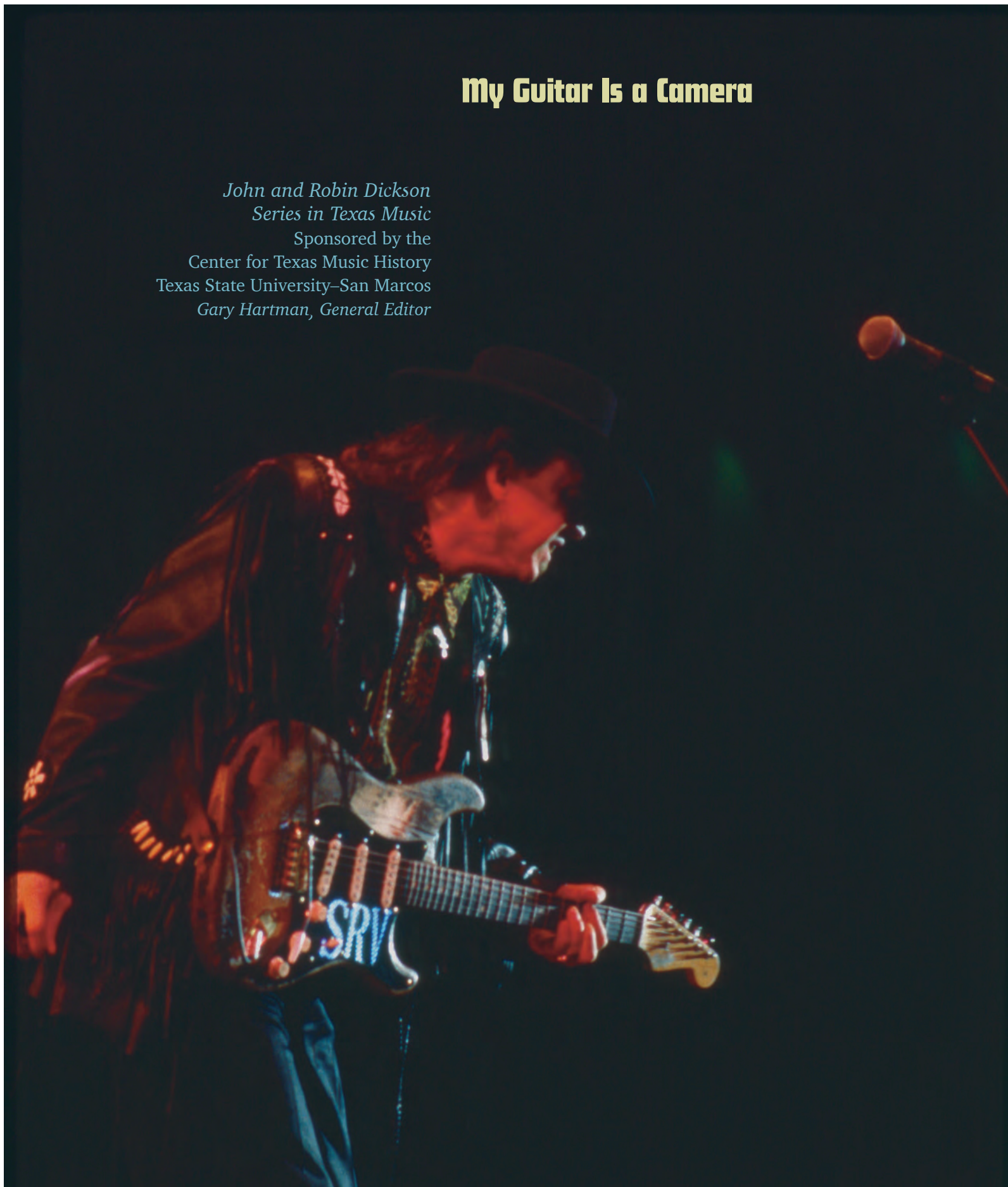




# My Guitar Is a Camera

*John and Robin Dickson*  
*Series in Texas Music*  
Sponsored by the  
Center for Texas Music History  
Texas State University–San Marcos  
*Gary Hartman, General Editor*





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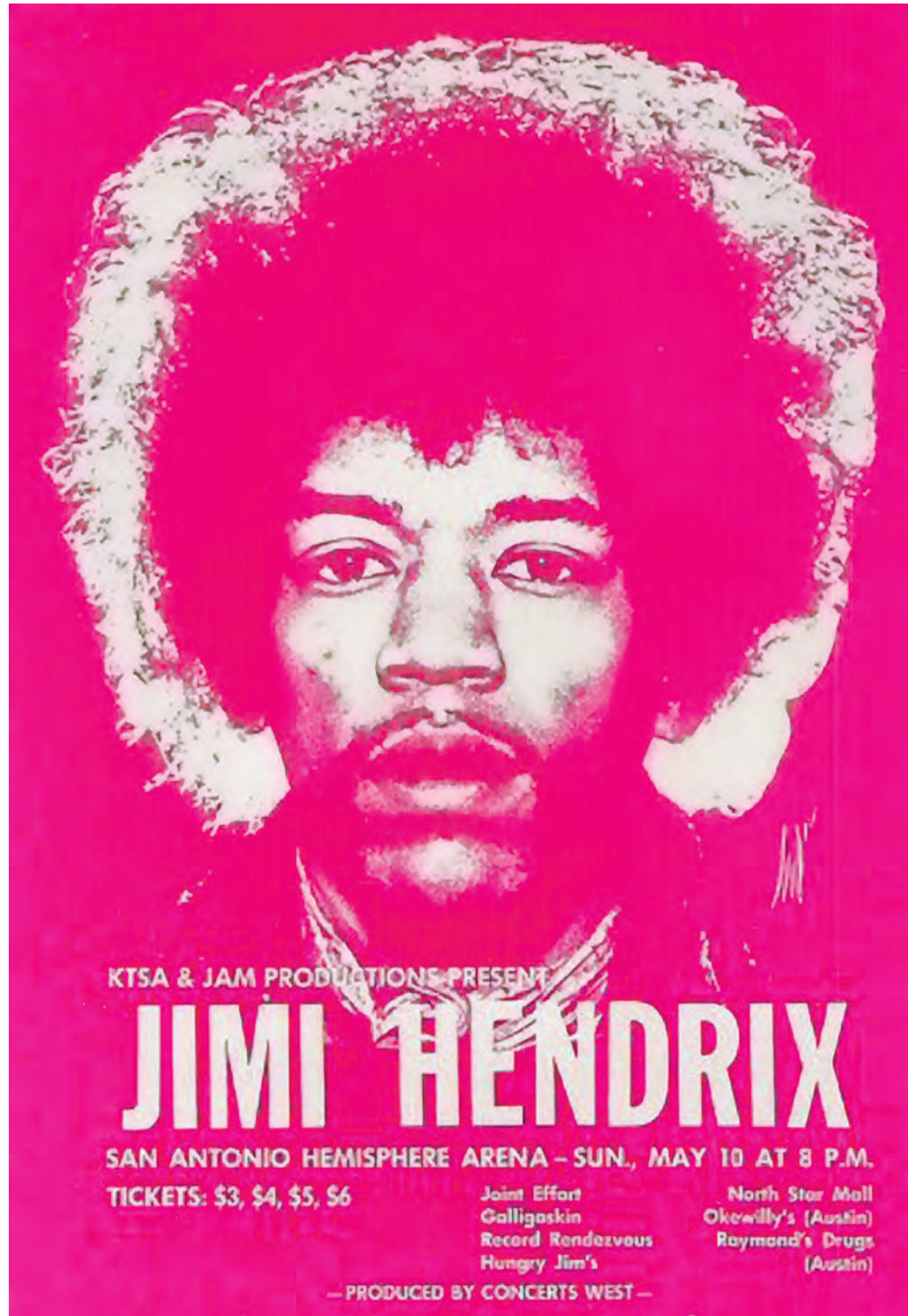
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Jimi Hendrix poster. Courtesy Paul Gongaware and Concerts West.





# From Hendrix to Now

## Watt, His Camera, and His Odyssey

HERMAN BENNETT, WITH WATT M. CASEY JR.

Watt Casey's journey as a photographer can be traced back to an event on May 10, 1970, at San Antonio's Hemisphere Arena: the Cry of Love Tour. Jimi Hendrix was the headliner. No one knew it at the time, of course, but Jimi had less than nineteen weeks left on the planet.

A few feet from the stage Alan Guncik, a close friend, and I recognized the National Anthem and with hands over our hearts, we jumped up as if it was a high school assembly. Jimi jamming "The Star-Spangled Banner" introduction noticed and said to the packed arena "All Americans stand up . . . ."

A couple of songs later, as the last notes of "Voodoo Child" faded, Watt, only a few feet away from Jimi, found himself bemoaning the fact that he was too poor to own a camera to chronicle the oh-so-special people who were part of the soundtrack for musical and social change. "It was foolish of me not to borrow a camera," Watt says. "It was only after [Hendrix's] death a few months later that I realized I was less than ten feet from him and did not record or document the moment for anyone." He swore to himself that he would make up for this in the days and years that followed. He had discovered his passion.

In the summer of 1970, Watt arrived in Austin with the intention of getting a degree from the University of Texas. Having heard about a music hall asking for volunteers to help build the stage and still without a camera, he lent a helping hand. The Armadillo World Headquarters was about to open.

Watt attended UT, taking classes as a photo-journalism major. Finally getting a camera, his off-campus "major" was shooting photos of musicians. His beginning efforts were at Willie Nelson's first Fourth of July Picnic in 1973 and with many of the touring bands playing at the Armadillo.

During a 1974 summer break from college, Watt worked concerts on Eric Clapton's tour from New York to California, as both a roadie and an unofficial photographer with a privileged, backstage point of view.

Watt and his camera could be found at Antone's Home of the Blues, located on Sixth Street in downtown Austin, as soon as the club opened in 1975. Antone's frequently billed local bands like Paul Ray and the Cobras (featuring a young Stevie Ray Vaughan), Southern Feeling, Storm (featuring Jimmie Vaughan), Marcia Ball, and many others. The owner, Clifford Antone,





soon began bringing in some of his blues heroes from Chicago: Albert King, Buddy Guy, Junior Wells, B. B. King, Muddy Waters, and John Lee Hooker graced the stage. Watt found his passion energized. Acting as the de facto house photographer, he documented many of the men and women who performed at Antone's. But the music scene proliferated at countless other venues in Austin and around the state. Wherever you found music being played, you'd likely find Watt there with his camera to photograph many of these acts: the famous, the soon-to-be famous, and the never-to-be famous. As he accumulated thousands of negatives, his friendly nature, combined with his professional persona and natural talent, afforded him a virtual press pass to any performance he chose to shoot. He was a local and regional fixture.

Asked if he had any sense at the time that he was capturing musical history, Watt says, in typical, self-effacing fashion: "Not exactly. I was just photographing musicians I liked. At some point around 1976, a woman told me my pictures from Antone's were going to be famous. But, as I told friends and others, since I didn't play any instruments well, I just thought, 'Okay, I'll photograph musicians instead.' My maternal grandfather and my paternal grandmother were both talented musicians, so I know that music can be a life-changing thing. Songs have such potential to speak to our spirits, whether we're up or down, happy or sad. I knew all that, so I guess that shooting musicians was kind of my way of being part of it."

As a photographer for the University of Texas newspaper, *The Daily Texan*, Watt covered Austin's local music scene. He also traveled to Houston for the Astrodome appearance of Bob

Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue in January 1976.

Watt photographed most of Bruce Springsteen's Austin and Dallas concerts in the 1970s and 1980s, plus Springsteen concerts in Colorado and Tennessee. He often ignored the "no cameras allowed" restrictions by sneaking in a camera body nestled in his boot and making handoffs of different lenses to friends who brought in his other photography tools via purses, pockets, and jackets.

Watt's passion resulted in a tiny bit of "commercial success" when some of his covert work was purchased for albums, box sets, books, or magazines. But the money was never much and had never been the point, really. Watt was shooting pictures because he was driven to do it.

Prior to a 2008 concert, Watt and his cousin Tom Reynolds, a fine musician and friend of Steve Miller, were visiting with Steve on his tour bus. Watt was aware that Steve had spent years in Chicago playing with many of the blues musicians that he had photographed years earlier. Also a big fan of Steve's, Watt presented him a large black-and-white print of Buddy Guy, Muddy Waters, and Junior Wells that he had taken at Antone's. Steve was impressed and asked, "Watt, do you have a book?" He did not.

It was not the first time the question had been asked. For years musicians and others familiar with Watt's work had encouraged him to put out a book. But it was never quite the right time.

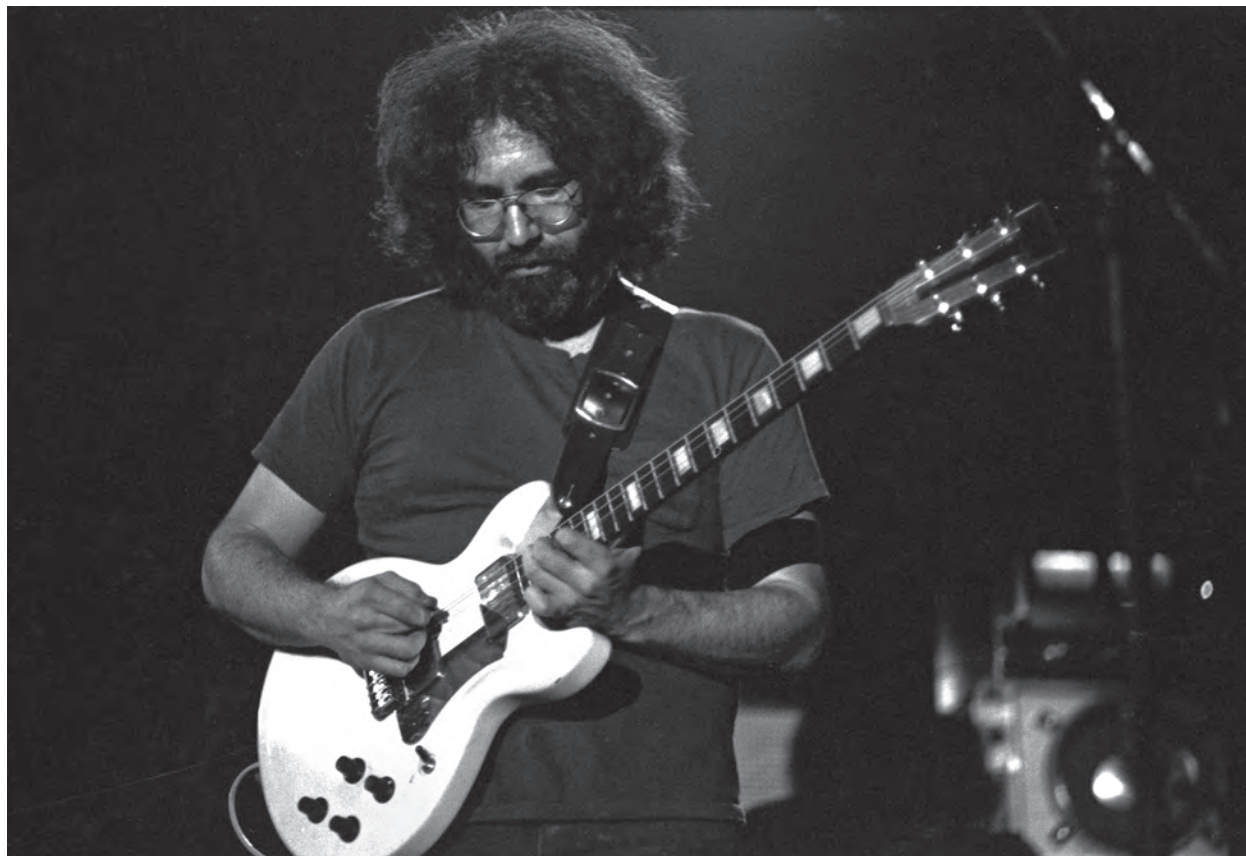
In 2012, while mulling over the possibility of publishing a collection of his photos, Watt thought again about Steve's question. He decided the time was right.

Now it is 2017, and all the parts have come together. Watt finally has his book.





Jim Franklin (*right*), creator of the trademark Armadillo art, and Gonzalo Barrientos, at that time a state representative from Austin, during Armadillo Appreciation Week, 1976.



Jerry Garcia at Armadillo World Headquarters, March 1976.



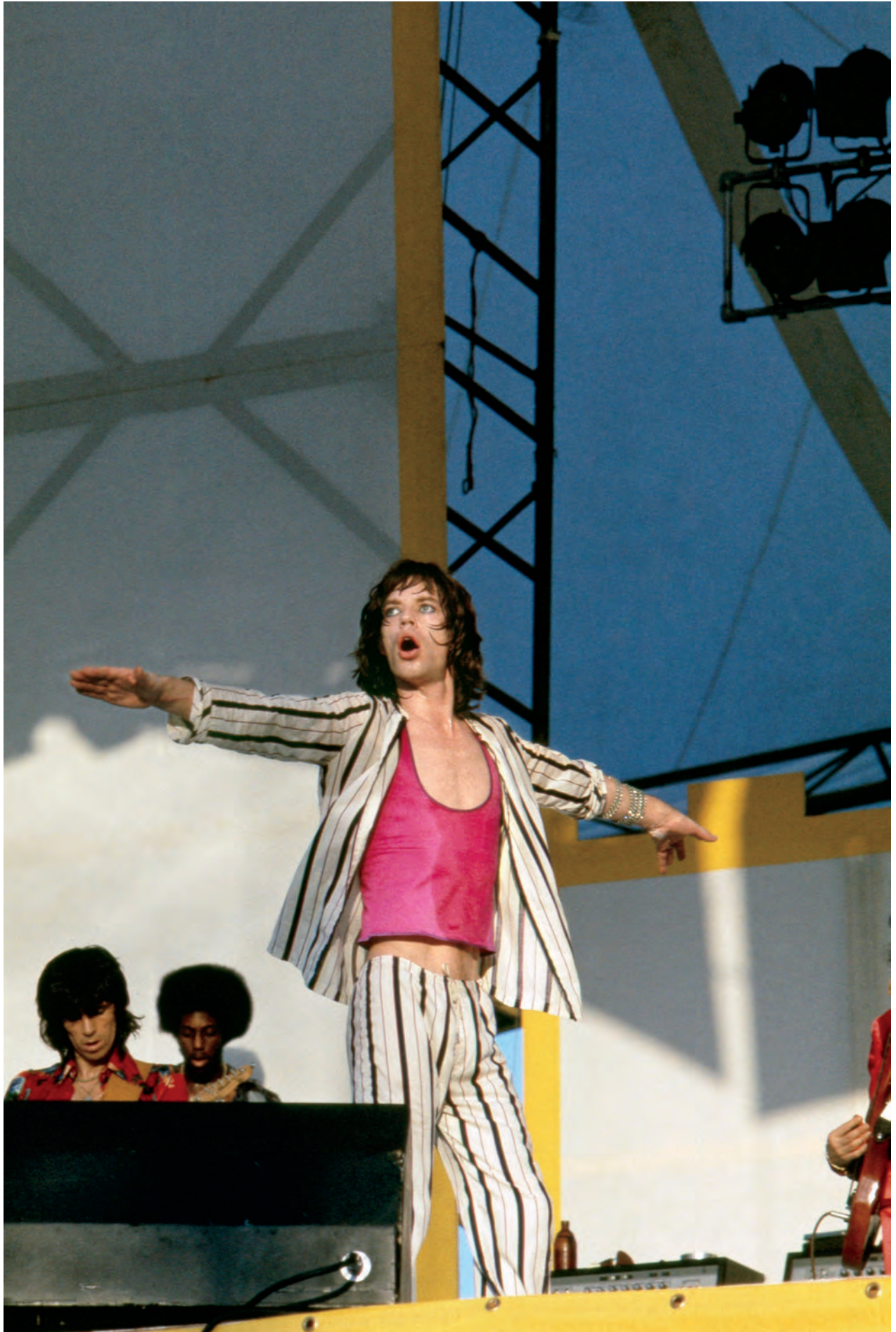






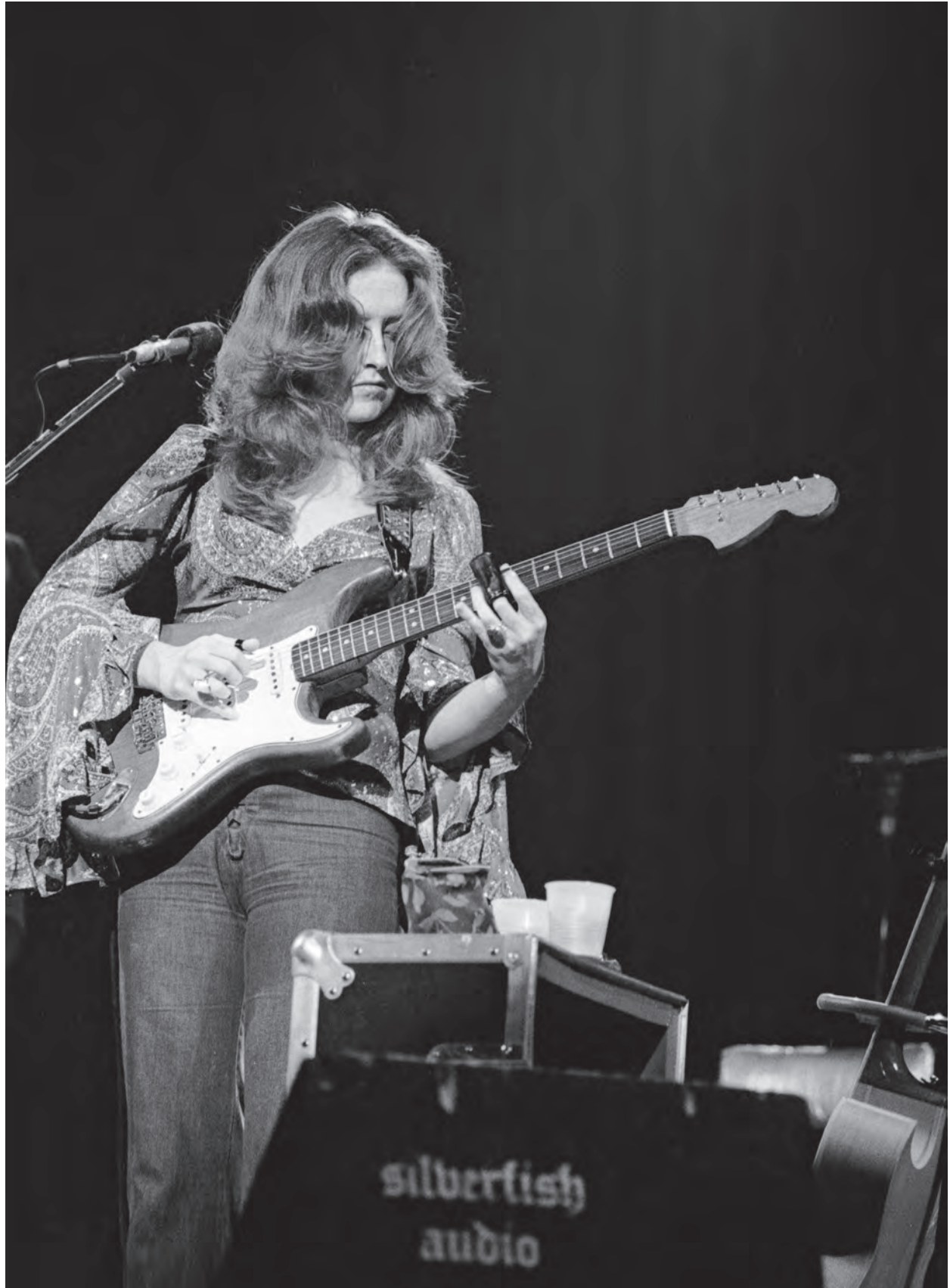


Mick Jagger.





Bonnie Raitt at Austin Municipal Auditorium, October 24, 1975. One of the photographs from this concert was the first photograph I had published, appearing in the University of Texas student paper, *The Daily Texan*. What a thrill!







Stevie Ray Vaughan playing the Fender Stratocaster he called “Number One” at Antone’s during his tenure with Paul Ray and the Cobras.



Stevie with Double Trouble at Sam’s BBQ in east Austin, July 20, 1981. Pictured with Stevie are Chris Layton and Tommy Shannon. This image appeared, among other places, in the Sony Legacy box set *Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble*.





Muddy Waters and Lou Ann Barton, a member of the Triple Threat Revue and later a founding member of Double Trouble. A similar photograph ran in *Rolling Stone* soon after this was taken.

When B. B. King smiled while he was playing, it was just like the whole world smiled with him. King had a contagious ebullience that could not be stopped. He'd be deep into the bluest song ever written, at a moment when it felt like he would take his audience to the bottom of the world. Then he'd break into a celebration with Lucille's six strings, and the audience would burst into auditory fireworks. There was really no one in B. B. King's league. He made the blues respectable around the globe and in the process made sure a bluesman would eventually be welcomed into the White House. The first time King took the stage at Antone's was on America's Bicentennial—

July 4, 1976—and he made sure the crowd knew he came to play. With saxes, trombone, and trumpet blasting, drums popping, bass bopping, and the Hammond organist putting a churchy glow on songs like “Rock Me Baby,” “Don’t Answer the Door,” and yes, “The Thrill Is Gone,” the club tilted on its axis as the audience went into blues-induced delirium. When the evening ended, no one moved—no one. Church had been in session, and the blessed knew the spirit was in the house.  
—Bill Bentley

Mr. Shotgun was loaded to the limit when he turned his small combo soul machine







Steve Miller and  
James Cotton in  
the green room at  
Antone's.



Clifford Antone and  
Fats Domino.





When it came to full-tilt rock 'n' roll stars who came to the holy ground at Sixth and Brazos in Austin, count New Orleans maestro Antoine “Fats” Domino at the very top. He rolled into Antone’s with diamonds flashing and had his 10-piece band behind him to make sure all of his bodacious hits had the snap, crackle, and pop of the timeless recordings. Fats started out on 10 and pushed the emotional quotient emanating from the pack-and-jammed bandstand well into the 20s by the second song. The club was filled to the bursting point with Crescent City homeboys and -girls, musicians of all stripes, and oldies-but-goodies worshippers from the city’s outskirts. Clifford Antone, a product of Louisiana-adjacent Port Arthur, was in blues heaven until the end of the night. He had, no doubt, bet the farm on the show selling out; it did that, and so much more. Dozens stood on the Sixth Street sidewalk, noses pressed to the window, watching the Fat Man and band get all the way down. Fats Domino’s smile says it all: the good times rolled and Austin rocked. Yeah, you right.

—Bill Bentley

Guitarist Bill Campbell was always the secret weapon in Austin’s blues army. He grew up in the area and started going to eastside clubs in the mid-60s—places like Ernie’s Chicken Shack—to play with Freddie King and others. When Antone’s opened, Campbell was there to make sure the feeling was real. Campbell is shown here playing with Otis Rush, who is famous for songs like “All Your Love (I Miss Loving)” —which Steve Miller has played for years, as did Eric Clapton with John Mayall’s Bluesbreakers—“I Can’t Quit You Baby,” “Double Trouble,” and so many other great tunes.—Bill Bentley



Albert King’s first concert at Antone’s was in 1976. What a beautiful man! He inspired so many of the blues musicians in England and elsewhere; Eric Clapton and Stevie Ray Vaughan are only two of the great artists who have listed him as an influence.

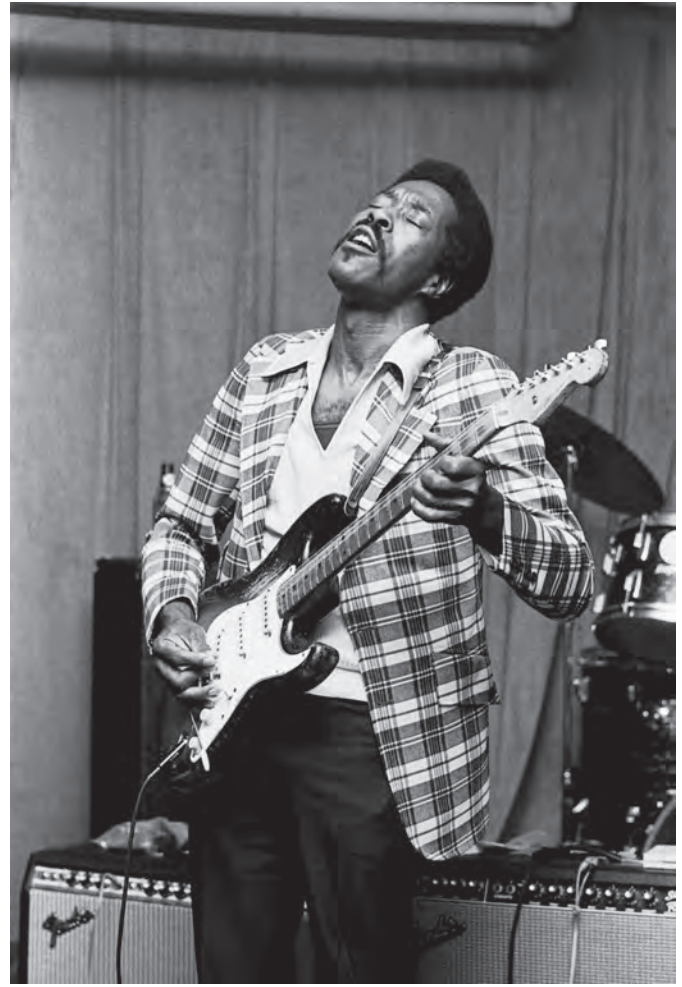
Otis Rush at Antone’s in 1976, with Bill Campbell on guitar (left).







Taj Mahal, backstage at the Paramount in 1977, during his interview with Mark Seal.



Buddy Guy at Antone's.

every stage trick in the book but at the same time had an intensity that some said rivaled even Jimi Hendrix at his bluesiest. Showing up in a stone-cold Madras jacket that might have come right off the racks at a '60s high-end men's store, Buddy Guy wasted no time before getting down to business. He turned his Stratocaster all the way up and laid waste to the stage. There was no doubt that Antone's had seen just about every single blues artist worth seeing by then (give or take a Howlin' Wolf or two), but Guy still brought something brand new to the true believers: an

unshakeable faith that the blues mattered, and could save a willing supplicant if they believed, too. Mission accomplished this night.—Bill Bentley

In a December 2011 interview in *Guitarist*, John Lee Hooker, referring to Van Morrison, said: "Van's been my friend for a lot of years. [He's] a real blues man, and he has the blues inside him. It doesn't matter whether he's white or Irish; he's a blues man for sure and I love him. He's a great influence on me and we work real good together."





Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell in Austin, January 28, 1976.

Joni Mitchell, San Antonio Municipal Auditorium, January 1976.







## 5 : Willie, Sir Douglas, and the Austin Music Creation Myth

JOE NICK PATOSKI

Music was part of Austin's DNA. The oldest operating business in town, Scholz Garten, has been a community gathering spot for beer drinking and music making since 1866. The scene that Watt Casey and I separately found in the city some 105 years later was a vibrant one. Music was everywhere, spread across dozens of small beer joints, honkytonks, dancehalls, bars, patios, and improvised performing spaces. We were kids in a candy shop.

My first nights were spent soaking up the countrified hippie rock of Greezy Wheels at the Armadillo World Headquarters; getting schooled in rocked-up hardcore country by Freda and the Firedogs, a bunch of college-age hippies led by Marcia Ball at the Split Rail; and witnessing the spectacle that was Kenneth Threadgill, the silver-haired granddaddy of the Austin music scene, who cut loose with wailing yodels whenever he sang in the tradition of Jimmie Rodgers, country music's first star, which was just about every song Threadgill sang. The music was great, pitchers of beer could be had for less than two dollars, and as often as not, there was no cover charge—just tip the band and the waitress, and a good time was all but guaranteed.

It wasn't just the clubs.

Turn on KOKE-FM, the radio station that invented a new hybrid music format called progressive country, and local stars such as Willis Alan Ramsey, Jerry Jeff Walker, Michael Murphey, and B. W. Stevenson were being played back to back with the Rolling Stones, the Byrds, the Flying Burrito Brothers, Kris Kristofferson, and Bob Wills.

Most musicians around Austin dabbled in country, rock, folk, or blues. A new wave of pickers filtering into the city was mixing it all up. Of all the musically inclined immigrants arriving in the Texas capital in the early 1970s, two artists coming from very different directions, both geographically and culturally, albeit with more in common than their fans realized, put Austin on the music map.

Willie Nelson was the most country of all the country rockers showing up. He was an accomplished country-music songwriter born and raised in Texas who'd spent ten years in Nashville writing hits for other artists, such as "Crazy" for Patsy Cline, "Hello, Walls" for Faron Young, "Night Life" for Ray Price, and the much-covered "Funny How Time Slips Away," a rhythm-and-blues hit for Joe Hinton. Songwriting royalties supported Willie's aspirations



the Tennessee promoters, who anticipated a huge crowd over three days. Most of those who did show up came for Willie, Waylon, and Kris.

Austin changed Willie and his music. He had variously been dismissed as too bluesy, too jazzy, or too eclectic to be a mainstream country performer when he was a Nashville recording artist. Now he could apply all those qualities to a sound he rocked by adding a second drummer and second bassist. An extended Willie Nelson

and Family jam could stretch as long and as deep as anything I'd witnessed by the Grateful Dead and the original Duane and Gregg version of the Allman Brothers Band.

A year later, in the spring of 1973, Willie decided to promote his own outdoor show at the Hurlbut Ranch, joining forces with the hippies from the Armadillo World Headquarters as copromoters. Willie Nelson's Fourth of July Picnic attracted a crowd of more than fifty



Willie Nelson  
graciously signing  
autographs.







thousand, most of them young and of the long-haired, dope-smoking, beer-drinking persuasion. They came to hear Willie and Waylon and Kris, along with a lineup of rock 'n' rollers under a torrid midsummer Texas sun. Fences were breached, fans got sunburned, others got snake bit, and some took some bad acid. From semi-organized chaos began a midsummer tradition that would stretch well into the twenty-first century.

One of the headliners at that first picnic was the other outsider who would help define Austin's music scene, Doug Sahm, a rocker raised on country music and blues. The same year a twenty-year-old Willie Nelson submitted his first demo recording to Sarg Records while working

Doug Sahm at the Armadillo, 1977.



as a disc jockey near San Antonio, twelve-year-old steel-guitar prodigy Little Doug Sahm was enjoying radio and jukebox success in San Antonio with his own Sarg recording, "Rollin,' Rollin'" and "Real American Joe." As leader of the Sir Douglas Quintet, formed in 1965, he enjoyed two Top 10 pop hits—"She's about a Mover" and "Mendocino." That kind of recording experience made him an old soul among the so-called Texas Mafia, alongside Janis Joplin, Johnny Winter, Steve Miller, and Boz Scaggs, who played roles in defining San Francisco psychedelic music in the late 1960s.

Doug returned with his family to his hometown of San Antonio in 1971, and the longhair musician with cowboy boots was immediately drawn to nearby Austin, where he famously hosted a Thanksgiving Day jam at the Armadillo World Headquarters with Jerry Garcia and Phil Lesh of the Grateful Dead and Leon Russell.

Doug and Willie were the first two signings to the new Atlantic Records subsidiary in Nashville started by the storied rhythm-and-blues producer Jerry Wexler. Both cut tracks in New York, Doug with a star-studded supporting cast that included Bob Dylan, Texas jazz-sax ace Fathead Newman, guitar virtuoso David Bromberg, longtime friend Doctor John, and his sidekicks Augie Meyers, Jack Barber, and George Rains. The album, *Doug Sahm and Band*, did not reach the Top 100, much less the Top 10. *Shotgun Willie*, one of two albums Willie and his band recorded in a week, something never before achieved at the Atlantic Records studio, also failed to chart.

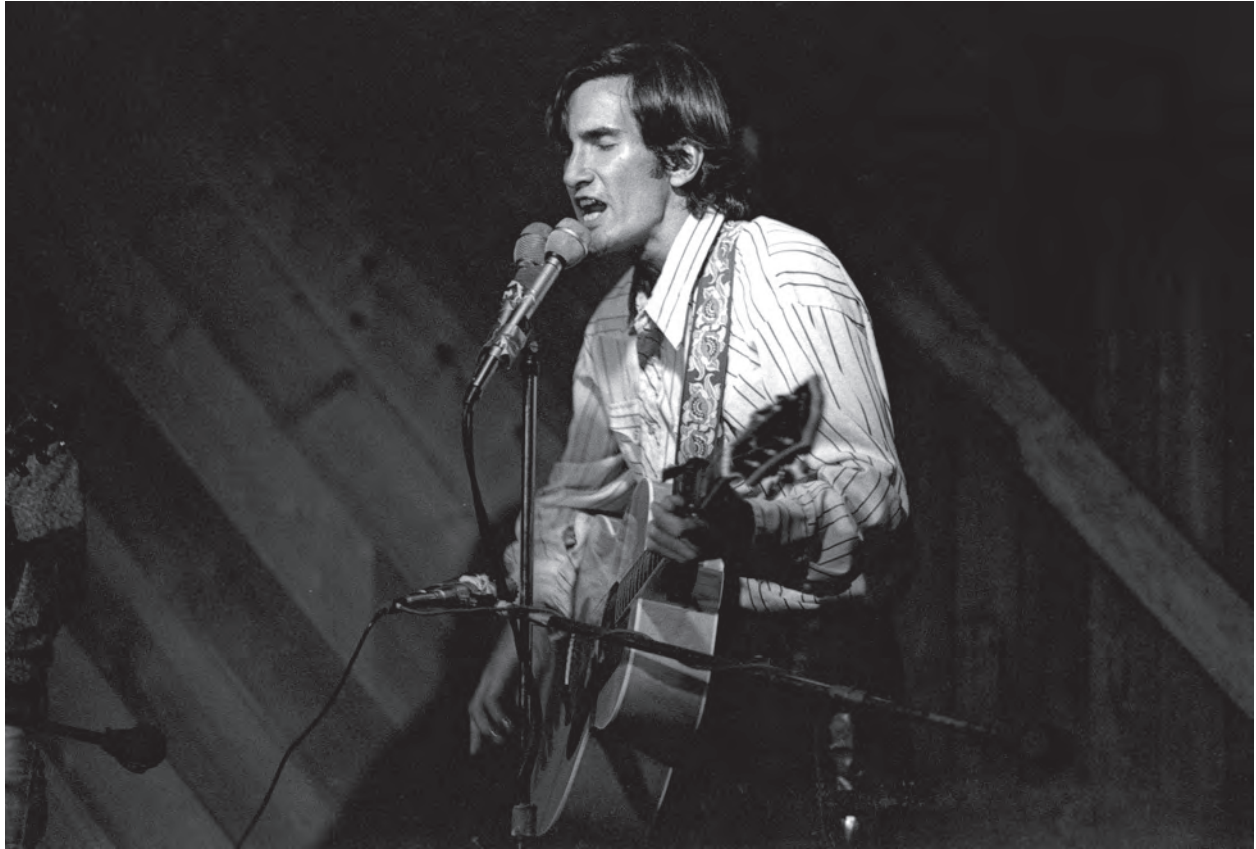
The Wexler projects, which also included Doug's album *Texas Tornado* and Willie's second concept album, *Phases and Stages*, and a charting single, "Bloody Mary Morning," ended when Atlantic Records in New York pulled the plug. But the producer's interest validated Willie, Doug, and by association, Austin.

Divorce led Doug to move to Austin in 1973 fulltime, setting up shop in a limestone mansion a hundred yards from Soap Creek Saloon,





The late, great Townes Van Zandt performing at Castle Creek Nightclub in Austin, 1976.



Michael Hearne (*right*), nephew of Bill and Bonnie Hearne, rehearses with his band, Just Lucky, in 1977. Lindsay Minter is on drums, and Paul Minter is on bass. Louis Meyers, on steel guitar (*left*), is well known as the founder of Austin's South by Southwest Music Festival (SXSW). Meyers passed away in 2016. Michael was a regular in our south Austin house, on Hillside off Congress Avenue. We would listen to him and Mike Cahill play for hours; they included lots of Jesse Winchester, Little Feat, and numerous original songs they had written.







Neil Young, Austin Municipal Auditorium, November 9, 1976.



This image may say about as much as any single photograph I ever shot about the mingling of influences that made up the Austin music scene in the 1970s. Pictured here in a backstage conversation at the Armadillo are two giants of the fiddling world, Vassar Clements (*right*) and Jean-Luc Ponty.





Merle Haggard performing at the Silver Dollar in Austin, October 1977.

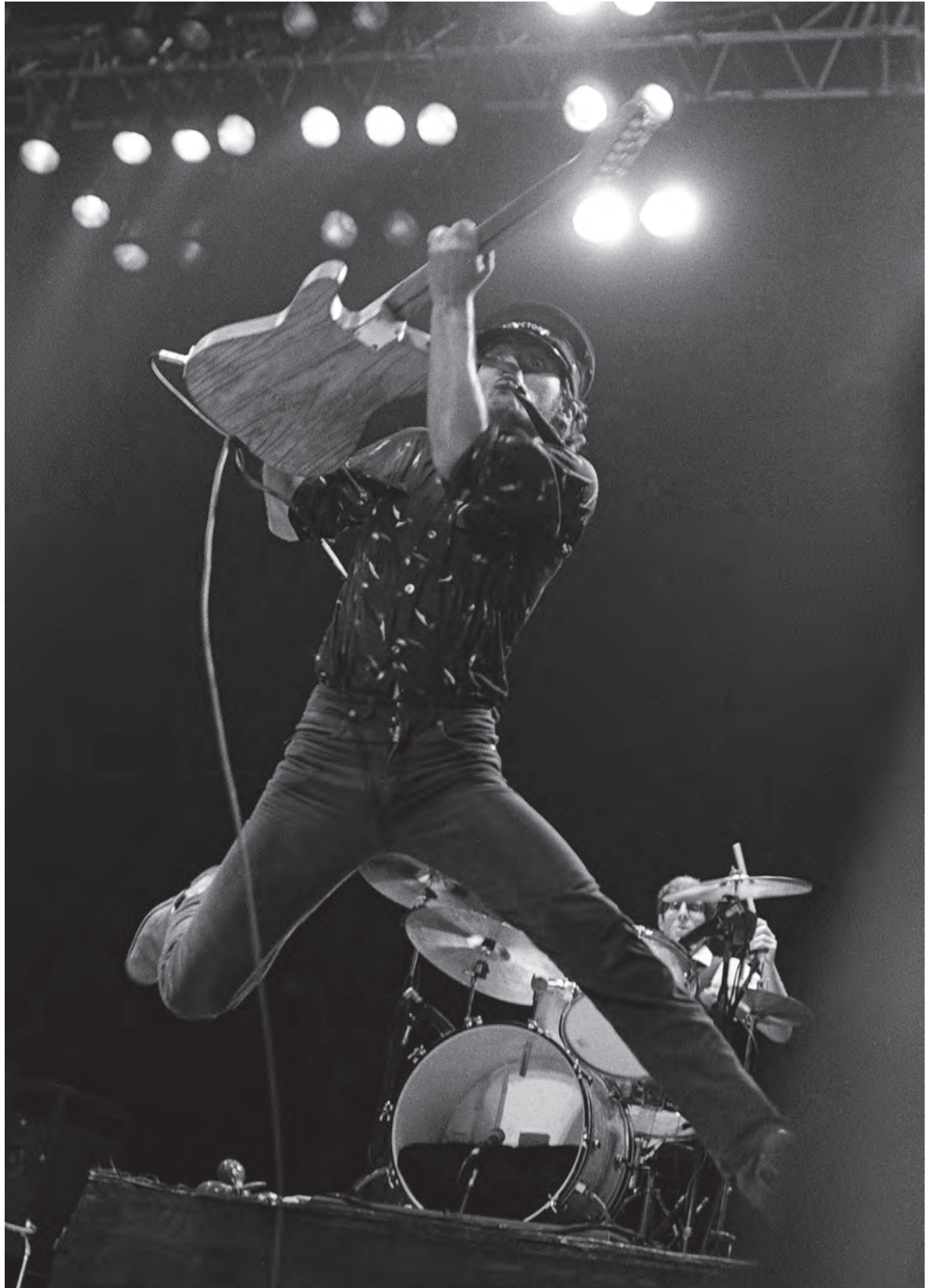


more and made the night one of the finest sets of rock 'n' roll in Austin history. Earlier in the day there'd been an Elvis Costello look-alike contest at Inner Sanctum Records near the University of Texas, and it is said the entrants were so good not even Costello would have won his own contest. The city was primed for what was being called punk, New Wave, or whatever this wild new style was. When the singer-guitarist came out, he had a sneer and a smirk wide enough to cover the whole state, and blasted straight into "No Action" like he was pulling a knife on his listeners. For the next careening hour, he did not let up, not even for a treacherous version of the heart-busting ballad "Alison." It was clear this crew had come to conquer Austin, and then America. Which is exactly what Declan McManus, AKA Elvis Costello, did and still does. In the middle of the





Bruce Springsteen  
at Reunion Arena,  
Dallas, November  
1980. This image  
appeared in *The River*  
songbook, published  
in 1981.





1975–85 box set. Needless to say, I was one excited West Texas kid.

Springsteen has a unique ability to connect with his audience, both live and through his recordings, which is the lifeblood of any entertainer's career. His musical style and his particular brand of stage banter allows listeners to empathize with him—to feel that he had been through many of the same experiences they had and that, in some sense, his songs were about them.

I know that for me, Springsteen's songs possess the ability to lift our spirits to a place above and beyond where I may be at the moment. I recall a conversation I had about this with Dave Bett, art director at Sony, in connection with their use of some of my pictures as artwork for Springsteen's *The Promise: The Darkness on the Edge of Town Story* box set. "It's amazing to me that a guy like me, from a small town, has photographs in a Bruce Springsteen release," I said.

"Small towns are what it's all about," Dave replied.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized he was right. Springsteen himself came from Freehold, New Jersey, which is not a big place. Maybe there's a small town inside all of us.



Born in the U.S.A. Tour, Austin, November 23, 1984.







# Photographer and Contributors

## ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

**Watt M. Casey Jr.** is a professional photographer and cattleman from Albany, Texas, where his family founded the historic Lambshead Ranch in the 1800s. In addition to his work with well-known musical performers, Watt also specializes in ranch and food photography. Many of his images are featured in the Grammy Museum's touring exhibit *Pride and Joy: The Texas Blues of Stevie Ray Vaughan*. His work has also appeared in CDs, box sets, music books, and many other publications.

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Susan Antone**, sister of Clifford Antone, received the inaugural Margaret Moser Award in 2016 for her “demonstrated passion and dedication to the Austin music scene.” Also the author of *Antone's Presents: Picture the Blues, Eleventh Anniversary* (1986), she is managing owner of Antone's Home of the Blues.

Muddy and Junior Wells, Antones Home of the Blues, April, 1976.

**Herman Bennett** describes himself as “a singing Jewish plumber.” A member of Ain't Misbehavin', a band that formed in Austin in the early 1970s, he also installed the plumbing at the previously closed storefront on Sixth Street that would soon become Antone's Home of the Blues. Bennett still performs occasionally in the Austin area with Ain't Misbehavin'.

**Bill Bentley**, from Houston, Texas, was music editor of the *Austin Sun* in the 1970s and played drums with Lea Ann & the Bizarros. He moved to Los Angeles in 1980 and has been music editor at *LA Weekly*, publicist at Slash and Warner Brothers Records, and director of artists and repertoire at Vanguard and Concord Records. Bentley produced tribute albums for Roky Erickson, Skip Spence, Doug Sahm, and Lou Reed. His book, *Smithsonian Rock & Roll: Live and Unseen*, was published in 2017.

**Denny Freeman**, formerly a guitarist with Paul Ray and the Cobras, played with Jimmie Vaughan on the Strange Pleasure tour in 1994. He also founded the band Southern Feeling with W. C. Clark and Angela Strehli. As a member of Antone's house band, he backed Otis Rush,





Albert Collins, Buddy Guy, and many other blues greats. He toured with Taj Mahal from the late 1990s until 2004 and recorded with Bob Dylan, including on his *Modern Times* album, from 2005 until 2009.

**Lindsay Holland** was equipment manager for The Band between 1969 and 1974 as well as road manager for the 1974 Bob Dylan and The Band tour.

**Craig Hopkins** directs a not-for-profit assistance program for music artists and is the author of *Stevie Ray Vaughan: Day by Day, Night after Night* (2008). In 2009 he received the Blues Foundation's Keeping the Blues Alive Award for his work in documenting and preserving Vaughan's legacy.

**Geoff Ice**, Watt Casey's friend since 1970 and roommate during their Hillside days in Austin, is a petroleum geologist and weekend professional harmonica player. He, however, is best known as the father of Jamey and Geoff Ice.

**Jamey and Geoff Ice** are the founding members of the Fort Worth, Texas-based band, Green River Ordinance, whose music has been featured on more than 56 network television shows. The band has accomplished a lot in their 15-year history including two albums on the Billboard Top 100, top 40 singles at hot AC radio, and No.1 singles at Texas Country. They have shared stages with acts like Bon Jovi, Merle Haggard, Sting, Chirs Stapelton, Zac Brown Band, and

others building a potent body of effortlessly accessible, instantly memorable music, while winning the loyalty of a fiercely loyal fan base.

**Diane Lee**, widow of guitarist and cofounder of the influential 1960s band Love, Arthur Lee, manages the estate of her deceased husband.

**Joe Nick Patoski**, former senior editor at *Texas Monthly*, is the author of *Willie Nelson: An Epic Life* (2008), *Selena: Como la Flor* (1996), and *Stevie Ray Vaughan: Caught in the Crossfire* (1993). He also contributed the article on southern rock to the *Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll*.

**Tom Reynolds** is a fifth-generation rancher and a jazz/blues guitarist based in Fort Worth, Texas. He plays professionally around the Fort Worth area as well as nationally and occasionally, internationally. He has played with many well-known musicians, several of whom are in this book, namely Steve Miller.

**Mark Seal**, a longtime magazine writer, is a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*. He is the author of many nonfiction books, including *The Man in the Rockefeller Suit* (2011), about a German immigrant who successfully posed as a member of the Rockefeller family, and *Wildflower* (2009), about the life and mysterious death of famed Kenyan naturalist Joan Root. He began his career writing about music and other topics in Austin, where he met Watt Casey.





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