



Even though I usually write about one woman in Texas music, I must write about two right now! Both women have new albums out on Alligator Records, based in Chicago. Both are Texas women with national and international followings. Marcia Ball has about 30,000 likes on her FB page, and Shemekia Copeland is listed at 28,000. At time of counting. I see patterns and synchronicity everywhere; these two women can be talked about in the same conversation...and column.

Both are in my book on the women of Texas music, and Marcia is the bridge between my first book on Texas Songwriters and my second book on the women. Marcia was born in Louisiana, but chose Austin soon enough (on a road trip to California) to become Freda and the Firedogs in the Cosmic Cowboy Scare (thanks Fromholz). Shemekia is daughter to the Houston-based Texas Twister, Johnny Copeland. He was a founding board member of my music foundation in 1987, lending his performer support. And he was an interview in my first book.

Ah, I love this tapestry of patterns that show up in my musical journey.

Marcia's new album, "Shine Bright" is getting lots of airtime on Sirius XM Bluesville, a channel I have on when I drive.

I heard her interview and her stories about the songs. She gave Shelley King, Carolyn Wonderland and Gary Nicholson shout outs, and she talked about her band members, her co-writing, and her philosophy. On her new album: "It is a ridiculously hopeful, cheerful record."

She joined Alligator Records, created by Bruce Iglauer, in 2001 with her album "Presumed Innocent." She went on to receive 10 Blues Music Awards, 10 Living Blues Awards, 5 Grammy nominations and the 2018 Texas State Musician recognition. In her interview she reported that

Gary Nicholson was joking about getting songs to her about food and parties. Then she proceeded to sing one. Marcia is amazed, as we all are, at the 5 decades of music that are part of her life. She started with piano lessons at 5. This tall gracious woman does not carry her wounds in public or share her hardships; she lifts us up.

A Bruce Iglauer aside: I was at the Memphis Blues Awards in 1986. Willie and BB King were co-hosting. I wanted to interview them. Then Sam Phillips showed up at a party. I innocently asked him to speak to me, we turned on my tape recorder and talked. Later that night he took me to hear Jerry Lee Lewis at Hernando's Hideaway. Bruce asked me later, "How did you get that interview." "I just asked as he walked by," I replied. Maybe the red leather pants helped?

Shemekia was playing the Monterey Bay Blues Festival in Monterey when I interviewed her the first time. She rocked out on the spot Jimi burned his guitar. That interview was years ago. Now I listen to her talk about her new Alligator album, "American's Child," and I hear some new perspectives. She said, "In this climate it's important to speak the truth and say what's true." Then on her album she takes on social justice. Worth a close listen, even as you move your body to the rhythm.

Yes, both women will move you...heart, mind and body. -KH

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