



The Kerrville Folk Festival A View From A Broad by Linda Kohl

Memorial Day weekend was upon us, and I was ready to head north for my favorite event of the year. My husband never cared much for the atmosphere there's lots of hairy legs and armpits, and that's just the women, so he stayed behind at the YO Hotel with a friend. Meanwhile, I threw on my hippest looking dress, guitar pick earrings, and sandals and set out with my friends Lizzie and Una to attend the first night of the Kerrville Folk Festival. The weather was ominous, and the thought of slogging through mud and getting pelted by rain was not appealing, but we undaunted and we persevered. Alas, all was beautiful and the only vestige of unusual weather was a cool breeze flowing gently through the grounds.

We started with dinner. Two gyros and a frito pie later, we grabbed our wine and wandered among the vendors' stalls of tie dye clothing, goat milk soap, handmade guitars, and jewelry, and as always, we did some serious people watching!

We ran into Una's friend, Shake Russell, who was scheduled to perform that evening, and asked him what he was up to. He'd just played a gig the night before with Clint Black at the Nutty Brown Cafe in Austin.

"The place was packed--it was great!" He said with a smile. Shake and Clint go way back. They collaborated years ago and have written half a dozen songs together that Clint recorded in his career, including, *Put Yourself In My Shoes*, which was a

huge hit for Black back in the day.

Shake's biggest news was that Miranda Lambert is recording a song he wrote in the seventies, *Wouldn't Know Me*. Yeah, it's an old song that I'd forgotten about--I don't even play it anymore! One day my wife told me that her friend heard that Miranda was putting it on her new album. "I actually had no idea!" he told us. I went to her Facebook page to look for myself and sure enough, it was listed on there. It's on a double album with 24 cuts, and my song and one other are the only two that she didn't write herself.

That speaks volumes, but wait a minute. How is it that a songwriter is not informed that his song is going to be on someone else's album? Know he said, shaking his head. That's not protocol, and I haven't had a chance to meet her to find out the whole story. I don't know why she put my song on her album. We do, Shake.

After he'd heard the news, he played a gig near Miranda's hometown of Lindale, TX. It was there that he met a woman who told him that "You Wouldn't Know Me" was one of the first songs Miranda learned when she started playing guitar. John de Flores over at Mineola at the Picking Parlor taught her that song," Shake said.

I asked him about his signature song, *Traveling Texas*, and how he came to write it. I was living in Houston and was friends with lots of people at Channel 2, NBC. In 1985, Ron Stone,

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Shake Russell & Michael Hearne

the head guy there, asked me to write a song for the upcoming Texas Sesquicentennial. They were producing a video for it. He said to be sure to get 'The Eyes of Texas' in there, so I wrote the song and recorded it, and I brought it to him. He loved it and used it for the documentary, and now it's become the theme song for Stone's travel documentary, *The Eyes of Texas*, which features different Texas locales each week. Yep, I hear my song every Saturday night when I tune in!

He was heading to Alamosa, Colorado immediately after the show to record his latest album, which Don Richmond of the Riffers (who was also appearing on stage that night) is producing at his Howling Dog Studio. We discussed the burgeoning music scene in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. His long-time music partner, Michael Hearne, lives in the area and hosts a big music festival there every year. We wished Shake safe travel and thanked him for catching us up on his life.

The music had already started, so we quickly made our way to the concert to catch the first set. By the time the Riffers were up, we had moved backstage and got a birds eye view of the performance and also visited with many of the musicians. Before we knew it, it was time for the last set.

With the recent death of musician Jimmy La Fave, who traditionally closes the Friday concert, one would think an impenetrable pall would be cast on the entire evening. Not so. It was wonderful--magical even! On a starlit night, a huge group of performers paid homage to the songs and life of the beloved musician.

The Kerrville Folk Festival never disappoints, but this time, it was truly outstanding. It was a great tribute to a great musician. If you missed it, that's a shame. Somewhere deep inside of me, I know that, from wherever he had to come, Jimmy didn't . . .

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