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## WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR...

# Welcome to Spring!

From our *Home*™ to yours!

*"If you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for a moment."* — Georgia O'Keefe, artist

## Happy Spring!

I feel like this issue of **HOME** is similar to a freshly picked flower from our garden. It has taken a fair amount of digging, sweat, tears and a whole lot of loving care to finally reap its beauty. Inside you'll find personal stories of struggle and hope, new beginnings and bittersweet endings, mingled with the "sounds" of music.

Singer/songwriter Mallory Eagle recently described her much-awaited record as her "pot roast" album - built layer by layer, simmering slowly until tender and delectable.

I can relate to that analogy, too.

Normally, the spring issue is out well before now. But not this time. I hope you find it worth the wait.

*Enjoy! Molly*

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PHOTOS by AMBER WATSON

by MOLLY PAYNE

**Colony:** “a place where a group of people with the same interest or occupation come together”

Recently it came to light that The Colony, a small bar/venue in Tulsa, had sold. Although I’d never been to The Colony, I was well aware of its popularity as a place to play - since many of my musical guests were ones who’d played there. For over 65 years, The Colony has drawn music lovers and legends through its doors. So it was no surprise to me that someone would want to buy this historic place. However, it came as a great surprise when I heard the buzz that the new owners were three musician friends of mine - Cassie Latshaw, Josh Westbrook

and Jared Tyler. Literally the day before, I’d asked Cassie if she and Josh would be interested in being the cover couple for the spring issue of HOME. I wanted to tell their love story from the perspective of a musical couple. But now I saw a different kind of love story - and Jared needed to be a part of it. We all agreed.

Arrangements were made for Sara (Payne Keyes) and me to pay our first visit to The Colony and get the scoop from our friends.

We learned there had been several parties interested



“It just seemed to fall into place,” Jared said. When Cassie called him to ask if he wanted to partner in the endeavor, he quickly responded with, “Let me think about it....yes!”

in purchasing The Colony, but the stars seemed to align when it fell into the hands of this Tulsa trio of musicians.

“It just seemed to fall into place,” Jared said. When Cassie called him to ask if he wanted to partner in the endeavor, he quickly responded with, “Let me think about it....yes!”

The big question for me was why they were so quick to act when the opportunity arose. The answer is pretty simple, they’d all played and frequented The Colony and they understood the need and value in keeping venues featuring live music, alive. And who better to understand what makes a live music venue valuable, as well as safe and inclusive, than musicians? Plus – not only do they share their love of music, Cassie, Josh and Jared share a strong bond of friendship – each having established relationships with one another separately, as well as together. This mutual respect and love for each other and for the music is a constellation made in heaven.

*“I didn’t know it then, but now I understand, Grandma taught me all I need to know to be a man, you gotta get a little dirt on your hands...”*  
**Jared Tyler, *Dirt on Your Hands***

Once the paperwork was signed, they jumped in to begin the hard work of giving the iconic venue a new start. Fellow musicians, friends and supporters teamed up to do whatever they could – cleaning, painting, moving what needed to be moved, to freshen up the space. With approximately a two-day turn around, The Colony was celebrating its grand reopening. “There’s no way we could have done it without all the people who chipped in to help,” Cassie said, gratefully.

By all accounts, the celebration was amazing. The Colony was back as a force to be reckoned with, providing live music – 7 days a week, in a safe, friendly – and accepting environment. They make it quite clear there is zero tolerance for anyone trying to be unkind – to its patrons, performers, staff or each other.

Friendships run deep in the musical community, but few more deeply than the ones shared by Cassie, Josh and Jared.

“I met Jared when I was playing as a duo with Rebecca Ungerman. We were playing the Garden Diva and following us was Jared and Monica Taylor,” Josh recalled. “They were loading in and Jared hung out and listened to our set a little, we got done...and we got to talking. I stayed and listened to theirs until I had to go. Oh my gosh, I was just blown away.”

“Like everyone is when they first hear Jared,” Cassie interjected.

Cassie’s first musical encounter with Jared took place at The Colony. “When I heard him, I remember I just started falling... melting....I remember thinking – I want to be this person’s friend.” Afterwards the two struck up a conversation and Jared asked if she’d heard his CD – Blue Alleluia. She hadn’t, but wanted to hear more. “I was totally ‘fan girling’ already, but then he told me his good friend Emmy Lou (Harris) sang backup vocals on his record – then we were attached!” Cassie said with a grin. Jared invited her to his car to listen to the CD. He shared stories about his songs



and music. “I wasn’t really doing music like that yet...I was mesmerized,” Cassie said wistfully. “He didn’t even know me – and yet he was so kind and welcoming. He gave me this one-on-one experience of what this song is trying to interpret...it was just beautiful. I believe it set the tone for the beautiful relationship we have now.”

Josh eloquently described the special bond music can create, as a musician as well as a listener. “As musicians, what we get to do is a very niche thing in terms of getting to express parts of ourselves that maybe you can’t do



*Cassie Latshaw*



*Josh Westbrook*



*Jared Tyler*

with language.

Sometimes being in the audience you get to absorb a feeling or emotion that you may not talk about... you get feelings you don't get anywhere else. Music is an intimate way of getting to know someone's soul."

*"I want a love as big as the stars..." —Cassie Latshaw, As Big as the Stars*

Cassie and Josh met through another fellow musician – Johnny Mullenax, who'd been playing in Cassie's band for a couple of years. Like many musicians, Johnny not only played in her band, but had several things of his own going on. One day he needed someone to fill in for a gig with Cassie and sent Josh in to do the job. In spite of Johnny's assurance, Cassie wasn't totally convinced. "Josh showed up and I was really nervous – we hadn't rehearsed, he didn't know my songs..." Cassie admitted. She soon learned her fears were unfounded when she discovered just how talented Josh was/is. "He was amazing!" Cassie said. "In fact, I'm pretty sure Johnny didn't come back a whole lot after that," she laughed.

"And I ended up connecting with the person I think I was always supposed to be with in this life," Josh said. "I ended up getting to hear her soul through her songs."

The chemistry between the two soon became apparent – to them and others. They found themselves wanting to be together on and off the stage. This past December, they made their relationship "official" when Josh proposed, onstage at Cain's, during a show they, and Jared, were performing in. Josh had let Jared in on the plan, but the proposal came as a total surprise to Cassie. "We had just made the decision to buy The Colony, and I thought he wanted me to come over to him at the mic because he was going to break the news right there," Cassie said; an announcement she felt would have been premature. Instead, much to her chagrin, Josh got down on one knee, ring in hand, and proposed. Relieved – and yet thrilled, Cassie said yes.

What's next for this talented trio? More music and more love. AND a new album. Watch for it! Catch a show! Visit The Colony. Support Live Music. You'll be glad you did!

*"I hope you'll always remember these words I had to say....forget about all the bad times...cuz the good ones are on their way...." – Cassie, Josh & Jared*

**Cassie Latshaw:** A Bristow native, Cassie started her musical journey at 5 competing in singing competitions, particularly American Kids. She sang "Xs and Os" for her first competition and forgot the words to the second verse. Panicked, she ran over and told her mom, "I forgot the words!" Mom prompted her and like a pro, Cassie went back to her place on stage and finished the song, earning her 2nd place. I'm sure she was adorable. Cassie is kind, caring, has a girl-next-door – with a bawdy sense of humor, vibe. Her voice is like velvet, soulful and sultry – with a touch of grit. While these days she leaves most of the instrumental parts to the band, she might bring out Guinevere (II), her chord stick, and give her a strum or two. When Cassie's not delighting listeners with her music, she's probably selling houses, being mom or taking care of business.

**Josh Westbrook:** Josh grew up in the Tulsa area, doing what many free-spirited kids did at the time – exploring, getting muddy in the local creek, "growing his immune system" and hanging out with the neighbor kids. He was also developing a passion for connecting with the rhythms of music. "I can remember standing under my father's piano, with my hands touching it, feeling the vibrations while he played," he said. Josh later taught himself to play guitar by watching his father on the piano and playing to music on the stereo. From Motown to Funk or the latest release, he learned to play it all. Consequently it's difficult to put a name on Josh's music or style because he's fluent in so many genres. "I just call it Feel Good music," Josh explained. How appropriate! Not only does his music make you feel good, just being around Josh will, too.

**Jared Tyler:** It's difficult for me to even know what to say about Jared. Like Cassie and Josh, I was blown away the first time I heard him play and sing – and that was just during an early morning interview. His voice is rich and his lyrics magical, weaving messages from the Universe about love and everyday life. Whatever he chooses to play, whether it be dobro, guitar or some other instrument, he can make it sing with its own emotion. One might say there's something "other wordly" about Jared and his music. Maybe it's his kind and gentle nature, or maybe it's just his soul shining through. Whatever it is, we can sure use more of it in this world. 🌱



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# D O N W I L B U R ' S Harmonica from Heaven

by **DEANNA MADDOX**, Cushing Citizen

**A** gift from God was bestowed upon Don Wilbur, in the form of a harmonica laying in a creek bed in 1939 at the young age of 11.

"I picked a harmonica up when I was in a Salvation Army home and found it in a little creek coming down from the mountain where snow was melting and I picked it up and said I'm gonna learn to play it," he explained.

Wilbur accepted the gift and hasn't

looked back. The now 95-year-old Wilbur has remained steadfast to the Lord since receiving his gift — always looking to spread the gospel through music.

"I love to get to somewhere where the spirit of God can move and I can play and touch people and God heal them," he exalted.

One of Wilbur's most recent prayers was answered when he was able to play his music on the radio on Friday, April 19.

As one may imagine, after nearly 10 decades on this earth it's not quite as easy to get around and so Wilbur has been living in Cushing at Linwood Village for the last 10-years or so. With staff approval his hospice advocate



# When you listen to him play the lyrics can be heard through the twanging, melodic metal — “the devil doesn’t live in me anymore, since Jesus kicked him out my heart’s door...”

Jody Schochler arranged to have him taken to KUSH Radio to play his harmonica live for Home in the Morning host Molly Payne and her listeners.

“This is the answer to my prayers — to be on the radio or the TV,” he added. “The radio came first. . . I’m really excited. My heart is out for the people to come to God and I believe the Lord God made this possible.”

He remained hopeful a TV station would be contacting him soon. Schochler, who has been a major proponent for Wilbur and his music, stated she would do what she could to make sure he had his chance through that media outlet as well.

On the air, Wilbur played three songs — “Amazing Grace”, a melody that he created on the spot, and a third song called “The Devil Doesn’t Live in Me Anymore” which he says was given to him by God.

“That’s just one that God gave me. I was sitting and we were about ready to eat dinner and I had a book out there and all of a sudden I put my pen in my hand ready to write my song and I said ‘Lord, you give me a song and you write it for me’ and all a sudden my hand just started going and that’s what come out,” he explained.

When you listen to him play the lyrics can be heard through the twanging, melodic metal — “the devil doesn’t live in me anymore, since Jesus kicked him out my heart’s door. He thought that he was boss but Christ died on the cross now the devil doesn’t live in me anymore. The devil tried to run away and hide but God would not let him abide. Yes, he thought that he was boss but Christ died up on that

cross now the devil doesn’t live in me anymore.”


Although gospel is his favorite music to play he has been known to venture into some dancing music.

“I’ve played for a lot of people. . . I used to go to hillbilly dances and I used to listen to a lot of the songs.” Wilbur said.

“But I love to play gospel music and if you’re saved you love it all the more.”

Wilbur was born on September 9, 1928 in Santa Barbara, California and is the fifth of seven children. He was briefly in the army in the late 1940s before being discharged.

He has a daughter who lives in Texas. He moved to Cushing just before his sister Edwina — who he called Winnie and who called him Duck — passed away at 100-years-old. He has remained in Oklahoma because he said he enjoys the people and he’ll get to see his loved ones again eventually.

“I’ll see them all again one day when we all get to heaven — what a joying, monum-cele-,” he said, stumbling over his words. “Anyways, it’s gonna be a great time.” 



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A photograph of a sunset over a field. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and lens flare. The sky is filled with scattered, illuminated clouds. The foreground is a dark, silhouetted field.

# *Live, Love, Lexapro*

a personal journey of healing

STORY and PHOTOS by **SARA PAYNE KEYES**



# It's springtime! Trees are green and shady, the sky is busy and beautiful. It's almost summer now! 2024! We're still here!



~Sara Payne Keyes

It feels like I am seeing some pretty flowers after some mighty storms.

The year started out rough with the loss of our friend Rick Sellers. Rick was a fascinating character. I really liked him. He amused me. He essentially died on the exact date my dad died two years before. I found that interesting. They resembled each other in many meaningful ways.

They looked alike, they had a similar vibe, they carried and shared wisdom and when they talked, people listened. I would say they were from the same planet and I am fairly certain that planet wasn't this one.

Losing Rick came with a realization I needed. I remember thinking "Yep, these feelings are bigger than me. I need help." So I called the appropriate numbers and made the necessary appointments to get some help - before I could change my own mind.

I am grateful I felt that push.

I have been carrying anxiety around for so long it feels like it's just part of what makes me the delightful lady that I am. Who am I without it? What could I be without it? Would I still be funny? I discovered with great tragedy comes great inappropriate hilarity. Will I miss that? I think I might.

It wasn't easy for me to reach out. After all, I didn't feel particularly unhappy. I

practice gratitude and that helps ease the blues pretty quickly. I just felt fuzzy, unclear. My energy level was a low buzz, but with heightened anxiety. I could check in with some things but totally checked out on other things. I woke up anxious and fell into a wakeful sleep, exhausted. The tools I used before to help me feel better seemed just out of reach.

I have read that emotional trauma can change the way your brain functions. This makes a lot of sense. No wonder I couldn't get to the tools I had used before. My brain is working differently now.

I went to my scheduled appointments and decided to give my trust to some professionals. Turns out, their help is a very positive fit for me right now. Despite my immense hesitations on taking medication, it feels like the right time and space to do so. I started medicine and therapy.

The first few days I sure didn't feel good. Not awful but not great. After that initial wave however, it felt like the clouds had parted and I could see new light. I didn't realize how unwell I was until I started feeling better.

It makes me think of the Maya Angelou quote "Today is a wonderful day. I have never seen this one before."

I had to pause to reflect on the stigma of getting mental health help. Not

necessarily other people's stigma but my own. Why could I support it for others, but not myself? I wouldn't tell someone else to "just get over it," and yet that's exactly what I was telling myself. I guess it is the nature of the beast. That negative self-talk sure can be convincing!

Right now I am taking it day by day and giving myself grace and space to heal. I am interested to see how this mental health journey goes.

I would like my heart and soul to be more in charge, and not my fears. I would like to enjoy this life as much as I can. Love on the people I love, and weave stories of my "Gone People" in with my present and future.

I'll keep you posted.



"I release you,  
my beautiful and  
terrible fear. I  
release you. You  
were my beloved  
and hated twin,  
but now, I don't  
know you as  
myself."

~ Joy Harjo, poet 



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“For almost 21 years, I traveled all over the state of Oklahoma reffing high school basketball with Terry. Some nights we were the only two people in the gym that liked the refs. I could not have picked a better person to be with all those countless nights. Also Terry, the “Bell” is in Drumright, right where it’s supposed to be and it’s not going anywhere!” -- **Jamie Osterhaut**

“Throughout my years of working with Terry, I have observed how his many talents and skills have served the people of Cushing and beyond. His passion as the consummate servant-leader has been a beacon of light that has, and will continue to shine, as a guide for Cushing’s future. I treasure our friendship and wish him all the best in his next chapter.” -- **Jerry C. Cook**, *Former Mayor of Tahlequah and retired GRDA Customer Relations Manager*

“Terry is a self-made man with a heart bigger than life. His passion for people and our city sets him apart from all others. When Terry decided to apply for the City Manager job, I reminded him that the self-life of a city manager was normally limited. After watching him for the past several years, we could have done well to give him a contract for life.” -- **John Fechner**, *Fechner Pump & Supply*

“When I met Terry about 30 years ago, he was in law enforcement. I have never known a finer police officer, a finer city manager, a finer Christian. He prayed for me intensely when I had a serious medical issue, and he did that again for my husband. He is a true witness for Christ.” -- **Patti Weaver**, *Reporter*

“The Rotary motto of ‘Service about self’ defines Terry Brannon, a non-Rotarian, to a tee! He has served his City of Cushing since a young man and has worked tirelessly to make it a wonderful place to live. He will be missed, but will continue to bless those around him!” -- **Don Amon**, *CMS Principal, Fellow sports announcer*

“Terry has been a huge part of my business and leadership development over the past 10 years. I’ve observed and listened to him intently, knowing no matter the situation, topic or circumstance, I was going to learn something from him. He is definitely a one-of-a-kind leader. He will be deeply missed as an advocate for our community, but the work he has done over his tenure will be

appreciated for years to come. Thank you, Terry, for everything you have done for Cushing.”

-- **Tracy Caulfield**,  
*CEO Cushing Chamber of Commerce*

“Success is measured in different ways. It must have purpose. You want to master your craft. You want to match reality to your expectations in life. If you mash these all together, you find contentment and happiness. I believe you’ve met your goals. Thanks for letting us be a part of it! God bless!”

-- **Richard Thackray**,  
*Cushing Pride*

Dear Terry, “Thank you for your lifelong service to people like me, a citizen of Cushing. I have consistently felt a sense of safety, security, and hope in the knowing our community was under your care and watchful eye. Cushing is no doubt a better place because of you. I appreciate the respect you give, your willingness to listen to and learn from your interactions with people. Your genuine handshakes, fist bumps and your kind questions like ‘How’s your mom?’ did not go unnoticed. Thank you for being such a fine example of how to be a civil servant, a humanitarian and a profoundly good person.” *With deepest gratitude,*  
**Sara Payne Keyes**



# MY FRIEND *Terry*

by **MOLLY PAYNE**



Photo by CINDY WAYLAND

“Faith and fear don’t live in the same house,” Terry Brannon said during the interview just after finding out he had stage 4 cancer. His deep faith fostered hope for complete healing. “Either way, I’ll be okay,” he assured listeners.

“But what about me?” I screamed silently. He was my friend and I didn’t want him to be sick, let alone lose him! I have no doubt, my “scream” was one shared by his family, friends and community.

Our friendship began when I was a green, “reporter of sorts” at the daily newspaper and he was a police officer. Through police reports, meetings mutually attended and an occasional event, we developed a rapport and trust. I moved into radio and he was promoted to police chief. Radio broadened our conversations when he became a frequent guest on the morning show – as chief, then as commissioner and finally as city manager. Through the years, our friendship has grown.

We’ve shared plenty of laughs, along with some tears. And while it isn’t necessarily a “talk to you every day” kind of friendship, it’s one I can rely on “the knowing” that I can confide in him about anything and seek advice when needed. I like to believe it’s mutual.

About a month or so ago, Terry announced he was stepping down from his position as Cushing City Manager. After his three year battle with the disease, it was time for him to shift his focus. “I want to see things I haven’t seen, do things I haven’t done,” he told listeners. “I’m committed to living my best life until the end.” As sad as I am about losing him as the leader and champion of our community, I’m happy for Terry to have made that choice, as difficult as it was.

His announcement left me wanting to do something to let him know he’s loved and appreciated. He’s done so much for so many. Since Terry’s always been a supporter of my endeavors, as well as the radio station’s, I felt the magazine could provide the platform I was looking for – especially since I wanted it to be a surprise. I knew he was much too humble to want to be “fussed over.”

I started reaching out to people I felt might want to say something. However, it didn’t take long to realize there wouldn’t be enough space for everyone to share their thoughts, thank-yous and well wishes to Terry Brannon. Some I reached out to simply couldn’t find the words to express the love and respect they had for him. I understand that. The others were quick to say yes, but they would have to think about what they wanted to say. All of them thanked me for doing this and giving them the opportunity to be a part of it.

One of the first people to respond – Dan Sullivan, President/CEO of Grand River Dam Authority, had this to say: “The first quote that came to mind when I thought of Terry was from Theodore Roosevelt in his speech, ‘**The Man in the Arena.**’”

*“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.” —Theodore Roosevelt*

**Thank you, Terry Brannon, for being that man. **

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# From Phantom to Friend

by **MOLLY PAYNE**

**I**n January we lost the fearless leader of KUSH Radio - Rick Sellers. Some knew he was our leader, but a lot of people didn't - and that was by design - his design. He liked being the Phantom of the KUSH.

I met Rick over a decade ago during the Sean Kelly days of KUSH. But before I ever met him, I heard about him. Rick would come visit the radio station after I'd gone home or on the weekend. He would impart his ideas, administer advice and swap stories with Sean. In turn, Sean would tell me about the visits - interjecting tidbits of Rick stories into our conversations.

I was curious. Who is this guy? Yet, as curious as I was, I honestly don't remember the first time I met Rick. It was as if he had always been there, in the shadows, waiting to show himself. He was the Phantom.

Rick was also "a hero of lost causes" and he'd just found a new one - KUSH Radio. It didn't take long for the visits to start including "projects." A little electric work here, some new equipment there, he was investing in KUSH's future. Rick had always been interested in radio - he'd even had a short-lived pirate radio broadcast when he was a kid. And he loved music! From classic rock to the "countryest" of country, he enjoyed good music. He saw great potential in this little AM radio station and was excited to do all he could to ensure its survival. Even more so, he wanted to see it thrive. He also wanted it to remain a locally owned radio station - he valued community and saw the importance of a healthy amount of autonomy.

Rick was a visionary. He could see things that others couldn't. I know he saw things in me that I couldn't see in myself. I'll never forget the night early in my radio "career", he



Rick  
Sellers



asked me if I would like to interview some big names in music. I laughed and took it more as a rhetorical question. He didn't leave it there. He told me in no uncertain terms that I **WOULD** be interviewing musicians from all over the country. At the time I could barely imagine the idea, but guess what? It happened and is still happening. While I haven't interviewed Dolly or Wynona –yet, I have interviewed Freebo (Bonnie Raitt's guitarist), JoJo Garza, (Los Lonely Boys) Marty Stuart and numerous other Nashville artists, along with singer/songwriters from across the country and even the world. And I sure can't forget to mention the day Billy Corgan came in... Rick wasn't always specific in his visions, but he was never hesitant to provide the push I needed to do the things I didn't even know I wanted to do. He was good like that. (Ha!)

Rick is also the reason the HOME magazine exists. It was part of his vision to make KUSH a multi-media outlet, serving the communities it touched. He even wrote a few things for the magazine – including the story of Santa's Hat. He got a kick out of telling stories. He'd call them his "shaggy dog stories" – all mostly true. "I'll wink at ya if it's not," he'd say with a sly grin. I thought it only fitting to include him in this issue.

Rick had a child-like, yet devilish, charm about him. He loved comic books, videos, toys, cars and SWEETS! Give that man a box of Little Debbie's or cookies from Joseph's, and you'd make yourself some brownie points! (pun intended)

He was constantly learning and excited to share what he'd learned – sometimes until your eyes would glaze over – at least mine anyway. Rick loved to talk about things like time-travel, history, space and anything to do with Elon Musk. He'd send snippets he thought might stir some interest, along with videos longer than my attention span. But I

appreciated his intention – to make me more knowledgeable – even about something I hadn't thought of ever being interested in. And of course, some of these tidbits have come in handy when interviewing people from all walks of life.

Early on, I also learned how generous Rick could be. One of the first live remotes I did was at the 4th of July OilPatch celebration in Drumright. I couldn't believe how magnificent this small-town event was! Big name musicians, along with many Oklahoma artists, performed on stage throughout the day and night. There were parachuters flying in with the American flag, jugglers and fortune tellers, along with plenty of things for kids to see and do. There was also a lot of food, drink, and, at dusk, an amazing fireworks show – set to music. And it was all for FREE – for the community he loved.

He was also generous to me personally. In 2013 he gave me a car – with my name on it – the Molly Carlo. (He liked being clever.) He never claimed it was a gift – he always told me I'd earned it with my loyalty to The KUSH and for doing the work he'd laid out for me. But I always felt like it was a gift – the gift of believing in me.

Rick was loyal and he expected his friends to be loyal, too. When I'd had a bad day, he'd always let me know he had my back. It made me want to have his back, too.

I've called Rick Sellers a lot of things over the years, (including a few I won't put in print) but some of my favorites were – Superman, pirate, mystic, visionary, collector of anything he deemed cool, lover of America and sometimes unsung hero. But most of all, I liked calling him my friend.

I've been asked what I'm going to do – what we are going to do – what The KUSH is going to do. We're figuring it out. But I know this – the words of Rick Sellers continue to ring in my ears:

**"Don't Weaken. We're Still Here."** 



I've been asked what I'm going to do – what we are going to do – what The KUSH is going to do. We're figuring it out. But I know this – the words of Rick Sellers continue to ring in my ears:

**"Don't Weaken. We're Still Here."**

PHOTO: Left is Billy Corgan in conversation with Rick Sellers





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Dan Bern • Dan Martin • David Anram  
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**May 16 - 19** - Rooster Day Festival, Central Park, Broken Arrow

**May 17** - Ravel on Route 66, 6 pm, Bristow Town Square, Free concert featuring a string quartet

**May 17** - Seth Lee Jones - Album release show, doors, 7 pm, show, 8 pm, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

**May 17** - Late night w/Paul Benjamin, show, 11 pm, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

**May 17, 18** - Zach Bryan in concert, Paycom Center, OKC

**May 18** - Art at Ol' Blue, 10 - 5, Blue Whale of Catoosa, Arts festival and music, Catoosa

**May 18** - Oklahoma Opry, doors open 6pm, show 7 pm, AMC@UCO, OKC

**May 18** - Michael Fracasso in concert, doors, 7:30pm, show 8 pm, The Blue Door, OKC

**May 18, 19, 25, 26, 27** - Oklahoma Renaissance Festival, The Castle of Muskogee, Muskogee

**May 19** - Ellis Paul, The Blue Door, OKC

**May 19** - Red Clay Strays in concert, doors open 6:30 pm, show 7:30 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

**May 20** - Brandon Jenkins Day, doors, 7 pm, show, 8 pm, hosted by The Red Dirt Rangers w/ BC & The Big Rig, Josh Yarbrough and more, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

**May 23** - Randy Rogers Band, doors, 6:30pm, show 7 pm, Apache Casino Hotel, Lawton

**May 24** - Mark Stuart w/ Kayla Ray, The Blue Door, OKC

**May 24, 25** - Roots Ball, Town Center Mainstage, Medicine Park

**May 24 - 26** - CHS Alumni Weekend, various locations in Cushing

**May 25 - 27** - Paseo Arts Festival, Paseo Arts District, OKC

**May 27** - Memorial Day Dance, Pawnee Nation Campgrounds

**May 27** - Two Door Cinema Club Band, doors 6:30 pm, show 7 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

**May 30** - John Fullbright w/full band, pre-opener - Giakob Lee, opener - Jason Scott & The High Heat, doors, 7 pm, show, 8 pm, The Dunkin Theatre, Cushing

**May 30** - 30 Years at the Blue Door, The Blue Door, OKC

**May 30** - Vincent Neil Emerson in concert, FREE, doors 7 pm, show 7:30, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

**May 31** - Pat Byrne, The Blue Door, OKC

**May 31** - Toadies in Concert, doors 6:30, show 7 pm, Diamond Ballroom, OKC

**May 31** - June 9 - Ponca Playhouse presents: Sunday in the Park with George, Ponca Playhouse, Ponca City

## JUNE

**June 1** - Tim Easton, The Blue Door, OKC

**June 1** - Jeremy Pinnell & Summer Dean, doors 7 pm, show, 8 pm, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

**June 1** - Bryan White in concert, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, Catoosa

**June 1** - Bluegrass, BBQ & Brews, featuring Bottom of the Barrell Band, Riversport, OKC

**June 2** - Christopher Paul Stelling, The Blue Door, OKC

**June 7** - Joey Frendo Birthday Show, doors, 7 pm, show, 8 pm, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

**June 7 - 9** - OKM Music Festival, 415 S Dewey Ave, Bartlesville

**June 8** - Leslie Mendelson, The Blue Door, OKC

**June 9** - Round Barn Rendezvous, jam sessions, 12 - 4 pm, Arcadia

**June 12** - Leon Majcen and Wheelwright, The Blue Door, OKC

**June 13** - Ronnie & the Redwoods, doors, 7 pm, show, 8 pm, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

**June 14** - Chucky Waggs, doors, 7 pm, show, 8, pm, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

**June 14** - Minor Gold, The Blue Door, OKC

**June 14 - 16** - Iowa Tribes of OK Powwow, Perkins

**June 15** - Shelly Phelps & The Storm, The Blue Door, OKC

**June 15** - Dancing Rabbit Music Festival, 3 pm, 104 E Choctaw Ave, McAlester

**June 18** - Cole Chaney: Legends & Verse 2024, doors 7 pm, show, 8 pm, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

**June 19** - Mike Coykendall & Fiawna Forte, doors 7 pm, show, 8 pm, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

**June 20 - 22** - Seminole Gospel Sing, Seminole Music Park, Seminole

**June 21** - Owen Temple, The Blue Door, OKC

**June 21, 22** - Corey Kent in concert, doors 6:30 pm, show 7:30 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

**June 22** - Sean McConnell, The Blue Door, OKC

**June 22** - Juneteenth Rhythm & Blues Festival, Boley Rodeo Arena, Boley

**June 23** - Mary Battiata and Joe Baxter, The Blue Door, OKC

**June 28** - Adam and Chris Carroll, The Blue Door, OKC

**June 28** - Thelma & the Sleeze w/RR Williams, doors, 7 pm, show, 8 pm, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

**June 28** - Kelsea Ballerini in concert, Choctaw Casino Resort, Durant

**June 28** - Wade Bowen in concert, doors 7 pm, show 8 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

**June 28** - Bixby Freedom Celebration, 7 pm, Bentley Sports Complex, Bixby

**June 28 - 30** - Tonkawa Tribal Powwow, 7 pm Fri, 2 pm Sat/Sun, Fort Oakland, Tonkawa

**June 29** - The Damn Quails, doors, 7 pm, show, 8 pm, The Dunkin Theatre, Cushing

**June 29** - Michael Fracasso, The Blue Door, OKC



June 30 – Willis Alan Ramsey Band, The Blue Door, OKC

## JULY

July 4 – 7 – Pawnee Indian Homecoming Celebration, Pawnee Nation Campgrounds

July 5 – Iron & Wine in concert, doors 7 pm, show 8 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

July 5 – Amy LaVere & Will Sexton, The Blue Door, OKC

July 6 – Randall King in concert, doors 7 pm, show 8:30 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

July 9 – David Amram & Friends, The Blue Door, OKC

July 10 – 14 – Woodyfest 2024, multiple locations/times, Okemah

July 10 – Josh Weathers, doors, 7 pm, show, 8 pm, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

July 11 – The Baseball Project in concert, doors 6:30, show 7:30, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

July 12 – Shrek Rave, doors 8:30 pm, show 9 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

July 14 – Round Barn Rendezvous, jam sessions, 12 – 4 pm, Arcadia

July 18 – Dave Mason in concert, doors 6:30 pm, show 7:30 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

July 19 – Uncle Lucious in concert, doors 7 pm, show 8 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

July 20 – Bowling for Soup in concert, doors 6:30 pm, show 7:30 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

July 26 – Walker Hayes in concert, 8 pm, River Spirit Casino Resort, Tulsa

July 26 – The Steel Woods in concert, doors 7 pm, show 8 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

July 27 – Calvin Loran, The Blue Door, OKC

July 27 – Chris Knight w/Josh Smith, doors, 7 pm, show, 8 pm, Mercury Lounge, Tulsa

July 27 – Giovannie & the Hired Guns in concert, JC Cowboys, Weatherford

July 27 – Dancing Rabbit Music Festival, Downtown McAlester

July 31 – Pretenders in concert, doors 7 pm, show 8:30 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

## AUGUST

Aug 2 – Zac Wilkerson, The Blue Door, OKC

Aug 3 – Andy Adams & Ben Brock, The Blue Door, OKC

Aug 5 – Orville Peck in concert, doors 6:30 pm, The Jones Assembly, OKC

Aug 7 – Samantha Fish in concert, doors 6:30 pm, show 7:30 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

Aug 11 – Jed Harrelson, The Blue Door, OKC

Aug 11 – Round Barn Rendezvous, jam sessions, 12 – 4 pm, Arcadia

Aug 14 – Charley Crockett in concert, 8 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

Aug 17 – Emo Night, 9 pm, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa

Aug 23 – Watermelon Slim, The Blue Door, OKC 

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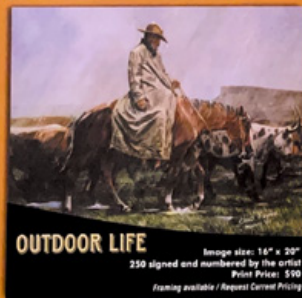
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Hugh at D'Mac's Bar & Grill

# Bright Lights and Open Mics

by **HUGH FOLEY**

Open mics and singer-songwriter nights are the well-spring of a local music scene. From folks who want to scratch the itch of performing in front of people for the first time, to experienced songwriters who want to try out new material, open mics are tremendous insight into what's happening on the grass roots level of any music community.

The Cimarron Valley is especially strong in open mics with regular, weekly gatherings in Stillwater and Drumright, with many more an hour away in Oklahoma City or Tulsa. For a DJ, open mics are great places to scout new talent for the station. I will often see someone playing at an open mic and offer them a slot on my Saturday Music Meeting or put them in touch with Molly to appear in the morning show in tandem with any local appearance or recent release they might want to share with the KUSH radio audience in north central Oklahoma from Tulsa to OKC.

For a music historian, open mics are a great way to find out where people are from and what their musical background is, which further fleshes out my understanding of music history in the state. Recently, I was at The Colony's Songwriter Night in Tulsa where some of Tulsa's best talent showcases their original material. One minute I was talking to hosts Desi and Cody about their upcoming tour of the South, and the next minute visiting with Jared Tyler about a Malcolm Holcombe tribute he was off to, followed by discussions with singer-songwriter, Casey West, who runs a couple of open mics in Tulsa and Oologah, and also plays constantly around Oklahoma with his band or solo.

I also had a chance to catch up with William T. Cauley, whose new album, *Possum Bone*, features primary current Tulsa musicians like Cassie Latshaw, Jesse Aycock, Aaron Boehler, Paddy Ryan, and Kent Halvorsen. Then a surprise occurred as I wound up visiting with Stuart Niemi, born and raised in Tulsa, whose roots in the Tulsa Sound run deep

and have spread to Europe and the US. His long history of collaborations with many significant musicians such as Webb Pierce, Johnny Taylor, Little Milton, and the GAP Band has formed his authentic and unique style. And Stuart was at The Colony just to listen and be part of the scene, along with the fact that it is his old neighborhood having been reared just a few blocks away.

Stillwater's open mic world is very strong, as one might expect with Oklahoma State in town, plus the stalwart singer-songwriter tradition that pushed the regional hybrid style of American roots music known as Red Dirt out into the world. As of this writing, regular opportunities for song slingers exist on Sunday night at Willie's, Monday night's featured songwriter night at the Great White Buffalo, Wednesday night's open mic at Bad Brad's run by Cale Lester, and first Thursday Troubadour Night at the Stillwater Community Center. Also in our local scene, Gene Collier's Fulkerson Jam on Tuesday nights in Drumright is another opportunity for locals to try out their songs or play along with the group without having to make the drive to Stillwater.

All of this activity has been educational and fun for me, as a developing singer-songwriter. I get to try out my songs on the public and other musicians, watch other people play to learn from them, and visit about music, playing the guitar, and writing songs. I also wind up talking about how a person gets airplay and then what to do when that starts. Helping younger musicians navigate the complicated music business as they get started is also enjoyable for me. In a lot of ways, open mics have become one of my "third places," those places we go outside of work and home to socialize and stay in touch with the world.

Up until the pandemic, I had mainly played with the folk-rock ensemble Slapout that has been my musical home for twenty-plus years with my musical partner, Derek



McCubbin. Due to everyone having a lot to do after the world cranked up again, I decided to start going to open mics around Oklahoma so I could play more and get better, plus work out songs that I could take back to the band once I had worked through them several times in front of an audience. Our area local mics are very supportive, as they should be, with musicians encouraging each other and offering gentle critiques. After doing about eighty local open mics after the pandemic, this past spring break I thought I would launch out to other open mics and songwriter nights out of state to see how my songs and performance of them would land with people I didn't know.

I started out by heading to Kentucky where my brother lives in Covington, essentially a suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio, right across the river. After an internet search, I located an open mic run by Aaron Hedrick at the Wunderbar in Covington, on St. Patrick's Day. We headed over there with my brother's crew and signed up like one would anywhere, and then started waiting our turn while sampling the food and beverages of the place. One thing I noticed in Kentucky was that a whole lot of the guys play big Martin dreadnought guitars, which are very familiar in the bluegrass world.

Unsurprisingly, a banjo player and fiddler also joined in with one of the guitarists. Just about everyone was doing cover songs, which is also not unusual, so I opened with a cover of Jim Croce's "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown," which everyone seems to like whenever I play it, and then went through a few of my songs. The way I can tell if people are into the music at all is if they respond physically somehow with either a smile, tapping their feet to the beat, clinking their beer bottle or glass on the bar in time, or just by bobbing their head. Once I see a few people doing that, I feel like I'm going over ok. Great to see my brother and to be invited back next time I'm in town by Aaron Hedrick.

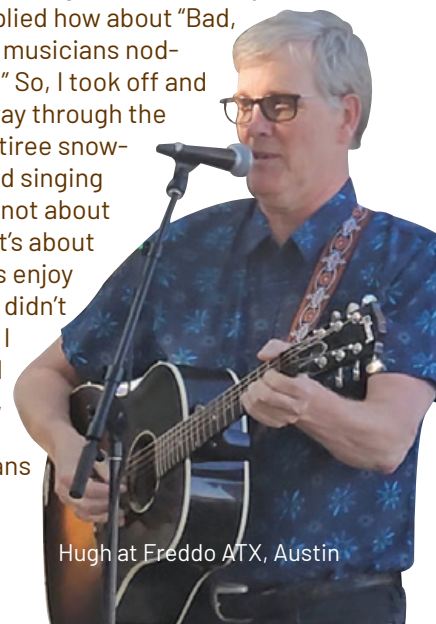
The next part of my strategy was to go down to Nashville, only about four hours south from where I'd just played. Of course, the place they call Music City is an experience everyone who plays thinks they want to try.

The next part of my strategy was to go down to Nashville, only about four hours south from where I'd just played. Of course, the place they call Music City is an experience everyone who plays thinks they want to try. After another internet search, I found an open mic run by Rick Hamel at the Roadside Bar and Grill in the Nashville suburb known as The Hermitage. I didn't know performers were supposed to sign up online, so I just drove down there and walked in the door with my guitar case slung over my shoulder. Luck-

ily, there was space for me and I was paired with another performer. Roadside has some good food which I enjoyed while waiting my turn. Once I got up there, I had the same comforting feedback experience I'd had the night before. I started playing, some heads turned, people smiled, and they started tapping along with a body part or beverage container. Afterwards, Rick said he'd put me on the e-mail list for whenever I was coming back through town, which was gratifying. The next night would be even more of a challenge.


Before I even tried going to Nashville to play at all, my friend WT Cauley had already run the open mic traps in town and said the Commodore Grill's Nashville Songwriter Night run by Jimmy and Anna Lisa was the one to hit, but to get there early and try to get on the open round at the end of the billed songwriters. The Commodore Grill is in the Holiday Inn right behind the Vanderbilt University football stadium. I made it plenty early and signed up for the open round. While waiting, I asked Jimmy how a person got to be a billed songwriter. He answered, "Do you live in Nashville?" I had to say, "No," and he let me know, "It's a Nashville songwriters' night, so we keep it local except for the open round." I thought that sounded fair and I was just happy to be playing anyway. Once I started on a song, I got the same reaction as the other two places, so that made me feel like I could at least hang at the basic songwriter level in Nashville. To cap it off, once I put my guitar up, Jimmy walked up and handed me a card, saying, "Let me know next time you're in Nashville and I'll get you on the bill." Two invitations to come back and play in Nashville was more than I could have hoped for, but it was sure nice.

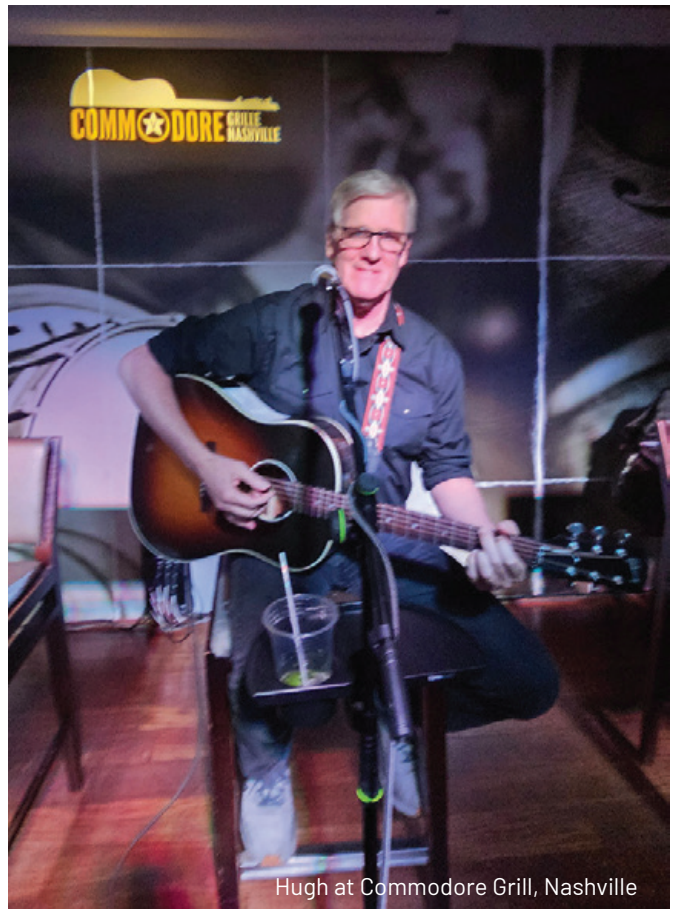
As soon as I finished playing the Commodore, I knew I wanted to head south because what's spring break without at least seeing saltwater and feeling those gulf breezes. I headed south through Alabama aiming for Orange Beach where I thought I would try an "open jam" which is a little different animal than an open mic, as it is usually a revolving pick-up band. The venue was D'Mac's Bar and Grill, not too far from the Gulf Coast. This was new territory for me, so when I got invited up on stage they handed me an electric guitar, which I don't normally play much, and started a blues jam which I only chorded along with. Then, they asked if I had anything, to which I replied how about "Bad, Bad, Leroy Brown"? The other musicians nodded and said, "We'll follow you." So, I took off and sure enough, I didn't get halfway through the first verse when a bunch of retiree snowbird types were up dancing and singing along. Once that happens, it's not about you as a performer anymore, it's about keeping time and helping folks enjoy themselves. It was good, but I didn't really connect with anyone so I just gave an Irish goodbye and headed to the Flying Harpoon, a little seaside restaurant to watch two really good musicians play for a while.



Hugh at Freddo ATX, Austin

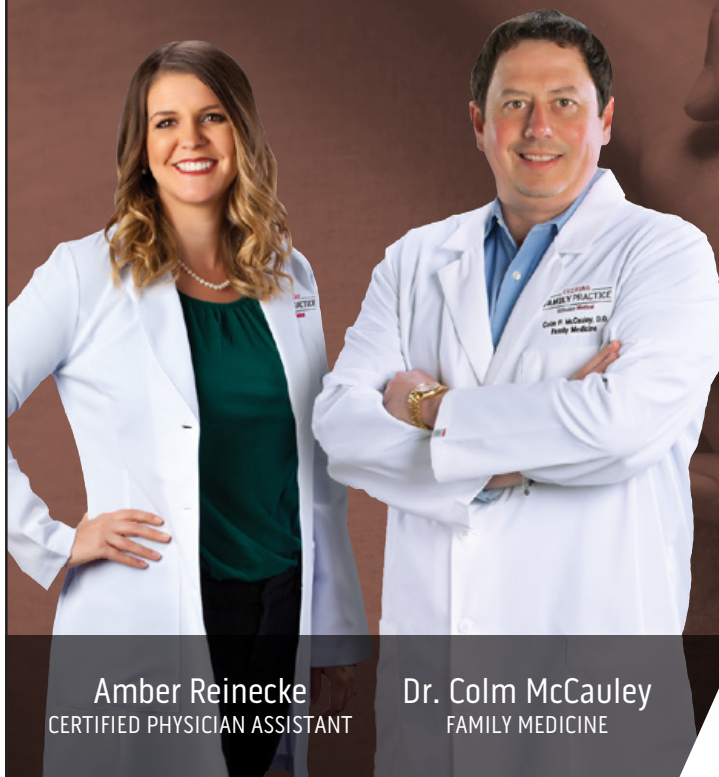
Oh no, I'm not finished yet. It was time to start heading back to Oklahoma but I wanted to visit a friend in Austin and see what might happen there. Friday's are usually not good open mic days, but I located an opportunity at the Freddo ATX coffee shop in Austin, and called them up. A very friendly Ananda Bliss answered the phone. I asked her if there was still an open mic there, and she said it's more of an invitation thing now, so she invited me. I got there early and had a lovely time playing the nice porch of this cool south Austin coffee shop right at 5 p.m. when everyone was coming over for happy hour. With lots of foot and vehicle traffic going by, it feels like you are playing for a lot of people. Along with the excellent food at Freddo's ATX, the workers at the coffee shop were also super friendly and helpful, asking if we needed anything during and after we were performing. After that show and a subsequent cavalcade of margaritas around Austin, I headed back north toward the Red River for one more open mic to close out the "tour" by going full circle back to The Colony in Tulsa.

Back on the comfortable stage at The Colony with its red velvet backdrop, billowy curtains on the windows, and homey living room rug, I was able to tell the crowd listening where I'd been and that from what I'd seen and heard, Tulsa's songwriters and musicians are equal to any others around the South. Then, I started a song and watched for the familiar feet-tapping and smiles, which thankfully occurred. 



Hugh at Commodore Grill, Nashville

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