

ALLYCE'S ATTIC

by MARY ALLYCE



These Hills Sing – And Dance

We're deep into Winter Texan season. In Arizona they were "Snow Birds". In South Florida, the preferred term was "Winter Visitors". By whatever name, folks who migrate south of the Mason Dixon Line for the winter and their shorter term counterparts, "tourists", are the lifeblood of many areas and the Texas Hill Country is no exception.

The gentler weather is certainly the biggest enticement, but available amenities follow closely. Each destination has its own allure. In Florida it's golf and the beach. Winter Texans, in large measure, come for the honky tonks, dancing and music - Texas style. What is Texas music?

Heck if I know.

I wrote an article on the subject for M.Y.T.H. magazine (Music of Your Texas Heritage) titled "From Joplin to Joplin", referring to Scott Joplin and Janis Joplin – both of them Texas musicians. The number of musicians and music styles produced in the Lone Star State is staggering. Anyone who thinks it's just classic country has not navigated the wealth of venues in the Hill Country and heard everything from country – old and new – to southern rock, classic rock, folk, Americana, blues, blue grass, even rap. There is absolutely no way to categorize Texas music as one genre.

If visitors like to play music as

well as listen, they can jump into any one of many jam sessions, rub guitars with and learn from musicians whose resumes run from coast to coast, from Austin to Nashville and beyond. The Hill Country is home and host to Grammy award winning singers and songwriters. Such is the music business that no matter how successful you are, you have to keep your music out there with gigs, tours and the happily growing house concert venues, so it's possible to hear and see musicians from Willie Nelson to Kinky Friedman, Arkey Blue to Walt Wilkins, Susan Gibson and Bruce Robison to Art and Lisa, Kevin Higgins and Barbara Malteze and too many others to mention. Last month in the pages of this magazine there were columns on women in Texas music, one on the Uvalde Opera House, reviews of CD's and concerts, news of musicians on tour and even a write-up on a concert in a cave.

Yes, the Texas hills are definitely alive with the sound of music and most of it comes with a two-step, waltz, swing or polka beat and a low to nonexistent cover charges. Find that elsewhere.

Unfortunately, I was also compelled to write, "One person's 'music' is another person's 'noise,'" and noise ordinances have reared their ugly heads too often. Bandera wrestled with one and most recently it was Fredericksburg. A word of caution – venues and the music they present can and do disappear under pressure, both legal



and financial, taking the music and musicians with them. It's that joyful musical "noise" that draws tourists and those who choose to spend the winter (and their money) here because it's unique and it's affordable.

Moreover, the abundance and affordability of music in the Hill Country is exceeded only by its quality and you won't find that combination anywhere else. Don't take it for granted. Do pull on your dancin' boots, pick a town, pick a venue, pick a style, try a house concert if you haven't already and just get out there and enjoy! It's our privilege and our pleasure.

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