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Aug. '14

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"He was a true legend," Houston-based radio host Gus Garza says of Sustaita, "in his own style and his own time."

'One of the Last Big Singers'

Roberto Sustaita had some voice – the "voz de oro," some would say – that caused fans to either swoon the moment it floated away from speakers or melt when experienced live. He crooned. "He didn't need a microphone," Roberto Rodriguez says of the artist he had the chance to play with after graduating in 1965. "He was one of the last big singers." Sustaita was revered as a legend in the Chicano music scene – one of the pioneers of what is now considered Tejano music – and was compared to the likes of Little Joe Hernandez, Joe

Bravo and Isidro Lopez. Some even considered him to be the Texas version of Pedro Infante, hailed as one of the greatest actors and singers in the Golden Age of Mexican cinema. Sustaita died July 21, three weeks after being diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver. He was 81. Inducted into the Tejano Music Hall of Fame in 1989, Sustaita came from a generation that pioneered Tex-Mex music, a blend of polka and popular Mexican music of the time. In his early years as a musician, there were two options



Sustaita (left) was a Big Band legend.

for Mexican bands – orchestra or conjunto, a smaller ensemble. "There was nothing else," Rodriguez says. "But he could do anything." Lucinda Cano, Sustaita's daughter, says her dad never stopped singing. "Even after his vocal cords were damaged from his cancer," Cano says, "he still tried to sing."



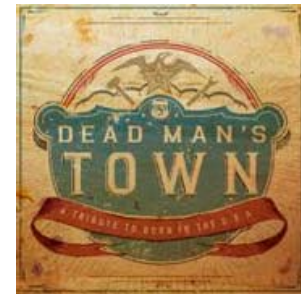
The "Welcome to Lindale" sign – featuring its most famous resident – got an unwanted redesign. (KYTX)

Defaced

Apparently, someone had way too much time on their hands when they decided to vandalize a Miranda Lambert sign welcoming visitors to her hometown of Lindale, Texas. The

unknown vandal may have thought it was funny to draw a mustache on the city's welcome sign, defacing the image of the popular country superstar, but authorities and citizens of Lindale don't think it's a laughing matter. Lindale Police Chief Daniel Somes let the public know these acts of vandalism won't be tolerated. "You have people who represent the city well and who we're proud of," Somes says, "and someone takes the time and effort to do something like this. It's very disappointing."

Anthem Revisited



Three decades after the record's original release, artists are reimagining Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.* on a new album titled *Dead Man's Town* (Sept. 16). Smartly, the artists present a

refined approach to the material – more influenced by the acoustic *Nebraska*, Springsteen's prior release – no more so than on the original album's iconic title track, performed by Jason Isbell and Amanda Shires, *Texas Music's* 2012 Artist of the Year. "Because I write songs and play rock 'n' roll shows, Springsteen is a hero," Shires says. "'Born in the U.S.A.' is one of my favorites because so many people have seemingly misunderstood the lyrical content and the song's overall tone. When you listen to the demo, the dark, minor key arrangement makes it clear this isn't strictly a song of celebration. We wanted to stay true to that version."



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PUBLISHER / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF STEWART RAMSER

EDITOR TOM BUCKLEY

CONTRIBUTORS ALLIE EISSLER
ANNE HERMAN
MICHAEL MARCHIO
MIKE MESSICK
CINDY ROYAL
JULIE SEAFORD
WILLIAM MICHAEL SMITH

www.txmusic.com

MAILING ADDRESS PO BOX 50273
AUSTIN, TX 78763

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 1-877-35-TEXAS

OFFICE: 512-638-8900

E-MAIL: INFO@TXMUSIC.COM

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Is 99 Cents Per Song Fair?



If people are willing to shell out \$5 for specialty drinks, will they pay \$3 to download a song? Ben Kweller is eager to find out. At age 33, he's already seen the value of music soar and crash since the mid-'90s, when his post-grunge band Radish sparked a major-label bidding war before he was old enough to drive. Today, after releasing five acclaimed solo al-

bums, Kweller is a free agent with his own small record label, the Noise Company, and a bold vision of destroying iTunes' 99-cents-per-song sales model. In Kweller's view, a good song is worth a lot more than that. "I had this realization at the farmers market in Austin," Kweller says. "People pay a premium for high-quality food, so when I release a new song as a super high-resolution file, I'm going to do it for \$3. Part of me thinks people will be like, 'What the --- ? A song's only worth a dollar!' But people spend \$5 for a coffee at Starbucks – every day – and with a song, you can enjoy it multiple times, forever. I'm not trying to change the world. I'm just trying to develop a fair market value for what I create." Kweller's been rethinking his career in other ways, too. He makes his acting debut in *Rudderless*, William H. Macy's directorial debut about a grieving father who forms a band with a young singer.



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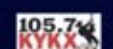
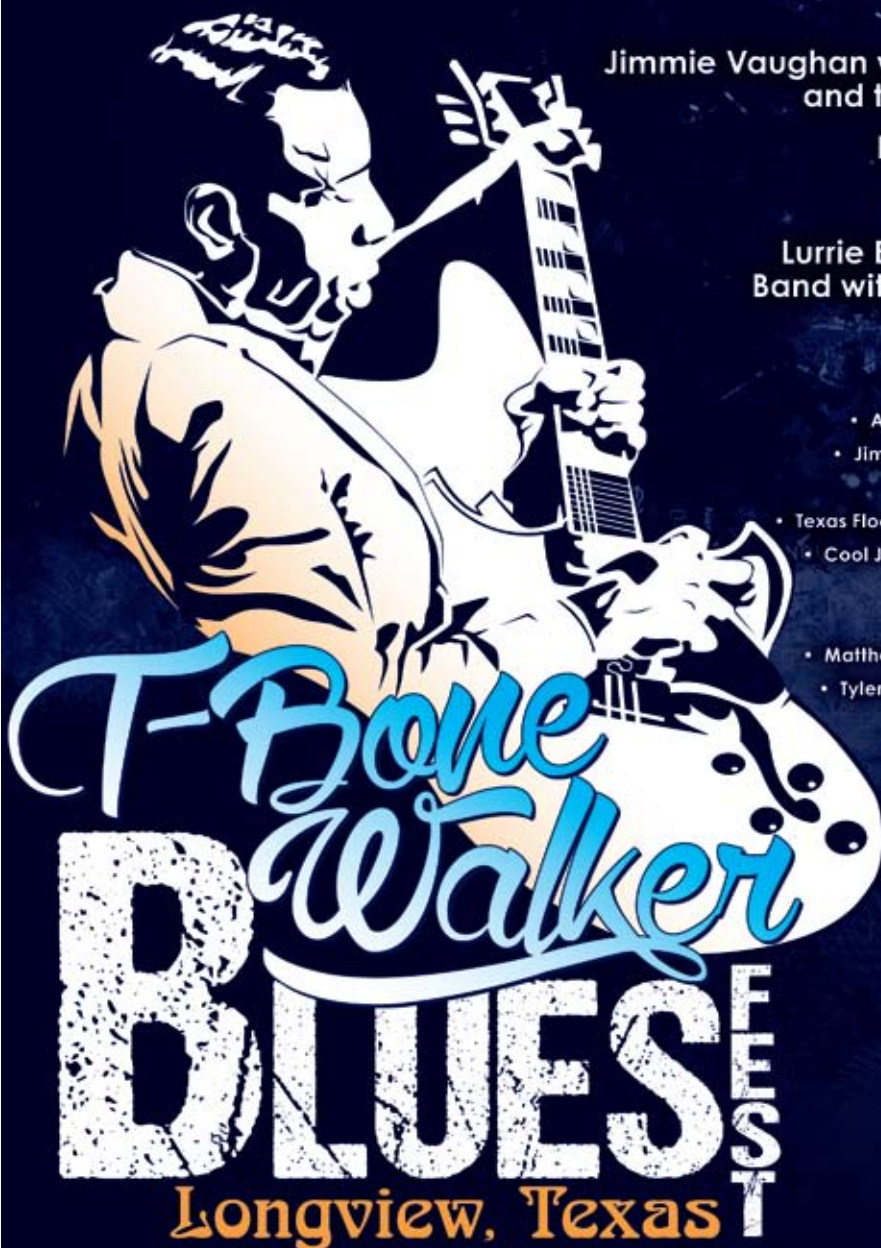
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Tony Joe White

- Trudy Lynn & Steve Krase
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- Cool John Ferguson • Chris Cain Band
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History Lost and Found

Given Texas' cowboy and music culture, small-scale dance halls should be flourishing in both big and small towns. But the tradition and popularity of these Texas stomping grounds is dwindling. The number of dance halls has decreased from 1,000 in their prime to about a few hundred now, says Patrick Sparks, president of the Texas



Dance Hall Preservation. "We're alarmed at the loss of this Texas history," he says. "With dance halls, it is tragic when we lose one. We think they all have to be saved." One contributing factor to the dance hall drought is the urban growth surrounding the halls. Sparks says that because of the changing landscape, many people don't appreciate the historical dance halls like they should. James White, owner of the Broken Spoke in Austin, says the apartments and city life surrounding his dance hall are overwhelming. "We're surrounded," he says. "The apartments make it feel like it's the Alamo." These days, people living in urban areas would rather go to modern nightclubs, Sparks says, rather than dance halls, many of which were built in the late 19th or early 20th century. Unlike clubs, Sparks says dance halls are family oriented, and that's what makes them unique. "A lot of Texans grew up in dance halls," he explains. "It's a place where little kids got to play. It's a place where little boys learned how to properly ask the little girl to dance." Although the number of dance halls has declined over the years, Sparks says there's been a recent increase in inter-

est because people are starting to realize that some dance halls still exist. He said Texans mainly visit Gruene Hall or Luckenbach Dance Hall, but other dance halls, such as Anhalt Hall, Kendalia Halle and Twin Sisters Dance Hall, are just as interesting. "They're the same, but different," he says. "People are realizing you can still go dancing at a 100-year-old dance hall and realize it's like it was 100 years ago."



Sobering Anniversary

For years, Ray Wylie Hubbard's life was as wild and as chaotic as the characters in his songs, but 25 years ago, someone named Stevie Ray Vaughan sobered him up. "He was the first guy I knew who got sober and



didn't turn into a square," Hubbard says. "My shows seemed to go better when I wasn't falling into the drums. When you get all the baggage, the garbage, the weeds out of your head, the good stuff can grow."



stage names

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The old five and dimer, Billy Joe Shaver, brings some country heaven to Utopia on Sept. 13.

UTOPIAFEST
Sept. 12-14 • Utopia
www.utopiafest.com

Located in a beautiful natural amphitheater, UTOPIAFEST is a campout festival offering musical performances and Hill Country sunsets. What's not to like? The festival offers free camping, free parking, free activities (disc golf, yoga, silent disco, kids' workshops, etc.), no lines, free water and no musical overlap. Located on the 1,000-acre Four Sisters Ranch (between Garner State Park and Lost Maples), the event provides an alternative to large, multi-stage festivals. And with no Internet service and limited cell phone availability, UTOPIAFEST targets those eager for an escape. Only 2,000 tickets are sold, so attendees have plenty of room to dance and enjoy full sets by bands from a variety of genres. Texas performers this year include Billy Joe Shaver, Wild Child, Ruby Jane, Wheeler Brothers, and Aaron Behrens and the Midnight Stroll. Two things to remember before you head out to the festival, though: (1) BYOB and (2) print a map and directions, because GPS doesn't work in Utopia.

AUGUST

23

Margarita & Salsa Festival

Extraco Events Center
Waco
www.hotfair.com

29-31

Bedford Blues & BBQ Festival

Bedford City Hall Complex
Bedford
www.bedfordbluesfest.com

Kerrville Fall Music Festival

Quiet Valley Ranch
Kerrville
www.kerrville-music.com

31

Float Fest

Cool River Ranch
San Marcos
www.floatfest.net

SEPTEMBER

12-13

Dia De Los Toadies

Panther Island Pavilion
Fort Worth
<http://toadies.sonarmanagement.com>

T-Bone Walker Blues Fest

Maude Cobb Convention Center
Longview
www.tbonewalkerfest.com

23

HAAM Benefit Day

Various Locations
Austin
www.myhaam.org

25-28

Trans-Pecos Festival

El Cosmico
Marfa
www.elcosmico.com

new releases

July 8	Noel McKay	<i>Is That So Much to Ask</i>	B&N
July 15	Robyn Ludwick	<i>Little Rain</i>	Self
July 22	Roger Creager	<i>Road Show</i>	+180
July 22	Kelley Mickwee	<i>You Used to Live Here</i>	CEN/Red
July 22	ZZ Top	<i>The Baddest</i>	Rhino
July 29	Micky & the Motorcars	<i>Hearts From Above</i>	Self
Aug 1	Thanks Light	<i>& the Hallucinations</i>	Enjoy Ears
Aug 5	Spoon	<i>They Want My Soul</i>	Loma Vista
Aug 5	Billy Joe Shaver	<i>Long in the Tooth</i>	Lightning Rod
Aug 5	Shooter Jennings	<i>Don't Wait Up (For George)</i>	Black Country Rock
Aug 12	Curtis McMurtry	<i>Respectable Enemy</i>	Berkalin
Aug 12	Polyphonic Spree	<i>Psychphonic</i>	Kirtland
Aug 19	Ruthie Foster	<i>Promise of a Brand New Day</i>	Blue Corn
Aug 19	Sarah Jaffe	<i>Don't Disconnect</i>	Kirtland
Aug 19	Randy Travis	<i>Influence 2: The Man I Am</i>	Warner Bros
Aug 19	Scientist	<i>World EP: Mobile Lab Remix Edition</i>	Self
Aug 19	Mike Ryan	<i>Bad Reputation</i>	Rock & Soul
Aug 26	Shelley King	<i>Building a Fire</i>	Lemonade
Sept 2	Johnny Winter	<i>Step Back</i>	Megaforce
Sept 2	Brian Pounds	<i>Strikes and Gutters</i>	Self
Sept 2	Foxtrot Uniform	<i>Cisco</i>	PopJesus
Sept 2	Canvas People	<i>Sirens</i>	Self
Sept 2	The Washers	<i>Everything At Once</i>	Double Ringer
Sept 9	Bob Cheevers	<i>On Earth As It Is in Austin</i>	Private Angel
Sept 23	Lee Ann Womack	<i>The Way I'm Livin'</i>	Sugar Hill
Sept 30	Kat Edmonson	<i>The Big Picture</i>	Sony
Sept 30	Lucinda Williams	<i>Down Where the Spirit Meets the Bone</i>	Thirty Tigers
Oct 7	Shakey Graves	<i>And the War Comes</i>	Dualtone

Ian McLagan

United States

Yep Roc



Ian McLagan moved to Austin in 1994, after moving from England 16 years earlier to L.A. and long after he was already something of a rock 'n' roll legend. A

founding member of the Small Faces and then, with Rod Stewart, the Faces, he released his first record under his own name in 1979 but spent most of his time as an ace session keyboardist, playing behind Joe Cocker, the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Bonnie Raitt and others. In 2012 he was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame for his work with the Small Faces and the Faces, but, at 69, seems a long way from the Barcalounger. *United States*, his first album in five years, is very much in the McLagan grain. Backed by Scrappy Jud Newcomb (guitar), Jon Notarthomas (bass) and Conrad Choucroun (drums), McLagan, with his pleasantly shopworn voice, leads his band through 10 chugging, hook-heavy originals about love, desire and relationships, present, past and imagined. The subjects are personal, and McLagan's approach to them is straightforward and unaffected, but not simple. Even in "Mean Old World," where McLagan sings about a failed relationship and real pain, there's something reassuring in his voice, a sense that pain is, after all, temporary. The "states" in the album's title are McLagan's own, and they're united not just by the relationships at their center but by the heart of the resilient bloke behind the Hammond B-3. **– MADISON SEARLE**

Old 97's

Most Messed Up

ATO



Sometimes growing up means getting back to your roots. That's what Old 97's do on *Most Messed Up*, their 10th studio album. Reaching back for a feel from 1997's *Too Far To Care*,

the band revisits the hard-driving twang-punk that put them on the tour bus in the first place. Lead singer and songwriter Rhett Miller had a few things to get off his chest and didn't mess with metaphor much on this one. The message, quite literally, is that rock 'n' roll isn't always what it's cracked up to be, but he'd have it no other way. The lead track, "Longer Than You've Been Alive," is a six-minute biography of life on the road, including stinky venues and bandmate strife ("I might butt heads with the guys in my band"). But you know it's OK with Miller when he repeats "The open road's the only place I wanna be." There's liquor, sex, "a handful of pills," a pile of F-bombs ... and the inevitable "Intervention." Dallas producer Salim Nourallah knows the 97's well (*The Grand Theatre Vol. I* and *Vol. II*) and brings them to the edge of introspection without wallowing in self-indulgence. With a guest appearance from Tommy Stinson of the Replacements, *Most Messed Up* puts an exclamation point on the past and sends Old 97's careening and carousing into the future.

– CINDY ROYAL

Rodriguez & Jacobs

Live at the Cactus

Self



On 2013's *Give Me All You Got*, Carrie Rodriguez took her own titular directive and offered up a real feast of a record, full of smart, brightly layered country-pop-folk hybrids.

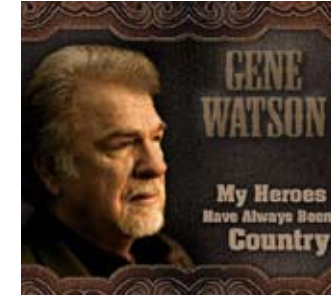
It was her best solo work yet and deserving of a mainstream breakthrough that didn't quite happen, so it's understandable that Rodriguez's follow-up is a leaner, scaled-down affair that amiably shares full credit with guitarist Luke Jacobs. Drawing songs mostly from the aforementioned last album (the infectiously sunny "Lake Harriet" and "Sad Joy," the saltier "Devil In Mind" and "I Cry For Love"), the duo approach gives Rodriguez some breathing room in the venerable Austin songwriter venue for both her masterful, spirited fiddle playing and the relatable, perfectly imperfect subtleties of her voice. She can coo, croon or just lean back and sing a dulcet note with the best of them, but she also has a touch of Lucinda Williams to her vocal drawl (especially in a live setting) and a willingness to leave the sighs, snarls and cracks in the mix to highlight the humanity. Playful musical back and forths even dissolve into onstage laughter on the loungy closing track "I Don't Mind Waiting." As with most live albums, it may not be essential to the general public, but if you're even a little bit in love with Rodriguez's music already, it's a most welcome offering.

– MIKE MESSICK

Gene Watson

My Heroes Have Always Been Country

Fourteen Carat



For anyone who loves to go on about how "There's no country music anymore," wrap an ear around Gene Watson's latest effort, a stellar batch of hardcore

country covers. Like Conway Twitty, Watson has proven to be a first-rate song picker over the course of his career, and these chestnuts penned by his personal favorite writers – Johnny Paycheck's "Slide Off Your Satin Sheets," Willie's "Turn Out the Lights (The Party's Over)," George Jones' "Walk Through This World With Me" and Buck Owens' "Hello Trouble" – are aural sculptor's clay when Watson wraps one of the finest voices ever to sing country around them. Producer-pianist Dirk Johnson has kept the arrangements simple and exact, which is the perfect backdrop for making Watson's voice the standout instrument. A balladeer of the first order, Watson infuses classics like Merle Haggard's "It's Not Love (But It's Not Bad)," Hank Cochran's "Make the World Go Away" and Jeanne Pruett's "Count Me Out" with all the emotion they require, something he's always been widely recognized for. Grab a cold one, dim the lights, clear a little dance spot and drop the needle on this one. It's like balm for a country soul.

– WILLIAM MICHAEL SMITH

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(Alison Toon)

For the past 20 years, Cody Canada has been sharpening the alt-country sounds of the Red Dirt movement. The former leader of Cross Canadian Ragweed formed his new band, the Departed, in 2010 and has since released two albums that each cracked country's Top 20. Canada may not consider himself the face of the Red Dirt movement, but that hasn't stopped droves of fans from buying his albums, packing his live shows and holding his name in esteem with other Red Dirters like Jimmy LaFave and Woody Guthrie. In this Q&A, Canada talks about honing his lead guitar skills, the key to a happy marriage and hippie love punk.

It's been about four years since you formed the Departed. You've released two albums, and at your live shows, fans seem to call out for as many Departed songs as Ragweed songs. That has to make you feel good.

It does. It's taken some time, but I finally feel like we've gotten over the hump, and people like to hear the tunes from both bands.

When will the Departed's third album be released?

October. We finished recording the album in Austin last month. It's called *Hippie Love Punk*. We told the sound engineer not to add anything. It's exactly what the band is. We didn't want to make it something it wasn't. In all honesty, front to back, I haven't been this pleased with a record since Ragweed's *Mission California* seven years ago. It's the best thing we've done. Not to be cocky ... I'm just proud.

How did you come up with that album title?

I have a close friend down in Texas who's an Americana radio station owner, and he asked me what the vibe of the record was, and I said, "It's about taking care of each other, don't back anyone into a corner, and I-love-you kind of stuff." And he goes, "Oh, so like a hippie-love-punk thing." I said, "Well, there you go. There's the title." It really fits the tone of the record.

Last year at Third Coast Theater in Port Aransas, you recorded a live solo album, *Some Old, Some New, Maybe a Cover or Two*. What was that like?

That's the easiest record I've ever done. You just go into the gig, press record and put on the show. I think the whole thing cost me maybe \$300. It's simple to do because it's just a show. Actually, on Aug. 30 I'm going back there, and I think I'm gonna record the show – do a whole new batch of songs. Maybe I can release it next summer or something. I just want to have an ace up my sleeve, you know?

You sing lead vocals and play lead guitar, which not a lot of performers can do. How did that come about?



Canada (center) with the Departed. (thedeportedmusic.com)

I really didn't have anybody to play with in the beginning when it was just me playing acoustic shows. I was playing lead and rhythm during solo shows, and once we formed Ragweed, we needed a lead guitar player because we had two rhythm guys. So I just started learning all I could.

You also blow a mean harp. What's the secret to that instrument?

I really don't have an answer for that. [Laughs] I learned harmonica by listening to Neil Young and Bob Dylan. That's another thing ... when I was first playing by myself, as a teenager, I needed some accompaniment, and harmonica was the closest thing I could find.

You've been at this game for more than 20 years, and you've got two young sons now. Do you ever get tired of touring?

No – if I was tired of it, I wouldn't do it. There are times when I miss home pretty badly. But we've got it down. Shannon – my wife [and manager] – and I have always been big Robert Earl Keen fans, and we've been following his mold: go out for a couple of weeks, then come home and play local. Don't be gone longer than three weeks, because that's when things get stale and people start missing home.

Besides Robert Earl Keen, who else influenced your music and style?

Merle Haggard. I hold him in high regard. When I was a kid, he really made me listen to the lyrics and the way he delivered them. I don't think anyone can deliver a song like Hag.

You've written a number of songs for your wife. Is that the secret to a happy marriage?

It sure helps. [Laughs] I've caught a lot of hell for it over the years from my friends, but I just love her. I met her when I was young, and we both realized we were put here to be with each other, to take care of each other. I don't purposely go out of my way to write those tunes, they just happen. Sometimes, she'll just do something or say something – one comment – and it makes me want to write a tune around it.

What accomplishment are you most proud of in your career?

Being remembered. It doesn't matter if it's the very first record or the very last record. It's a longevity thing. That goes back to the Robert Earl Keen mold – it means a lot when you've got those people who are going to listen to you forever.

Who is someone on the scene who really impresses you?

Kevin Russell. He was with the Gourds for like 20 years, and now he has Shinyribs. It's hard to explain how his music makes me feel, but it's such a performance ... it's so happy. Right out of the box ... the first song he plays live ... you've got people dancing and hopping around. He's kind of a maniac when it comes to performing. There's no safety net. There's no fear. On top of all that, he makes the show fun, and the music is uplifting. Shinyribs – I'll preach that until my last breath.

– JIM CASEY