

The Journal of

# TEXAS MUSIC HISTORY

Volume 1 Number 1

Spring 2005



Jessie Joplin: The Spade Sharp Dancer as Feminist Rodeo  
Cowboy and Idol: The International Stage  
Texas Music Archives: The Southwestern Writers Collection  
at Southwest Texas State University

# Letter from the Director



This issue of the *Journal of Texas Music History* marks another important milestone in our history. As you probably have noticed, we have changed our name from the Institute for the History of Texas Music to the Center for Texas Music History. This new name is not only more succinct and easier to remember, but it also reflects our tremendous success and rapid growth into a larger,

more comprehensive Center, which sponsors a variety of exciting and unique programs.

Under this new name, we continue to develop our many important and innovative educational and preservational activities. Our graduate and undergraduate courses on the musical history of the Southwest are growing in popularity. *The Handbook of Texas Music*, the definitive encyclopedia of Texas music history, which we are publishing jointly with the Texas State Historical Association and the Texas Music Office, will be available in 2003. The online bibliography of books, articles, and other publications relating to the history of Texas and Southwestern music, which our students developed in cooperation with the Texas Music Office, remains a very useful tool for researchers and scholars.

This year, our "Texas Music History Unplugged" concert series featured remarkable performances by Ray Benson, Joe Ely, Tish Hinojosa, Ponty Bone, Ruthie Foster, and Cyd Cassone. Through their music, these artists have helped students and others better understand the rich history and tremendous cultural diversity of the southwestern United States.

We continue to work with Rosetta Wills and a variety of prominent people in the music and business communities to establish a "Bob Wills Foundation," which will fund scholarships and research and publishing opportunities related to the study of Southwestern music history.

Our community outreach programs, through which we give educational presentations at public schools, community centers, and other venues, are going strong. Our newest community outreach program, *Swan Songs*, in which we work with musicians and health-care professionals to organize musical performances for critically-ill patients, is brand new, yet it has already received its first \$500 sponsorship. Our thanks to Balie Griffith and Christine Albert for helping get this program off to a such a great start.

Our second compilation CD, *Travelin' Texas, Volume 2*, which includes nineteen songs from Delbert McClinton, Eliza Gilkyson, the Ace in the Hole Band featuring George Strait, Billy Joe Shaver, Sara Hickman, Ray Wiley Hubbard, and a variety of other great Texas musicians, has been very successful. Proceeds from the CD have been vital in helping fund our ongoing educational projects. We are very grateful to the musicians and everyone else who helped with this project.

Several new and exciting projects are on the horizon, including a collaborative project with the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin and KLRU and *Austin City Limits* to develop an exhibit on the history of Texas country music.

With this third issue of *The Journal of Texas Music History*, we continue to provide solid scholarly research on American music history in a way that is accessible to both academic and non-academic audiences alike. As the first academic journal to focus on the entire spectrum of Texas and Southwestern music history, the *Journal* continues to earn national praise for its high academic standards and its innovative format.

I am deeply indebted to Kathryn Ledbetter, Gregg Andrews, Vikki Bynum, Jenni Finlay, Ann Marie Ellis, Gene Bourgeois, the entire SWT History Department, Gerald Hill, T.Cay Rowe, Diana Harrell, César Limón, Rick and Laurie Baish, Lucky and Becky Tomblin, Kim and Robert Richey, Jo and Paul Snider, Margie First, Darrell and Barbara Piersol, Dennis and Margaret Dunn, John Kunz, Mandy York, Tracie Ferguson, Kent Finlay, and everyone else who has contributed to the success of the *Journal* and the Center for Texas Music History. I'm especially grateful to the Joan and Herb Kelleher Charitable Foundation for helping underwrite publication of this journal. We believe the work we're doing is very important, and we need the ongoing support of others to continue our success.

I invite you to contact us for more information or to become involved in this unique and exciting educational and preservational program.

Sincerely,

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# THE JOURNAL OF TEXAS MUSIC HISTORY

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The Center for Texas Music History is a nonprofit educational program designed to help students and the general public better understand how music reflects the richly diverse ethnic and cultural heritage of the American Southwest. Within its first two years, the Center has developed a number of very successful projects focusing on the preservation and study of Southwestern music history.

In order to continue this success, we need your help. Your contribution will help fund continued publication

of *The Journal of Texas Music History*, along with all the other important educational and preservational projects we have underway.

We are very grateful to the donors listed on this page. They have made a personal commitment to preserving the musical heritage of the Southwest. Their efforts will help us continue to increase awareness of how Texas music represents the unique historical development of the region.

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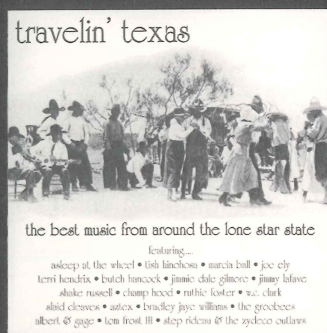
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# Janis Joplin:

## ***The Hippie Blues Singer as Feminist Heroine***

Jerry Rodnitzky



*The women's liberation era was treacherous for all heroes and heroines. The 1960s and 1970s shook up culture more than politics, and the cultural terrain moved even more quickly than social foundations. Amidst this rapid change, young people had difficulty finding heroes and models in the traditional fields of politics, business, and sports. The new 1960s heroes were increasingly activists or entertainers, especially musicians and singers. Because American women had seldom found heroines in politics and business, and precious few in sports, the change seemed less revolutionary for the new aggressive feminist heroines. Most feminist heroines were activists, yet some were just actors or singers. Women entertainers had always been viewed frivolously, and women activists had usually been ladylike. Thus the new female heroines were more revolutionary in their way than Abbie Hoffman or Bob Dylan.*

*Whether activist or artist, they were all cultural models. How they lived and what they did often was more important than what they said. They were models of life and not exponents of ideology. In short, they were countercultural heroines.*

At first glance it seems odd to see Janis Joplin as a feminist heroine. Although few would deny her credentials as a countercultural figure, she seems somewhat ludicrous in the company of feminists such as Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan. Janis was not a card-carrying member of any feminist group, nor did she lend support to specific feminist campaigns. Her feminist influence was indirect and subtle, but also powerful and long-lasting. Joplin did have a clear stake in feminist issues. Many of her personal problems stemmed directly from the new gender relationships of the 1960s. Her move toward a fatal, drugged personal world was clearly linked to a long struggle within her psyche. Janis was born January 19, 1943, in Port Arthur, Texas, during World War II. In October 1970, at age

the Beatles only wanted to hold hands with to the “groovy chick.” This coincided with the rise of so-called hard and acid rock and, incidentally, with Joplin’s appearance on the national scene. The difference between the “groovy chick” and the traditional sweetheart was that the “groovy chick” performed sexually, and, in the lyrics of hard rock songs, women usually appeared as eager sexual partners.<sup>2</sup>

Rock festivals would be difficult without “groovy chicks,” but most of the stage patter was addressed to males. A typical comment was “when you and your chick go home.” Janis Joplin was an anomaly—a groovy chick who performed for and rapped with the audience rather than passively enjoying the scene. Female singers of the 1950s and 1960s such as Connie Francis

*The difference between the “groovy chick” and the traditional sweetheart was that the “groovy chick” performed sexually, and, in the lyrics of hard rock songs, women usually appeared as eager sexual partners.*

27, she died of a heroin overdose while the Vietnam War raged. Joplin was killed by a far more subtle war than the Vietnam conflict that absorbed the energies of so many of her contemporaries. She was a casualty, in part, of the war between the sexes. Ironically, she was a victim of sexism within a sexual revolution that she helped fuel. This is but one of many contradictions in her rise as a rock superstar, but perhaps the most important irony was her role as a feminist symbol in a male-dominated, sexist rock culture.

In the 1960s, it seemed somewhat strange to label the rock culture sexist. Feminists were quick to confess that they had been taken in by rock music because it had challenged the status quo. But, like Saul on the road, each sooner or later had a conversion experience and came to see that rock culture was only a groovy microcosm of the brutal larger society, which, according to Cheryl Helm, had “ruthlessly amplified” the rule of “male supremacy.”<sup>1</sup> While rock music promoted unisexual clothing and sexual freedom and revolted against conformist, middle-class values, 1960s rock lyrics stereotyped women as classic sex objects, and it was almost entirely written and performed by male musicians. Female rock disc jockeys were almost nonexistent. The most dramatic change came in the mid-1960s when the women in rock lyrics changed from the “girl next door” that

and Brenda Lee were stereotypically cute and sexy. The 1960s girl rock groups, such as the Shirelles and Ronettes, had beehive hair and high heels but projected a similar, if updated, cute sexiness. They often sang silly lyrics because record producers thought dumb was cute. Women folksingers of the 1960s, such as Joan Baez and Judy Collins, were not self-consciously cute and often spoke out on political issues. But they had a saintly image and were not particularly sexual or involved in gender issues. Joplin was a new kind of aggressive female singer who became a unique rock superstar and inadvertently a feminist heroine by crossing gender lines and raising gender issues.

There was little in Joplin’s background to suggest that she would become either a feminist heroine or rock superstar. Her hometown, Port Arthur, Texas, was an oil refinery center 100 miles from Houston and across the river from Louisiana. Port Arthur did have a diverse population of native Texans, Louisiana Cajuns, Mexican Americans, and African Americans from around the country—all drawn by the good union refinery jobs. Yet, despite the diversity, in the 1950s Port Arthur was a typical Texas oil boomtown where Southern Baptists dominated religion, the Democrats held most political power, and oil companies held the economic power.



Photo courtesy Sony Music



Janis's parents were not average Port Arthur residents. Her mother, Dorothy, moved to Port Arthur from Amarillo at age 22, and, after a one-year courtship, married Seth Joplin in 1936. Dorothy had a high school education and usually worked as a businesswoman. Seth had an engineering degree from Texas A&M University and

and San Francisco, the moody freshman became an apprentice hippie almost overnight.

Back in Texas in 1962, she tried to impress her old friends with her hip ways, first in Port Arthur and then at the University of Texas at Austin, where she enrolled in the summer of 1962.

*"They don't treat beatniks too good in Texas. Port Arthur people thought I was a beatnik and they didn't like them, though they'd never seen one and neither had I."*

had worked for Texaco Corporation since coming to Port Arthur. The Joplins had three children: Janis, another daughter Laura, and a son, Michael. As the first born, Janis was showered with parental attention and evidently was a happy, normal child.<sup>3</sup> Seth Joplin was an active, resourceful father. Janis often later called him "a secret intellectual" who had only one other person in Port Arthur to whom he could talk. Traditionally, American feminists have had strong intellectual relationships with their fathers as children, and Janis seemed to enjoy such a paternal bond during her formative years. In a July 1970 interview, Janis reminisced about her father's influence:

My father was like a secret intellectual, a book reader, a talker, and a thinker. He was very important to me, because he made me think. He's the reason I am like I am, I guess . . . The biggest thing in our house was when you learnt to write your name, you got to go and get a library card. He wouldn't get us a TV, he wouldn't allow a TV in the house.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the simple, "just-folks" verbal style that Janis cultivated, she was surprisingly intelligent and well-read, especially in classic American fiction. As a child, she was a quick learner and creative student. As a teenager, she showed a flair for writing and a larger talent for painting.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, adolescence brought common physical problems that plagued Janis throughout her life. Her youthful good looks dissolved into a general heaviness, complicated by a bad case of facial acne. Thereafter, Janis would be haunted by the fear that men might find her unattractive. In her junior year of high school, she solved her relationship problems with boys by running around with a gang of four hell-raising boys. In the process she picked up a reputation for Bohemian toughness and was ostracized by many of her classmates. Janis was glad to graduate in 1960, and she immediately enrolled at Lamar Tech University, a state school in nearby Beaumont. After an unhappy, humdrum year at Lamar, she traveled to the West Coast, and in Los Angeles

She had occasionally sung at coffeehouses in Beaumont and Houston earlier in 1962, but in Austin, she sang regularly, both at the student union and at a gas station that doubled as a bar named Threadgill's. She was drinking more now and became a favorite of the Austin post-beatnik crowd that centered on an apartment complex called "The Ghetto."

Janis's happy Austin era ended suddenly in January 1964, when a thoughtless prankster officially named her "Ugliest Man on Campus" in a contest. Janis then wrote her parents about the cruelty of the Austin campus and told them she must leave. Shortly thereafter, Joplin and a male friend hitchhiked to San Francisco. Janis returned to Port Arthur and Austin in 1965 before going to San Francisco for good in 1966. However, Texas was never really home for Joplin after 1963. Looking back in 1970, Janis felt that in Texas she had been a "beatnik" and "weirdo" and she observed:

Texas is OK if you want to settle down and do your own thing quietly, but it's not for outrageous people, and I was always outrageous. I got treated very badly in Texas. They don't treat beatniks too good in Texas. Port Arthur people thought I was a beatnik and they didn't like them, though they'd never seen one and neither had I. I always wanted to be an artist, whatever that was, like other chicks want to be stewardesses. I read. I painted. I thought.<sup>6</sup>

Her father, Seth, agreed that she was out of place in Texas. After her death, he acknowledged that Janis "had a pretty rough time of it in high school," because she insisted on dressing and acting differently and "they hated her for it." Seth thought Janis was "one of the first revolutionary youths" in Port Arthur, and that she was unable to relate to her peers. Clearly Janis was much more outlandish in Port Arthur than in relatively cosmopolitan Austin. Indeed, Port Arthur was very slow to acknowledge their most famous resident, but the town eventually came around, as indicated by the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Janis Joplin Birthday Bash at the Port Arthur Civic Center on January 19, 2002. Past musical



honorees—all of whom had at least one hit single and were from the Texas or Louisiana Gulf Coast—include the Fabulous Boogie Kings, the Big Bopper, Lonnie Brooks, and, of course, the most famous inductee, Joplin.<sup>7</sup>

After Joplin returned to San Francisco in 1966 to team up with a rock band called Big Brother and the Holding Company, she became an instant success at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967. Two gold record albums later, she was a nationwide sensation and a symbol for gutsy singing and living. Her public image was symbolized by the tentative title of her second album, *Sex, Dope and Cheap Thrills*, subsequently censored down to *Cheap Thrills*. During the next four years, Janis broke up with Big Brother, formed her own Full Tilt Boogie Band, and put out another album, *Kozmic Blues*. However, her success was always based on the image established during her first triumph at Monterey. From festival to festival and concert to concert, her legend grew while her body and voice deteriorated. For

example, just two years after Monterey in summer 1969, at the high profile Woodstock Festival, Joplin was so stoned she ruined her concert set by stumbling around the stage and over lyrics and having her voice break at several points. Yet her voice was not her primary asset. Janis expressed feeling rather than lyrics; she communicated anxiety rather than art. She was never much of a studied vocalist and remained a mediocre songwriter. Perhaps her most popular written song was her satiric yuppie hymn, “Mercedes Benz,” with the opening line, “Oh Lord, won’t you buy me a Mercedes Benz.” Despite her minimal musical talents, she had considerable influence as a hip model for youth in general and young women in particular.

After 1969, Joplin gained increasing acceptance in San Francisco, New York, and other centers of rock culture. Her crude, natural manner and dress now fit in perfectly with the new lifestyles. A more confident Janis would now often gloat over her countercultural image. For example, on a poster of herself she once wrote: “Guess what, I might be the first hippie pinup girl.”<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, drugs were part of the new counterculture lifestyles, and Joplin took to them quickly and passionately. From barbiturates to speed to heroin to liquor and back to heroin, Janis never got free of the downward spiral. Some rock stars used drugs to live the life, but Janis increasingly used drugs to ease the pain of life.

At the same time, both Joplin’s life and lifestyle lent themselves to the new feminism in America. Indeed, Janis’s path to stardom exactly paralleled the rise of the women’s liberation movement. In 1966 Betty Friedan founded N.O.W. (National Organization for Women). A year later, when Janis got her start at Monterey, radical college women began streaming out of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and forming their own feminist groups such as Redstockings and New York Radical Women. Joplin was largely oblivious to the feminist movement, as she was to most 1960s activism, but she served as an unconscious feminist symbol for younger women. Janis’s most universal influence came through her popularization of naturalistic dress and hairstyles. Then, as now, millions of young women often dressed in ostentatious “poverty” in uniforms of blue jeans and work shirts. But their hair and makeup often came directly from high fashion magazines such as *Vogue*. Moreover, on dates, jeans were usually discarded in favor of panty girdles and dresses. Joplin hardly originated the natural look that she picked up in San Francisco, but she did spread it nationwide. Janis liberated millions of young girls from makeup and girdles, while she pioneered the braless look and wild, loose, individualistic clothes. Also, Joplin’s long, brown, usually lack-luster hair helped free many women from the exaggerated brush, wash, set, color, and spray syndrome that still grips America through long and short hair fashions.

Janis brought new confidence to girls who had always worn their locks short or their clothes long because they had “bad”



hair or “bad” figures. With the new, diverse, natural styles, many women who could never be beautiful in classic ways radiated a unique personal charm. The Joplin look was well fitted to the rock scene. You would not dress otherwise when going to a rock festival. As rock writer Lillian Roxon noted about rock festival dress: “If you didn’t look like Janis when you got there, you sure as hell looked like her by the time you left.” Roxon thought that Joplin sometimes looked homely and sometimes looked beautiful, and that she “taught America that beauty didn’t have to be a constant, it could ebb and flow and surprise you by being there one minute and not the next.” For Roxon and countless others, Joplin “personified the new woman—blunt,

sexy performer to the hilt and did it well, she was typed as raunchy. When Mick Jagger did a crude imitation of Turner, in almost transvestite costume, he supposedly exhibited creative showmanship. Rod Stewart and Tom Jones could tease women with tight pants, suggestive pelvic bumping, and risqué lyrics and be described as sexy. However, when women did the same, from Janis Joplin to Joan Jett to Madonna, they were usually seen as sleazy or sluttish.

Also, Joplin’s sexy style highlighted some typical problems of feminists coping with the new sexual revolution. Janis reflected the feminist desire to be equal to men yet uniquely feminine, to be sexually liberated yet captive to true love, and wildly sexually

*The more Janis put out for her audience, the less she seemed to get for herself afterward. From the start, she became a victim of her performing image.*

straightforward, honest, unfettered, impatient and brave.” According to Roxon, Janis “liberated more American women than a hundred books.”<sup>9</sup>

Joplin was hardly unfettered or brave. Rather, she was often hung-up and frightened, but her legend was always more important than her life. Although Joplin’s clothing did not always suggest that she was sexually liberated, her manner did. Dress styles aside, the popularly defined sexy woman must be the pursued and not the pursuer. Joplin was clearly liberated, both in her bandstand patter and private life. She reserved the right to be the hunter as well as the hunted. Janis often declined to dress sexily on the one hand, yet insisted on the right to act sexually aggressive on the other. The most sexily dressed young women of the era would not likely even ask a man out on a date, much less to bed. Lillian Roxon was amazed that Joplin commonly invited men out for dates and also to bed.<sup>10</sup>

Not surprisingly, Janis’s performances generated sexuality. Thus, after listening to her album *Cheap Thrills*, Al Aronowitz, a *Life* magazine reviewer, suggested that, like Mae West, Joplin “could be the greatest lady who ever worked the streets.” Aronowitz felt that Janis’s singing made you feel she was “calling out to you from the second-story window of a bordello, inviting you up.” Aronowitz likely found Joplin’s concert performances even more bordello-like. Joplin always fed off the crowd, and her anguished, intense expressions and suggestive body language while singing added to the sexuality of her lyrics.<sup>11</sup>

Yet as a woman rock star, Joplin had a sexuality problem that still plagues female rockers. Male rockers such as Mick Jagger or Rod Stewart could be as trashily sexual as they wanted. Indeed, they were imitating sexy women on stage as a type of female impersonation. In contrast, women rockers who tried to be sexy were often classified as trashy. When Tina Turner played the

fulfilled in the process. Joplin often could not satisfy her own sexual longings, but on stage she held out the promise to others. At the height of her career success, Joplin could lament: “On stage I make love to twenty-five thousand people, then I go home alone.”<sup>12</sup> The more Janis put out for her audience, the less she seemed to get for herself afterward. From the start, she became a victim of her performing image. Country Joe McDonald, leader of the rock group Country Joe and the Fish and her lover for a brief period, thought Janis often wanted to be just another person offstage, but that others saw her as a conventional sex symbol. McDonald thought that many people wanted her to be traditionally feminine, and when she could not comply, they treated her “like one of the guys,” and that this pressure was “one of the things that drove her to drugs.” He noted:

On the one hand people wanted her to be a sex symbol and on the other hand she wasn’t the conventional sex symbol in any kind of way. Her bone structure was wrong, the way she acted was wrong. . . they wanted her to be Billie Holiday and she wasn’t Billie Holiday at all because Billie Holiday was very very feminine and Janis wasn’t at all. . . . Yet, she was a real woman and people kept treating her like one of the guys.<sup>13</sup>

Being “one of the guys” was a decidedly mixed bag for women in the 1960s. Taking on male attributes often made a woman look more powerful, whereas men who took on female attributes were objects of ridicule. Women could wear slacks and smoke Marlboros, but men could not wear dresses or smoke Eves. There was usually grudging admiration for the tomboy. The same could not be said for the “sissy.” When high school boys complained



about girls, they usually said they were too feminine, always fixing their hair and holding back from the action. In short, girls were not adventurous like guys. Many aggressive women, encouraged by 1960s feminism, got caught in the same feminine-masculine dichotomy that tortured Joplin. Men tended to treat aggressive women like guys. Yet Joplin never shied away from coming on too masculine. Early in the 1960s, female folksingers, such as Judy Collins and Joan Baez, sang folksongs meant to be sung by men. For example, they changed “Man of Constant Sorrow” to “Maid of Constant Sorrow.” But Joplin was the first big female rock star to sing songs written for men. In 1970, Janis role-reversed her big hit, “Me and Bobby McGee,” which Kris Kristofferson had originally written to be sung by a man.

Joplin had a problem competing with Grace Slick, lead singer of Jefferson Airplane. Serious FM stations played both Slick and Joplin records, while AM stations generally kept playing sexy girl groups such as the Supremes. Slick, too, was a new-style aggressive rock singer. Shaped by the same San Francisco hippie lifestyle as

self-deprecation, less prone to play buffoon, and because she was less driven to sexual priority, less ridden with anxiety.”<sup>14</sup> Possibly Joplin’s ostentatious heterosexual behavior was a compensation for her bisexuality. In any case, as an aggressive bisexual, she appealed to all sides of the feminist camp.

In one sense, Joplin was a fake. Blues singers were traditionally black and poor. A blues superstar in the 1960s was thus a contradiction in terms. Steve Katz, a blues guitarist, thought that, although Joplin was “a good primitive blues singer,” she was no longer credible, since, if “you’re making \$10,000 a night,” you could not come on projecting “hard luck and trouble.” But Janis knew suffering, and to the charge that she could not sing realistic blues, she aptly replied: “You know why we’re stuck with the myth that only black people have soul? Because white people don’t let themselves feel things. Man, you and any housewife have all sorts of pain and joy. You’d have soul if you’d give in to it.”<sup>15</sup>

Just as black blues had equipped generations of poverty-stricken blacks for living with economic pain, Janis’s blues singing

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*She was not going to save her voice, cut down on her drinking, or bypass a sexual partner in hopes of happier, healthier tomorrows. Janis had decided that, philosophically, tomorrow never comes.*

Joplin, she also identified with drugs and alcohol. Moreover, Slick was an accomplished songwriter whose early hits included “White Rabbit” and “Somebody to Love.” Grace oozed a unique sexuality in concert and promoted naturalistic dress, but she never had the concert intensity, cult following, or news coverage that Joplin generated. However, Slick was a former model and much more graceful, attractive and feminine than Joplin. If there was an early hippie rock pinup, it was probably Slick. Joplin was almost in the position of feminist Betty Friedan, in terms of trying to find a way to compete with feminist Gloria Steinem’s grace and beauty. Some rock fans saw Joplin as a homely Grace Slick, and although the two singers were friendly, Joplin often suffered from comparisons with the more conventionally sexy Slick.

Joplin’s lesbian activities may have been part and parcel of her refusal to be sexy in traditional ways. Her homosexuality was likely exaggerated by some lesbian feminists who suggested that her problems stemmed from not admitting her lesbianism. However, Joplin’s bisexuality had also been ignored by many rock writers who feared it would destroy her sexy image. Because Joplin was clearly bisexual, her lesbianism was more likely just part of her determination to get as much love and/or sex as she could, sexual orientation aside. Yet, Linda Gravenites, a close friend of Joplin, noted that Janis “was more comfortable, more herself in the presence of women. She was less on the rack of

eased her personal suffering. The pain her songs reflected also fit in with one new coping philosophy of contemporary feminism. The “anti-brain-washing” position of the Redstockings, a New York radical feminist group, stressed standing up for women who were down and not blaming women for their oppression.<sup>16</sup> This approach tended to glorify women as victims. The more marks of suffering you could show, the more credible your struggle with sexism and, consequently, the more support you deserved from your sisters. Clearly, Janis’s music often glorified pain and suffering.

Joplin’s music also proclaimed a primitive joy at times. In dozens of ways, Janis made it clear that she would live for today. She was not going to save her voice, cut down on her drinking, or bypass a sexual partner in hopes of happier, healthier tomorrows. Janis had decided that, philosophically, tomorrow never comes. Her most characteristic song, perhaps, was “Get It While You Can.” This hedonistic stress complimented the impatient mood of youth, but it also struck a responsive feminist chord. Women were constantly urged to put off personal pleasure for a more suitable time. Young girls were told to save themselves for their husbands. Wives were supposed to sacrifice immediate pleasures for their children. Even grandmothers had responsibilities to daughters and grandchildren. Joplin insisted that you were number one and that the present was everything.







Feminists, too, increasingly stressed their own primacy, and the 1960s feminist slogan "Liberation Now" stressed "now" almost as much as "liberation."

In the final analysis, Joplin made women feel better but hardly altered their most basic problems or hers. Her songs of complaint suggested things to identify with rather than goals to work toward. Moreover, her attempts to reconcile femininity with sexual aggressiveness and professional success with personal happiness were so personal and intense as to exclude the possibility of applying many lessons. Joplin's solutions were usually sensory, anti-intellectual, and shortsighted. For Janis, "being an intellectual" created "a lot of questions and no answers." You could "fill up your life with ideas and still go home lonely." The only things that really mattered to Joplin were "feelings" and the music that helped release and reflect them.<sup>17</sup> Janis felt that she had to make sacrifices for her music. She could not "quit to become someone's old lady," because even though being dedicated to one man was "beautiful," it could not touch "hitting the stage at full-tilt boogie."<sup>18</sup> Feminists tended to marry later than the average woman. Also, feminists urged younger women to establish themselves in careers before marrying. Joplin seemed to fit this profile.

Probably the closest Joplin came to telling us what her performances and profession meant to her was when she explained:

But when I sing, I feel, oh I feel, well, like when you're first in love. It's more than sex, I know that. It's that point two people can get to they call love, like when you really touch someone for the first time, but it's gigantic, multiplied by the whole audience. I feel chills. . . it's a supreme emotional and physical experience. . . I live for that one hour on stage. It's full of feeling. . . it's a rush honey.<sup>19</sup>

A man could be a rock star, do gigs and "know that he was going to get laid that night," as Janis put it, but a woman had to sacrifice love to be a rock singer.<sup>20</sup> Joplin's philosophy was compensatory. She was going to get drunk, get laid, and, in the lyrics of her friend, songwriter Kris Kristofferson, "let the devil take tomorrow." This simple creed brought back visions of the ancient Greek ideal of a short, glorious, heroic life. It was, after all, quite romantic to live fast, die young, and leave a good-looking corpse.

Alice Echols and Lucy O'Brien have both suggested that Joplin would have had support from the stronger second wave of feminism in the 1970s, if she had lived. Echols felt Joplin's "refusal to sound or look pretty, prefigures feminism's demolition of good-girl femininity." O'Brien thought that Joplin died too early to get support from the second wave feminism which "rescued many a 'bad girl' from oblivion." She believed that, had Joplin survived, "she could have been an astute, mature



CD cover courtesy Columbia Records / CBS Inc.

voice in the women's movement."<sup>21</sup> There is little to suggest that Joplin would have ever become an active feminist. After reading *Rat*, an underground New York paper, Janis told a radio interviewer in 1970 "it seemed like" the radical feminists "hadn't a good time in months." Joplin felt feminists were going crazy about just not getting one thing or another. Janis admitted that she was missing things too. She was not getting "peace of mind" or "a steady home," but she was "having a good time," and that's what she thought was "important." Joplin's advice to the feminists was "to rock on out."<sup>22</sup> This is classic Joplin, but I doubt that it would have impressed second-wave feminist leaders such as Gloria Steinem. The erratic, enigmatic, profane Joplin could never have become a feminist poster child.

Joplin's music raised the right questions but suggested no answers. Her songs offered solace, but not wisdom. As feminist educator Florence Howe aptly put it, popular songs told women "to love being a sex object," but they need songs that show them how to "love being a woman."<sup>23</sup> Joplin's songs often told about the pain of being woman and how to live with the pain and compensate for it. It remained for other voices to teach women how to prevent or avoid that pain. Janis adapted the black blues tradition to the needs of an affluent but culturally rootless youth culture. It was clearly a confused generation of white Americans that she spoke to. Her uninhibited style and flamboyant escape from the social conventions of a small Texas city acted out the conscious desires of thousands of youthful Americans. Joplin's music and lifestyle provided them with a vicarious escape from middle-class America, just as it allowed Joplin to escape her unhappy coming of age. Perhaps, Mimi Farina depicted Joplin

best. In her memorial ballad for Janis, "In the Quiet Morning," Farina describes Joplin as "the great Southwest unbound."<sup>24</sup>

Joplin's stature as a feminist heroine can only grow with time. Indeed, time is what distinguishes heroes from mere celebrities. The hero remains a man or woman famous for his or her deeds; the celebrity is just a temporary big name, "famous for being famous."<sup>25</sup> Long after Cyndi Lauper and Britney Spears are but forgotten historical footnotes, people will remember Janis Joplin. Joplin was a heroine because she broke common female stereotypes. She influenced by her words, deeds, and images. Her fame put her in the spotlight, but only the responses of masses of men and women confirmed her role. As a real heroine, Joplin appealed both to men and women. Indeed, if her mystique was limited to only half of American society, she could not appear very powerful.

Joplin was more successful than any other female singer in merging popular music and the counterculture. She was the

closest female equivalent to Bob Dylan in terms of cultural influence, her short career notwithstanding. She taught men and women that a talented woman with problem hair, pimples, and a weakness for food and drink could make herself beautiful because of who she is and not just how she looks. She popularized a new style and standard for feminine beauty. As a cultural rebel, she helped both men and women to see themselves in new ways. The fact that she ignored organized feminists and that no overtly feminist messages appeared in her songs did not make her less a feminist model or heroine. In the 1960s women were on the make for suitable cultural models, and when they found them they did not apply a feminist litmus test. In the future, there will be increasingly less focus on the tragedy of Joplin's life and more attention to her triumph as a key cultural model of the watershed 1960s. ■

## NOTES

1. Cheryl Helm, "No One Cries for the Losers," *Paid My Dues* (January 1974), 12-13.
2. For specific examples of the sexism of rock music during this period as seen by contemporary feminist critics, see Marion Meade, "The Degradation of Women," in *The Sounds of Social Change*, ed. by R. Serge Denisoff and Richard A. Peterson (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972), 173-178, and "Cock Rock: Men Always Seem to End Up on Top," *Rat* (October-November, 1970), 8-9.
3. For a long while, the most reliable biographical information on Joplin was in Myra Friedman's *Buried Alive: The Biography of Janis Joplin* (New York: William Morrow, 1973). The best biography of Joplin is now Alice Echols, *Scars of Sweet Paradise* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), a marvelous biography built on a vast spectrum of interviews with people who knew Joplin. Although Friedman's work is still very useful, Echols provides much more detail, especially in looking at Joplin's Texas roots and following her career. However, Echols spends little time or effort on Joplin's connection to Women's Liberation. Feminism is only mentioned in passing on four pages, although Echols does say that Joplin "expressed women's anger and disappointment before feminism legitimized their expression", 306.
4. Interview with Janis Joplin, taped in July 1970, printed in David Dalton, *Janis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 54. On balance, Dalton has the best collection of complete, unedited Janis Joplin interviews.
5. Echols, *Scars*, 3-37. Jeanne Ford, a college teacher and former colleague told me she had been Janis Joplin's junior high teacher in Port Arthur and that Joplin had been a very bright and creative student.
6. Janis Joplin quoted in "Janis: 1943-1970," *Rolling Stone* (October 29, 1970), 2.
7. Seth Joplin quoted in Dalton, *Janis*, 139. Information on the Annual Joplin Birthday Bash given by organizer and former Janis Joplin classmate, Don Ball, in *Texas Journey* (January/February, 2002), 14.
8. Friedman, *Buried*, 82. For Joplin's Woodstock performance in 1969, see the DVD, *Woodstock: 3 Days of Peace & Music, The Director's Cut* (Warner Brothers # 13549, 1997).
9. Lillian Roxon, "A Moment too Soon," in *No One Waved Good-Bye*, ed. Robert Somma (New York: Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, 1971), 95-97. Roxon followed Joplin's career closely as a rock writer and this essay is a frank and affectionate memoir.
10. Ibid.
11. Alfred G. Aronowitz, "Singer with a Bordello Voice," *Life* (September 20, 1968), 20.
12. Janis Joplin quoted in Ellen Willis, "Rock, Etc." *New Yorker* (March 15, 1969), 45.
13. "Interview with Country Joe McDonald," *Rolling Stone* (May 27, 1971), reprinted in Dalton, *Janis*, 146. In part McDonald split with Janis because she wasn't political enough. For McDonald's political views, see "Country Joe Unstrung," *Sing Out!* 18 (June 1968), 20-21.
14. Linda Gravenites quoted in Friedman, *Buried*, 127.
15. Steve Katz quoted in "Rebirth of the Blues," *Newsweek* (May 26, 1969), 82. Janis quoted in John Poppy, Janis Joplin: Big Brother's White Soul," *Look* (September 3, 1968), 60-61.
16. "Redstocking Manifesto," in Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writing from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 598-600.
17. Janis Joplin quoted in Hubert Sall, "Janis," *Newsweek* (May 26, 1969), 82.
18. 1970 interview with Janis Joplin, in Dalton, *Janis*, 55.
19. Janis Joplin interview, quoted in Deborah Landau, *Janis Joplin: Her Life and Times* (New York: Warner Books, 1971), 14.
20. Taped comments by Janis Joplin in 1970 on record attached to Dalton, *Janis*.
21. Lucy O'Brien, *She Bop: The Definitive History of Women in Rock, Pop, and Soul* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 105; Echols, *Scars*, 306.
22. Joplin interview on Louisville, Kentucky radio station in summer 1970 from tape, courtesy of Myra Friedman, quoted in Echols, 306.
23. Florence Howe, "Feminism and Literature," in *Images of Women in Fiction*, ed. Susan K. Cornillon (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Popular Press, 1972), 259.
24. Mimi Farina's memorial ballad, "In the Quiet Morning," was recorded by Farina's sister, Joan Baez, on her album *Come From the Shadows* (A&M Records, 1972).
25. On the nature of celebrities as opposed to heroes, see Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: Or What Happened to the American Dream* (New York: Atheneum, 1961), 45-76.



Hillis: Cowboys and Indians: The International Stage

# ***Cowboys and Indians:*** ***The International Stage***

Craig D. Hillis

Bob Livingston in his Austin office surrounded by instruments collected from around the world.  
Photo by Bruce Jordan

*There are countless cultural innovations and popular products recognized around the world as uniquely American. Whether with the blues, the Big Mac, tailfins on Cadillacs, or the legacy of space travel, the United States continually astounds and, from time to time, confounds the world with its prolific cultural productivity. Things American are everywhere, at least anywhere a radio wave can reach a receiver or a satellite signal can touch a television set, and two of the most ubiquitous Yankee exports are the mythical cowboy of the Wild West and country music. Bob Livingston, an accomplished Austin musician, has helped to shape these singular institutions into an effective tool of American diplomacy. Since 1986, Livingston has toured extensively in South Asia and the Middle East as an emissary of the State Department of the United States presenting a musical program he calls "Cowboys and Indians." He describes his mission (with his tongue only partially in his cheek) as an attempt "to achieve world peace through cowboy songs and yodeling."<sup>1</sup> Livingston's ambitious crusade has touched the lives of thousands around the world by offering a refreshing and holistic view of American culture. His program, "Cowboys and Indians," is a testament to the practical and positive contribution that American music can make to a deeply troubled world.*

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There are few cultural images as widespread and enduring as the image of the American cowboy. This romantic, rough and tumble character embodies the perceived virtues and strengths of an entire society. Although historians know that roughly half of the cowboys working the great cattle drives of the late 1800s were Hispanic, black, Asian, and even Native American, it is the English-speaking, square-jawed, white cowboy of the Marlboro cigarette commercials that the general public seems to envision as the "typical" cowboy of the Old West. The life and times of the cowboy have provided the templates for countless forms of popular entertainment: books, magazines, movies, and music in both the United States and abroad. Since the late 1800s, popular cowboy culture has dominated American iconography, and, at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the way of the West remains popular worldwide. There are "cowboy clubs" all over Europe where "wannabe" cowpunchers get together for quick-draw contests and barbeque;<sup>2</sup> cartoon cowboy figure Lucky Luke<sup>3</sup> is one of France's most popular comic book characters; and country line dancing is all the rage in Japan.<sup>4</sup> American presidents have incorporated the cowboy image into their political identities; Ronald Reagan's presidency was, to many historians, an extension of his role as a western hero, and Theodore Roosevelt's presidential persona borrowed heavily from his experience as a Dakota cattle rancher.<sup>5</sup> The cowboy image

has become part of the lexicon of American foreign diplomacy. From Theodore Roosevelt's foreign policy dictum, "walk softly and carry a big stick," to John F. Kennedy's "New Frontier," from the derogatory campaign launched by eastern-block communists that dubbed President-elect Ronald Reagan a "reckless cowboy" to the "ranch" retreat of our current president, the cowboy trope has been a regular on the international stage for over a century. Foreign political initiatives have co-opted the cowboy image: in 1986, Polish artist Tomasz Sarnecki used Gary Cooper's image from the movie *High Noon* to symbolize the tenacity of the Solidarity movement and to mobilize the vote against the Communist government.<sup>6</sup> Historian Walter Prescott Webb exaggerated only slightly when he described the cowboy as, "the most unique and distinctive institution that America has produced."<sup>7</sup> A brief sketch of the historical cowboy however, reveals that America's "most unique and distinctive institution" is the distinct progeny of the Lone Star State.

Like many things considered "uniquely American" or "uniquely Texan," the historical cowboy was the product of disparate cultures grinding together in the New World. The Spanish and the Moors herded cattle for centuries before the Conquistadors landed the longhorn steer in Vera Cruz, Mexico in the 1520s. These first longhorns were a scrawny-looking lot, with wide, sinuous horns waving over thin bodies supported by





Bob Livingston with Michael Martin Murphey in the 1970s.  
Photo courtesy Bob Livingston

long, bony legs. Despite appearances, however, longhorns were a sturdy breed that adapted well to the arid plains of Mexico. Over the years, the herds drifted north to the Rio Grande Valley where, in the early nineteenth century, Mexican ranchers bred them with the beefier bovines from the United States. The result was the hardier Texas longhorn commonly known today. After Texas gained independence in 1836, the Mexicans retreated south beyond the Rio Grande leaving millions of cattle in the vast Nueces Valley of South Texas. Those that were unbranded, the “mavericks,” were considered public property, and, in this rustler’s paradise, the great Texas cattle herds and the Texas cowboy were born.

The success of the cattle business depended on the rancher’s ability to transport large herds to national markets or to railroad shipping destinations. Cattle worth three to four dollars a head in South Texas were worth thirty to forty dollars a head in St. Louis, and even more in Chicago and other booming urban centers in the north and northeast. Estimates in the mid-1860s put the number of cattle in the Nueces Valley at over four million.<sup>8</sup> To insure that supply met demand, vast herds had to be mobilized, and that called for an army of cowboys. As these early drovers struck out from South Texas to points north, a “unique and distinctive” era of American history took root.<sup>9</sup>

The life of the cowboy on the trail was, by and large, a Hobbesian existence: “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”<sup>10</sup> Cattle drives encountered the natural and manmade dangers commonly associated with the trans-Mississippi frontier: windstorms, prairie fires, floods, droughts, Indian attacks, outlaws; despite the enduring legacy of the cowboy, his heyday was incredibly short. It lasted little more than twenty years. Less than a decade after the first cattle drives of the mid-1860s, conditions developed that all but guaranteed the end of the drover and the trails he rode. Ranchers and farmers began stringing the barbed wire that sectioned off the open range,

railroad lines extended south offering ranchers access to northern markets, and state and local governments began drawing legal lines across the range that denied easements to the great herds. Yet, even as the sun set on the trail drives and the historical Texas cowboy, writers, photographers and artists of every ilk drew on the images from those dusty years to shape the mythological cowboy that would pique the public imagination for many years to come.

For most modern cowboys, country music is the music of choice and, to no small degree, an extension of the cowboy myth. Like so many American music genres, country music is an ever-evolving amalgam of influences. Transplanted folk music from the British Isles became America’s hillbilly and bluegrass music; the Swiss yodel, combined with African-American blues stylings, became the trademark of America’s “first country singing star,” Jimmie Rodgers;<sup>11</sup> African-American blues, gospel, ragtime, and jazz influenced the young country genre in many ways as well, while the big band sound of the 1930s and 1940s provided the harmonic structure for western swing. Our concern here, however, is the vastly popular singing cowboy whose songs told, and, when necessary, reinvented the story of the great American West.

Unlike the rough and tumble, gun-toting cowboy, the singing cowboy of western folklore pulled out his guitar rather than his hog-leg forty-four. This brand of western hero, first made popular by Gene Autry, Tex Ritter, and Roy Rogers, brought a gentler form of justice to an otherwise violent western hero genre.<sup>12</sup> The singing cowboy knew the ways of the Wild West; he could ride and rope with the best of them, but when the time came for a showdown, this brand of hero chose diplomacy, reason, and even humor, to save the day. This is the cowboy of Bob Livingston’s imagination, a cowboy more in the image of Will Rogers than Clint Eastwood, a romantic cowboy that makes positive contributions to people’s lives—a cowboy ambassador of good will.

Bob Livingston is a native Texan raised in Lubbock who has survived and thrived in the music business for over thirty-five years. In 1969, Livingston ventured west of the Pecos to Los Angeles where he signed a recording contract with Capitol Records. “Nothing much came of the record deal,” Livingston reported, “but I met some great musicians in Los Angeles.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Livingston teamed up with Michael Martin Murphey and Guy Clark in a music publishing venture called “Mountain Music Farm” funded by Roger Miller. After recording a series of publishing demos, Murphey approached Livingston and asked him to join him for a tour of the Southwest. According to Livingston, “Murphey handed me a bass and said, ‘I’ve got a bunch of dates booked and I need a bass player.’ I told Murphey that I didn’t play bass and he said, ‘You’ll learn.’”<sup>14</sup> What began as a tour of small rooms across the Southwest ended up in Nashville when Livingston and Murphey recorded with

legendary record producer, Bob Johnston.<sup>15</sup> These sessions became Murphey's first record album, *Geronimo's Cadillac*, on A&M Records.

After the successful release of *Geronimo's Cadillac*, Livingston's career picked up steam. He and Murphey left Los Angeles and relocated in Austin where they met Gary P. Nunn and other talented Texas musicians. This eclectic entourage backed up Murphey on his second album, *Cosmic Cowboy Souvenirs*, and toured extensively in support of what was to become the landmark recording of the "Progressive Country" scene that put Austin on the musical map in the 1970s.

During this initial flurry of Austin-based activity, Livingston met Jerry Jeff Walker. In 1972 Walker was on his way from Key West to Los Angeles to begin an album for MCA Records and decided to stop off in Austin to visit his old pal, Murphey. When Walker discussed his plans to hire studio musicians in L.A. for his upcoming project, Murphey suggested that he record it in Austin and use his band. Soon thereafter, Walker, Livingston, and other members of Murphey's band were recording late-night "Sangria" sessions in a makeshift studio on West 6<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>16</sup> The end result was Walker's first "Texas" album, *Jerry Jeff Walker*, the first in a long series of album projects with MCA. The following year Walker reassembled the band in Luckenbach to record the million selling album, *Viva Terlingual*, and in its successful aftermath, Livingston and Gary P. Nunn rounded up several new top-notch Texas musicians to form the Lost Gonzo Band. In addition to backing up Walker, the Gonzos pursued their own recording career producing two albums for MCA and one album for Capitol Records. Since those early days in Austin, Livingston has recorded well over a dozen albums with Walker, has had a number of his songs covered by Walker and other prominent recording artists, and stands as a defining figure in contemporary Texas music.

Livingston has embraced his personal life with the same intensity that he has embraced his music. He met his wife, Iris, in 1974 after a show at the Armadillo World Headquarters where he was playing a double bill with Murphey and Walker. Since their early days together they have followed the teachings of an East Indian guru, a path that has taken them back and forth between America and India. On a 1986 trip to visit Iris and their two boys at an ashram in southern India, Livingston had an interesting encounter with a fellow American, Frank Block, a Fulbright Scholar and professor from Vanderbilt University. Block was affiliated with the United States Information Service, the arm of the State Department responsible for disseminating information about America and American interests abroad. As Livingston recalls, "Block explained to me that if you could convince the USIS that you were an expert in any field, whether that be hydroponics or country music, they might have a gig for you."<sup>17</sup>

On this particular trek to India, Livingston was accompanied

by a fellow pilgrim and band mate in the Lost Gonzo Band, guitar player John Inmon. Acting on the information from Block, Livingston sent a telex to the American Consulate in Madras explaining that he and John were musicians from Texas and would like to come and audition. Livingston soon heard back from Vice Consul Tim Moore who told them to come ahead to Madras. Livingston recalled their journey:

John and I took an all-night train to Madras for our audition. On the way, I was trying to figure out how we should present ourselves to Tim Moore. Are we just going to get up and play songs? Are we supposed to be sending some sort of cultural message? Then, as I'm looking out from the train at the Indian landscape sliding by, I had this feeling that you could be anywhere. It was about 5:30 in the morning, we were a hundred miles west of Madras, the sun's just peeking over the horizon, and there's scrub brush and gullies rolling by and you could swear that you're in the middle of West Texas. I realized that our two countries not only had a lot in common geographically, but that our people have a tremendous amount in common as well. We all have the same emotions. We all love, we all have frustrations and fears, we all want the best for our families, there are "bad guys" to look out for and there are heroes. I realized that the best way for me to bring out those common themes was through the image of the cowboy.<sup>18</sup>

Livingston and Inmon arrived in Madras early the next morning and met Tim Moore at the American Center, an auditorium with a theatrical stage, sound system, and lights located on the grounds of the American consulate. Tim Moore took a seat in the audience and said "OK fellas, what'cha got?"<sup>19</sup>

John and I tuned up, took the stage and let 'er rip. I did some old cowboy classics like "Don't Bury Me on the Lone Prairie," songs like that. After we'd done about a half dozen tunes Tim Moore piped up and asked us, "Hey guys, do you mind?" He reached down, pulled out a banjo case, opened it up, pulled out his banjo and said, "I've been dying to play with somebody! So we played "Fox on the Run" and a few bluegrass things, and he said, "You guys got the job, but only if I can play with you every once in a while!"<sup>20</sup>

Tim Moore asked Livingston and Inmon to return to India



in nine months to do a series of shows. Once back in the United States, Livingston did his homework. He read books about the American West and worked up an extensive cowboy song repertoire. He studied up on Woody Guthrie, Jimmie Rodgers, and the collections of Alan and John Lomax. He even learned some cowboy jokes. In essence, Bob undertook a crash course in cowboy musicology and applied it to the program he anticipated presenting in India. He reasoned that his background as a singer-songwriter and country musician, coupled with his command of cowboy folklore and a healthy cache of songs, would enable him to draw his audience into his performance.

To this end, Livingston had another invaluable asset, his spirituality. As he prepared for his first USIS tour, he realized that, to be effective in communicating the kind of message he wanted to send, he would have to draw on the teachings of his guru. "When you're at the ashram in the presence of the guru," Livingston explained, "your direction is clear and you know what needs to be done. It's really an incredible experience. But when you take those teachings out into the world, you have to work very hard to keep on track."<sup>21</sup> Livingston wanted to carry the essence of the ashram into his musical program. If he could weave the threads of spiritual enlightenment into his cowboy message of goodwill, he felt that he could successfully draw his Indian audience into a frontier of the imagination: a frontier where similarities between people transcend their differences, where cultural barriers fade in the light of compassion and understanding, and where world peace is not an abstract dream but a work in progress. To be sure, this was quite an undertaking for a cowboy ambassador from Austin, but, with his determination, his musical background, and his spiritual resolve, he was uniquely qualified to build some cultural bridges between East and West. As the following story illustrates, Livingston was certainly on the right track:

When John and I returned to India, the first show we did was in a small southern Indian town called Cochin in the state of Kerala. When we arrived we mentioned that we would love to play with any local musicians that might be available. For us, playing with Indian musicians was part



Bob Livingston in his office with the main tool of his cowboy yodeling trade. Photo by Bruce Jordan.

of the cultural exchange. So we hooked up with a tabla player and another musician who was a really good drummer. He had a trap set and played in a rock band. We had a chance to get together before the show and run down some songs, and when we brought them up about three-quarters through our show, the audience just loved it. They loved to see some of their local boys up on stage with these cowboys from Texas!

We started out kind of slow and easy, singing a few songs and telling the folks a few stories. I remember telling the audience, (in an exaggerated Texas accent) "We're from Texas and we come here to play songs about Texas and beautiful women and ugly men. We're here to tell ya' stories about cowboys and Indians." John and I were really decked out: We're both wearing big 'ole cowboy hats, vests, bandannas around our necks, with pants tucked into our boots, the whole bit. And the folks were really eating it up! Because if there's anything in India, or for that matter, all over the world, that people want to know about, it's cowboys and Indians! That may seem amazing, but it's true! The Wild West is a part of American culture that seems to translate in other cultures as something pure and honest. It's something that the people in India can relate to because just as

we have our Wild West in America, Indians have their "Wild East!" They have heroes, bandits, and stories about their own culture, stories that talk about adventure and how the good guys win out over the bad guys. Also, when I refer to our presentation as "Cowboys and Indians," I'm not just talking about the Sioux or Pawnee; I'm talking about the East Indians.

One of the first tunes I did was "Don't Bury Me on the Lone Prairie," and before I'd start the song, I set it up with a story. I told the audience about the train trip we made to Madras when I looked out on the "Indian Prairie," and how the "Wild East" was very much like the "Wild West." Then I said, "Imagine that you're a young cowboy on this big desert, either west of the Pecos or west of Madras, riding along with your buddies on your horse, or your camel, when all of a sudden a cobra jumps out from behind a bush and bites you right between the eyes." Then I'd say, "You lie down in the dirt and your compadres light a fire to keep you warm but you know that your life is slowly oozing away; and what's the last thing you're thinking of? You don't want to be buried out there all alone!" Then I'd go ahead and sing the song.

Backstage after the show, the wife of the Supreme Court Justice from Kerala came up and said to me:

"Oh, I very much enjoyed your program. It was so wonderful. And that song you did about that poor young cowboy. You had to leave his body on the prairie? It's so sad and so touching! But tell me, is there no way you could go back and bring his body back so he could be buried as he wished? It was not right to leave his body on that prairie. He did not want to be left there!"

I was amazed! She had taken the story seriously. She took it at face value. But I was trying to draw them into the show, so evidently I succeeded.<sup>22</sup>

This example not only illustrates Livingston's ability to turn a good tale, it suggests certain dynamics between his program and his Indian audience. The Indian woman's acceptance of Livingston's story at "face value" suggests her acceptance of Livingston as a credible spokesman for cowboy culture and, by extension, for American culture. Her perception not only underscores the influence Livingston wields as a cultural interpreter, it places a distinct responsibility on him as a representative of the United States. The woman's disappointment

with the fictitious cowboys' decision to leave their companion's body on the prairie shows that she expects cowboys to take the high moral road and go the extra mile to honor their commitments to others. If cowboys were going to be exemplar of American society, if they were going to be the conduit between American and Indian culture, then their iconic aura must not be tarnished. Livingston took the woman's critique to heart and, in an attempt to exonerate the cowboys and leave his audience with a sense of closure, he wrote another closing verse to the song:

When the sun went down  
So far from home,  
We had no choice  
But to go on alone.  
So we dug his grave  
Underneath that White Oak Tree,  
And we buried him,  
Out on the lone prairie.<sup>23</sup>

After the first few shows, Livingston fell into the routine of the performances and the extracurricular duties of a cowboy ambassador. Many of his appearances were co-sponsored by local book clubs, academic societies, or other cultural organizations, and he described the logistics and activities surrounding a typical show:

When I began doing the shows, I had an Indian liaison officer to help me along the way. I also had close contact with an American vice consul. What the vice consul did was not only set up the details of our gig, but he'd set up dinners with the mayors and members of the town counsels, and if there was a university involved, with members of the student government. Sometimes we'd go to the Rotary Club, which had a large membership in India, and we'd have lunch, and then they'd give me a little present and I'd give a little speech and the Mayor or the appropriate dignitary would also give a little speech.

When the USIS found out that I liked to do this sort of thing, mixing with the audience and rubbing elbows with the local muck-id-dee-mucks, they took full advantage of it. They worked my rear end off! Most people that go over there to do entertainment programs, they wanted to play their gig and go back and rest because they were massively jet-lagged. They hadn't been living there like I had been. I would go to a student association meeting, then they'd take me to the Rotary Club for lunch, and then off to a tea with the mayor in his office. After all of that



I'd rally the musicians and we'd go do the sound check, come back to the hotel and get a little nap, and then go play the gig. After the gig, they would take us out to a late dinner. They eat their final meal of the day very late in India. At ten-thirty, eleven o'clock, they're stuffing themselves! They claim that it makes them sleep. It just made me fat!<sup>24</sup>

Judging by Livingston's reports of these shows, it appeared that the USIS and the co-sponsor invited primarily middle and upper-middle class people to the events. The audience at his first presentation in Cochin, Kerala, for example, was an exceptionally bright and educated group. "Kerala," Livingston said, "is a state in southwestern India that is one of the most

Department in Livingston's program: First, was the target audience confined to only upper and middle-class Indians and second, did the State Department influence the structure and content of his program? In addressing the first question, it is helpful to look at an analysis of an earlier series of State Department programs. In her essay about the government's "Goodwill Tours" in the 1950s and 1960s, Peggy Von Eschen argues that the entertainment venues were tightly controlled to complement American economic interests abroad.<sup>28</sup> The jazz acts that the State Department sent to Africa, for example, would generally tour areas rich in oil, diamonds, or uranium. Such economic determinism naturally affected the nature of the audiences in Africa, strongly favoring the well-to-do, while virtually ignoring the common people. An example of such

*You must understand that people in India will stare at you unabashedly, especially a big redheaded guy with freckles like me. They thought I was from the dark side of the moon!*

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literate states in the world. Cochin, I believe, is in the Guinness Book of World Records as being 100% literate. Taxi drivers there have master's degrees! The state of Kerala is where a lot of India's computer programmers come from."<sup>25</sup> Bob described these audiences as "the people that the USIS wanted to reach the hearts and minds of:"<sup>26</sup>

We were engaged in propaganda in the correct sense of the word. We were spreading a positive image of America and getting a group of people there to share it with. And the places we played would be packed. We might have a thousand, fifteen hundred people! The USIS would have a co-sponsor, like the Kerala Fine Arts Society or a local book club and the co-sponsor contacted everybody on their mailing list asking them to please come to the show. They would tell them about our program and give them invitations. The ladies would come out dressed in their finest saris and men would wear their finest clothes, and they'd bring the family and the kids. You could almost sense their anticipation. "What is this going to be like? American country and folk music? There are going to be cowboys here singing!"<sup>27</sup>

The audience and the events surrounding these performances begs two important questions about the role of the State

obvious audience bias was the early 1960s Dizzy Gillespie concert tour of Asia. Gillespie recalled that, "the tour skipped India because that country was nonaligned," and the band "played instead in Karachi, Pakistan, where the United States was supplying arms." There, Gillespie refused to play until promoters agreed to open the gates to the "ragamuffin" children. He complained that, "they priced the tickets so high the people we were trying to gain friendship with couldn't make it."<sup>29</sup> I asked Livingston about the nature of his audiences while playing abroad for the State Department. Were his shows in any way a remake of the State Department shows of the 1950s and 1960s? According to Livingston:

Many of the shows we played were for a higher, educated class of people, no doubt about it. But as time went on and I became a little more comfortable with the lay of the land. We also played a number of children's schools, universities, hospitals, and quite a few refugee camps. The USIS was open to suggestions that I would make. No, all the shows we did weren't just for the rich and famous. Through the years we've played for all classes of people.

One of my favorite ways to communicate with the common folks was through traveling. India is a very large place, and I spent a tremendous amount of time in train and bus stations. After a few tours, I got so good at getting around the

country that the USIS no longer sent a liaison with me, they knew that I could get to where I needed to go. I remember so many times when I'd be standing there at a train station by myself: I'd have my cowboy hat on, I felt really self-conscious, I didn't necessarily want to wear it, but with my guitar in one hand and my bags in the other, I really didn't have any other place for it except on my head. You must understand that people in India will stare at you unabashedly, especially a big redheaded guy with freckles like me. They thought I was from the dark side of the moon! Pretty soon there are eighty or a hundred people standing around checking me out. So sometimes I'd just pull my guitar out and start playing for them and the place would go bonkers! They would laugh, and just have a great time. They usually couldn't understand a word I was saying, but the message was clear: Let's be friends.<sup>30</sup>

Livingston travels with a video camera and has been able to get a number of his foreign adventures on tape. I was lucky enough to see one of these railroad station exchanges that he described. It's an incredible spectacle; the dark iron roof structure growing out of the dirty concrete of the train platform, a large antique locomotive puffing away in the background, the sky gray and overcast, and humidity that you can almost see in the air. There's Livingston, big wide straw cowboy hat, scarf around his neck, and a colorful western shirt, towering over his wide-eyed audience, his head thrown back yodeling at full volume to a sun no one can see, an amazing picture. The scene changes and shows Livingston strumming away on his guitar, slightly bent over to meet the gaze of the young Indian woman that he's accompanying. Livingston is listening intently, nodding his head in encouragement and grinning like a mighty happy rascal. The young lady, sari and scarves swinging, is singing without reservation, bobbing gently up and down on the balls of her feet, moving through the quarter-tones in the hypnotic language of a song obviously dear to her heart. The audience smiles and claps along. This is a touching scene and an excellent example of cowboy diplomacy in the Indian hinterlands.

I asked Livingston if the State Department made any attempts to shape or censure his program. He maintains that "Cowboys and Indians" is his own creation and that the government had nothing to do with its form or content. Indeed, when he signed on with the USIS, he expected some sort of guidance or direction and was pleasantly surprised when that didn't happen. He assured me that he was left to his own devices in developing and delivering his program. Livingston did bring up one interesting episode that's worth mentioning:

At one point, the State Department did have something to say about my program, but I wouldn't necessarily call it censure. It was more of an advisement. I started doing this thing about yodeling for world peace. At that time, early 1991, the Russians were still in Afghanistan and there were hundreds of thousands of refugees in Peshawar, Pakistan. Also, the Gulf War was in full swing. So I had this idea to teach my audiences how to yodel, and once I got them yodeling and having fun, I told them that it's impossible to feel bad and yodel at the same time! As a matter of fact, I'd say, can you imagine if George Bush would call Mikhail Gorbachev every morning about 6:30 and say, "Mikhail, Yodel—aaaa—hee—hoooo!" And Mikhail would yodel back to George, "Yodel—aaaa—dee—hoo—too!" What a great way to start another day of international relations! Then I'd say, can you imagine Bush and Gorbachev calling up Saddam Hussein, yodeling to him and getting him to yodel back, because, I'd tell the audience, that it's impossible to invade a country and yodel at the same time! I reasoned that if Saddam Hussein had had just spent more time yodeling, he would never have invaded Kuwait! I thought this was all light-hearted, and funny stuff, but a couple of times people would walk up to me after the show and say something like,

"I really like your program, but let me tell you one thing. Don't you make fun of Saddam Hussein. Even you must admit, even though you are American, he's very bold and very much for his people."

And I would say, ah yes, very bold, very good for his people, yes, you're right! These people, I'm telling you, they mean business. This was a time when there was some very serious international business going down and we were over there representing the American government. So what the State Department did, they sent a FAX to the appropriate vice consul that said, "Advise Livingston on the sanity of using Saddam Hussein in a disparaging way or in a light-hearted manner." That's the only time the government ever said anything about my program.<sup>31</sup>

Livingston's first trek into India was in 1981, and he played





Livingston making friends at a train station in Kharagpur, India. Photo by Tucker Livingston.

his first USIS show in 1986. After twenty years, he still tours India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, the Middle East, and North Africa. After the initial tour in 1986, his band mate, John Inmon, went back to the states, but Livingston stayed in India and continued to play. He went back every year from 1987 through 1992. In 1992 he played in sixty different cities in India. Throughout the 1990s Livingston returned on a regular basis and in 1998 began to take his son, Tucker, to accompany him on guitar and vocals. After twenty years of visiting and performing in India and its surrounding nations, Livingston has seen tremendous cultural changes in the region; some of which have been brought about by the infusion of American popular culture:

Back before television and radio expanded so greatly in South Asia, I remember playing a date in Nepal. I believe it was 1987 or 1988. After the show, a young man came up to me and said, "I like your program, but tell me, do you know Michael Jackson?" And I said, "Well, no." Then he asked me, "Do you like his music?" And I said, "Sure, I like his music. I don't know him but, yeah, I like his music." He thought about that for a sec-

ond and said, "Humm, OK, well, then tell me, what other famous American singers are there? You, Michael Jackson and who else?" And I said, "That's about it!" I got a pretty good laugh out of that, but at that time, their exposure to American music was very limited. Their main connection to pop music was through posters and the occasional cassette tape. That was all about to change though.<sup>32</sup>

When I went back over in 1990, India had just gotten the Star Television satellite system out of Singapore. There were five television channels on the system, MTV, CNN, BBC, and two other independent channels. I knew their culture was in trouble when I walked into the house of

some Indian friends of mine in Madras. The man's name is Arvis Schwiswan, he plays a sentur, which is like an Appalachian hammer dulcimer, and he's one of the foremost players in the world. His wife, whose name is Chitra, is a Banakian dancer who is very famous in India. These are very talented and well educated people. Both her parents and his parents live in the house. That's another great thing about India. They take care of their parents. There are no old folks homes. When I walked in they're all sitting around a television set watching "Santa Barbara!" There they are in India watching this soap opera so I asked them where it was coming from? They explained about Star TV and the satellite. I didn't see a satellite dish and I asked them what was up, and they said, "We're connected with a friend of ours." Evidently, some guy in the neighborhood had a dish, and for fifty rupees a month he would allow you to run a line and connect it to his set-up! There were lines running down all the alleys and it looked like some sort of spaghetti convention! I realized then that India was in for some changes.<sup>33</sup>

The growth of transnational media in India, largely influenced by American mass culture, suggests several important questions: How do the Indian people perceive Americans? Do they distinguish between the American citizens in their country and the American exports they find in their stores and on their airwaves? How was Livingston treated in India? He offered the following answers to these questions:

One thing I was asked again and again as an American in India was, how could the United States support the oppressive government of Pakistan when India, a US ally, is the biggest democracy in the world? Actually I agree with them, but I couldn't really tell them that US arms manufacturers were making a bundle selling their goods to Pakistan. For the most part though, as an individual, I was treated great and I never felt threatened. There's a very large network of State Department representatives throughout the country and the Indian people have a very positive view of musicians. Musicians in India are treated with great respect.<sup>34</sup>

When I'd travel with my family, people would get up on the bus or on a train and let my kids sit down. Sometimes an old man would motion to one of the kids and have him sit in his lap. I didn't know if this was a carry-over from British colonial times, but they were very kind to us. I think a great number of Indians perceived America as a great nation, and the kids of India saw us as a source of a new culture that was going to take the place of their old culture.

When the media came to India, it came in a big way. MTV is all over India these days. Now the kids are not only able to hear Michael Jackson or see him on a poster, they were able to see him perform on MTV, and you can imagine what a difference that makes. The older people would complain about MTV in India. It was Asian MTV, and it was toned down a little, but it was still MTV. There were pictures of women in bikinis, and similar images that were offensive to the older generations of Indians. "Why do we want to ape the West?" This is something I heard quite a bit. "We're aping the West and it's not good!"

This is where I believe my program makes a positive impact. I don't have girls in bikinis on stage with me; I have local musicians. I like to think of my program as the opposite of MTV,

more of an "organic" affair rather than a synthetic-electronic presentation. And, as I've mentioned, we would regularly entertain families and lots of kids. I tried to accent the things our respective cultures had in common, and I did that by presenting the "cowboy way" as an honest and decent way of carrying on. You've got to ask yourself the question, "What would Roy Rogers do?" (Bob laughs) I'm sure our audiences in India perceived a real difference between Michael Jackson's MTV specials and my "Cowboys and Indians" program.<sup>35</sup>

In Livingston's travels to the neighboring countries of Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, he found his audiences and the public equally charming, but the political environment was sometimes volatile and dangerous. "The State Department sent me into some hellacious areas," he said. "I remember one time they had to smuggle me out of the American Center in Dhaka, Bangladesh in an ambulance."<sup>36</sup> Livingston was at the American Center for a press conference when a riot broke out between laborers on strike and government forces. The strikers burned cars, vandalized buildings, and when the violence spread to the American Center, the staff called for an ambulance claiming that Livingston, who they described as a visiting professor of musicology from the University of Texas, was having heart palpitations. The ruse worked. Livingston and the six staff members made it to safety in the ambulance.

In Pakistan, Livingston encountered another politically charged environment that had a profound effect on a treasured musical tradition.

In 1989 I was in Peshawar, Pakistan, just east of the Khyber Pass. I was up there to play for the Afghan refugees and they were everywhere. The Russians were in Afghanistan. At the local university, I met an instructor who was a sitar player and I invited him to join me for the show. We agreed to meet in my hotel room that afternoon to rehearse.

(It's important to realize that) Pakistan used to be part of India. When the partition happened in 1948, all the Muslims went to Pakistan and all the Hindus went to India. Even though they relocated, the Muslims left a great deal of their culture behind in India, and the Hindus left a great deal of their culture behind in Pakistan; their musical instruments, customs, and their epic stories for example. In Pakistan there were still many folks who liked



the classic Indian stories, especially the older people. They loved to hear the stories, and many Pakistanis still loved to hear Indian music.

When I met the sitar player at the hotel, he said, "I'm the last sitar player in Pakistan." He explained that the Pakistani government had systematically erased any marks of Indian culture left in his country. "The government doesn't encourage anything Indian," he explained. "I am still teaching," he said, "but now the young students don't want to go through the discipleship of twelve years of practicing, bringing water, chopping wood, and working with the teacher." We talked about Ravi Shankar, the famous sitar player, how he had a guru that was his music teacher. Shankar had to practice scales for twelve years before he was ever allowed to play a song much less go on stage. "That musical tradition of master and student," he told me, "is dying in Pakistan."<sup>37</sup>

Livingston empathized with the loss of such a great tradition and pointed out that western music also faced challenges in maintaining its heritage. Fortunately, in the United States there are extensive efforts underway to save traditional American music genres from obscurity. Museums, universities, private collectors, and certain institutions such as the Library of Congress and the Center for Texas Music History at Southwest Texas State University are all engaged in preservation projects. Livingston also explained that the majority of contemporary music in the United States was market driven. The government did not dictate musical formats. This was an aspect of American culture admired by many of the people Livingston met in his travels, but he realizes that the free market can have toxic side effects on both American and foreign cultures. The "star making machinery behind the popular song"<sup>38</sup> is the same cultural juggernaut that produces the endless stream of aesthetic simulacra that sends shivers through the ranks of concerned parents and traditionalists worldwide. To those Indian families concerned about their children "aping America," Livingston explains that there is much more to American culture than Madonna, with her sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll message, and that many American families share their concern. He intentionally steers away from pop references in his program and prefers to stay the course of the benevolent and heroic cowboy, an image he describes as "one of the purest things that foreigners know about America."<sup>39</sup>

In his own way, Livingston has carried on the Indian musical tradition of master and student. Since 1998, he has enlisted his son Tucker to accompany him on guitar and vocals. Tucker is not only an extremely talented musician, his presence on stage

brings a new dimension to "Cowboys and Indians." The essence of family is one of the few cultural institutions revered internationally, and when Livingston and Tucker team up, the audience sees a father and son traveling the world, working together, reaching for the same altruistic goal. The combination significantly expands the outreach potential of the program. According to Livingston,

The fact that Tucker and me, father and son, were up there playing together really spoke to them. I had a thousand people come up to me and say, "It's just wonderful to see a father and son up there on stage. When we look at America, it doesn't seem like families matter very much. We don't get a good picture of America and how they treat their families. But to see father and son relating so well and being so close . . . it's really wonderful. It's one of the best lessons you have in your program."<sup>40</sup>

Bringing Tucker on board is consistent with Livingston's effort to include other musicians in his program. Since his first show in Cochin in 1986 when a local drummer and tabla player joined him on stage, Livingston has aggressively recruited indigenous musicians.

Rounding up local musicians for the shows is an important part of our cultural exchange, and I believe that it makes a real difference in what we do. Music is a universal language and when the audience sees their own musicians on stage playing with a couple of cowboys, the message of friendship and unity really hits home. Plus, the musical blend was something that none of us had ever heard before.<sup>41</sup>

Livingston's "cultural exchange" is a real-time exchange that enables an audience to witness the harmonious product of music forms largely considered incompatible. This musical confluence illustrates the ability of seemingly disparate cultures to come together aesthetically and to lay the foundation for a greater cooperation economics, politics, and human rights. As Livingston says, "If we can get along musically, we should be able to get along in other ways as well."<sup>42</sup> When Livingston and Tucker perform with local musicians, they create an indelible cultural link between Livingston's family and the families in the audience, between the eclectic mix of musicians on stage, and between the people of America and the people of India.

Incorporating local musicians into his program is not without its challenges. Many of the players Livingston approached argued

that eastern and western idioms were incompatible. Time signatures, tone intervals, and countless other technicalities clouded the issue, but, as seen in the following example, Livingston effectively set such differences aside to propagate a successful musical synthesis:

In 1999, Tucker and I were in Oman and we were scheduled to play with a group called the Royal Omani Orchestra. The Sultan of Oman was a music nut and supported a number of different musical groups. One of his groups was the Royal Omani Orchestra. They had two or three *udes*, which is like a lute, they had a *quanoon*, which is similar to a hammer dulcimer but it's played with little finger thimbles, darndest thing you ever heard, and they also had violins and dumbats, which are a very interesting type Arabic drum.

The leader of the orchestra was from Britain. He was hired by the Sultan to put together the

group and direct it. We were all there at the concert site that afternoon, doing our rehearsals and I suggested that we do something together. The British bandleader wasn't too crazy about the idea and came up to me and said, (here Livingston imitates a highbrow English accent) "You know, this Anglo-American thing, this cowboy thing, we don't care about that! Why don't you just play your program and we'll play ours, and everything will be fine. Because, really, Arabic music simply does not go with American western music!" And I said, "I'm tellin' ya, it'll work."

Well, about this time the orchestra was playing a drum beat that sounded like a cross between American Indian war drums and Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away." So I pick up my guitar and start singing, "Kaw-Liga was a wooden Indian standing by the door," the Hank Williams classic, and the Arabic players just loved it! The British band director acquiesced and we learned "Kaw-Liga"!





That night when we played, there were two American generals and their wives in the audience. One was the head of the Central Command, General Zinni, he's the guy that took over from Schwartzkopf, and the other was General Jones, the Commandant of the Marine Corps. The rest of the crowd were Arabs who had been educated in the United States. They were the elite that ran the country of Oman. Everybody showed great appreciation for our program and for the Arab music, but when we got together with the orchestra and played "Kaw-Liga," they just went crazy.<sup>43</sup>

After the show, one of the Arabic gentlemen in the audience came up and said to Livingston, "I never understood country music until now." The gentleman, who happened to be the Cultural Minister of Bahrain, explained that he had gone to college in Alabama and one of his favorite pastimes was to rent a car and travel around the South listening to country music on the radio. "I loved that music," the minister said, "but I never really understood country music until I heard your program. Through your narration, the stories you tell with the songs, you've explained what I've been listening to and loving all along!"<sup>44</sup> Bob went on to explain the scene backstage:

After I finished talking to the cultural minister, the two generals and their wives came backstage and said to Tucker and me, "You guys are doing more good for public relations and morale in this area than an aircraft carrier out in the Persian Gulf! We want to give you some medals." And they gave us these special medals that were for civilians that did great things for America and told us things like, "You did a great job for me today soldier," that kind of thing. Tucker and I were eating it up. We thought we were in a John Wayne movie! And then they said, "We want you to go with us! We think you guys could just tear the troops up!" So the next day we went to Bahrain with them, to a huge naval base, and ended up on an aircraft carrier doing several shows for a pack of beer-drinking sailors and marines. We had a great time.<sup>45</sup>

The State Department remains enthusiastic about Livingston's program and has expanded it considerably:<sup>46</sup> In 1998 and 1999, they arranged for a series of shows in the Middle East, including the show in Oman mentioned above with its interesting excursion to the naval base in Bahrain. In 2000, Livingston and Tucker returned to India, Nepal, and Pakistan. Livingston recently returned from a tour of Morocco. He speaks highly of

the State Department's people in the consulates and embassies where he's traveled: "The USIS people I've dealt with for the most part are just as sharp as tacks. We can feel comfortable knowing that our national interests are being well served in the world."<sup>47</sup> The State Department, through cultural programs like Livingston's "Cowboys and Indians," has worked hard to make new friends and keep the ones America currently has.

At the end of our last interview, I mentioned to Livingston that the mission of the State Department was quite clear, but I asked him to expand on the nature of his personal mission:

There's a selfish mission of course, and that is to go visit these wonderful countries, play these great places, and get paid for it! After fifteen years of doing it, the money is pretty good. They're flying me in and out of the various countries and paying for everything. I'm able to take my son with me and give him some work. But basically, I really love doing this. I'm continually trying to develop the "Cowboys and Indians" show. I keep writing more material that's suitable for cross-cultural programs in different countries. It's basically a vision of world peace and I believe it's a formula that works.

The cowboy image is very important. I mentioned before that the USIS has sent me into some hot spots like Yemen and Bangladesh where the government was falling. I never felt really threatened, however, because I was viewed as a curious figure, a cowboy, a mythical figure with good intentions. If there's one positive image of America that people around the world have, it's the image of the cowboy. Plus, I'm a musician, and in India and many Middle Eastern countries musicians are well treated and revered. Music in those countries is an honorable vocation. It's not like America where so many talented young musicians are encouraged to "keep their day job." So, with this peculiar combination of cowboy and musician, I'm not viewed as a threat. That gives me a little extra elbowroom to operate in tight places and set a soothing tone.

When I get on stage and start singing songs and telling stories about American folklore, cowboys, and explaining the message behind the songs, I don't care whether it's in Bombay or Bahrain, Katmandu or the end of a dusty little road in southern India, I draw the people in and get them involved. I let them know that there are cowboys all over the world and that we're all in this together. We all have families, we all love and cry, we want to be educated and do

our best for our kids, and we're all part of the family of man. The audience would always say YES to these ideas. They would enjoy the show, laugh and for that one moment at least, they would witness an aspect of American culture that was almost 100% good and as far as I'm concerned, that's just great!<sup>48</sup>

Prior to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the information arm of the State Department had its hands full making new friends, maintaining relationships with old friends, and refurbishing an ailing American image overseas. United States multi-national corporations like Nike, McDonald's, and countless others are viewed by many of our international neighbors as implements of economic imperialism. Further, the perception of the United States as an international bully flaunting its military might is a particularly tenacious stigma to overcome. Indeed, such lingering tensions between the United States and smaller countries, religious splinter groups, and foreign economic partners might fittingly be described as "McWorld versus the Jihad." But since the tragedies of September 11, a new paradigm is in play that might be more fittingly described as "Civilization versus the Jihad." Given this new and unsettling global environment, the need for America to reach out and win the hearts and minds of

the world community has taken on a necessity and immediacy unrivaled in modern history. Understandably, the State Department has put cultural programming on the back burner to deal with the pressing challenges at hand. American bombs and technology have prevailed over the Taliban, American troops and intelligence agencies have crippled the al-Qaeda network, but these accomplishments will stand only as tactical victories unless a strategic, long-term mission focusing on cultural exchange and mutual understanding is embraced by the American people and our government.

In time, presidents, premiers, and diplomats will meet in the gilded halls of governments to discuss the War on Terrorism and its complicated global ramifications. Eventually the talks will turn to collateral damage, humanitarian aid, and nation building. Plans will be made to soothe the suffering and rebuild the goodwill between nations, and those plans will eventually "trickle down" to the rank and file in the form of treaties, policies, and relief efforts. It's questionable however, whether the "hearts and minds" of the common folk will reflect the sea change handed down from on high. To insure any lasting harmony between societies, new ideas and modes of communication must be embraced by laborers, farmers, teachers, local leaders, students, artists, writers—in short, the people who *are* the

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Bob & Tucker Livingston rehearsing with the Royal Omani Orchestra in Oman. Photo by Bill Wilbur.



culture. Here, Livingston provides us with a template. He illustrates through his “Cowboys and Indians” program that seemingly small adventures into the nesting places of the ethnic “other” can make a significant difference in developing meaningful ties with another lifestyle. With his cowboy hat and guitar, Livingston has successfully delivered the State Department’s message that “we’re the good guys” and that “we’re all in this together” to thousands of people in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, the Middle East, and Morocco.<sup>49</sup> These encounters have been warm, close, and personal, and, judging by Livingston’s correspondence and press files, they have left a lasting and positive impression with audiences around the world. Livingston’s program clearly illustrates the wisdom of sharing cultural commodities and focusing on those things that people

everywhere hold dear. Only through such exchanges can we be assured of any “enduring freedom.”

Hopefully, in the months to come, the State Department will reinvigorate their cultural programs. When they do, I’m confident that Livingston will be on the international cowboy trail singing Jimmie Rodgers songs and performing with an eclectic group of local musicians trying to touch the hearts and minds of people in their own back yards. Given the success of “Cowboys and Indians,” the State Department might consider expanding on Livingston’s message and methodology. They should assemble a small army of cowboy singers and songwriters, arm them with Stetsons and guitars, and deploy them to teach the people of the world how to yodel. ■

## NOTES

1. Interview with Bob Livingston, April 10, 2001.
2. Interview with Freddie Krc, March 15, 2001. Fred Krc is a country performer based in Austin, Texas, who has traveled extensively in Europe with his musical group, Freddie Steady and the Shakin’ Apostles. Krc reports that a number of English, German, and Italian music venues have patterned themselves after the romantic saloon of the Wild West. See also, the “Willkommen in der Welt von Karl May” website. Karl May (1842 – 1912) was a German writer of Wild West fiction who has had a profound effect on twentieth-century German popular culture. May, for all practical purposes, was to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European market what Beadle and Adams were to the American market during the same period with their famous “Dime Novels.”
3. See “Lucky Luke,” a website: [www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/Shores/5270/lucky-luke.htm](http://www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/Shores/5270/lucky-luke.htm).
4. See “Happy Country Dancin’ . . . Country Dance in Japan,” a website: [www.country-dance.com/](http://www.country-dance.com/). Also of interest, “Macaroni Westerns . . . Spaghetti Westerns in Japan,” [www.pscweb.com/macaroni/](http://www.pscweb.com/macaroni/).
5. Theodore Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), 24.
6. Kevin Mulroy, ed., *Western Amerykanski Polish Poster Art & the Western* (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western Heritage and Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 73.
7. Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931), 244.
8. Joe B. Franz and Julian Ernest Choate, Jr., *The American Cowboy the Myth & the Reality* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 27.
9. Webb, *The Great Plains*, 244.
10. Thomas Hobbes, quoted in “Thomas Hobbes,” *Lexicon Universal Encyclopedia*, John P. Doyle, ed. (New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc., 1983), 192.
11. Bill C. Malone, *Country Music, U.S.A.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), from the table of contents, the title to Malone’s third chapter: “The First Country Singing Star: Jimmie Rodgers.”
12. Two out of three of these cowboy icons were native Texans: Orvon (Gene) Autry was born on September 29, 1907 in Tioga, Texas; Woodward Maurice (Tex) Ritter was born on January 12, 1905 in Murvaul, Panola County Texas; and Roy Rogers, the lone non-Texas native, was born Leonard Franklin Slye on November 5, 1911 in Cincinnati, Ohio.
13. Telephone conversation with Bob Livingston, February 4, 2002.
14. Ibid.
15. Bob Johnston is a legendary record producer in the country/rock genre, having recorded such recording giants as Simon and Garfunkel, Bob Dylan, and Johnny Cash. For detailed biographical information, go to [www.bobjohnston.com/disc2.htm](http://www.bobjohnston.com/disc2.htm).
16. I was the guitar player on these sessions. They were called the “Sangria” sessions because before we would begin recording, Jerry Jeff would brew up a large, multi-gallon tub of Sangria Wine.
17. Interview, April 10, 2001.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Telephone conversation with Bob Livingston, February 5, 2002.
22. Interview, April 10, 2001.
23. Discussion with Livingston, February 8, 2002.
24. Interview with Bob Livingston, May 1, 2001.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Penny M. Von Eschen, “Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz, Race, and Empire during the Cold War,” *Here, There and Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture*, Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May, eds. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 163.
29. Ibid., 170.
30. Interview, May 1, 2001.
31. Ibid. I asked Livingston how his comments about Saddam Hussein got back to the State Department. He said that there was always a representative from the State Department at every one of his shows and that they write a report about each event. This report was then passed up the chain of command.
32. Interview, April 10, 2001.
33. Interview, May 1, 2001.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Interview, April 10, 2001.
37. Ibid.
38. Joni Mitchell, “Free Man in Paris,” *Court and Spark*, Electra/Asylum Records, 1974.
39. Interview, May 1, 2001.
40. Ibid.
41. Interview, April 10, 2001.
42. Telephone conversation with Livingston, February 5, 2002.
43. Interview, May 1, 2001.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. The United States Information Service (USIS) is no longer an autonomous agency within the State Department. Over the last few years the USIS has been absorbed into the State Department. Livingston assures me however that the USIS’s mission is alive and well and that he continues to work with Cultural Affairs Officers at the State Department. He cites budget considerations and reductions in personnel as the main reasons for the change.
47. Interview, April 10, 2001.
48. Interview, May 1, 2001.
49. Interview, April 10, 2001.

# ***Texas Music Archives:***

## ***The Southwestern Writers Collection at Southwest Texas State University***

Steven L. Davis



Lizard skin boots made by Charlie Dunn for Jerry Jeff Walker, with Walker's initials. Jerry Jeff Walker papers. Photo by Brienne Corn, courtesy SWWC.

*As an assistant curator at a literary archives collection, I 'm sometimes called upon to explain why something called a "Texas Music Collection" exists as part of the Southwestern Writers Collection. It's a good question, and the best answer, I've found, is to pull out one of our most treasured items. No, it's not the 1555 edition of Cabeza de Vaca's La Relación y Comentarios, considered the first written account of Texas and the Southwest and one of the rarest books in the world. This is something even more special to many Texans. It's a little handmade book of original songs, put together by Willie Nelson when he was about 11 years old. When you see Willie's songs written down on paper, it's easier to understand how musicians belong in something called a "Writers" collection. Because musicians, as we all know, are also poets.*



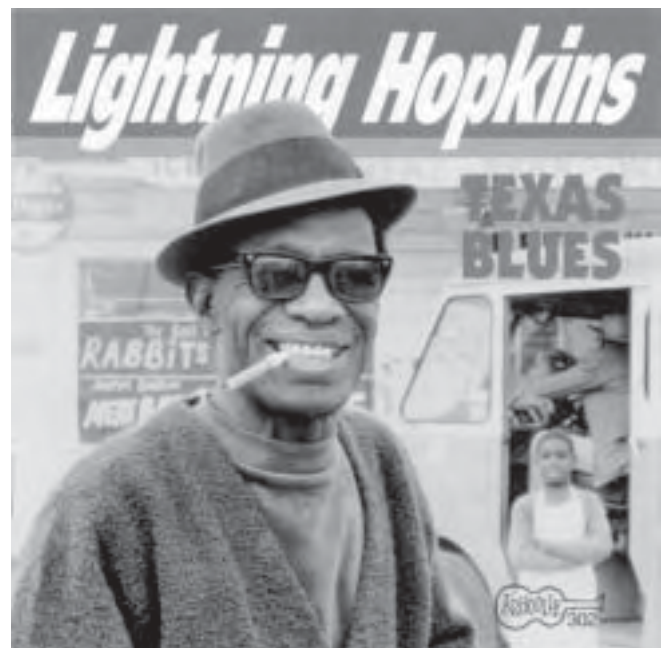


Willie Nelson songbook, written at age 10-11. Front cover, Table of Contents, and "Starting Tonight" song lyric. Willie Nelson papers. Photo by Brianne Corn, courtesy SWWC.

Willie's songbook is just one item in an extensive collection on the legendary star; also included are pages of handwritten song lyrics, concert programs and posters, tour itineraries, photographs, and publicity clippings. One can find several files on Nelson's "Farm Aid" initiative in the 1980s: correspondence, annual reports, newsletters from grassroots farm organizations, publications from various state departments of agriculture, concert memorabilia, grant proposals, and applications for funding. The Nelson papers contain material on one of the singer's bleakest periods—his trouble with the Internal Revenue Service in the 1980s and 1990s. The archives contain a notice of seizure from the IRS, as well as government documents and inventories for the 1991 auction of Willie's property. The Nelson papers are rounded out by a staple of any archival collection, representative artifacts, such as Willie's bandanas, sunglasses, t-shirts, and even a pair of his well-used running shoes, complete with mismatched shoelaces.

Another good question that people often ask is "How do you get all this stuff?" In the case of Willie Nelson, as well as most of our other archival collections, the answer is very simple. The materials are graciously donated by benefactors who wish to see that the collections are preserved and made available for future

researchers. The Willie Nelson collection came through the efforts of our founding donors, Bill and Sally Wittliff, along with Willie himself, Bud Shrake, and Jody Fischer.



Courtesy Arhoolie Records

The Willie Nelson collection will prove to be a valuable treasure trove of detailed information for future historians. The tour itineraries, for example, detail where Willie and his band were on specific dates. The snippets of song lyrics captured on hotel stationery trace the development of some of Willie's best-known hits, along with a few songs that never got off the ground. The correspondence from fans offers first-hand testimony about how the singer affected numerous lives; some even make the case for Willie as a secular saint. The "Farm Aid" files illuminate the inner workings of an organization that reflects Nelson's sense of social obligation to his fans.

The Southwestern Writers Collection, founded in 1986, is one of the youngest of the major archival repositories in the state. We consider ourselves a "living collection" in many ways. Not only are many of our donors and artists still living, we also continue to grow steadily as we collect and preserve the works of significant Texas and Southwest writers, musicians, and filmmakers. We are committed to collecting Texas music materials that represent the state's rich diversity, from country and Western Swing to blues, polka, rock and roll, conjunto and Tejano. To that end, we've gathered hundreds of representative recordings from performers in all genres. In terms of our primary source materials, the archives, what we collect depends on what people



Courtesy Arhoolie Records

choose to donate. We've had tremendous success so far, partly because of our responsible stewardship and good word-of-mouth reputation. The first thing we do after taking in a collection is basic preservation work—rehousing all material in acid-free folders and boxes and storing them in a climate-controlled facility. Though every archives collection has a large backlog of uncataloged material, we have made it an institutional priority to expeditiously "process" the collections—which means that the materials are organized and a detailed inventory and guide to the collection is compiled. We place all of our "finding aids," as these guides are called, on our worldwide web site.

The Internet revolutionized academic research, and institutions that make finding aid information available via the Web are a welcome sight to scholars. A researcher can quickly locate archival collections and review online what specific material is available for research. The Web has certainly brought widespread attention to our own music holdings, as well as our other archival collections. The numerous inquiries we receive from researchers all over the world are good indicators of the widespread interest in Texas music history.

Our Texas Music Collection includes a number of prominent Texas musicians and musical styles. We are honored to be the archival repository for the Texas Western Swing Hall of Fame, which has been led for several years by Al Dressen. Among the holdings are rare treasures from the King of Western Swing, Bob Wills. The collection contains Wills's blazer, along with a hat he wore







Courtesy Arhoolie Records

and a fiddle he played. Additional artifacts are stage outfits worn by the Light Crust Doughboys, along with Laura Lee McBride's fringed leather costume. The collection is rounded out by numerous sound recordings, rare photographs, awards, clippings, posters, momentos, and other items that pay homage to Western Swing legends such as Milton Brown, Smokey Montgomery, Cliff Bruner, Tommy Duncan, Johnny Gimble, Hank Thompson, Leon "Pappy" Selph and many others.

Country music is represented by our holdings on Willie Nelson as well as contributions from Jerry Jeff Walker, who played at the dedication of the Southwestern Writers Collection. Walker has donated a pair of his Charlie Dunn boots, as well as his handwritten lyrics for his song honoring the revered bootmaker. Long-time *Austin City Limits* producer Bill Arhos has recently donated numerous personal archives from his twenty-odd years of guiding the celebrated television show. Arhos's materials are like having a backstage pass to *Austin City Limits*, and they include candid photographs, rare ephemera, concert posters, program schedules, press packets, newsclippings, correspondence, sound recordings, and magazines.

Another very exciting area of the Texas Music Collection is the material relating to conjunto and Tejano music. Included in the collection are copies of some 12,000 recordings made by Mexican-American performers in Texas and the Southwest from the 1920s to the 1980s. As any student of Texas history knows, there remains a wide disparity between Anglo and Mexican interpretations of specific historical events. Too often, historians in the past have relied solely on written Anglo accounts. The Mexican view was often overlooked or ignored, many times

because no published work on particular historical events existed. Yet as Américo Paredes so vividly demonstrates in his groundbreaking book, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*, a vital response to Anglo history can often be found in the music, particularly the corridos, popular among Mexican communities. In that sense, these 12,000 songs offer immense potential for future researchers interested in Mexican perspectives. Much of the story of the Mexican presence in Texas remains to be told, and some of it will undoubtedly appear in future research into collections such as this.

Another important collection of note is the *Selena: Como la flor* archives, donated by *Texas Monthly* Senior Editor Joe Nick Patoski, who wrote an acclaimed biography of the murdered Tejano superstar. The archive consists of early drafts of the book, extensive research into Selena's life, interviews with dozens of musicians and others who knew Selena, correspondence, hundreds of Selena-related clippings and other publications, documents from the Yolanda Saldívar trial, and an extensive record of Patoski's relationship with his publisher. The collection is useful to researchers in many ways, from a possible examination of how the Anglo media portrayed Selena, to her relationships with others in the Tejano music industry. Among the most fascinating aspects of the collection are the oral interviews. Only a very small portion of the interviews ended up in the pages of Patoski's narrative, yet a wealth of information was collected. For example, one of Patoski's interviewees was Laura Canales, a pioneering female singer in the male-dominated world of Tejano music. Patoski and Canales discuss Selena in their conversation, yet they also speak at great length about the issues women face in the music industry. That subject goes beyond the scope



Courtesy Arhoolie Records



Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, Showboat Hotel, Las Vegas, March 13–June 7, 1959. Texas Western Swing Hall of Fame collection. Photo courtesy SWWC.

of Patoski's biography and is waiting to be ferreted out by enterprising researchers. Patoski's extensive interviews function very much as a collective oral history of Texas's Tejano music scene.

Stevie Ray Vaughan is the subject of another major research collection donated by Joe Nick Patoski and Bill Crawford, co-authors of *Stevie Ray Vaughan: Caught in the Crossfire*. The collection has received intense attention from several researchers, but much more remains to be analyzed. Patoski and Crawford assembled a wealth of research material for their biography, and the collection contains dozens of bootleg recordings spanning the entire breadth of Vaughan's career, from his early days with

the Cobras in 1975 to his final performance in Wisconsin on August 26, 1990. As in the Selena papers, the rich oral interviews with numerous musical personalities are of particular interest. Included here are discussions with B.B. King, Ray Benson, W.C. Clark, Kim Wilson, Buddy Guy, Angela Strehli, and Austin club owner Clifford Antone. The conversations not only illuminate Stevie Ray Vaughan's personality and musicianship; they also document the rise of Austin's music scene in the 1970s and 1980s.

Patoski has written for *Texas Monthly* for some 25 years now, and he has also donated his personal writing archives to the



Southwestern Writers Collection. At *Texas Monthly*, Patoski has covered a wide variety of stories, from bargain-hunting excursions along the Texas-Mexico border, to meditative explorations of the rugged reaches of Texas's mountain country. But for much of his tenure at *Texas Monthly*, Patoski has been the magazine's principal music writer. As such, he has received hundreds of promotional materials over the years, such as press kits and sound recordings covering everything from hillbilly punk to gospel rap. Patoski also served for a time as the manager for Joe "King" Carrasco and the Crowns, a popular Texas party band that blended Tex-Mex with New Wave. Material from his time with Carrasco is also present in the collection, including Joe King's royal cape and crown.

*Texas Monthly* magazine is one of the signature archival collections held at SWT. In 1994 the magazine agreed to donate its enormous archives to the Southwestern Writers Collection, and the materials fill an entire warehouse annex. *Texas Monthly* has covered Texas music extensively over the years, and its archives offer additional opportunities to music researchers.

Thanks to a grant from the Texas State Libraries and Archives Commission in 1999, we have completed the massive task of processing the first five years of the magazine's editorial archives: 1973-78. Through internal memos, correspondence, notes from editorial meetings, responses from readers, and other files, researchers can piece together the ways in which the state's leading mainstream publication reported on the state's music.

Another *Texas Monthly* writer, Mike Hall, was once known as the leader of an Austin-based band, The Wild Seeds. Since joining *Texas Monthly's* staff, Hall has written stories on personalities ranging from Lance Armstrong to Roky Erickson. In the spring of 2000, Hall conducted interviews with several musicians for a feature story on a curious phenomenon: why so many great musicians hail from Lubbock. Hall envisioned the story as an oral history, and, as such, he conducted lengthy interviews with West Texas luminaries Jimmy Dale Gilmore, Joe Ely, Butch Hancock, Jo Harvey Allen, Caroline Hester, Terry Allen, Angela Strehli, Delbert McClinton, Lloyd Maines, Waylon Jennings, and many others. Hall has since donated the tran-



scripts of his interviews to the Writers Collection, where they stand ready for researchers.

Another popular magazine with great potential for research is *Hispanic*, a national publication that reaches over one million readers a month. In 1999 *Hispanic* donated its editorial archives from 1994–98 to the Southwestern Writers Collection. The materials consist of manuscripts, correspondence, memos, research, press kits, and editorial suggestions. The archives allow unparalleled insight into *Hispanic's* coverage of Latino music, which is of particular interest to historians examining the relationships between Hispanics in Texas and the larger Hispanic world.

Additional donations have come in during the last year, such as vintage concert posters donated by Nancy Coplin and Bruce Willenzik. These document performers as diverse as Mance Lipscomb and the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Elevators.

The business aspect of the music industry is often as fascinating as the musicianship, which is why archives that relate to music management are also very valuable resources. The Southwestern Writers Collection has been fortunate to receive important music business archives in recent months. We have worked closely with SWT's Center for Texas Music History (formerly the Institute for the History of Texas Music), which helped bring in the Mike Crowley Archives and the Roger Polson and Cash Edwards Archives; their Under the Hat Productions represented artists such as Terri Hendrix and Ray Wylie Hubbard. Mike Crowley managed the careers of several major Texas artists, including Tish Hinojosa, Jimmy Dale Gilmore, Hal Ketchum, and Joe Ely. The Crowley archive contains massive amounts of information detailing the financial, legal, and public relations work necessary to manage artist careers. The files hold tour itineraries, contracts, publicity materials, legal correspondence, videos containing rare footage of television appearances, accounting statements, snapshots, marketing reports, catalogs, and news clippings. Researchers can explore everything from venue contracts for Tish Hinojosa's Border Tour in 1994–95 to publicity efforts made on behalf of Hal Ketchum, which include a coffee mug featuring the singer's smiling face. The Southwestern Writers Collection also holds selected materials on the life and career of legendary music producer Harold "Pappy" Daily, donated by Daily's grandson Mike.

The Southwestern Writers Collection's holdings represent just one part of an extensive network of private and public collections that exist throughout the state. Devotees of Texas music often envision establishing a single high-profile Texas music



Photo of Laura Lee McBride wearing fringed leather costume which forms part of the Texas Western Swing Hall of Fame collection. Photo courtesy SWWC.

museum and collecting institution that can bring together the diverse collections under a single roof. The Southwestern Writers Collection and the Center for Texas Music History will continue to collaborate on future archival projects, but such a museum and collecting institution probably won't happen in the absence of a multi-million dollar financial commitment. The best bet may be to elect Willie Nelson as Lieutenant Governor, and then he can convince the state legislature to appropriate \$80 million towards the enterprise. After all, it worked for Bob Bullock and the State History Museum.

In the meantime, we at the Southwestern Writers Collection see ourselves as a partner with the other diverse collections within the state. As such, we will continue to do our best to serve the interests of donors, researchers, and the general public by continuing to collect, preserve, and make available important archival collections that reflect the unique heritage of Texas and her cultural arts. Those who wish to join us may contact any of our staff at 512-245-2313 or visit our website at [www.library.swt.edu/swwc](http://www.library.swt.edu/swwc). We plan to continue to grow and flourish as we join with others who share our vision. ■



## Narcocorrido: A Journey Into the Music of Drugs, Guns, and Guerrillas

By Elijah Wald, Harper Collins Rayo

Even longtime chart buffs were surprised when Jessie Morales, a virtually unknown 18-year-old from Los Angeles, debuted at No. 1 on *Billboard's* Top Latin Albums last June. But Morales's album was a tribute to singer/songwriter Chalino Sanchez, a legend of the California Mexican immigrant community who was murdered in 1992. Almost 10 years after Sanchez's death, his influence is far greater than he would have ever imagined, and his name still sparks fascination. Elijah Wald, author of the new book *Narcocorrido: A Journey Into the Music of Drugs, Guns, and Guerrillas*, calls Sanchez "the defining figure of the L.A. (corrido) scene." Wald said Morales's unexpected success epitomizes the disconnect between a new underground culture and American mainstream society. He believes that the dominant cultures need to understand subcultures to avoid racial strife. Corridos originated as a nineteenth-century Mexican folk ballad, accompanied mostly by an accordion and 12-string guitar (bajo sexto), that, like storysongs, described tales of Mexican revolutionary heroes. In recent decades, corridos focused on conflict between Mexican outlaws and U.S. authorities. However, the new breed of U.S.-based corrido acts led by Morales and Lupillo Rivera borrow from gangsta rap's appeal. "A lot of poor kids are seeing that the only people in their communities who have money, fancy cars and beautiful models hanging off their arms are the drug traffickers," he said. "And it makes it a very romantic thing."

On the other end of the spectrum are the genre's elder statesmen, Los Tigres del Norte. Though the band got its start in the early 1970s with seminal narcocorridos such as "Contrabando y Traicion" and "La Banda del Carro Rojo," the group has remained a chart force with its activist political songs. For example, "El Centroamericano" from the group's new CD *Uniendo Fronteras* deals with an undocumented Central American immigrant's attempt to pass for Mexican. "He pretends to be Mexican so he will only be deported as far as Mexico," Wald

said. "Los Tigres are always coming up with new things. Meanwhile, all the other guys are still just singing about drugs and guns."

Though Texas's contributions to the corrido scene have been minor in recent decades, Wald visited key cities along the Texas-Mexican border. Texas of course, was the birthplace of the seminal "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez," a perfect example of the confrontation Wald describes. The song depicted an actual event that occurred on Cortez's ranch near Karnes City in 1901. His brother was killed by a sheriff while being questioned about a stolen horse. Cortez killed the sheriff and fled on horseback. He was eventually acquitted by a Corpus Christi jury, which found he had acted in self-defense. Over 50 versions of "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez" had been recorded by 1958, when University of Texas professor Americo Paredes wrote a book about the episode and its historical context titled *With His Pistol In His Hand*. Wald hitchhiked around Mexico and South Texas, interviewing musicians and fans. What do we learn of import from his travels? That despite the corrido's humble origins, the modern narcocorrido is essentially a Mexican cousin to gangsta rap. And, like the mainstream music industry, sales are largely driven by controversy and celebrity. There is little historical context on U.S.-Mexico relations and the drug war in *Narcocorrido*. Wald's first-person account also wears after a while, and could have benefited from more judicious editing. Still, Wald's book fills a gap. Corridos provide a valuable insight into a large, but largely invisible, segment of the Mexican and American population. "The corrido is sort of a picture of how the world looks to people in the street," he said.

**Ramiro Burr**

*San Antonio Express-News*

Research assistance was provided by editorial assistant Doug Shannon.

### Steven L. Davis

is assistant Curator of the Southwestern Writers Collection at Southwest Texas State University. He has published many reviews and articles about literature of the American Southwest and served as curator for many exciting exhibits of materials in the Southwestern Writers Collection at SWT.

### Craig D. Hillis

is a veteran of the Texas music scene. He was a guitar player with Michael Martin Murphey, Jerry Jeff Walker, and Steven Fromholz in the 1970s, an artist representative and record producer with Moon Hill Management in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and an Austin nightclub owner (Steamboat and the Saxon

Pub) in the 1980s through the mid-1990s. In 1992 he returned to the University of Texas to complete his Master's degree in American Studies and continues in that department working on the Ph.D. His dissertation topic is the Austin music scene in the 1970s. Hillis is the Texas Music History Curator with the New Braunfels Museum of Art and Music and has a book coming out this fall on UT Press, *Texas Trilogy: Life in a Small Texas Town*.

### Kevin E. Mooney

is a lecturer of Musicology at the University of Texas at Austin, Southwest Texas State University, and Armstrong Community Music School of Austin Lyric Opera. He contributed an essay for the first issue of

## Southern Exposure: The Story of Southern Music in Pictures

By Richard Carlin and Bob Carlin, Billboard Books. Foreword by John Hartford.

*Southern Exposure* presents a slice of photographic history of mostly Anglo, mostly male, mostly amateur music-makers of the South, their instruments, and various performance contexts. The aim of this book is to explore how pictures tell stories of the musical life of the southern states. The authors wanted to address the questions "What is southern music? And how is it popularly portrayed?" (p. 8). In an attempt to answer these rather large questions, they have compiled seventy-nine photographs dated from the 1880s to around 1950. The book is divided into eight sections with the following topical headings: Music Making at Home, Rural and Industrial Working Music, Folk Instruments and Their Players, Music as Part of Worship and Ceremony, Music for Dancing and Recreation, Street Musicians and Semiprofessionals, Ragtag Child Bands, and Small-Town and Big-City Performers. One of the book's strengths lies in its diverse collection of images exhibiting a variety of contexts for music making in the South.

Slightly less than half (thirty-three) of the photographs date from the 1930s. This emphasis is understandable considering that one of the authors' primary sources for these pictures was the Library of Congress's Farm Security Administration (FSA) archives. The FSA was one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's relief agencies enacted during the Depression era. The purpose of this program was both to document the vanishing life of the southern *Musical Traditions* (New York: Schirmer, 2002), published in collaboration with the Smithsonian Folkways Archive and edited by Jeff Todd Titon and Bob Carlin. In addition to Bob's co-editor role with the series, Richard Carlin's essay, "Irish Music from Cleveland," can be found in the third volume of this series, *British Isles Music*.

Besides North Carolina, other southern states pictorially referenced in *Southern Exposure* are Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana, West Virginia, South Carolina, Mississippi, southern Ohio, Oklahoma, and Texas. Twenty-six photographs are included without any reference to a state.

The visual representations of music making in Texas are limited. There are two pictures in the section titled Rural and Industrial Working Music, one of a group of African-American prisoners "singing in time to the movement of their axes" at Darrington State Prison Farm, Sandy Point,

Texas (p. 35), and another of an Anglo railroad work gang laying track in Lufkin, Texas (pp. 38-39). Besides a mention in one annotation that Bob Wills started out selling Light Crust Dough (p. 151), the only other Texas reference is found in a photograph of Otis and Eleanor Clements, who were members of Doc Schneider's Texas (p. 149).

The textual material of this collection includes a six-page introduction briefly addressing such topics as "Who Are These Folk?"; "The Myth of the South"; "Family Gatherings"; "The Camera's Eye"; and "The Urge to Collect." In addition to a brief introduction at the beginning of each section, the authors provide short annotations to the individual photographs, including bibliographic information where known, such as the picture's date, location, photographer, source, and the names of the subjects photographed. While the authors "tried to allow the images to speak for themselves," the annotations often include circumstances surrounding the creation of the image. Some of the pictures included in this collection are portraits. Others are less formal snapshots of southerners making music. Whether posed or spontaneous, the authors use each photograph as a springboard into a brief description of the historical context of music making. To cite one example, the annotation accompanying the mid-1930s photograph of Slim and Wilma Martin in the studio of WALB radio extends beyond description toward interpretation and history, when the authors write: "These kind of husband-and-wife, semiprofessional musicians would often have a fifteen-minute show on a local station (if they could find a sponsor). There usually wasn't any pay, but they could advertise other local appearances and also sell songbooks or records if they had any. Their repertoire would typically be a mix of favorite old ballads and songs, sentimental popular hits, and hymns" (p. 138).

The reader must take the authors at their word, since the information beyond the bibliographic specifics of the photograph itself is not documented. Indeed, a bibliography or suggestions for further reading would improve this collection.

One of *Southern Exposure's* strengths lies in its diverse collection of photographs of southern music activity in a variety of contexts. Unfortunately, for the reader interested in Texas's role in the southern musical contributions to American music, there are comparatively few photographs of Texans. Nevertheless, this book should not be ignored by those interested in visual representations of music making in the south.

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*The Journal of Texas Music History*, and his article, "Defining Texas Music: Lota May Spell's Contributions," was published in the Spring 2000 issue of *The Bulletin of the Society for American Music*. He has also contributed several articles to the forthcoming *Handbook of Texas Music*.

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