Music and David King's Corpus Christi

By Charles Protho

DK

My name's David King and I'm a multi-instrumentalist for the band Independent Thieves, and this South Texas Stories.

CP

I am Charles Prothro and today on South Texas Stories we will dissect the local music scene in Corpus Christi. David King a local musician will be our guide. The 31 year old musicians lifelong passion for music has led him to lead a life torn between his own personal passion for performing great lyrical songs that he wrote or his bandmates contributed, to working at a water treatment plant, and finally being a dedicated family man with two small children. As music is sometimes the best way to determine what is important to a culture his discussion on the life of a local musician in our city will be eye opening to those looking to determine what the culture of Corpus Christi looks like.

DK

I've been playing in a group, The Independent Thieves, for over six years and my partner and I have been singing and writing songs in and around Corpus Christi for that period of time. We bend more towards the uh, singer/song writer aspect. So, we stick with a lot of uh, lyric important music and that's our main focus. it is important for important music to tell a story. we take uh, inspiration from artists such as Bob Dylan or, um, we're both big Tom Petty fans, uh, so musically we, we tend to go towards that, that sound. But um, Garrett's a big fan of Townes Van Zandt and uh, other singer/song writers like that. We're both proponents of the Kerrville Folk Festival. We um, also have affiliations with the Southwestern Regional Folk Alliance. So, there are a lot of people who make their living off telling stories through music.

CP

The Kerrville Folk Festival is an important part of Texas music. In fact, Robert Earl Keen is one among many artists that credit the festival with what it is has done for their careers. It lifts Texas music every year and promotes story telling within the community of Texas artist. The festivals and associations are great for promoting a local music career. Also, they showcase original music. Playing a gig at places like the Kerrville Folk Festival can be extremely nerve racking.

DK

I tell you that the hardest group of people to play for is uh, number one, your friends, but also friends that you have that are also either artists or musicians. Because, they tend to see things that— In a different way, you know? And they might not take the same thing away that you intended, and you could come away with a completely different perspective of uh, your chosen art medium and what you're trying to put out there.

CP

When a musician is reborn into the artist, they become to their fans that story becomes an important part of their persona. David gave us an interesting bit of that in our interview.

DK

I was 16 years old, and my dad had to take a business trip. And I knew he had guitar lurking around the house, somewhere. I remembered it from when I was a baby and I, I hadn't seen it in while, so. Being uh, being very industrious, I kind of climbed up in the attic and I found this thing wrapped in a blanket and I shimmied myself down out of the rafters and I cradled this wooden thing that was about my same size, and I unwrapped it and it was his old guitar, this old arched top harmony with a crack in the back. And I convinced myself I was going to learn a Credence Clearwater Revival song before he got back. He had, I had two days to do it. And by golly, I did a really terrible version of “Bad Moon Rising” when he got back. But, the grin on his face was pretty good. From then on, I can still do a pretty half-decent version of “Bad Moon Rising”, yeah.

CP

People hear great lyrical songs and wonder how did that song get made? It sounds so real life like. Well most local artist hold down full time jobs and that helps to inspire them in their songs. Life provides the background for the music that is created

DK

I work at a water plant here locally and um, I am what they call a mechanical maintenance technician. I have always had some kind of technical or industrial job since uh, I was 17 years old. So, been very blessed to have like either a physically demanding or technically demanding job, that's been able to support a livelihood. And in enough time, besides that, to pursue music. So. If you're San Patricio County, and you're drinking that water. I helped.

CP

The city an artist lives in will be reflected in his music. That is true of David King. His city features in several songs. The culture that musicians grow up in like all great art will be reflected in their work. David takes a minute to talk about how his city and the culture have influenced his writing.

DK

I have uh, one from our first and currently only, but we're working on our second album now, but from our first album, from the Independent Thieves, which is called *Letter From the End of the World*. And, the song that uh, one of the songs I contributed to that album was called “Body of a Ghost”. Now it's, it's kind of a, a play on words, but here dry docked in our, in our bay we have what we lovingly call the Blue Ghost, as the USS Lexington, and um. She's all lit up, she's got blue lights on her. Can't miss her. And uh, it was, it was one of those times where I was, it was just me and my, my buddy Garret, we would play the show somewhere and being a young man in his twenties, I was in uh, I was in a probably a little more than an inebriated state, but probably a little bit less than a sober state. Somewhere in there. Um, I'm gonna guess, somewhere in between. And um, you know. We, we, if I remember the story right, I think we walked back to his brother's place and I crashed down on the couch and that couch is notorious for sinking in and it doesn't let you go. You just, you just pass out right there. There you go. And uh, but the song kind of came to me.
It was uh, it was a time of my life where I, I could truly, truly use a friend and the city that we live in, Corpus Christi really kind of personified itself, I guess to me somewhat. It has this potential to be almost kind of a—I, I don't even know how you would describe it. Kind of like a uh, a uh, another, another person that can walk beside you. I mean, it's, it's got it's pitfalls and its, its got its humanity that it shows itself to you. But that's just like anyone. We all, we all have those moments where maybe we're not showing our, our best side. But uh, we can be there for each other. And that's how I felt like the environment and the, the city and the, the co,unity of the place was being for me at that moment. And it just kind of came out in song. I don't even know if I can take true credit for it, because I woke up hearing it and I wrote it down and then I woke up the next day and I was able to play it.

CP

Of course, I had to get him to sing it…

DK

This city is my home. Is my friend, when I'm not all right.

It's my drug when I'm tired, sore, or stoned.

My soul hits the street. But here's not a place to feel alone.

The city, you will lick my wounds. Somehow, she always knows.

Body of a ghost. The body of a ghost.

My head spins around. But it's the constant comfort that I know.

This deep, religion that is the waves against the stones.

Body of a ghost. The body of a ghost.

CP

The original music that comes from a city is first heard in the venues we frequent. Sometimes we go to hear the music, sometimes we go for the atmosphere. In any account venues have changed over time and the emphasis that they have on who shows up.

DK

I can definitely say that um, there's a growing trend in Corpus, and I think we're catching up to a lot of larger cities. Um, we've got several venues here in town uh, some of the local breweries uh, they're all more of a family establishment. And I mean, it's usually family owned and they have events that you bring your kids to. And that's, that's a great thing I think, that you can go and uh, enjoy someone else's craft, like uh, like um, there efforts in crafting a beer, you know, they're proud of their, they're proud of their work. You’re gonna go there, you're gonna spend time with their family and usually their kids are there too, helping out or working with them. And um, I think that the community in Corpus is lending itself, and I think that there's a, that there's an awakening so to speak, where as you have these farmer's markets, you have these breweries, you have these restaurants and these establishments that realize that Corpus is growing, and the only way you can do that is incorporating these new, these new families and these new uh, these new artists as, as part of that. I think it's a great environment. We're getting better all the time.

CP

The crux of the music career is the performance. That’s how fans are made, and legends born. How the audience reacts to the band is of utmost importance because cues are delivered which change the way the band alters their performance.

DK

some of the shows that you think that you play and there, there's been a few shows where it's an actually stage and there's and actual um, concert-like vibe to it, because a lot of what we do is uh, is bars and, and coffee shops, and, and the like, so you have the restaurant mentality of someone's going to come in, order some food, they may tip the band on the way out, but they're there for an hour, tops.
Then there's these big shows where you can really showcase exactly what you're good at. The handwritten stuff. The stuff you only dust off and you perfect for that moment, right? So, you get the reaction from people but sometimes you get nothing, and then they come up to you afterwards and say "That, that was so great. That was really wonderful". Or, thanks to social media, they may find you on the internet and you know, give your band a like and—You'd be surprised. The, that's harder to come by sometimes. But when they react to you, in a obvious way, it's great. And you may start to play better, and you might start to vibe off of that. But, when they come back and say "That song really meant something to me, and here's why. This reflected a part of my life and I really got a deeper meaning behind it. Thank you, guys", you know. That's, that's pretty great. That's, that's a win.

CP

Through David King’s story we get a small look into what it is like to be a musical talent in our city. Culture and music have been intertwined through the ages and they are still doing so today. If you want to know a city and the people that live there, I might suggest you start by listening to some local artist. We end with what David would like to see in regard to people listening to local bands

DK

go out and listen to local, original music. Go be supportive of that. Go ahead and go to a show that you don't know who's playing. Go see that person, look them in the eyes and, uh, tell them it meant something to you. Or tell them— Even if you just tell them that they need to work on it. They are putting themselves out there, and it's for you. As much as it is for themselves. So, go and be supportive of that.