

## The SXSW Report *by Barbe McMillen*

Thought I'd never get around to this report, I hit Austin town running and haven't stopped since I returned to Dallas. The road trip down to Austin went smoother this year. Wednesday I got an earlier start, and the roads are in better repair. Allan McGowan, Editor of VIP-Booking and IQ, who had come into Dallas the day before from the UK, was a welcomed companion again this year. I missed my usual suite at the Four Seasons, but was resigned to stay at the Best Western, which was tolerable, since I was only there to crash. Say good-bye to the infamous suite parties at the Four Seasons, but hold on to those invitations from years gone by, you may still find them useful. Instead of throwing parties, I had a mission to attend as many as possible.

I didn't drag a computer this year, but tried to remember to check my email at the stations provided on the trade show floor. In fact, that was the only time I went to the trade show floor. I didn't have to set up the MIDEM booth, didn't have to tear it down, and was not obligated to baby sit the booth. Friends said that they had asked for me at the booth when they could finally find someone manning the booth, however, actually it was empty most of the time.

This year registration was horrible, with more than an hour wait in line, even Press had to wait. This was the biggest complaint this year. People also mentioned the fact that Roland angered them with his flippant remarks during the opening address, "I see you all did get registered", but no apology for the wait.

The first party event was POPKOMM. I do hope to make this German music event some day. They have moved it to the month of September, a better time than August. Besides all of Allan's friends from across the pond, that he so graciously introduced me to, I met the other biggest party girl, Fiona Bloom. I'd met Fiona years ago when we both helped out at the MIDEM booth at the New Music Seminar in NYC. We compared party notes for our week. Her buz was the DKNY party at the old airport, which proved to be good, but I didn't make it- Too far out!

From there it was the NARAS Party where you never know who you will bump into as I practically fell over Joe Ely upon arriving. Ah, dinner, then networking. Los Super Seven performed a rousing set after Campanas De America got our blood flowing. Then we zoomed over to Castle Hill for a small intimate dinner with the eight SX friends we love the most. Dave Hirshland of Bug Music and I were the force of holding down the tradition of the Wednesday night kick off dinner. Naturally, I took the opportunity to compare notes on the evenings music schedule. The dinner honored Bill Craig this year, and was attended by Americana Chanteuse, Laura Cantrell, Jeremy Tepper of Sirius Radio, Allan McGowan and Louis Meyers, of Austin Music Network. Castle Hill was Dave's suggestion and a great choice. It was full of locals, and very crowded.

Then it was off to see the music wizards for Wednesday night: Tift Merritt, who was great even though the sound was bad. The sound got better a La Zona Rosa for Elvis Costello, who did a variety of old and new songs. My old favorite, Rodney Crowell topped off the evening for me at Antoin's. He played 30 minutes past closing.

Each morning I made a point to listen to KGSR Radio's live broadcast from the Four Seasons, if I could not make it there personally. Let's see, I remember Reckless Kelley, and Robert Earl Keen. Thursday morning at 10:30 before the opening address in the conference hall, we heard an inspirational performance by Mavis Staples with Marty Stuart on mandolin. I was impressed by the Keynote Conversation with Robert Plant. It inspired me to get the the Music Hall later that night to hear what he has going on now. Then it was one party after another: At the British BBQ I loved alt. country singer from London, Amy Smith. New Orleans had a big presence this year with Scott Aiges and Bern Cyrus showing up. Loved the jambalaya and funky music of Jon Cleary at the New Orleans party, and then ran back to convention center to catch Rob Berend's, the Paperclip Agency the Netherlands, panel on US Bands Playing Abroad. No need for lunch or dinner, we grazed our way through the town. The next place was the New West Party at Club Deville with Buddy Miller and others. Was this the night we met Klaus at the Driskel for whose showcase?? Man, too much to remember.

Thursday music wizards: Ray Wylie Hubbard & Robert Earl Keen at Antoin's, and back and forth there and the New Orleans night at the Fox and Hound where we saw Jon Cleary again, Teresa Andersson, Kermit R. and Los Hombres Calientes. There, I got my Jazz Fest fix since I won't be going this year. Later at the Music Hall, The Soundtrack Of Our Live (a big buzz amongst our Ebuds) was disappointing and Robert Plant was great. Plant's voice is still superb. I liked the new songs with the new band, but did not want to hear the new band cover the old songs. Guess those songs are written in stone for me and I don't want to hear any changes.

Friday began with meetings at the Four Seasons that progressed to the BMI brunch on the



### *Barbe, wet from the rain storm and elated to be with Aaron Neville, Bill Craig*

lawn, then Friday is a big blur. No wait, I remember hanging out with Suzette and going to the Continental Club for the Bug Music party. Yes, and I do remember finally catching up with and thanking Chris Prosser, Suspicious Marketing, London, for my badge, just as Mojo Nixon was introducing the New York Dolls at the Spin party in Stubbs Garden. It was the perfect alias for me this year. He and a friend were off the next day to New Orleans. Uh Oh, things are really blurry after that, I think my feet were aching by this time!! Wait a minute, There was this Canadian Party and BBQ. That was so much fun, we had trouble leaving the music and that historic Caswell House.

Friday music wizards: Laura Cantrell, her recent revue in the New York Times was glowing. The Matador Label is a great place for her songs and the party was a fun place to hear her again. We love her, she's great. Just walking 6th Street afterwards, we run into The King with his big sparkling glasses and crown just a busking out a song.

Saturday I actually sleep in a little. The main agenda this day was to be there for the Erykah Badu interview. I've been wanting to get to know her better. From the interview I discovered the spiritual side of her that comes out in her music, as she talked about giving back to her community and the Black Forest Theater project. She spoke of the year that she won her Grammy as being a blur, and the good, bad and ugly of being a hitmaker. She expressed the confusion of juggling motherhood with her career, of the struggle to keep the balance. I knew I had to see her performance later and had arranged a pass earlier in the week with Paul Levitino, anticipating the event. Later in the afternoon, Allan took me to the Island Records party at the Velvet Spade and introduced me to his friend, Bob Brimson. It was interesting to hear about label reorganization and the bottom dollar first hand. I found Bob a very kind and interesting person and enjoyed our talk during the afternoon rain showers.

Saturday music wizards: Bill and I blagged our way backstage for the Aaron Neville concert on the Town Lake Stage. We then looked at each other to say, "It don't get any bedder dan dis." Check out our picture with Aaron in the hard copy version of this article. Then on to the Music Hall. Things are running late, so Bill ditches me and moves on. Our motto at SX is "Anyone's ditchable". We all have our own agendas and mine was to hang with the Dallas group. Bill was in search of P. The Strange Fruit Project (I think this is Erykah's sister) and Jay Electronica I just didn't get. It may have been a bad sound man, I'm not sure. However, Erykah was well worth waiting for. Her show was captivating! Her mixture of spirituality and sensuality combines for a powerful performance. I get her, totally!

Sunday began with a meeting of friends at Las Manitas on

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