammed. Me and Vandiver and Eric Johnson. Eric Johnson's a real nice guy. When we needed a really hot guitar player our friends said "Get Eric." We thought he wouldn't want to play on this kind of music. As it turned out, he did.

**One of the songs on that album was co-written by Dana and Marlin Greene. Marlin also had a solo album issued by Elektra, years ago. Where did they team up.**

When I came to Texas and Dana went to California, Dana got a deal with Elektra. Marlin may have produced his album or co-produced it. They wrote some songs together. Do you know Marlin Greene?

**I know of his Elektra album "Tiptoe Past The Dragon." Let's get back to the "Comin' Home" album.**



I was getting away from the big label - the fiasco - and back to simplicity. We knew we had an audience, and at that time, the concept for **"Comin' Home"** was that four or five different artists would be on that album - artists and entertainers who did shows together. People were used to seeing us, so we decided to pick out a couple of songs from each person's set that were audience favourites and make it like a mini show.

**Although the front of the liner lists, John Vandiver, Shake Russell/Dana Cooper etc, the album tracks listings indicate a great intermingling of the musicians involved.**

It certainly was a lot of fun to do it that way.

**There was a four year gap before you released "Time Spent."**

Yeh, I had some fun with lawyers. A guy out of Houston, Mickey Gilley (club owner) and his partner Sherwood Cryer went to court, and then went their separate ways. Sherwood Cryer and I had a deal - after **"Comin' Home."** I was looking for an independent label on which to release my recordings. He had Gilley Records and Gilley's Nightclub. He called me and said "One of the music critics out here, told me I should talk to you, if I want to sign up somebody from around here." I went out and met him. He was a good old guy, but things didn't turn out to well. He signed me on a handshake - told he couldn't guarantee anything, but that he'd put my recordings out on his label. He was going to press up 10,000 copies and see what happened. We would be partners. That album never saw the sunlight. The studio burnt down, and the tapes were in there. That took me a year - 1983 - I spent a whole year making that record, and it never got released. Finally, I got a lawyer.

**What was the title of the album going to be.**

I don't remember now. I don't know if we ever got that far with it. We had a cover designed and everything.

**Who played on that recording. Was Dana still there.**

I'd split with Dana, and Jack Saunders hadn't joined me at that stage. It was me and the old band, minus Dana.

**What did you do next.**

We continued recording. Trying to get another deal. Then I had to do another local release of my own. We did quite well with our own releases. That's what I'm doing again now.

**That local recording was with Austin Records.**

After the Gilley thing - again, trying to heal the anger and frustration, we went to Rampart Studio in Houston and began recording an album from scratch. I wanted to get it out as soon as possible. We even brought in some new players - the band changed at that point - some band members got disillusioned, because of all that had happened. Anyway, I brought in some new

blood and recorded a number of songs, a couple at a time. When we finally got eight songs together, we decided to get it out right away, because it had been too long since **"Comin' Home."** We ran into Herschel Cunningham who was running Austin Records. I forget who introduced us. He said, "Well you've got the record finished now. I'd be interested in doing a distribution deal for you." I thought it would be better than me putting a few thousand copies out just in Houston. I signed an agreement with him for three years. We sold maybe 10,000 copies of that record, but I never saw much money come back from it.

**That album appeared just after John Vandiver and Debbie Davis were murdered. You dedicated the album to them.**

They were killed in February and the record came out in June. We were recording when it happened.

**Did you write "True Love" during those sessions, as it strikes me as being a very personal song.**

Yes, it's for John and Debbie.

**Is their murder something you felt deeply/still feel deeply about.**

Yes, I sure did and still do. John was like my brother.

**Who's this guy Jim Tiemann, who wrote one of the songs on the Austin Records album, "Time Spent."**

He grew up in Missouri with me. I knew him back up there, and he finally migrated to Texas. By chance, at the time, I needed a guitar player. He needed the job, so he joined up with us. This was around the time I did the **"Time Spent"** album. I also brought in another guitar player, Rusty Burns, to supplement Jim.

**What about Roger Harcourt.**

Roger is a songwriter from Michigan, who came down to Houston having heard about me. Some people in Michigan had told him about my records and he decided that he wanted to meet me. Roger came to one of my shows and said "Hey, I'd love to write a song with you." I gave him the usual "Well, let's get together some time," not thinking he'd ever follow up. The next morning he was at my door, and said "Let's write some songs." We started writing songs and he helped me make a trip to Michigan and play up there one time. I haven't seen Roger since about 1988. I think he's still playing up there, on the College and club circuit.

**On the liner of "Time Spent," Merlin Condry's name appears for the first time. There's also mention of a fan club based in Houston.**

I met Merlin back about 1983, maybe 1982. Right after the Gilley's fiasco. Another guy was doing what Merlin does now, except one day, he just threw his hands up and walked out. Merlin moved up the ranks from setting up the amps to doing everything.



**Your next album "Denim And Pearls" appeared on No Mountain Records. Tell us about that label.**

In Midland, Texas there are no mountains. It's totally flat. Have you ever been to Midland or Odessa? People say it's kinda like Afghanistan, but I don't know. I've never been there. There's a studio out there, called No Mountain. Nick Carlton runs the studio and we used to go out to that area and play gigs every year. He'd come out and do the sound at different clubs and events. One time, he mentioned that he had a studio and that we should check it out. We'd go, "Well man, you're quite a ways out there. We live in Houston." Anyway, one day we went out there and he had a real fine studio. He's a great engineer and every cent he makes in that studio, he puts back into the enterprise. So people come from all around that area. He has business all the time from Lubbock, El Paso - that whole area. It's located in an old farmhouse, in the middle of an oilfield. Oil rigs around you. Cotton fields. You drive up to it and from the outside you'd never know the studio was inside. Inside the house, he has all this hi-tech equipment.

**That's something like Loma Ranch Studio, near Fredericksburg. I visited Loma last Sunday, with a dear friend. Anyway, back to business. Jack Saunders appeared on the "Time Spent" album. What's his history.**

I've known Jack for quite a time. When I first moved to Houston, Jack arrived there the very same year - 1976 - when I came back from New York and Chicago and picked up with Vandiver again, Jack would always be around playing in different groups, at the same clubs. As a result, we got to know each other. Then in 1982 when my other bass player in the Shake Russell/Dana Cooper band left, Jack was available and I knew his reputation. He came out and listened to us and joined up as a bass player and has stayed with me ever since. He also did the Gilley's album with me, that was never released.

**On the "Denim And Pearls" album, there's a song titled "One Way Ticket" which you co-wrote with a guy called Clint Black.**

I met him in a music store in Houston. I walked into this store one day, and someone started playing "You've Got A Lover" on a guitar - one of my songs. I looked over and there's this kid grinning at me. He goes "I bet you know that song, don't you" and started laughing. He was about 20 years old or so. He says "You're Shake Russell. I'm Clint Black, and I play around. I'm trying to get started. Do you think I could do any shows with you." I could tell by his playing, he was good. Even being young, he had what it takes. I said "Sure, call Merlin some time and tell him we talked." Clint started coming out by himself and opening up solo for my band and mesmerising people - even in front of a band, he was a hard act to follow. Maybe he was doing 10% of his own songs at that time - this was like right after John's death at the end of 1985. He was doing Paul Simon, James Taylor covers - all kinds of stuff.

**Not just straight country then.**

No, he didn't even have a hat. Not to make fun of it. I'm sure he had one at home, but he wasn't doing a cowboy kind of show. He was doing happy hours, entertaining anyone who wanted to hear. He did a lot of Merle Haggard, George Jones. He was into country, but he was also into contemporary songwriters.

**Did you continue to gig all over Texas with the band.**

Yes, up until 1988 when the band finally broke up. On New Year's Eve, we did the last gig.

**Did you take Clint on the road with you.**

Yes, just around Texas. That's when we started writing together, because he was doing a couple of my old songs. So we sat down and wrote "One Way Ticket" - I think that was the first song we ever wrote together. At that time, he didn't have a recording contract. I was the one recording, so I got to record the song first. Now it wouldn't fit the style of what he's doing.

**You co-wrote one song on that album with Josh Leo. He's a well known session guy. How did you meet him.**

Josh came from Kansas City too. He and I and Jim Tiemann all knew each other. We played in different bands. Dana was there too. Me, Dana, Josh and Jim Tiemann, it's funny. We're still friends. In the business, Josh has played in some well known bands. He was with Jimmy Buffett for a long time. J.D. Souther, Kim Carnes. I hadn't seen him for years, and then we finally met up again and renewed our friendship. Whenever he came out to Houston with Buffett, we'd go out to dinner. Finally, he moved to Nashville. He got a gig at Warner Bros as a in-house producer. He told Jim Ed Norman at Warners that he had a friend in Texas he wanted to produce, called Shake Russell. Jim said "Bring him up here." This was like 1987 and I still had my band. Anyway, I went up by myself and they put some real hot players behind me. We cut four songs at Warner Bros. Unfortunately, they passed on those. Time went by, then a couple of years ago, Jack and I went up to Nashville again, and showcased with Josh as our producer. He heard our new songs and said he wanted to do a showcase and bring some guys out. He'd presented it as a package, produced it and put all these players on it. So we tried that. Most people passed on that. They said they liked it, but they didn't know what to do with us because Foster and Lloyd were already around. They only sold about 100,000 records and the record company didn't really want another one of those. They put us in that group - that little niche - because we didn't have cowboy hats, and there were two of us. Josh didn't give up. He said, "Shake keep sending me your songs and if I get anybody - [ED. NOTE. Leo produces a lot of solo artists and bands, including Alabama] - to do some of your songs, I'll help you that way." So he's been helping us. All of a sudden he got interested a few years ago, in a group out in New Mexico called South



by South West. They were doing some of my songs too. He went out to hear them do a showcase and told them **"Deep in the West,"** I know the guy who wrote that song." Mike Hearne from South by South West, said "Yeh, that's Shake Russell. We're old friends from Austin." They started talking and all of a sudden Josh said "You know, I'd been real interested if you and Shake and Jack put a band together. RCA would too." So that's what's happening right now. We have a four song record deal with Barry Beckett producing, South by South West - that's what we're gonna call it. It'll be me and Jack, Mike Hearne and Carmen Acciaoli. Do you know Carmen? When Mike played behind Michael Martin Murphey for five years, Carmen played pedal steel, mandolin, banjo, fiddle, dobro - that kind of thing - all the good stuff. So he's the utility player. Things have worked out for Josh. He's moved up the ladder from being a sideman, to a producer, to being a big shot at RCA. He's an ally, thankfully. The four songs will appear as singles, and if any of those take off, then we'll go back in the studio and cut some more stuff.

**There's a song titled "Tears In Your Eyes," on "Denim And Pearls" which you co-wrote with Josh and Harry Stinson. He's another well known sideman.**

Harry played drums on the Warner Bros. session which Josh produced. Somebody at Warner Bros. said that we needed to write some more songs, so I went out to Josh's house and spent a few days there. We got a couple of songs going, and initially thought that we had **"Tears In Your Eyes"** finished. Later, we gave it to Harry. Josh said that Harry might be able to give it that finishing twist. He changed the chorus around, and helped finish the song. He's a great guy, really good. Very talented.

**Then we come to Jalapeno Records, and the "Pilgrim's Highway" album.**

That's an offshoot of No Mountain studio. I think we soon realised that we were going to cut more than one record out there. When the big guys started biting the bait, we thought we should go ahead and form a label and be official about it, so that people could identify us. We got the trademark for Jalapeno.

**Jimmie Fadden plays drums on that album.**

Nick who owns the studio, is old buddies with the Dirt Band. They used to pal around together. As a matter of fact, the drum set which he has in the studio, a beautiful Gretsch set, he bought from Jimmie. Jimmie freelances whenever he's not working with the Dirt Band, and we just got lucky. He wasn't busy, so he came out there.

**Where did you stumble across Theresa Brunelle. She played Kerrville in 1989 with her husband, Joseph.**

Through the studio again. Joseph and Theresa were playing out there at the Hilton in Midland. After we finished recording, we'd drop by to see them. She's such a good singer, that we invited her in to sing on a couple of tracks.

**What about Chuck Hamrick.**

Chuck's a songwriter that I met in Houston, back when I was still playing with Dana. We were at Emmajo's an old folk club that's now defunct. Chuck's from Tennessee and he would come and hang out. He'd ask if he could do a little guest set. He got up there and played - in a real primitive country style, almost like Hank Williams. He was so pure and soulful, that I really took to it, and we became friends. He liked my writing and wanted to write some songs with me, so I had him come down to Houston for a few days. I've probably written eight or nine songs with him so far. Right now, he's in Alabama. He kind of moves around a bit.

**After your band broke up in the late eighties, was it a conscious decision for you and Jack to carry on as a duo.**

We were tied together, not only by the fact that we lived in the same city - you see, half of the band lived in Dallas and the rest in Houston, so it was hard for us to really be a band - half of us wanted to go in one direction musically, and the rest in another - Jack and I had a lot of similarities in our music. By that time we had started writing together. He liked the same styles, and Jack's an excellent player. Way back in the late seventies when we first hit town together, and before we formed our own bands - when everybody was just settling in - I did a show with J.J. Cale, where I hired Jack just out of the blue - we'd never even played together before that and he did it without any rehearsal. He's like Vandiver - he can do anything. In my mind, it settled the fact that Jack was somebody I could work with. I prefer to work with musicians who are spontaneous. It so good that you can do that, and makes it so much easier. Gives me much more freedom.

**The next album you cut together, was titled "Before/Now." Where did the idea come from.**

People were coming to shows and saying, "Where can we get those old songs." **"Songs On The Radio"** was out of print at that time. Still is. I'd say "Well, right now I don't know." Finally, I got tired of saying that and discussed the idea with Jack of cutting an album half of which would be the old songs and half new. Not a greatest hits, because we're too young for that, but one side with all the old favourites that people can't get anymore - and make them contemporary. A lot of people said that they liked the way we currently did the old songs. We got a bunch of new songs for the other part of the album. That's how that recording and the title came about.

**"Deep In The West" dates from when you were in Ewing Street Times.**

It's probably one of the first song I ever wrote. If I had a dime for every time I played that song, I could retire. It's just a simple little song that I wrote for my girlfriend at that time - she's my wife now - were we always separated and I would never listen to what she was telling me, I was always taking off. I ran off with



Vandiver and joined his band and left her in Missouri. I was caught up with the idea of the road, like everybody is when they're young, caught up with what I wanted to do. Next thing I knew, I lost her. We were separated, while I was up in Colorado and **"Deep In The West."** Looking up at the sunset, as the heavens turned red from the fire down below - it was right there for me to look at. I started writing the song and tried to use that as a metaphor - **"Deep In The West"** being how I felt deep inside. I was separated from her, and I wasn't wise enough at that age to listen to my partner. She couldn't get through to me.

**Do you realise that a Texan who now lives in England, has just cut that song. Cassell Webb.**

I know Cassell, she used to sing in B.W.'s band. In fact, when B.W. cut **"Temper, Temper"** Cassell sang on it. When we did that Gilley album, we hired her boyfriend Craig Leon, to produce that album.

**What inspired you to write "Travelling Texas."**

I was commissioned to write that song. A friend at Channel 2 in Houston in December of 1985, he called and said "Next year is the sesquicentennial. The 150th birthday of Texas. I'm going to put together a sixty second video of Texas scenery. I need a song to go with it. Can you write the song." The only stipulation he made, was that somewhere in the song I had to mention "eyes of Texas." I didn't know why, but it was the only guidance he gave me. I spent January to March thinking about the song. What position and perspective I wanted to take. I started reading a lot of history books on Texas. Remember I'm from Missouri. I wanted to get into it, and in one Texas Monthly I found an article about some elementary school children from the East coast, writing their impressions of what Texas must be like, having never seen it, except on TV. I thought then, that I'd write it from a child's perspective. Not a nursery rhyme, but like an old cowboy song. The melody can be simple enough, and the words - make it like **"Pecos Bill"** - make it bigger than life. Put some mythology in there, but also some elements of Texas. That's what I started writing down. All these notes I had, I tried to put together into a song form and then into a rhyme scheme. Get all those elements which touch on Texas. I was careful that the song didn't sound like a travelogue of Texas. Looking back now, Bruce Bryant, the fellow who asked me to write the song, knew that he was going to try to get that song pushed as the theme for the "Eyes Of Texas." They had a TV show with that title in the planning stage. Anyway, I delivered the song and sure enough he played it for the producers of that show and they loved it. It's been on air ever since 1986. This is from Channel 2 in Houston, every Saturday night at 6.30pm. They broadcast it on other Texas stations. It's a half hour documentary show.

**Are you still writing songs with Clint Black.**

I haven't this year, but I just talked to him recently and we're going to write next year, when he has some time off. We'll get together and do some writing for his fourth album. He's just finished his third album. I don't

know if I've got any songs on there or not. I had one which was a candidate, that we'd written. I don't know if it made the final cut. He told me just the other day, he's been meeting some movie people out in California, and that he's going to be doing soundtrack music. He wants some of my stuff for that too.

**I can see "Deep In The West" turning up in a movie soundtrack someday.**

I hope so. We've got a bunch of other songs that we've written, that we haven't done anything with. They're not country enough for what Clint is doing. He's played them for some big shot producers - Irving Azoff and Richard Landis - and some movie producers, and they really like the rock songs. They're going to try to get somebody else to sing them, not Clint. Some big rock act, with Clint possibly producing them. I'm hoping that comes about.

**Have you ever thought of trying to get a songwriting deal in Nashville.**

Jack and I have been going back and forth to Nashville, since Clint released my songs two years ago. We started making the most of it - striking while it was hot. We go and do showcases, meeting publishers, meeting other writers, writing with other people. They're more open to giving me a chance to write with them, once I've had a couple of hits.

**Where have you and Jack been playing lately.**

All over Texas and up into New Mexico, since this band thing started to develop. Oklahoma as well. Generally around the South West.

**Have you ever played The Birchmere in Alexandria.**

No. I've been denied all that access and so has my friend Dana Cooper. We were talking about that the other day. We wish we could find the contact that Butch and Jimmie Dale and those guys have made - or David Wilcox - that can put us in those songwriting rooms. We've never gotten into that. We certainly want to.

**On your latest album "Listen With Your Heart," you're writing again with Dana.**

That started happening again, which was great, because now that we're writing a lot together, we're planning to do an album together, somewhere down the road. Dana is still based in Nashville - it's like you can't make a living in Nashville as a musician - you have to get a job somewhere else, if you want to pay the rent, particularly if you don't have a hit song out. He comes down to Texas, to save up some coins, play some gigs where people know him, and then go back to Tennessee to write songs up there. He comes through every three or four months. He's here now, and we've been playing shows all round the state. He and I and Jack, have been writing together. As soon as we get ten songs that we think are strong - we've got three now, that I think are as good as any we've written so far - seven more, and if this RCA thing



hasn't got me all tied up and runnin' around the world, we're going to jump back into No Mountain studio and record a Shake and Dana and Jack album. On Dana's new album, which we put out on Jalapeno Records, Jack and I played on it. It's titled **"Stone By Stone."**

**You've been writing with a guy called Tom Schaper.**

He's a country songwriter from Houston. We became buddies and it developed into writing songs. He has a band of his own in Houston.

**Who is the writer that has co-penned songs with you and Clint.**

Hayden Nicholas is Clint's main co-writing partner. He's also his lead guitar player. Hayden is really Clint's partner, like Jack is mine. All three of us collaborate on tunes from time to time.

**"Pilgrim's Highway," "Before/Now" and "Listen With Your Heart" seem to have appeared in quick succession. Is this because you've become more popular in the last four to five years.**

That has certainly come around again too. We're writing a lot too, so we have the material. All of a sudden we've got twelve new songs, so we go and do an album. There's a few thousand people out there who like to hear it. We have a nice studio and thanks to Clint, Ricky Skaggs and Waylon, I have a little bit of money in the bank. I don't have to borrow money, from Mr. X or Miss X to do it. As we put each CD on sale to our fans, we also mail them out to artists and management companies and labels to use as a demo. To show them that we are still alive and writing songs. Hopefully we're progressing as writers and performers as well.

**When's the deal with RCA liable to reach fruition.**

It could be next month. It could be next Spring. Right now we're at a stage where the deal is struck, and that's all we know. Barry Beckett is working on a budget. Next step is that he'll come down to Houston, and Mike Hearne will fly in from New Mexico. Jack, Mike and I will sit down and play our catalogue of songs to Barry Beckett. What we think is appropriate for the concept of South by South West. Mike will also play his songs. Then we'll pick out the strongest contenders. If there isn't any songs there, we'll write some new ones.

**So what is the concept.**

That's what first attracted RCA. Jack and I bring in the folkie side - the Texas side, which Barry Beckett likes. At first he was afraid when he heard they were bringing in two new elements. He wanted to meet us, see what we sounded like. Everything. Once he heard us play, he took us into this room and said "Yea, I like this." It won't just be me singing. Mike will sing, because he's got a real nice clear voice. I have this funky voice. Jack's a good lead singer too. He's just real reticent about doing it sometimes. Now he's into it. RCA thought there would be a problem with marketing

a band which had three lead singers. The Dirt Band have two or three singers. We went into No Mountain studio around a month and a half ago, and recorded three songs, to send to them. One with me singing lead. One with Jack and one with Mike, just to show them what the listener would be able to hear on an album. As we get tighter, eventually I hope we'll evolve to where we're like the old group, The Band. One guy would sing one verse, and so on - really swapping things around.

**Has your voice always had that *rough edge* to it.**

No, not as rough as it is now. For instance, I can listen to the **"Songs On The Radio"** album - back in those days, I even had a falsetto. I can't do that anymore. Over the years - smoky nightclubs, and whiskey and all that - when I did that stuff - I don't anymore. I guess it has added to it. A lot of people who haven't heard me or seen me for years, will ask "Shake are you OK. Your voice has gotten so low." I went to a throat specialist this past year, just to get things checked out. He looked in there and said "Everything looks great."

**Who was John Moss that produced "Songs On The Radio."**

He was a manager that was trying to get us going. When all that came about, I felt that he had really helped us so much, we credited him as producer. It gave him a title, even if it didn't mean all that much. He did a lot of the post production work. Went to KLOL, the radio station where we did the live broadcast, and got those tapes from them and their permission to let us put them on the album. We had some stuff from up in Austin, that we'd recorded with Eric Johnson. John pulled it all together and took it out to a studio and pulled the whole project together. He deserved the title of producer.

**The three tracks which were recorded at Odyssey Studios in Austin, were produced by someone named Jay Podolnik.**

He's the guy that introduced me to Eric Johnson. Joe Podolnik is now called Jay Aaron, and he's pop singer. He's not real high profile yet, but he's got a deal with some big label. They gave me a CD of some of his songs a few months ago - they wanted me to write some songs with him. He needs a lyricist. He owned the studio and it subsequently became Pecan Street Studio when Michael Brovsky bought it. Jerry Jeff recorded his **"Jerry Jeff Walker"** album there, before they finished building the studio - it was still partly a laundromat [ED. NOTE. The album liner refers to Rapp Cleaner's]. He had just moved here, and went in there with Gary P. and all the Gonzos and recorded **"L.A. Freeway"** and all those big hits.

**The "Comin' Home" album was recorded at Rivendell Sound in Pasadena, Texas.**

It's just outside of Houston. It's a studio where they mainly make religious recordings. I can't remember who recommended that we go there. I heard that it



was a real fine studio - one of the better ones in the Houston area at the time. So I went out there and cut the record, once I'd funded the sessions.

**On the South Coast album you included a song which Walter Hyatt had written. Where did you run into him.**

Up in Austin. He's one of my favourite songwriters. He's up there with Dylan or any of them. I used to do a lot of his songs. Around half a dozen or so.

**Your style of playing, whether with a band or in a duo with Jack, features a real mixture of styles. There's a rootsy feel to what you do, with elements of country, folk and rock. How did that evolve.**

I think that all started out in my childhood. My mom's radio and my dad's country record collection. Hearing Hank Williams all the time - and then my older cousins with fifties music. The Everly Brothers and a young Johnny Cash. All that Sun Records stuff. In the sixties, the Beatles came along and the power of songwriting took over. A form of expression which could make people feel good and all that stuff. It was only later, when I was older and studied what they had done, that I realised that they were just emulating those old US musicians. Their element of songwriting was drawn from many sources. Mine is a hybrid of folk, country, blues and pop all mixed up - just from playing in all those different groups - from doing the Top 40 thing and from playing the coffee house circuit for a while. From meeting Vandiver and coming to Texas, and being lucky that it was 1972, when Austin was just blooming with songwriters. I could go out and see Michael Murphey, Jerry Jeff, Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt - I thought "That's what I want to be. I can do that. They're doing it. On a day to day basis, and people like it. There's an audience for it, here in Texas." John's element of the funky blues - I tried to emulate some of that, not as well as he did it by any stretch of the imagination, but I just absorbed all those influences.

**Have you ever thought of moving to Nashville.**

I would want to go there to do business. Out of all the alternatives to do business - as opposed to New York and L.A. - Nashville is more my cup of tea. More laid back. More friendly. More like Austin. I prefer to stay in Texas. I can do my business there, but that's all. Currently my wife and I are looking to find some land - somewhere up in the hills between Austin and here - to build a house and live here. Then I could get on a jet and fly to wherever I need to fly to do my business. I don't know exactly why, but I really like Texas. More than just for the reason that it's been good to me. I love it. I love the spirit of it. I spent my first, almost twenty years in Missouri, and my second twenty in Texas. Missouri and Texas are a lot alike. I was used to the Ozarks and the hills and lakes. When I first saw Austin, I thought "Man, this is paradise." If I still lived in Missouri - like I said before, I would have had to find a job or have another source of income, because I couldn't do there what I'm doing here. I'm self employed. I'm my own little company. Even though it is small potatoes, I'm my own boss. I pay my taxes. I

decide my own hours. I'd like to be a little bit more successful, but I get scared when I see Clint and what he goes through.

**How many of your early albums are still in print.**

"Songs On The Radio," "Comin' Home" and the MCA album are out of print. "Time Spent" is available - we can get that from Austin Records, as they still have copies. We're in the process of putting "Songs On The Radio" and "Comin' Home" together on a CD. We've already transferred it from tape to DAT. We're getting the cover design done currently. Both of those albums have the same players, and sound and feel. Even the same artist did the covers, so it all works.

**Have you ever got tired of coming to Kerrville.**

No. Not Kerrville. This is a treat, because it's an ideal audience. An ideal setting when it's not raining [Laughs], and I'd do it for nothing. If I could have a gig like this every night, it would be a songwriters dream. It's a great place for songwriters. What it nurtures for everybody and for people that like music - it gives them a place to come. It's a peaceful place and they can relax and enjoy it.

**There's a song on your new album, titled "The Ballad Of Angus Mustang." How did John Vandiver come by that nickname.**

When we did the "Comin' Home" album we had to get investors. There were six of them. John got some friends from Florida to put in some money, but they didn't want to sign their names to the deal - I guess they were outlaws - John signed his name as the investor. He put down Angus Mustang. For years, I didn't know where he came up with it. One night I was driving up to Dallas, to play a gig, and on I45 there's two towns, one called Angus and the other Mustang. They're on the same exit, so there's a sign which says Angus Mustang, 1 Mile - I laughed.

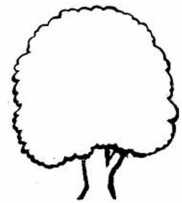
**Have you ever appeared on "Austin City Limits."**

Yes, back in 1982. We got lucky. Michael Murphey was supposed to have done one and he had to cancel. Brovsky pulled some strings and got us in there. That was wonderful. I had friends from all over the country calling me, saying "We saw you." It's a wonderful show to do. I haven't done "The Texas Connection" yet, although Jerry Jeff's wife Susan wants us on there. She wants Clint to do it at the same time, since we've written songs together. That's what we're trying to set up. Maybe it will happen sometime.

**UPDATE.** The April 1993 edition of *COUNTRY MUSIC PEOPLE* featured another episode in my bi-monthly series *CURRENTS*. The artist involved, **Shake Russell**. **Mike Heame & South By South West** are scheduled to appear at the Kerrville Festival on Sunday May 30th this year. **Shake, Dana and Jack** are due to appear together, later that evening. By that stage their trio recording *"The Thrill Of Love,"* should be available on Jalapeno Records. As far as their continued input to *South By South West* is concerned.....?



# A Kerrverts Festival 50.



There is a reason, There is a rhyme,  
There is a season, There is a time,  
and then, there's the latest KERRVERTS FESTIVAL 50.

1. The Dutchman **STEVE GOODMAN** "The Essential.....Steve Goodman" Buddah BDS 5665-2 [1976]. #
2. The Way To Calvary **ROD MACDONALD** "Highway To Nowhere" Shanachie 8001 [1992].
3. Years **BETH NIELSEN CHAPMAN** "Beth Nielsen Chapman" Reprise 9 26172-2 [1990].
4. Oh Great Spirit **MEGON McDONOUGH** "Buy Me Bring Me Take Me: Don't Mess My Hair....  
Life According To Four Bitchin' Babes, Volume 2" Philo CD PH 1150 [1993]. #
5. I'd Fall For You **COSY SHERIDAN** "Quietly Led" Waterbug 0004 [1992]. #
6. Yarrington Town **MICKIE MERKENS** "Texas Summer Nights, Vol. 1" Potato Satellite PS2-1000 [1983]. #
7. Paint The Town Biege **ROBERT EARL KEEN** "A Bigger Piece Of Sky" Special Delivery SPDCD 1048 [1993].
8. So Far To Go **GREG TROOPER** "Everywhere" Black Hole BH0113 [1992]. #
9. Coney Island Moon **TOM RUSSELL** "Box Of Visions" Round Tower RTMCD 52 [1993].
10. Measuring Words **JIMMY LAFAVE** "Austin Skyline" Bohemia Beat (no index no.) [1992]. #
11. River Of Innocence **SHAKE RUSSELL/JACK SAUNDERS** "Pilgrim's Highway" Jalapeno CD-072 [1990]. #
12. Billy Collins **KATY MOFFATT** "The Greatest Show On Earth" Round Tower RTMCD 50 [1993].
13. Girls Of Santa Fe **BILL MORRISSEY** "Standing Eight" Philo CD PH 1123 [1989]. #
14. The Kitty Friel **TAMARACK** "Fields Of Rock And Snow" SGB Records SGB 13 CD [1991]. #
15. Perfection In The Mud **BUTCH HANCOCK** "Own The Way Over Here" Sugar Hill SH-CD-1038 [1993]. #
16. As Close To Flying **CHRISTINE LAVIN** "Buy Me etc...." as 4. above - Philo CD PH 1150 [1993]. #
17. Good Night, New York **JULIE GOLD** "Buy Me etc...." as 4. above - Philo CD PH 1150 [1993]. #
18. Until We Meet Again **DELORES KEANE** "Solid Ground" Shanachie 8007 [1993].
19. Rudy And Yolanda **SHAKIN' APOSTLES (FRED KRC)** "Shakin' Apostles" East Side Digital ESD 80752 [1993]. #
20. Look Over Your Shoulder **MARK HEARD** "Second Hand" Fingerprint 9102 FCD [1991]. #
21. The Dance **TOM RUSSELL** "Beyond St. Olav's Gate [1979-1992]" Round Tower RTM CD 40 [1992].
22. Somewhere Ahead **JAMES KEELAGHAN** "Small Rebellions" Tranquilla Music (no index no.) [1989]. #
23. Ice Fishing **BILL MORRISSEY** "North" Philo CD PH 1106 [1986]. #
24. Cuatro Velas **SANTIAGO JIMENEZ Jr.** "Corazon De Piedra" Watermelon CD 1010 [1992]. #
25. Graceful Man **SALLY FINGERETT** "Buy Me etc...." as 4. above - Philo CD PH 1150 [1993]. #
26. Rise From The Ruins **MARK HEARD** "Dry Bones Dance" Fingerprint 9001 FCD [1990]. #
27. Change Partners **ROSANNE CASH** "The Wheel" Sony/Columbia CK 52729 [1993]. #
28. Caledonia **DELORES KEANE** "A Woman's Heart" Dara/RTE DARTE CD 158 [1992]. ^
29. Lucky **TONI PRICE** "Live" More Homespun Stuff (cassette only, no index no.) [1992]. #
30. Grand Canyon **STEINAR ALBRIGHTSEN/TOM PACHECO** "Big Storm Comin'" Norsk IDCD 33 [1993]. ^
31. Spooky And Skeeter **JERRY GIDDENS** "The Devil's Front Door" Doctor Dream DD 9263 [1992]. #
32. Cross My Heart **JACK HARDY** "Two Of Swords" Great Divide GDCD 1771 [1992]. #
33. Comin' Down In The Rain **NANCI GRIFFITH** "Other Voices, Other Rooms" MCA MCD 10796 [1993].
34. Guess You Had To Be There **JANIS IAN** "Breaking Silence" Sony/Columbia COL 472376-2 [1992]. ^
35. Songs On The Radio **VIGILANTES OF LOVE** "Jugular" Fingerprint 9205 FCD [1993]. #
36. Sligo Honeymoon 1946 **TERRY CLARKE** "The Shelly River" Minidoka MICD005 [1991].
37. Tuesdays Are Forever **D.D. WOOD** "Tuesdays Are Forever" Hollywood HR-612370-2 [1993]. #
38. Starcrossed Misbeggotten Love **CHUCK PROPHET** "Balinese Dancer" China WOLCD 1031 [1993].
39. Bed Of Roses **STEVE GILLETTE** "The Ways Of The World" Compass Rose CRM-4CD [1992]. #
40. Back On The Street Again **STEVE GILLETTE** "Steve Gillette" Vanguard VMD 79251 [1967/1992]. #
41. Me And My Daydreams **ROBIN GREENSTEIN** "Slow Burn" Brambus 199238-2 [1993]. ^
42. It Don't Bring You **MAURA O'CONNELL** "Blue Is The Colour Of Hope" Warner Bros. 9 45063-2 [1992].
43. Across The Milky Way **JOHN STEWART** "Teresa And The Lost Songs" Homecoming (cassette only) [1992]. #
44. Crash On The Levy **STEVE YOUNG** "Seven Bridges Road" Big Ear Music LP 001 [1992]. ^
45. If **ANDREW CALHOUN** "Hope" Waterbug 0002 [1992]. #
46. Crazy Mary **DAVID ALLEN COE** "Myst. R/stone Cowboy/Once Upon A Time" Bear Family BCD 15706 AH [1993]. ^
47. The Wing And The Wheel **NANCI GRIFFITH** "The Last Of The True Believers" Philo PH-1109 [1986].
48. Texas Lullaby **DAVID ALLEN COE** "Longhaired Redneck/Rides Again" Bear Family BCD 15707 AH [1993]. ^
49. You And Me Go Way Back **JOHN SEBASTIAN** "Tar Beach" Shanachie 8006 [1992].
50. Heal In The Wisdom **BOBBY BRIDGER** "Kerrville Folk Festival - Live 1986" (cassette only, no index no.) [1987]. #



*Gibson.*



**BUBBLIN' UNDER** - Treasure Of The Broken Land **MARK HEARD** "Satellite Sky" Fingerprint/Enclave FLD 9751 [1992]  
#; Jenny Dreamed Of Trains **MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER** "Country Music For Kids" Disney Spotlight 60837-2 [1992]  
#; Foley **RICHARD DOBSON** "Blue Collar Blues" Brambus 199239-2 [1993] ^; Shadowing You **FRANCES BLACK** and  
**KIERAN GOSS** "Same" CBM CD 003 [1993].

**NOTE.** All albums issued in the UK, unless marked otherwise. US releases marked #. Euro releases ^. Introductory rhyme taken from the Bobby Bridger song, "Heal In The Wisdom" - The Kerrville Folk Festival Anthem. Entry No. 44 is a 1000 copy, German Limited Edition CD in a galvanised [damned awkward to open] metal case !



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## Editorial.

Well here it is - a new computer, a new print face and more lines crammed on to each page. I trust that you approve. As usual, the contents mainly lean toward the less well known - certainly in the *kompacts* section. It seems a waste of space to me, if for instance, I were to take time to tell you how *wonderful* **Rosanne Cash's** new *major label* album "**The Wheel**" is. The big boys like **Q** and **VOX** are there for things like that - even **FOLK ROOTS** and **CMP**. Geographically speaking, the music which we love here at KKHQ is located somewhere in the area that **DIRTY LINEN** [*finest music publication on the face of the planet currently*] serves with it's *Linen Shorts* section.

Never one from shrinking from sticking my foot in my mouth, I had one renewing subscriber [following Issue 14] berate me about the lack of hard facts about **John Stewart** in the **KK** since **OMAHA RAINBOW** expired. In full public view, I'd like to take this opportunity to publically invite **OMAHA** to don his *mask* and *cape* once more and despatch a missive to KKHQ for inclusion in **KK** Issue 16. From memory, it's the years 1989 to date which require *colouring in*. Personally, I don't think I'm up to the task, as I've lost track of John's activities of late.

Well as you'll note from the enclosed **BACK ISSUES** flyer, my invite to send in Small Ads resulted in a tumultuous response of one - thanks Alan. As far as the **Small Ads** section is concerned, the **KK** letterbox remains open for you reponse. Is putting pen to paper really so much of an effort? I refuse to believe that you have nothing to trade, even if it's just memories!

I must apologise for leaving the **DEJADISC** address out of the "**Across The Great Divide**" review in the last issue. It was an *observation test* you see. Back on page 9 of that issue, the **David Rodriguez** album review included the necessary San Marcos address. Stay awake always. With the new bold typeface I intend using from now on to highlight record label addresses/retail outlets in the *kompacts* section, things from now on, should stick out like a sore thumb! Ouch.

Meanwhile, it strikes me as sad that none of the major UK music publications have picked up on the compilation of **Jo Carol Pierce** songs. Many column

inches have been lavished of late, on the Australian released Love compilation "**Comes In Colours**" [Raven available in the UK via **Topic**], and rightly so, while what I consider to be an equal contender in terms of *quality songwriting* remains unheralded in despatches.

The number of American singer/songwriters touring the UK/Ireland has been somewhat miniscule so far this year. Only recently, have things sprung into action. **Katy Moffatt** was the first [seems that you should look out for her onscreen, in "**The Thing Called Love**" movie which Robert Earl Keen mentioned]. **Nanci Griffith** and **Robert Earl Keen** will have come and gone by the time you read this. Seems that **Jimmie Dale Gimore** may visit in July, on the strength of his next American Explorer Series album. **Tom Russell/Andy Hardin** are rumoured for the autumn, as is **Tom Pacheco** with **Steinar Albrightsen**. Within days of it's release in Norway, the latter duo's "**Big Storm Coming**" album went gold, and they found themselves playing in mega capacity arenas. The Bon Jovi, Lenny Kravitz, Hothouse Flowers stadium size. Also mentioned as possible visitors before Xmas '93 rolls around - **Townes Van Zandt**, **Andy Wilkinson**, **Rod MacDonald**, **Steve Young** and **John Stewart**. Remember to check your local press for details of the concert dates.

Regarding the contents of this issue and in no particular order, thanks are due to Rod Kennedy, Shake Russell and Jack Saunders, Robert Earl Keen, Alpha Ray plus Edward Dalton and family for the transcription services. This issue is dedicated to the art of survival. **So if yours is due, send that subscription renewal today!** Survival of the *Kronikle* is an issue I've mentioned in the past, but with losses of around 30 readers/issue, the *Titanic* will not stay afloat forever! Sad but true. So that's the price of obscurity.

#####

2 October 1982

because you told me once

the round hay bales  
like surrealistic cows  
graze in open fields  
of golden autumn glow

because you showed me once

the toolshed wears  
my beaten straw hat  
like some huge squating  
hardworking old scarecrow

because you touched me once

the garlic blooms  
in early morning light  
like lace upon a  
blue October canvas



because you loved me once

ALPHA RAY