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Pop sat Duncan and NBA title chance died...

By Jacques E. Strap
Action sports analyst

Okay, sports fans, I have grudgingly agreed to come out from under my self-imposed rock to make a few small observations and recommendations after the Spurs’ agonizing defeat by Miami in the NBA finals.

Excuse me if I say something offensive. Should that happen, I can assure you that it is purely intentional and probably with enough malice to drown the average Spurs worshiper. I wouldn’t say mean, ugly, judgemental and spiteful things if I didn’t feel them deep in my heart, and I will quote Tim Duncan when I say what is obvious—"It is what it is."

If I am to be condemned to basketball hell, then so be it. And as Dwayne Wade so aptly put it one time, it is just a game we are so steamed up over—grown men playing a bouncy ball game first devised for children.

First off, I would like to establish the one irrefutable fact: The Spurs are Tim Duncan’s team, and not Tony Parker’s, and the churlish coach Gregg Popovich is not really God disguised in a business suit.

Humility, I have come to believe, is the ability to remain teachable, and the grand pooh-bah of the San Antonio Spurs might do well if he learns to sit up and listen a bit. If I remain silent at this point, with my head bowed in mourning for the Spurs, then I am practicing false humility. The truth is, I have something to say, and I have as much right as Charles Barkley to shoot off my mouth.

Coach Gregg Popovich cost San Antonio the NBA title this go around, and it is because of loveable old Pop that the greatest basketball closer of all time is limping toward retirement without having ever enjoyed the amount of playing time that he deserved.

I’m talking about Manu Ginobili, the Argentinian warrior who has been relegated to a substitute’s role ever since he joined the Spurs. Moved in and out of the lineup like a chess piece, Ginobili didn’t earn a starting berth this season until game 5 of the finals against Miami.

Out of sync and often rusty, Ginobili has not been afforded half the shots he should be afforded in his role as a second team target for every frustrated player on an opposing team. His greatness flashed back in the game 5 win over Miami, then faded as he turned the ball over eight times in game 6.

But don’t hang this loss on Manu’s shoulders. Pop blew game 6 by sitting Tim Duncan during the waning minutes, and by this indefensible act of basketball idiocy, the coach gave Miami the 2013 NBA title.

Pop’s ego has raised its ugly head on previous occasions. Like believing that he was the only coach on the planet who could convert mental case Stephen Jackson into a productive team basketball player.

With Duncan benched in game 6, and with the Spurs leading by 5 points, Miami roared back to pitch us into overtime and an eventual loss.

The team had the NBA title in their hands. The yellow ropes were being strung up for the championship awards ceremony. And then the tide turned with a fast Miami Heat bombardment, including a 3-point dagger by Ray Allen. This happened with the greatest power forward and the Spurs’ greatest defender sitting on the bench.

Tim Duncan, 37 and in the nadir of his amazing career, had to agonize on the bench during the waning moments of what was probably the last chance for a fifth NBA title in his career. And this while Popovich had someone by the name of Boris Diaw out there in his place.

Boris Diaw? Yeah, Boris Diaw.

God Popovich playing human chess.

Pop defended his benching of Duncan with a bunch of round ball gibberdegook, i.e. small ball, switching matchups off the pick-and-roll, some feat that might or might not be quicker than Tim’s, and other bullshit.

I ain’t the smartest country canoe-back chair sports analyst out there, but I do know this: When the game is on the line, and seconds are ticking away, you have your big boy out there on the court. Especially if the big boy is one of the greatest competitors in the world with an ending career, and with this game the most important of this entire year. And maybe his entire career.

You don’t plant Tim on the bench in this situation. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure this out.

And Tony Parker?

Tony who?

When the rubber hit the road, Parker performed his disappearing act, not even bothering to tumble around under the basket after a layup or two.

After the series was over and done with, and San Antonio had finished giving Miami what should rightfully have been for the Spurs, the ex-husband of Eva Longoria shrugged and said, "That’s just sports."

So what does old Jacques recommend for the Spurs?

Here’s what.

While Gregg Popovich will no doubt wind up in coaching’s hall of fame, and with a record that proves him to be the greatest coach San Antonio has ever had, he will be mentioned up there with the Red Auerbachs and Phil Jacksons. Maybe he will wonder sometimes... did he really treat the kid from Argentina right? And old Tim Duncan really belong on the bench when Heat big men were rising up to dominate the rim in the waning seconds of a possible NBA title 6th game?

Jacques recommends a little humility for the coach. He needs it.

Tim Duncan needs another couple of years and continuing health. In his own words, he will “play until the wheels come off.”

Ginobili, at 36 and a battered and tiring warrior, needs a new set of legs. I hope he hell I am wrong about this, but Manu may have hooded out his row.

Tony Parker needs a new set of balls. Too bad that Duncan and Ginobili don’t have an extra set they could loan him.
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A photograph on the internet from Pakistan shows us a grinning, snaggle-toothed son of Islam wearing a T-shirt which depicts the twin towers of 9/11 in full bloom.

A sickening sight, indeed, and the smoking death trap which was the World Trade Center is displayed like a badge of glory by the man in the T-shirt. Printed text with this infuriating sight goes on to tell us that shirts of this image are selling like hotcakes on Pakistani streets and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Killing Americans is considered hip, slick, and cool in that part of the world where human scumbags flaunt our great tragedy with impunity.

Sectarian Gibberish

With cries of “allahu akbar” and other such sectarian gibberish which defines no real deity of love, justice or mercy, the American haters go on blowing themselves and others to smithereens in the name of their own version of God.

And in places like Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan, we can expect a never-ending shit rain of hatred, death, and destruction from these people. They will strut the streets in their Twin Towers T-shirts, grinning and drooling like necrophilics over freshly-opened American graves, and there is damn little that we can ever do about it.

But when they slaughter Americans on American soil, how much abuse are we expected to take?

All of which brings me to the subject at hand: Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, the Fort Hood mass murderer who our military justice system is coddling and pandering to like a bunch of droop-titted nanny goats over a fallen kid.

My old Bulverde Indian friend put it well when he described an end to long-suffering patience thusly: “I have been known to let people shit on my head without taking any real action. But when they start wiping their asses with my hair, that’s it.”

So when will we see some sand dune dirt bag walking around in a Nidal Malik Hassan T-shirt?

A Stroke of Fury

There is something about the Nidal Malik Hasan case that might make some infidel want to do something violent and contrary to our military justice system.

Nidal Malik Hasan is the U.S. Army major who now sits half-paralyzed in a wheelchair, stroking his fluffy Islamic beard and plotting the courtroom defense which our great nation has afforded him.

Nidal Malik’s paralysis is the result of a bullet he took while, in his own words, he was “defending the Taliban.”

Major Hasan’s defense of the Taliban consisted of him slaughtering 13 innocent Americans and injuring 32 others in a shooting rampage he conducted at Fort Hood in 2009. But old Nidal Malik has his rights, folks, and our military court system appears determined to see that not much is denied him. The judge did rule out his Taliban defense crap.

Never mind that there were no members of the Taliban present during Nidal Malik’s defense. The American army shrank went about his Taliban defending mission with merciless and gutless efficiency.

He gave his victims no warning. Using two hand guns with laser designators and extended-round clips, he cornered his prey in a crowded waiting area of Fort Hood’s Soldier Readiness Processing Center. He gave them no warning and no quarter. It was like shooting fish in a barrel, and most of the GIS were seated when the great protector of radical Islam went to work on them.

He shot them in the face, in the chest, and in every other area that was exposed to his guns. Many of the victims were shot multiple times. Maj. Hasan killed, reloaded his weapons, and kept right on killing.

Now, more than four years later, we still have Major Hasan among us, still grooming his bushy beard in direct defiance of military dress codes, and now preparing to act as his own lawyer while, figuratively if not literally, wiping his ass with American hair.

What the hell is wrong with us?

How is it that we can exterminate a slimy American killer like Osama bin Laden, then let another terrorist murderer like Nidal Malik Hasan diddle around with us for almost four long years without doing a damn thing to him?

Navy SEALs blew Osama to hamburger pulp before feeding his sorry carcass to the fish. No funeral bullshit, no opportunity for anti-American propaganda.

But with the Fort Hood killer, we are acting strange and alarmingly protective.

SEALS Kept Firing

The SEALs kept firing until bin Laden was a dirty memory whose corpse was never allowed to touch American soil.

Major Hasan was hit only by the bullet that paralyzed him, and now he has American doctors adjusting his catheter bag and wheeling him into a courtroom where he is sure to put on a three-ring martyrdom circus in the name of radical Islam.

We have twice allowed Hasan to fire his court-appointed lawyers. One military judge was taken off the case when he threatened to have the defendant forcibly shorn in keeping with military regulations.

Nidal Malik Hasan, although a member of the American military, is allowed to keep his facial brush because our military justice system doesn’t want to trample on the major’s “religious” sensibilities.

Bloody Sanctity

This is the “religious belief” sanctity which saw Hasan holler “allahu akbar” (God is great) as he started butchering innocent American men and women with twin handguns.

Before ruling that Hasan could represent himself in a military court of law, the judge, Col. Tara Osborn, went to great lengths to be sure that the major is physically able to act as his own lawyer.

God and a Fort Hood crowd watched Nidal Malik murder 13 and wound 32, but the law says he is innocent until proven guilty.

But all protocol must be followed. We must empty his catheter bag with regularity, and make sure that his wheelchair cushions are fluffy and clean as he takes center stage.

Then we should hang our heads in shame.
With Darrell McCall it is a family affair in the heart of Texas.

By Sam Kindrick
Geographically speaking, Brady is in the exact center of Texas.
Brady people hang "The Heart of Texas" label on everything around them, and this includes their thriving music industry and the record label that features Darrell McCall and numerous others who might be a few years past the teenage idol stage.
"I'm 73 now," Darrell told us last month, "and I couldn't be happier than I am with our Heart of Texas Records label here in Brady. I'm playing what I want to play, hanging out with people I love and want to hang out with, and I am touring all over Texas with my wife Mona and other members of my family. It can't get much better than this."

McCall is a personal friend, and one of the finest talents alive among that dying breed of country music puritans who still insist on performing to a backdrop of fiddles and steels.
"This is my country, and these are my people," McCall said last month prior to his performance at the Anhalt Dance Hall in Bulverde. "I play real country music that real country people like the ones out here at Anhalt love to dance to. This is what sustains me. This is all I know how to do, and this is all I want to do."

Wife Mona sang with Darrell and also soloed a few numbers from her cd Memories Love a Melody. And the song-writing daughter Guyanne McCall was also at the Bulverde gig.
I recall Guyanne and her little brother Cody when Darrell and Mona lived in San Antonio. The little McCall squirts have grown up.
Cody sings harmonies on all of Darrell's recordings, and after a stint with a New York rock group known as Paper Rival, Cody is now working as a television set dresser in Nashville.
Daughter Guyanne McCall has developed into an accomplished songwriter who is seeing her material being recorded by a wide variety of artists, and she is planning to soon release her first cd, a record she aptly calls In The Genes.
"I'm so proud of both of them that I could bust," Darrell said. "Guyanne is one hell of a songwriter, and although she has been slow to realize it, she is also a fine

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The Trap Blog - http://caughtinthetrap.blogspot.com/
singer. And Cody has been doing harmony on my records for so long I couldn’t do without him. And wait until you hear the duet he does with Guyanne on her upcoming record. It will blow your mind.”

After the Anhalt show, and upon her return to Brady, Guyanne emailed us a couple of rough cuts from her upcoming album, which will be celebrated at a dual release party with her dad’s next record in the near future.

Her duet with little brother Cody on a song called The Fall has big promise, and her solo tune One Tear at a Time has hit written all over it.

In The Genes is an apropos title for the cd, and Guyanne and Cody McCall have the voices to prove it. Darrell was Darrell at the Bulverde dance last month. He meets and greets his fans with the perpetual grin which has become his trademark.

McCall does not fake it. He is one of those rare public performers who truly loves people. He remembers names, faces, babies, and lyrics to the tunes which have long endeared him to San Antonio and Texas country music fans.

“I feel blessed,” McCall said. I had a real health scare a couple of years ago that set me back on my haunches and got me to thinking about today, tomorrow, and whatever comes after tomorrow.

“I started losing weight, and I couldn’t imagine why. I went from 180 pounds down to 150, and I hadn’t weighed that little since I was in high school. Of course I figured it might be cancer, but none of the doctors who I went to could find anything. Finally I went to a female doctor in Bandera who figured it out. It was a thyroid problem which she cured with a prescription pill medication. I have gained all of my weight back, and I couldn’t feel better.”

McCall and his musical family are now ensonced in Brady and the hamlet of Freedonia, a greasy spot in the road between Brady and Llano.

Heart of Texas Records is a Hill Country record label owned and operated by Tracy Pitcox, a Brady radio station operator who also founded the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame.

Darrell McCall recently worked on two recordings with Tony Booth and Curtis Potter which are headed The Survivors.

Others who have recorded on Pitcox’s label include Justin Trevino, who also serves as a record producer, and such true grit country luminaries as Ferlin Husky, Leona Williams, and Mona McCall, the French Canadian wife who Darrell said sacrificed years of her own career to stay home raising kids.

“Mona has some beautiful stuff on her cd,” Darrell said. “The French Song and Deepening Snow are really special songs. I could never say enough good things about Mona.”

McCall is scheduled to play The Little Red Barn in San Antonio on August 3. With his band of musicians who live from San Antonio to the Brady area, Darrell was in rare form for the Anhalt show.

He sang them all—from Rainbow at Midnight to Lilly Dale to I’ll Break Out Again Tonight, and the requests kept coming on bar napkins and paper scraps which fluttered around the state.

The Anhalt show was one day before fathers day, but Darrell opted to do a song he wrote for his late mother with Lamar Morris titled Eleven Roses. Hank Williams Jr. took this tune to number one on country charts.

Other McCall favorites include Wall of Pictures, There’s Still a Lot of Love in San Antone, Down the Road of Daddy’s Dreams, Pins and Needles, Long Line of Empties, and Memphis in May.

I have known Darrell McCall for more than 30 years, and his soaring tenor voice with the natural tremolo effect is as powerful and gripping as ever.

“Of course, I could have taken better care of my voice down through the years,” Darrell said. “But I have quit smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol, and I guess that may have helped.”

I have mentioned this before, but it is a story worth repeating.

Darrell McCall actually began his recording career as a member of the pop group Little Dippers in 1960. He broke away from that band the following year, and by 1963 his found had evolved into pure country. He moved then from Ohio to Nashville with the late Johnny Paycheck, and the ensuing years have seen him work in movies, rodeos, and on country music stages as a bass player with Ray Price’s Cherokee Cowboys, a band that also included a drummer by the name of Johnny Bush and a lead guitar player named Willie Nelson.

After Nelson, Bush, and McCall left his band, Price was often heard to say that every member of his band left for individual stardom.

I got close to the McCalls during those hardscrabble years of the 1970s when Darrell was bouncing from San Antonio, to Nashville, to Helotes, and back to Nashville again, enduring one disappointment after another as he struggled with record label hotshots who lacked the brains to appreciate him and the vision to help develop what was in front of them.

McCall has always been a fan favorite in San Antonio, but his flirtation with stardom has been confined to certain pockets around the country with big regional hits such as Down the Road of Daddy’s Dreams, Pins and Needles, and Lilly Dale, a duet tune Darrell recorded with Willie Nelson.

McCall has fleeting and fond memories of Nashville, especially when he remembers such great steel guitar players as the late Jimmy Day and Buddy Emmons.

It has been a number of years since Darrell lamented the lack of appreciation for the instrument and its masters.

“That was always my battle with the record labels,” Darrell said. “I wanted to record with fiddles and steels, and they opposed it for some weird reason. It was a never-ending struggle.”

And so it was that Darrell found a true home in Brady with the first record label to let him select all of the musicians and material for a full-length cd titled Old Memories and Wine.

He said it again.

“I’m blessed and damn grateful to have what I have.”
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With locations at 425 North Main Avenue and 1530 Babcock Road, the 84-year-old company has been a proven winner with special devotion to its customers and the local musicians it serves.

Equally impressive, of course, is the man who started it all in 1929, Alamo Music’s executive chairman, Alfredo Flores Sr.

“Mr. Flores,” as he will always be known to faithful employees, will turn 105 on August 10, and he has remained active in the business for most of Alamo Music’s storied tenure.

Says Ann Specht, Alamo Music’s executive assistant/accounts payable manager: “We don’t see Mr. Flores Sr. too often. He is an amazing man. I worked here for 29 years, so I have grown up at Alamo Music."

Action Magazine is available at both Alamo Music locations, and the Alamo Music ad in this issue of the magazine offers some hot summer deals.

Among the specials is a free music lesson with purchase, and 20 percent off all accessories by presenting the Action ad at either Alamo Music Center store.

Alamo Music is a full line music store, offering sales and service on all types of instruments. There is a repair department, and piano tuning, moving, restoration, and even storage is available.

The center’s stores also offer music lessons.

Alamo Music employees, like Ann Specht, are mostly happy long-termers who have been with the four-generation family-owned company for years.

Ms. Specht outlines current management thusly: “Alfredo Flores Sr., executive chairman; Alfredo Flores Jr., chairman of the board; Zach Marr, general manager/president (Mr. Flores Jr.’s grandson); Adriana Flores, business manager, and Mr. Flores Jr.’s daughter. And Patrick Marr, Zach’s brother, just graduated from college and has joined the company.

The company now includes Maurice Munier, Rodney Goza, Brian Hodges, Gary Smith, Martin Rendon, Mike Brown, Ted Barsalou, Kevin Higgins, and Mary Alice Ezell.

The company’s San Antonio Music Government Sales Division is a certified government contractor and has been for a number of years. It is an area devoted to selling musical instruments and audio/video products to various government entities.

Since the company’s beginning, Alamo Music Center has been actively involved in community and music industry projects. Leaders of the firm have served on boards of the finest pianos made, including Baldwin, Yamaha, Steinway, Chickering and Wurlitzer. In the band and orchestra fields, Alamo carries Selmer, Conn, Gilad, and Collin.

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which include The Arts and Cultural Board, San Antonio Downtown Improvement District Council, National Association of Music Merchants, American Music Conference, University of Texas at San Antonio Fine Arts Advisory Board, and many others.

Alfredo Flores Jr., as past president of the National Association Music Merchants, has a continued link to national activities of the music industry. He is called on to consult on major issues facing music education, music research and music marketing.

Johnny Rodriguez
The ever-popular Johnny

Rodriguez, who last appeared in San Antonio at lawyer Alan Brown’s birthday party in May, will play the big outdoor pavilion at Texas Pride Barbecue on Saturday, July 13.

Johnny Rodriguez

Pride Barbecue on Saturday, July 13.
The biggest draw in Texas Pride history, Rodriguez will be backed by his usual band of Texas musicians.

In other activities at Texas Pride, the big Adkins barbecue and live music emporium is offering its “Great Texas Experience” every Wednesday through July with music by Wrangler Country.

Billed as a celebration of Texas food, music, and culture, the Wednesday outings offer both buffet and concert for $20.

Jones Funeral
Dennis Townsend of San Antonio returned last month from Nashville where he attended the funeral for country music legend George Jones.

Townsend brought back a copy of the funeral program. It was impressive enough for a partial reprint in this space. Those who participated in the service, and what they did, are as follows. Backed by The Imperials, Tana Tucker opened the program singing The Old Rugged Cross.

Pastor Mike Wilson gave the opening prayer. Randy Travis and The Oak Ridge Boys performed respective songs Amazing Grace and Farther Along.

Next came a speaker tribute from Bob Schieffer, chief CBS Washington correspondent and moderator of Face the Nation.

Charlie Daniels sang Softly and Tenderly, followed by Travis Tritt’s rendition of Why Me Lord.

Barbara Mandrell’s speaker tribute was followed by Kid Rock doing Best of Me and the duo of Vince Gill and Patty Loveless singing Go Rest High on the Mountain.

Laura Bush, the former first lady, was a tribute speaker, followed by Brad Paisley singing Me & Jesus. Pete Fisher of the Grand Ole Opry, and Governor Mike Huckabee both offered eulogies, and a speaker tribute was offered by Kenny Chesney.

 Wynona sang How Great Thou Art, and Alan Jackson closed the service singing the George Jones monster hit He Stopped Loving Her Today.

Pallbearers listed were Brittany Allyn, Bobby Birkhead, Van Coffey, Walter Ferguson, Ricky Land, Vaughn Reed, and Scott Ulmer.

There were 25 honorary pallbearers, plus all fellow members of the Grand Ole Opry.

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There were 25 honorary pallbearers, plus all fellow members of the Grand Ole Opry.

Johnny Rodriguez
The ever-popular Johnny

Rodriguez, who last appeared in San Antonio at lawyer Alan Brown’s birthday party in May, will play the big outdoor pavilion at Texas Pride Barbecue on Saturday, July 13.

Johnny Rodriguez

Pride Barbecue on Saturday, July 13.
The biggest draw in Texas Pride history, Rodriguez will be backed by his usual band of Texas musicians.

In other activities at Texas Pride, the big Adkins barbecue and live music emporium is offering its “Great Texas Experience” every Wednesday through July with music by Wrangler Country.

Billed as a celebration of Texas food, music, and culture, the Wednesday outings offer both buffet and concert for $20.

Jones Funeral
Dennis Townsend of San Antonio returned last month from Nashville where he attended the funeral for country music legend George Jones.

Townsend brought back a copy of the funeral program. It was impressive enough for a partial reprint in this space. Those who participated in the service, and what they did, are as follows. Backed by The Imperials, Tana Tucker opened the program singing The Old Rugged Cross.

Pastor Mike Wilson gave the opening prayer. Randy Travis and The Oak Ridge Boys performed respective songs Amazing Grace and Farther Along.

Next came a speaker tribute from Bob Schieffer, chief CBS Washington correspondent and moderator of Face the Nation.

Charlie Daniels sang Softly and Tenderly, followed by Travis Tritt’s rendition of Why Me Lord.

Barbara Mandrell’s speaker tribute was followed by Kid Rock doing Best of Me and the duo of Vince Gill and Patty Loveless singing Go Rest High on the Mountain.

Laura Bush, the former first lady, was a tribute speaker, followed by Brad Paisley singing Me & Jesus. Pete Fisher of the Grand Ole Opry, and Governor Mike Huckabee both offered eulogies, and a speaker tribute was offered by Kenny Chesney.

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UNFRAMED IN STOCK
Cool Cat Charlie picks the Cigar Box Blues

Our first contact with Cool Cat Charlie Cruz came on April 6 in the form of an email. The note said: Just wanted to introduce myself. My name is Cool Cat Charlie. I'm a local musician here in San Antonio, and I would love to send you my new cigar box cd.

I just need to know where to send it to make sure you get it. I love your magazine and I'm always eager to see what's new and up coming. My music is a little different with a totally different style. Appreciate all you do for our beautiful city.

Cool Cat Charlie

We received the self-titled cd, and after missing the record release party at Sam's Burger Joint, we managed to catch Cool Cat Charlie's act at Oma's Garden adjacent to Gruene Hall.

"Different" is a euphemism for Charlie's guitar style. Anyone who picks the blues on a stringed cigar box transcends the "different" category.

At the Gruene show, Cool Cat Charlie showed both sides of his public performance repertoire—the roots delta blues music of ancient times which has heavily influenced what he is doing today, and the more traditional and current blues music which you hear at most blues shows.

Way back in the beginning days, it is believed that the blues pioneers played guitars fashioned from cigar boxes. Charlie Cruz is certainly the only San Antonio area musician who actually plays a stringed cigar box both on stage and in the recording studio.

"My major influences for the old blues I am doing now are Mississippi Fred McDowell, R.L. Burnside, and Junior Kimbrough," Cool Cat Charlie said. "The stuff I have written, and the cigar box guitar music was all influenced by these musicians."

The cigar box picking has a primitive, almost tinny sound, and Charlie does a couple of cigar box instrumentals on his first cd which features one tune titled Patty Cruz (Mrs. Cool Cat Charlie).

From the cigar box roots music, Cool Cat Charlie can switch adeptly to a solid body Fender guitar which he can smoke right along with some of the city's best pickers.

"When I do regular four-hour gigs," Cruz said, "I play both the cigar box delta blues music, and some of the later material by blues greats like Howlin' Wolf, Jimmy Reed, Elmore James, and Muddy Waters. But I am concentrating more now on the roots stuff from the deltas. I had a very popular blues band at one time called Charlie and the Coolcats. And with this band, I made a lot of contacts and had the pleasure of associating with some great musicians."

The Coolcats, it might be noted, opened for Koko Taylor Bobby Blue Bland, Lazy Lester, The Ohio Players, Tab Benoit, the late Michael Burke, and Omar and the Howlers, to name a few.

CONT. PG 14
A native San Antoni-ian, Charlie Cruz didn’t start playing profession­ally until he was 32. His dad, Charlie Jester Cruz Sr., plays bass with his son on some shows, and the elder Cruz is on the Cool Cat Charlie cd.

Also on the cd are drummer Gordon Bartling and famed Austin harmonica player Greg Izor.

Prior to his cd release here, Cool Cat toured through Madrid, Zaragoza, and Barcelona, Spain with his cigar box show, an outing which was put together by Emilio Ar-suaga of the King Bee’s Blues Band.

Charlie Cruz was first bitten by the delta blues cigar box bug when he visited a juke joint festival in Clarksdale, Mis­sissippi, emerging with two cigar box guitars especially crafted for him, and a new and deeper appreciation for the birth beginnings of the blues.

Greg Mitchell built Charlie’s two Punch brand cigar box guitars, while Donnie Meals of Edit Point Studios pro­duced the first album ever recorded with a cigar box guitar.

“My friend T.C. Cuel­lar made it all possible,” Cruz said. “He gave me a gift certificate to Edit Point Studios, and that’s where I met Donnie Meals.”

While Cruz still does regular four-hour shows that include both his cigar box original music and some traditional copy numbers, he says he is starting to do more original material influ­enced by the old delta guys.

“And a lot of my shows are shorter now, with just me, my dad, and the drummer,” Cruz said. “Sometimes I do just an hour and a half with only the drummer.”

While the harmonica is the dominant instru­ment on his cd, Cruz said many of his shows are done without a harp, and he indicated that fu­ture recordings my be with less harmonica in­fluence.

“I try to git the instru­ment to the type song,” Cool Cat Charlie said, “and sometimes I like working with just me and the drum. I do private parties, barbecues, and backyard gatherings. I love out-of-the-way places, and you can see that I’m not really inter­ested in getting rich. I am reverting more and more back to my earlier influences, realizing that the old stuff is what re­ally drives me. And I am writing more music along this line, material that I intend to record in the near future. I guess while a lot of people are working to get ahead, I am working to sort of go back where it all started in the first place.”

For bookings and other information, call Cool Cat Charlie at (210) 823-9598.

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