

# TEXAS MUSIC

EXTRA

May '14

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From left, Emmylou Harris, Willie Nelson and Lyle Lovett returned to a familiar set. (Scott Newton)

## Studio 6A Revisited

The first *Austin City Limits* Hall of Fame induction ceremony brought the show back to its original venue for one night: KLRU's Studio 6A on the University of Texas campus. Before *Austin City Limits* moved to its current home at the Moody Theater, the walls of Studio 6A absorbed nearly four decades of Austin music history. Held on Saturday, April 26, the invitation-only event was filled with special performances and standing ovations for performers and honorees. The Hall of Fame's first class of inductees included Willie Nelson, Stevie Ray Vaughan &

Double Trouble, famed UT football coach Darrell Royal and show creator Bill Arhos. During the induction, the show's longtime executive producer, Terry Lickona, called Nelson the heart of *Austin City Limits* and Arhos its spirit, both helping to make the show a musical institution. With an introduction by actor and Texas native Matthew McConaughey, Nelson kicked off the night with a rousing rendition of "Whiskey River" and was soon joined onstage by



Buddy Guy honored Stevie Ray Vaughan. (Scott Newton)

Lyle Lovett and Emmylou Harris. During their 11-song set, the three performed "On the Road Again," "I Saw the Light" and Townes Van Zandt's "Pancho and Lefty." Before a short break, Nelson, Royal and Arhos were honored with awards depicting the Austin skyline. Nelson was inducted by McConaughey, Arhos



From left, Doyle Bramhall II, Robert Randolph and Willie Nelson perform during the finale. (Scott Newton)

by Lickona and Royal by former UT football coach Mack Brown. Surrounded by family, Royal's wife, Edith Royal, accepted on the coach's behalf, stressing how much the music meant to Royal, who rarely missed a taping.

## TEXAS MUSIC EXTRA

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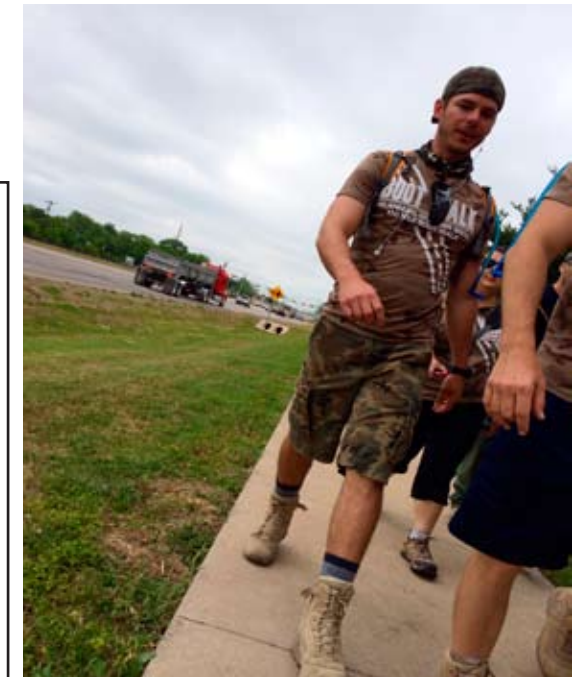
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## Walking Shoes

Sore-footed country artist Granger Smith admits his 100-mile Boot Walk – from Austin to Fort Hood May 4-8 – took a toll. "Wednesday was the worst," he told *Texas Music*, "but my pain doesn't compare to anything our soldiers go through. People pull up in their cars, and we never know what to expect. This year a combat vet pulled up and talked to us about his friend, who died in Iraq just two months ago." This marks the fourth year Smith – partnering with the Boot Campaign – has hosted the five-day trek, aimed at providing financial assistance to military families using proceeds



from the walk. Still, this year the walk took on special significance after the recent Fort Hood shooting, which Smith says didn't deter the walkers. "It just made them more eager to do it," he says. "I can't describe the feeling of walking through those gates, and soldiers telling me how much what I do matters to them. Some said 'I'll never forget this' and 'We really needed this.'"

## Country Girl

Miranda Lambert, whose new album, *Platinum*, comes out June 3, admits she's puzzled by the trouble other female country acts have getting airplay. "I don't know what's going on," she tells *Billboard*. "I don't know where the connection is off as far as airplay. This is just one of those waves where females are struggling a little bit, but we'll come back around and be a force to be reckoned with." That's not to say the 30-year-old songbird isn't proud of being country with a capital "C." "Country music is on top right now," she notes. "I might be a little prejudiced toward country, and happy about it, but we're popular music. It makes me proud we're getting the spotlight, because we deserve it." Due to her popularity and that of husband Blake Shelton, the duo are now country's superstar couple – a position that sometimes makes Lambert upset. The constant tabloid coverage on the state



of their marriage and whether she's pregnant has been "hurtful." "None of it is true," she declares. "All of a sudden this page turned, and it was like overnight we couldn't go to a restaurant. There's people outside waiting, flashing cameras in our face, and I'm going, 'What just happened?' Nobody told me about this. I thought this was only in the magazines I bought at the airport, and now we're in them!"



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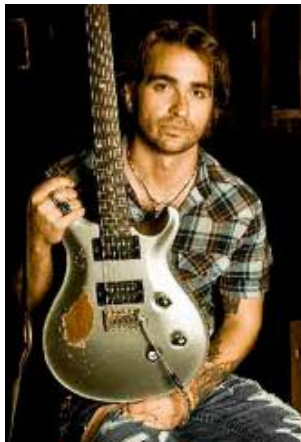
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## Hippie Love Punk



Cody Canada and the Departed began work on a new full-length album this month at the historic Arlyn Studios in Austin, planning on a release date this fall. The follow-up to their 2012 album of original material, *Adventus*, the new record finds former Cross

Canadian Ragweed frontman Cody Canada returning to his musical roots after several years spent pursuing other creative paths. Since the amicable exit of vocalist/guitarist

Seth James last year, Canada has seized the opportunity to take the lead of the now four-piece band. With Canada's songwriting and vocals at the forefront again, long-time Ragweed fans have something to look forward to. "It's a hippie love punk record," Canada quips. "Hey ... that could be a good title."

## Dose of Reality



The reality television series *Troubadour, TX* returned April 26 with all-new episodes to

finish out its third season on the Texas Plus syndicated network. The new episodes have even more of a focus on the music, getting back to the basics of what it takes to make it as a Texas singer-songwriter. The final seven episodes of the season include a variety of Texas music, including country, pop, Americana and alternative. Returning troubadours include Zane Williams, Josh Grider, Cody Johnson, Curtis Grimes, Michaelis and Kylie Rae Harris, while the final episodes also showcase both new talent, including Andrew Ripp and Jack-opierce, and troubadours living the dream, such as Ray Wylie Hubbard, Rodney Crowell, Jack Ingram, Wade Bowen, Roger Creager and more. Co-creator of the series Stacy Dean Campbell narrates the docu-reality series, and Kris Kristofferson appears each week in a segment where he offers advice to the participants.

## Texas-Sized Celebration



Eighteen minutes – that's how long it took country music fans to snap up all 70,000 tickets for next year's 50th anniversary of the Academy of Country Music Awards. The awards show is set for April 19, 2015, at AT&T Stadium, the home of the Dallas Cowboys, in Arlington. The show and its surrounding activities typically take place in Las Vegas, but plans were

announced during the 49th annual ACM Awards for a move to Texas next year in honor of the show's 50th anniversary. "I'm so proud of what Texas is to country music," says Cowboys owner Jerry Jones. "It's almost like Friday night football in Texas. It's a tradition." Blake Shelton – better known to Texans as Miranda Lambert's better half – and Luke Bryan will return as ACM hosts.



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Aaron Behrens (Ghostland Observatory) plays with the Midnight Stroll.

**NEON DESERT MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
May 24-25 • El Paso  
[www.neondesertmusicfestival.com](http://www.neondesertmusicfestival.com)

Over the past three years, more than 30,000 fans have attended the Neon Desert Music Festival, and, for the first time, the popular outdoor event will take place over two days when it takes over Cleveland Square Park in Downtown El Paso on Memorial Day weekend. "It just gets better every year," organizer Zach Paul says. "We're going to fill downtown with amazing music, artists, vendors, visitors and locals for an incredible weekend-long event." Zedd, a 2014 Grammy-winning electronic music producer and DJ, will join Grammy nominee Wiz Khalifa, MGMT and Calle 13 as the headliners. The diverse lineup also includes another Grammy nominee, Capital Cities, and Latin Grammy nominee Hello Seahorse!, along with Panteón Rococó, The Bloody Beetroots, A\$AP Ferg, GTA, Crystal Fighters, Classixx and more. More than 20 artists are expected to perform, including groups playing hip-hop, electronic, Latin, indie and rock. Tickets cost \$75 and can be purchased on the website.

### MAY

**22-6/8**

**Kerrville Folk Festival**

Quiet Valley Ranch  
Kerrville  
[www.kerrville-music.com](http://www.kerrville-music.com)

**23-25**

**Fredericksburg Crawfish Festival**

Marketplatz  
Fredericksburg  
[www.fbfcrawfish.com](http://www.fbfcrawfish.com)

**National Polka Festival**

Various venues  
Ennis  
[www.nationalpolkafestival.com](http://www.nationalpolkafestival.com)

**24-27**

**Llano's Blue Bell and Bluegrass Festival**

Historic Courthouse Square  
Llano  
[www.llanochamber.org](http://www.llanochamber.org)

### JUNE

**7-8**

**Texas Folklife Festival**

HemisFair Park  
San Antonio  
[www.texasfolklife festival.org](http://www.texasfolklife festival.org)

**12-15**

**ROT Biker Rally**

Travis County Expo Center  
Austin  
[www.rot rally.com](http://www.rot rally.com)

**14**

**Texas Blueberry Festival**

Downtown Nacogdoches  
[www.tbfnacogdoches.org](http://www.tbfnacogdoches.org)

**26-29**

**Luling Watermelon Thump**

Downtown Luling  
[www.watermelonthump.com](http://www.watermelonthump.com)

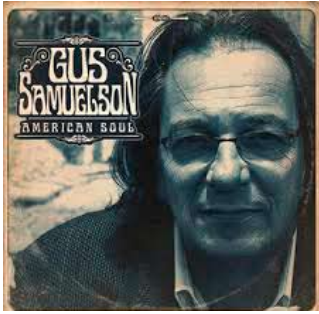
## new releases

April 15	Randy Rogers Band	<i>Homemade Tamales: Live at Floores</i>	Room 8
April 15	Rodney Crowell	<i>Tarpaper Sky</i>	New West
April 15	Ray Bonneville	<i>Easy Gone</i>	Red House
April 27	Philip Gibbs	<i>Box Canyon Blues</i>	Self
April 29	Old 97s	<i>Most Messed Up</i>	ATO
April 29	The Footnotes	<i>Comin' Home</i>	Rodeo Cold
April 29	Asylum Street Spankers	<i>The Last Laugh</i>	Yellow Dog
May 3	Leslie Kraflka	<i>on•ward</i>	Smallz
May 6	Josh Grider	<i>Luck &amp; Desire</i>	Amp
May 6	Elias Haslanger	<i>Live at the Gallery</i>	Cherrywood
May 13	Radney Foster	<i>Everything I Should Have Said</i>	Devil's River
May 13	Carrie Elkin & Danny Schmidt	<i>For Keeps</i>	Red House
May 13	Jonny Burke	<i>EP</i>	Dreamcar
May 13	Levi Weaver	<i>Your Ghost Keeps Finding Me</i>	Rock Ridge
May 13	Collin Herring	<i>Some Knives</i>	Self
May 13	Asleep at the Wheel	<i>Having A Party: Live</i>	Cleopatra
May 27	Mark Jones & Twenty Paces	<i>Breaking Even</i>	Self
May 27	Kelly Willis & Bruce Robison	<i>Our Year</i>	Premium
May 27	The Ghost Wolves	<i>Man, Woman, Beast</i>	Plowboy
May 27	Nick Verzosa & The Noble Union	<i>Love In Principle</i>	Tiyaga
June 3	Mingo Fishtrap	<i>On Time</i>	Blue Corn
June 3	Miranda Lambert	<i>Platinum</i>	Sony
June 3	Rosie and the Ramblers	<i>Whatever You Need</i>	Self
June 3	Shy Blakeman	<i>Live at Billy Bob's</i>	Smith
June 17	Willie Nelson	<i>Band of Brothers</i>	Legacy
June 17	Willie Nelson	<i>It Will Come to Pass: The Metaphysical Worlds and Poetic Introspections of Willie Nelson</i>	Omni
June 24	Matt Harlan	<i>Raven Hotel</i>	Berkalin
Aug. 5	Nicholas Altobelli	<i>Mesocyclone</i>	Dalton

## Gus Samuelson

*American Soul*

Self-Released



Gus Samuelson has been a DFW radio personality for years, a music biz professional for decades and (from the sound of it) a gifted guitar picker since birth. He's been

nurturing his musical chops all the while, sometimes fronting the country/R&B band Swampadelic, sometimes co-writing or sitting in with higher-profile regional artists. But he's made what may be his most enduring work yet with *American Soul*, setting aside the full-tilt band and the well-known friends to put the focus on his songwriting, his voice and his guitar. Despite the gamble of pulling so much focus to himself, the result doesn't bear a trace of vanity: Samuelson wears humility and intimacy well, singing original songs ranging from hard country ("Shade of Black & The Blues") to nimble blues ("In The Water") to sweet, lounge-friendly acoustic pop ("I Don't Want To Wait") with the easy grace of a talented guest who's just happy to share the warmth of your living room for an hour. The gospel-tinged good vibes of "Love Is A Strong Word" and "I Know Where To Go" fairly radiate out of the speakers, serving as particularly high points in a fine collection of songs from a man whose "side gig" is clearly more than a hobby and no less than a passion.

– MIKE MESSICK

## Trudy Lynn

*Royal Oaks Blues Café*

Connor Ray



A swaggering, thundering shouter who backs up from no one, Houston native Trudy Lynn continues to work the club scene and record. Her latest finds the Queen of the Blues in a

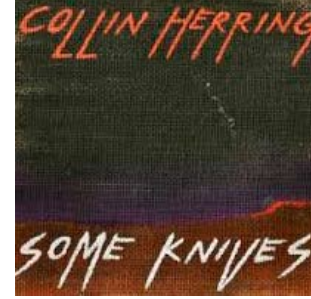
retro frame of mind, and she dials her delivery back just a notch for somewhat minimalist versions of tunes that reach back over half a century and put her voice in surroundings that feel natural compared to some of her previous albums, which featured bigger, brassy productions. Working with Houston journeymen Rock Romano, Steve Crase and Jonn del Toro Richardson, Lynn is perfectly at home on jumpers like "Red Light" as well as quieter pieces like "Street Walkin' Daddy" and "Feel It." The opening cover of Jay McShann's "(I'm Gonna) Play the Honky Tonks" sets the whole album up nicely, and when Lynn closes with "Whip It To Jelly," the double-entendre sex quotient feels exactly right. Featuring lost nuggets by forgotten early female writers like Clara Smith, Eloise Bennett and Viviane Greene, the album feels like a priceless collector's item discovered accidentally at a garage sale.

– WILLIAM MICHAEL SMITH

## Collin Herring

*Some Knives*

Self



It's been five years since Collin Herring released an album, and his fifth studio effort, produced by Matt Pence of Centro-matic, is shrouded in shadow. "Psychopaths like me don't shiver," the Fort Worth native bellows on tense opener "Psychopaths," as he sings of obsession, disconnection and stubbornly loving the wrong woman atop jangly electric guitar and pounding drums. Eerie pedal steel, played by Herring's father, haunts "Kicked Around," the tale of a long-term relationship grown passive and stagnant, while Pence's dynamic drums are the standout on the spare, slow-burning, electro-tinged "Different Ways," a murky ode to the grey areas that keep individuals from connecting with others. Equal parts country, folk and punk rock, Herring's plaintive vocals recall the best of both R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe and alt-folk king Conor Oberst, with earnest, poetic lyrics to match. *Some Knives* exposes the darkest corners of doubts and fears, showing how the past and future are ever intertwined despite our best attempts to sweep past hurts away. Or as Herring puts it on the slyly titled "Woke Up the Same": "Last words are strange, oh how they linger / Oh, how you've changed."

– ALLIE ESSLER

## Leslie Kraflka

*|on•ward|*

Smallz



With less harmonica and mandolin, Leslie Kraflka's second album, *|on•ward|*, could encourage comparisons to Jewel, though it's not likely to leave a lasting impression.

While her voice is serviceable and her sense of narrative sleek, her lyrics suffer at times from obvious or contrived rhymes, such as "scen'ry/green'ry" (from the otherwise standout track "South Texas Fall"). Her rendition of the Ray Wylie Hubbard/Hayes Carll co-write "Drunken Poet's Dream," which she recasts by singing as the voice of the muse, treads dangerously close to sounding like an outtake from a Lucinda Williams session, but it also shows that with better material Kraflka has potential. "Whiskey High" seems destined to be the audience sing-along from this set, deceptively simple and unchallenging yet with a sense of humor. If anything, she's trying too hard on some of her songs, like "Beauty," by singing counter to the melody and sounding neither polished enough nor gritty enough for that technique to be effective. Under the wing of co-producers Terri Hendrix and Lloyd Maines, she may develop into a fine performer, but ultimately this album is the musical equivalent of a bowl of frozen custard – smooth, sweet and forgettable. – MARIE BRADEN

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A graduate of Texas A&M, Armando Sanchez of Clear Lake has spent most of his adult life in the music business, part of it at Sony as sales director for Latin music distribution. But after a couple of decades working with a major label and distributors, Sanchez struck out on his own a few years back with South Central Music, a distribution company dealing primarily in records for the Latin market. Recently Sanchez has also formed a new label and is investing in select local acts.

### Is the Latin market growing overall?

It's hard to tell because of shifts in technology, immigration and assimilation. Without continuous immigration from Mexico, the market shrinks because the younger demographic assimilates so rapidly. I've always thought politics plays a bigger role in the Latin market than any other factor. If immigration laws are more strictly enforced,

the population of Mexican nationals flattens or decreases, and so do Latin music sales. I think digital sales account for only 10 to 15 percent of overall sales in the Regional Mexican category, according to *Billboard*, so the physical CD is real important in that niche.

### You're an aficionado of the Houston conjunto/Tejano scene, which seems to have shrunk. What happened to that market?

It's struggled to retain the under-30 demographic. As Tejano fans from peak years of the '90s have aged, their kids aren't necessarily listening to Tejano music. And if they are, they're probably cherry-picking songs online, not buying the full album. Although there's plenty of young talent in Tejano music, they don't have the opportunity to develop given the limited representation of Tejano music on terrestrial radio.

I work with lots of Tejano artists and also singer-songwriters on the general market side, and oddly there are parallels to their business models. They can't rely on mainstream radio support, so they need to tour as much as possible to promote the new album. And they're putting out their own records. That said, a few Tejano clubs in Houston and around Texas can still pull full houses on the right night with the right band. I'm talking 1,000+ for a big group like La Mafia. So the market is still there, but certainly not as big as in its '90s heyday.

### You've recently started your own label. What was your motivation, thought process, rationale?

Getting involved as an investor in Mike Stinson's last project [*Hell and Half of Georgia*] really got me interested in possibly starting a recording company. I'd thought about it long before that, but the math never worked. It still doesn't. But physical distribution is shrinking, not growing, and there's probably never the perfect time to



Sanchez (right) with wife Eva and Los Lobos' Dave Hidalgo.

start a business. It's like deciding to propose to your girlfriend or having kids; you can always come up with valid reasons to wait. At some point you just have to do it or it'll never happen. I'm looking at where my role will be in this business in the coming years, and the recording arm allows me to be more involved in the creative process. It's rewarding to be able to say, "This record doesn't get made without me." I've often been handed master and artwork files and thought, "I'd have done this or that differently." So here's my chance.

### With the massive changes in the structure of the music business, what's the current model for distributors?

The emphasis has shifted from physical distribution to digital – and now streaming – services, so for larger distributors it's mostly scaling back operations to the level of demand for physical goods and continuing to add catalog, especially for digital distribution and streaming, where costs are minimal because they already own the recordings. My company is much smaller, so I've always been focused on artists who are their own label. What do they need, and what role can I fill? My model hasn't changed since day one: keep overhead

low to be able to withstand the lulls, identify great music makers at any level who may have a distribution need I can fill, do right by the artist, and consider any new avenues for selling music.

### You distribute a good number of popular Latin music acts. Is there a different strategy with those acts versus your rock and country clients?

The main difference is that my Latin music business is still chain-driven for the most part. We're able to place a few titles each month into Walmart stores. With my general market catalog, I focus on indie retail via my largest indie distribution account, Alliance Entertainment – my best channel to reach indie stores nationally.

### You're working with Max Baca and Los Texmaniacs on a new release.

Max approached me with a project that's more mainstream than his previous three Texmaniacs records, which are more conjunto-based. Max wanted to make a record that could reach more music fans, but he's long been a sought-after bajo player, so he's been pulled into that musical current for a long time. Right now, he's to the bajo what Flaco Jimenez is to the accordion: an ambassador of the instrument.

I perceived that Max had outgrown the box the business had placed him in and needed at least a bigger box. That's what we've tried to do with this record. Max recruited Steve Berlin of Los Lobos to produce and had his Texmaniacs for the session work. He also brought in some high-profile guest talents like Augie Meyers, Joe Ely, Rick Trevino, David Hidalgo, Alejandro Escovedo and Kevin Fowler. So what came out on the other end was a kind of gumbo that's Texas music – a fun, very accessible record.

– WILLIAM MICHAEL SMITH