

WOMEN IN TEXAS MUSIC: STORIES & SONGS

By Kathleen Hudson



Shelley King just appeared on the September 2014 cover of *Buddy Magazine*, a Dallas-based magazine that has documented the history of Texas music since Stoney Burns created it in 1973. I wrote my first feature on Texas music for *Stoney*, attending the Willie Nelson picnic at Carl's Corner. "Hudson, be sure and get closer. That is my advice for using a camera. Get closer," Stoney admonished me. I took that advice into my photography and my writing. Get close to the details. I first heard Shelley King at the Old Settler's Reunions; she was rocking a small stage under a tent. Off to the side. I was blown away by her stage presence as well as her music. The THMF showcased her at a Schreiner coffeehouse, and she became part of my oral history on women of Texas music (archived at kathleenhudson.net). I once danced to her music into the wee hours of dawn at the Kerrville Waterin' Hole, a venue that now regularly showcases Josh Murley and Someone Like You. I stay up late on Thursday for this. She reminded me that we had also shared a now defunct Kerrville venue called The Java Pump. Ah...memories. Now she is building a fire...the title of her 7th CD.

Murley and SLY were the first band the THMF showcased at a series we call 290Texas.com Shelley King was our November showcase. Her music, her writing, her performance and her presence have been making waves and starting fires in the music world. That night with an intimate group of fans, Shelley, along with Tony Redman and Perry Drake, riveted our attention with stories and songs. We heard the story of every song she performed, and husband/drummer Perry showed me a few licks on the

snare drum. I now have a snare drum in my tiny house, a place to practice the rhythm he taught me. That is intimacy at a concert.

When I asked for one more song, my personal anthem "Drivin' By Myself," I reminded her I had danced to her all night at the Waterin' Hole once. She responded, "I play and you dance." I noticed the young Asian lad across the room, seeming to want to move, and I asked him to join me. What a finale we had. Stephen and Kathleen dancing. Yes, Shelley is compelling and inviting in concert. She took off after that to open for Marcia Ball on a West Coast tour. They must have created some heat.

She began the evening at the Walnut Spring Preserve in Johnson City (290texas.com) with a rousing rendition of "Walk On," and I watched several on the front row in that clubhouse room sing along! Yes, many knew her songs, and the ones that didn't could not quit talking about their new discovery. Nothing pleases me more than to point to something I love and watch others light up too. We heard the story of the day she met her biological father, divorced from her mom, and we heard the end of that story. "They are married again."

Not only is she the first Texas State Musician (2008), but she is also on the Texas Commission of the Arts touring roster. She has carved a niche for herself with her approach to the music, an approach that includes passion, fire, rhythm, writing and stories. Always the stories. From her roots in Arkansas and her penchant for the gospel sound to her audiences in Europe, the impact of her music ranges wide afield.

One CD, entitled "Armadillo Bootleg No. 2," contains a collection of songs recorded live or as demos. Carved painted leather boots and lace adorn the cover, a fitting symbol for Shelley King. King wrote 10 of the songs on her new CD, "Building a Fire," and she delivers all her songs with the sultry, passionate, fiery gusto that has become her trademark. We got to hear the entire package on November 1 in a small room while audiences of thousands also enjoy her energy from a distance. We were up close.