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New blood rock guitar with old school values

Article
page 7
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Big reader response to Alex Harvey article

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Our cover article on Alex Harvey in the December issue of Action resulted in more favorable comments than any article we have run since the March, 2015 story on Royce Showalter.

Those who read both articles know that Showalter is the last living founding member of the San Antonio chapter of the Bandidos Motorcycle Club, and that Harvey is one of the greatest songwriters living on the planet today.

Although these two men are polar opposites in many facets of their lives, both are friends of mine today, and I share a spiritual connection with Harvey which was detailed in last month's cover article.

The response I got on the Harvey article is something that I deeply appreciate, and the kind words that come from these readers are what keeps me doing what I do. It is not about money. Money can't buy this sort of stuff.

Here are some of the comments I received on the Alex Harvey article.

**Vivian Travis:** Thanks for sharing, Sam... One of the best articles I've read in a very long time.

**Wayne Martin:** Great article. I am a FAN.

**Jeff Haese:** Got to meet him in Burnet when he played at Trailblazers. I play there once a month, and he was so nice, and we had a great conversation on the topic of songwriting...Great guy.

**Emmett M Pastran Jr.:** Great read on one of my favorite subjects!

**Geoff Mayes:** Great writing, Sam Kindrick.

**Eddie Jacoby:** Good read. Thanks Sam.

**Dee Dee Williams:** Mercy!!! Awesome article!! Good read!!!! TY

**Priest Kemper:** WOW... what a way with words! Loved it! I've read it three times so far-can't get enough of it!

**Margie Harris:** Wow...what a story...it took all of my emotions...I never was aware of a lot of what I read. Life is a journey and it was very interesting going through someone else's journey...knowing that we are blessed by the music that comes out of it! Thank you for sharing it with us!

**Mary Louise Schneider Chapman:** What a marvelous tribute for a truly great songwriter by a truly great writer. Thank both of you for sharing your God given talents with the whole wide world!!!

**Mike Ullevig Sr.:** Great article Sam. Alex sounds like one helluva fella.

**Bobbie Capitao:** Loved every word of this article about (admittedly) someone I hadn't heard of. A heartwarming story and thank you Sam for it.

**Carol Maciel:** Awesome!

**Don Tyer:** Very well written - as you always do - and interesting story about a gifted songwriter...couldn't help but think of my grandson - Jefferson Remmert - who wants to make it in the songwriting/entertainment business.

**Mike Hicks:** Sam, you should not hesitate to enter this story in the Readers Digest short story contest!! If they have such a thing. Now be sure to take the advice I gave you, after all I did spend the best 3 years of my life at Alamo Heights High school in the 9th grade, but don't think for a second that I am anywhere near as dumb as I look!!! Anyway, I really enjoyed the read, Thnx.

**Romy Vela:** Great article. I still remember when he played at the Bijou. He was great.

**Elizabeth Loper:** A pleasure to read. So many familiar names, even excluding the more famous - Tompall, Manny Gammage, George Chambers.

**Margaret Healy:** Fantas tic artist, writer lyricist. Such a Talented Man.

The last accolade to come in was from Alex Harvey himself. He waited until two days before Christmas to weigh in via the Facebook page of Action editor-publisher Sam Kindrick.

First off, Alex wanted to know if I knew anyone in El Paso who might check out a pup pup he was thinking of buying for his wife's son. Then he added, “Great job on the article...if I didn't tell you yet. I've heard lots of good feedback. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!”

I can only take this as a complement, coming from one of the greatest word mechanics I have ever known.
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I don’t like to look back over my shoulder at the beginning of a new year, but I feel obliged to say a few things about the past one. And I’m not going to bore anyone with a snivel and whine session over the political landscape.

Both the music and nightclub industries here took some soul-shattering hits throughout the year 2016, while the inevitable changes affected me both personally and on the business playing field. I lost long-time advertisers and gained new ones with promise and excitement.

The natural order of death took nightclub owners and musicians alike, many of them my friends and longtime customers in this world we call the entertainment industry.

Without trying to catalog or make any chronological sense out of year 2016, I went back through monthly issues beginning with January 2016.

This issue chronicles the death of Leroy Richter, founder and longtime operator of the Antlers Cafe in Spring Branch. He was my friend. Leroy’s son has continued on with the popular eatery, which is one of Action’s largest distribution points in that area. On a still brighter note, we added Element Tattoos to our monthly supporters that month.

The February issue contained the news that Kay and Bryan Maynard had bought Herb’s Hat Shop from Kellye Harris, daughter of the late Herb Carroll, cowboy hatter who founded the popular South San Antonio business.

Dale Watson’s Big T Roadhouse advertising was evident in the March, 2016 issue. Also a story about tattoo legend Honest Charlie Potter closing down his colorful, “Monkey Island” tattoo emporium on Fredericksburg Road.

Billy Mata and his Texas Tradition western swing band also merit ink in that March issue. Mata’s band was named best western swing group in the Ameripolitan Music Awards competition in Austin.

Not much was logged in the April 2016 issue, but the May magazine featured a cover article on Dale Watson’s chicken shit bingo promotion that is still the most successful restaurants in San Antonio during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, and defied a relentless state comptroller for most of his years in San Antonio.

I attended Olly’s funeral along with friends Wayne Harper and Augie Meyers, both of whom worked in Otten restaurants.

Mike Clancey and other musicians gathered at the bed of beloved former club operator Brenda Boswell, who would pay the musicians who worked her nightclubs when she didn’t have money to cover the rent. And I know that Brenda bought Action ads for her Country On The Rocks and Pour House clubs when she couldn’t pay the milkman.

A powerful vocalist in her own right, Brenda performed with many of the bands she booked, and I will never forget the last song she ever sang—Peace In The Valley. It was on her death bed, and I was privileged to be there and hear it.

Frank Mueller closed the Trap Lounge in late July, retiring for health reasons. He was our first Action advertiser, and his colorful “Frankly Speaking” diatribes in Trap ads were as literarily sound as they were politically non-correct.

Mueller’s trap ads started in the first Action Magazine issue—March of 1975—and they didn’t end until he shut the joint down last August. Mueller is one of the cleverest writers I have ever known.

On another positive note, our 41st anniversary blowout at Texas Pride Barbecue was another great success. We had major stars like Johnny Bush, Augie Meyers, Alex Harvey, and Darrell McCall. As 2016 drew to a close, the losses continued to mount. Scott Byers, founding member of the old Black Rose Band and a playing partner with Sylvia Kirk, fell dead of a heart attack.

Then came the death last month of Slim Roberts, the legendary fiddler and band member who once worked with Tex Ritter, and right behind Slim it was Fiddlin’ Frenchie Burke. Sometimes I wonder about the picture, but I know who painted it and why I am here.

Claude Morgan says we each operate in our own circle of influence.

I do what I do because I love it, and I am grateful for all of you who make it possible.
Randy Toman Jr. adds hot guitar to family group

By Sam Kindrick

Randy Toman Jr., was blessed with the genes, but he didn't get his blazing guitar licks through osmosis.

"It was work and it still is," the 34-year-old Toman says. "I learned guitar by watching my uncle Russ on an old video tape of The Toman Brothers that I probably played a thousand times."

Music lovers from San Antonio and across South Texas know The Toman Brothers well, for Randy and Russell Toman have kept their act together for the better part of 35 years, both in their own band and with the late national hit songwriter and recording star Gary Stewart. They were Stewart's backup for years.

Randy has always been the talented bass guitar player with the golden voice, while brother Russ has supplied vocals with an electric lead guitar that seemingly has a mind of its own.

What the older Toman Brothers fans have yet to find out is that there is another Toman out there with the same musical brilliance as his dad and uncle, Randy's guitarist/vocalist son Randy Jr.

"I grew up with Gary Stewart in our house," Randy Jr. said, "and it was through my dad's association with Gary that I got to meet the stars of both the country and rock music worlds, heavyweights like Greg Allman, Dickey Betts, Bob Dylan...stars of this caliber. All of this had a profound effect I am sure."

Randy Toman Jr., had a kid band called Alleged back when he was 18 or 19, and Action Magazine made due note of sorts without really realizing what these youngsters were about. I found out this past September when Randy Jr., sat in with his father and uncle at the Texas Popular Culture Center on Hackberry Street, the jiving little music museum known as Tex Pop. They were also joined by rock guitar veteran Galen Niles.

The talented Tomans, who can switch from rock to country in a downbeat, were in their classic rock mode on this afternoon, and the lead electric guitarists of Russ Toman and his nephew Randy Jr., along with Galen Niles, provided a driving, rattling reminder that pups can grow up to hold their own with the big dogs.

Like a number of others in that Tex Pop room, I was set back on my haunches.

"Well, thanks," he says. "I try. I know how fortunate I am to have the family I am a part of. I am very proud of my dad and uncle and all they have accomplished. I am also grateful for the encouragement I have received from them through the years. Russ didn't teach me guitar. He didn't have the time. Neither my dad or my uncle really had the time. They play five or six nights a week. But they set the stage for me. They gave me what I needed. The atmosphere. Like I said, I watched them on that old videotape until I all but wore it out. I learned to play guitar by watching my uncle Russ."

The younger Toman lists guitar influences like Jimi Hendrix, Van Wilks, Eric Clapton, Chris Holzhaus, Greg Allman, Billy Gibbons, the late Joe Estes, and Billy Cage, and he admits to playing material from ZZ Top and Led Zeppelin, always giving credit where credit is due.

"I didn't learn Led Zeppelin from Led Zeppelin," he said. "I first heard Led Zeppelin from my family players."

The Tomans, both father and son, were influenced by Wilks when he was playing the old Carlsbad Tavern in San Antonio.

"Our cousin ran the place," Randy Sr. recalls. "He had junior sitting in on many occasions."

Randy Toman Jr., also thinks the late San Antonio blues guitarist Chris Holzhaus was one of the best in the world. And he has high praise for other local pickers like Jimmy Spacek, Ruben V, and the late Joe Estes.

"These guys are the best of the best, and I believe my uncle Russell can hold his own with them all," Randy said.

While Randy Toman Jr., has played his share of cover music, his major focus today is writing, playing, and recording his own brand of original classic rock.

"We are working on the first cd now," he says. Continued on pg. 12
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We lost two of our legends last month.

Nobody wanted to follow Frenchie Burke on stage.

Fiddlin’ Frenchie Burke wanted to play Action Magazine’s two anniversary shows at Texas Pride Barbecue, but he was too weak to make either event.

Most of the music world knows by now that the cajun fiddler is gone.

Tormented by cancer, strokes, heart attacks, bad hips and other ailments, Burke died December 10 at age 82, leaving wife Sara and country music lovers across South Texas and the entire world to mourn.

Friends and fans contributed through a benefit called the Frenchie Burke Love Fund at Lytle State Bank.

Sara Burke said, “The amount of love from the people responding just blew me out of the water.”

Media personalities Gary DeLaune and Bruce Hathaway were behind the benefit promotions.

Everyone loved Leon (Frenchie) Burke. He performed with Johnny Bush, Ray Price, Little Jimmy Dickens and many more, topping the country charts with a jazzed-up version of the cajun waltz Big Mamou.

Augie Meyers loved and worked with Frenchie, as did hundreds of other Texas musicians he touched over the years.

“He was one of the greats,” Meyers said. “I took him with me to some shows in Washington, and he drove them wild with the fiddle.”

In an Express and News article John Goodspeed quoted Drugstore Cowboys leader Dub Robinson as calling Frenchie “the best entertainer I have ever seen.”

Continued on pg. 14

Gentleman Slim Roberts
Rolled in with Tex Ritter

Allen Pleasant Roberts was known from San Antonio to Nashville simply as Slim, a smooth fiddler with a voice to match his name.

Daughter Deborah Kay Braun, who sang with her father in at least two Slim Roberts bands, said, “I believe Dad’s middle name fit him so well. He was such a Pleasant man on top of everything else.”

Slim died from a heart attack December 8, and San Antonio lost another music icon, one who rode into San Antonio more than 60 years ago with the legendary singing cowboy and movie star Tex Ritter.

Slim Roberts was 88.

“He was absolutely one of the best,” said San Antonio’s living legend Augie Meyers. “Slim was a gentleman, a great fiddler... man, he could sing. His passing is another big loss.”

Slim has toured with everyone from Ritter to Willie Nelson, and he has worked stage shows with such stars of the past as Roy Acuff, Bill Monroe, The Ink Spots, Bill Haley, Joe Maphis, and Grandpa Jones.

Most of his San Antonio fans will recall his later life career in groups with three of his children.

Son Will and daughters Pamela and Deborah Kay were with their father in

Continued on pg. 14
Randy Tomann
continued from pg 7

Randy played for several years with rock bands called Piranha and Dragoonfly, and he has subbed in on occasion with Flipside. His current group is a Tool tribute band called Third Eye, but his major goal is creating a classic rock group he will call The Randy Toman Band.

“I have 10 or 11 songs we are working on,” he said. “I will drop the junior designation. Most of the people who know me now just ID me as Randy Toman. The drummer on the cd will be Jason West, who also plays with my dad. He is doing the recording work. He’s an old pro, playing with outfits like Guns and Roses. The bass player is Steve Coro­nado, who also plays in Third Eye.”

When I first met Gary Stewart, the original Drug Store Cowboys were his road band, consisting of Randy Toman on bass and vocals, Dub Robinson on lead guitar and vocals, and Robert (Cotton Payne) on drums. I soon formed a personal bond with Stewart. It wasn’t hard to do.

This original group of Drug Store Cowboys played my daughter Gena’s 16th birthday party at the old Ferdie’s on U.S. 281 near Bulverde.

When this group disbanded, Dub continued on with the Drug Store Cowboys band name, while Russell Toman joined his brother Randy to form the Toman Brothers Band which maintained the position as Gary Stewart’s road outfit.

Cotton Payne moved to Nashville where he became Janie Fricke’s drummer. Stewart had been inactive when his wife died in 2009. His suicide immediately followed her death.

Fate may have played a big hand in the direction young Randy would take.

“Gary had been talking with my dad about getting the band back on the road with me as a second gui­tar,” the younger Toman recalls. “They had all decided that I was good enough by then to work with the band. I know I was really excited about the possibility at the time. I grew up on classic country and classic rock, I knew Gary’s material inside and out. I guess I heard them play She’s Acting Single about a million times.”

Randy Toman Sr., said he was preparing to re­sume a tour schedule with his brother and son both as part of the Gary Stewart group.

“Gary and I had talked about it, and I thought it was about to happen when Gary’s wife died in Fort Pierce, Florida,” Randy Sr. recalled. “I knew Gary would be a wreck after her death, so I waited for about a week to call him with my condolences. When I did call, he was gone. The tragedy stunned us all. As you know, we all loved Gary.”

The Toman Brothers are one of the hardest working and most versa­tile bands on the planet, easily slipping from one genre to another without a hitch.

“I have been watching them do it all my life—play­ing a rock show one night and a country gig the next,” Randy Jr. says. “They never cease to amaze me. They are the only band I have ever seen that can play both rock and country with the same level of sincerity. They are doing more country than rock at this time, working a lot in the Bandera area at such country saloons as 11th Street Cowboy Bar. But they can rock it when the need arises, and I know that this versatility is what has kept them rolling as long as they have been doing it. I’m just proud to be a part of it all.”

For any who would like to see all three of these Tomans working on the same stage, the place to be is the Tonic Bar on Babcock Road on the first Friday of every month.

“This is the only gig I do with my dad and Russ,” Randy Jr. said. “Now I hope to shop the cd out to some of the smaller record labels, and settle into a performing schedule with my own band which will play only my own music. If I have to wind up playing acoustic gigs with nothing but me and the guitar, that’s what I will do.

... Continued from pg 7 - The younger Toman works as a health insur­ance claims processor. His long range goal is to write, record, and perform nothing but his own music.

“I have done the five and six night a week gigs before, playing a lot of stuff I really didn’t want to do,” Toman said. “Now I

Randy Toman Jr., with uncle Russell Toman (left) and father Randy Toman Sr.
Old Man Riverwalk a class act until the end

By Jacques E. Strap
Action sports analyst

It’s time for old Jacques here to come out of hibernation. The Spurs are making noises like another title contender, and the Dallas Cowboys have come alive with two rookies leading the way.

Cowboys detractors may have to eat all of those “Cowgirls” slurs before it’s all over and done with. With a break or two, this Dallas team could go all the way to the Super Bowl.

Dak Prescott and Ezekiel Elliott are doing what Tony Romo and De-Marco Murray never managed to pull off. They are hitting on all cylinders with two rookies leading Prescott and replacing him.

Owner Jones, it would appear on the surface at least, is finally keeping his nose out of the daily operations of the team, allowing Jason Garrett to coach a little.

That Jones hasn’t bailed out onto the field to personally yank Dak Prescott and replace him with Tony Romo is a good sign that some measure of sanity might have taken up occupancy in Jerry’s skull.

Jones loves Tony Romo, and for good reason. Romo has proven to be one of the best quarterback on paper, statistically fulfilling every category.

But we are all aware of the two defects which have held the Cowboys back for so long.

Romo has long had the propensity to suddenly and without warning, and almost always at a critical point in the game, to throw the ball straight into the arms of a defender.

And he breaks like fine China. Suddenly and seemingly without taking much of a hit at all.

Dak Prescott is everything that Romo isn’t. He throws few interceptions, and he does a good job of sharing the ball with his receivers.

Elliott seems to be equally together with Romo.

He is an explosive runner who breaks tackles and bulls over defenders, scampering like a frightened jackrabbit when he sees daylight.

On the local scene, the San Antonio Spurs basketball team is again winning at a torrid clip, but the most impressive happening in the camp this season was Tim Duncan’s retirement ceremony.

As they hoisted Tim’s number 21 jersey into the AT&T Center rafters, Tim was atypical Tim, shocking the audience by wearing a suit and talking for more than 30 seconds as he thanked his coaches, his family, his friends, and the San Antonio fans who worship the greatest power forward to ever play the game.

Duncan retired from the game after 19 seasons. He didn’t strut and preen through a farewell season a-la-Kobe Bryant, and he completed his storied career—winning five NBA championships—without once beating his chest like LeBron James.

James may be the greatest overall basketball player in the country, but I am sure of one thing.

Duncan showed the humility and class that has defined him since his arrival in San Antonio.

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Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said it all when he said the Tim Duncan standing at that retirement ceremony in the AT&T Center was the same Tim Duncan he met 19 years ago.

Dave Odom, the Wake Forest basketball coach who recruited Duncan from the Virgin Islands, was at the retirement ceremony.

Vanessa Macias, Duncan’s pretty girlfriend, was also at the party, along with his children, daughter Sydney and son Draven.

Absent, of course, was Duncan’s former wife Amy, mother of his two kids, and the beautiful blonde cheerleader he married soon after graduating from Wake Forest.

Was there regret? Did she feel left out? Did she feel a sense of loss at what might have been?

We will likely never know, because neither Tim nor Amy talks about it. This is how people with class handle their personal business.

The entire Spurs nation is sure of one thing, though. There will never be another Tim Duncan.
Frenchie Burke continued from pg 11

Robinson went on to say that Frenchie’s showmanship is “unheard of.” Billy Mata, who recorded the song Faded Love with Burke, said, “It was a pleasure to record with him, truly one of my heroes.” Mata recalled a KKXY River Festival he played on with Burke.

“The entire day had been cold, miserable, and rainy,” Billy said. “Then Frenchie played. It was during his fiddling act when he played Boil ‘Em Cabbage and Orange Blossom Special, doing his fiddle tricks that the skies opened and the clouds cleared, and the sun began to shine. I couldn’t help but believe that it was because God wanted a front row seat to the amazing Frenchie Burke show.”

Mike Carr, owner of KCWM Radio in Hondo, said, “I guess I’ve never been an aggressive person walking drunk together. He rode in as a friend and a great supporter of local musicians such as myself. I’m glad I stopped by for a last visit and goodbye. He will surely be missed and we should all keep his family in our prayers.”

Dud Robinson said no musician wanted to follow Frenchie Burke on a stage, for the man they called the “Cajun Gentleman” was an explosive fireball of energy who played the fiddle behind his back, on top of his head, and between his legs.

When Mike Carr was a DJ on KSYM Radio in 1978, he said the first song he ever played on the air was The Fiddlin’ of Jacques Pierre Bordeaux by Frenchie Burke.

Carr said “The biggest thing I remember about Frenchie from the past 40 years, is the time and effort he gave to help others. Over the years, I have put on numerous fundraisers and concerts, and many times I asked Frenchie to help. Not once did he turn me down.”

A native of Kaplan, Louisiana, Burke received his early fiddle training from his step-grandfather, “He repaired fiddles,” Burke once said in an interview, “I picked one up and he asked me if I wanted to play. He taught me You Are My Sunshine and Shame on You. Four months later, I came back with my parents to visit, and I could play better than he could. I spent three years in the fourth grade, but I learned to play the fiddle.”

Shortly after his family moved to Texas, Burke joined the Air Force where he won numerous talent contests. He left the service in Houston where he started bumping into musicians like Bush, Price, and Jimmy Dickens. A series of albums followed, including Fiddlin’ Frenchie Burke and the Outlaws, Fiddlehead, and Frenchie Burke’s Dance Album.

There will be a celebration of Frenchie’s life from noon until 6 p.m. on January 22 at Floore Store. Where Roberts eventually put down roots. Slim had been stationed at Lackland AFB before he was asked to join a little tour into Louisiana that included Nelson, Johnny Bush, Sonny James, and Jimmy Day. He later played Texas shows with Bush, Darrell McCall, and Ray Price.

Willie Nelson will recall his days with Slim Roberts. They all will, and all will feel the loss.

A service celebrating Slim’s life will be March 26 at Fellowship of San Antonio, the late Buckner Fanning’s church. More details will be posted.

Slim Roberts

continued from page 11

the 1970s group Slim Roberts and The Generation Gap. The girls did vocals while Will manned the drums.

In a subsequent group called Texas Weather, Roberts had daughter Deborah Kay on vocals and San Antonio veteran Don Pack on steel guitar.

Pamela lives in Nashville with husband Larry Patton, a singing bassist who worked with the Flying Burrito Brothers. Patton was with the Hank Williams Jr. group that disbanded in San Antonio and became a part of Claude Morgan’s old Buckboard Boogie Band.

A third Roberts daughter Robin runs the family business current byways with Cousin Bob Roberts said he took home many more than he could. I spent three years in the fourth grade, but I learned to play the fiddle.”

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