

# Not Fade Away

Buddy writers and photographers recorded the 1973 Kerrville Folk Festival, Willie's first Fourth of July Picnic, the Texas Jam, the rebirth of Deep Ellum and the rise of social media  
by Bellicose Bullfeather

**B**UDDY MAGAZINE'S 45 YEARS OF PUBLISHING is admirable. That it ever got off the ground is amazing.

Stoney Burns (originally Brent Stein) may have been a man of vision, but it's doubtful he could have envisioned that *BUDDY*, his little music publication, the first of its kind anywhere, would still be publishing after 45 years. With its tongue-in-cheek sensibilities, a playfully smartass attitude, and an undeniable passion for music, *BUDDY* first hit the streets in July, 1973.

Stoney, a never-quite-reformed '60s "radical" channeled the energies of his earlier counterculture/alternative (underground) publishing efforts (*Iconoclast*, *Notes*) into a free monthly magazine that hewed closely to his *drugs, sex and rock 'n' roll* lifestyle without actually saying so.

Best of all, because it filled a *niche* (there were no free regional music magazines), and it was riding the cultural wave of rock 'n' roll, soon to be overtaken by the "progressive country" movement, *BUDDY* magazine, which was started on a shoestring budget was in the right place at the right time, and actually had a chance, improbable as it seemed, of succeeding.

And so Stoney Burns, the eccentric Dallas alternative publication outlaw who at that time was awaiting sentencing for pot possession as well as "inciting a riot," had at least found a winning formula.

Stoney Burns' idea of publishing a free regional music magazine must have been a good one, because copycats sprang up all over the U.S.

That kind of confidence had allowed *BUDDY* to become the ultimate insider music magazine of the '70-'80s.

Contributors have included some of the best writers, photographers and artists in the state including renowned graphic artist and cartoonist Steve Brooks.

*BUDDY*'s first editor Rob Edleson and Ron McKeown were roommates at ETSU. After college, Edleson and Stoney worked together at *Notes* and *Iconoclast* and teamed to protest the Vietnam War.

By 1974, Ron was working as a news photographer at the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. He photographed Burns, surrounded by copies of *Notes* that a TV cameraman had brought before he was taken into custody and sent to Huntsville.

A few days after the first issue was printed, Rob and photographers Jesus Carrillo and Ron headed to Dripping Springs for the first Willie Nelson Fourth of July Picnic. It was apparent that this mix of hippies and rednecks

listening to country music might work. *BUDDY* landed on the ground floor of the '70s "Cosmic Cowboy/Redneck Rock/Progressive Country" movement in Texas music, and that genre's buzz would give the magazine a lot of horsepower. True to the spirit of the times, *BUDDY* played it fast and loose with everything.

Burns and Kirby Warnock established the selection of *Buddy* Texas Tornados in 1978. It began with Rocky Athas, Jimmie Vaughan, Bugs Henderson, Eric Johnson, Billy Gibbons and John Nitzinger in 1978, with Stevie Ray Vaughan and Rocky Hill being added the next year. Today, there are more than 500 *Buddy* Texas Tornados performing, teaching and recording on guitar, bass, miscellaneous stringed instruments, as well as keyboards, drums, horns and harmonica.

"It was a different time back then," recalled former editor-photographer-ad salesman Kirby Warnock. "Promoters wanted you backstage. You could just show up and it'd be like, 'What can we do for you?'"

Peter Frampton's manager once demanded Ron McKeown's film when he found the photographer and *BUDDY* writer Ben Ferguson talking to Frampton

as he was changing into street clothes. After a brief argument McKeown saw Freddie King coming toward them. He popped open the back of one of his Nikons and handed the worried manager an unexposed roll of film, just in time to photograph King introducing himself to Frampton.

What made it great for *BUDDY* writers and photographers was the *access*. Full access, anytime. If there was something happening, it was assumed that a *BUDDY* staffer would be there.

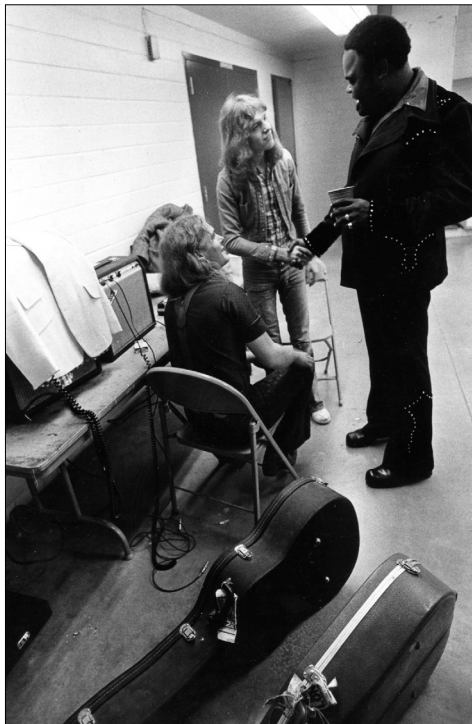
"The Texas Music Awards" (the "*Buddies*"), selection of *BUDDY* Texas Tornados, and the Texas Music Hall of Fame inductions certainly reflected the publication's growing clout in the early '80s.

(Editor's note: See page 12 for

more information on the Buddy Awards)

At its peak, *Buddy* had editions in Dallas, Houston, and Austin/San Antonio and a staff of almost two dozen. But trends in entertainment had already begun to toll the bell for the free-wheeling '70s. As the cosmic cowboy thing waned, as boobs in big hats became as anachronistic as banjo players in blackface and bowler hats, the magazine also lost steam, seemingly unable to attract young 'un writers who could bring the scene to readers in a way that could attract ads.

Chuck Flores was living in Austin when the downturn in the economy forced him to shut down his photography studio and move to Dallas in 1988. A year later, he was working at Southside Camera on Mockingbird when Ron McKeown walked in, hoping to sell a lens.



Backstage after Frampton concert: *BUDDY* staffer Ben Ferguson, Peter Frampton and Freddie King

"Just looking at his worn Domke camera bag," Chuck recalled, "and hearing him talk about music photography, and I knew I had found a kindred spirit."

Ron was of a like mind. He had left the *Star-Telegram* to make his living in the burgeoning music business. While he had a few good years, he had to shut down his studio and darkroom in 1989 after dealing with kidney cancer.

Stoney brought Ron back as editor in 1990 and the next year, Chuck came onboard just as *BUDDY* was moving to Lower Greenville.

"With its loft, we had more than enough room to operate the magazine," Chuck remembered. "I could set up my studio strobes, and Ron could display large prints of his great music photog-

raphy. Ron and I built a fairly decent darkroom in back.

"*BUDDY* allowed me to pursue the things I loved best, photography, writing about music and even playing music. My favorite shoot in the Greenville space was Doyle Bramhall and his sons, Doyle II and Chris Hunter for our January 1991 cover."

The area where *BUDDY* continued to be immediately relevant was in the coverage of the local blues scene. *BUDDY* staffers helped resurrect the career of Zuzu Bollin, turned mainstream music fans on to local standards like Roger Boykin and R.L. Griffin, and (through the attention of local blues expert and the late *BUDDY* staffer, Tim Schuller) at last provided piano player Boston Smith with an epitaph commensurate with his achievements.

Tim Schuller wrote "When *Buddy* said it covered Texas music it didn't mean, only trendy Texas music. Boston Smith — this senior man of blues, this war hero — would get no brushoff here. R.L. Griffin, Gregg Smith, Ernie Johnson and Z.Z. Hill are major stars in the soul/blues field. I've profiled 'em all for *BUDDY*."

"*BUDDY* never minded if I, kind of, showed up in the story. There's a school of journalism that says you're not supposed to. But I do. Hell, I was there."

With the explosion of personal computers, it seemed every kid with a Mac could publish their own music magazine ... and did.

*The Dallas Observer* claimed music coverage as one of its selling points. To counter this, *The Dallas Morning News* began stepping up its coverage of music.

"In 2003, photographer Darleen McAdams' enthusiasm for live shooting had us hitting five to six Deep Ellum clubs in a night," Chuck said. "And the question we heard most often was '*BUDDY* magazine? Is that still around?'"

"Since then, she's proven herself invaluable, transcribing my long, rambling interviews to make me, and the magazine, look good. Plus, she's done some great shooting herself. She and Dakota (Michelle Sirchio), our head of promotions, have been wonderful, positive photo assistants; their hard work makes some of our covers possible. They both do so much to keep the spirit alive.

"Both Ron and I have daily newspaper backgrounds and he's the big brother I never had. When we were operating out of Goodnight Ln, we spent long nights bouncing ideas off each other, finding ways to make the stories even better.

"My most enduring memory is when Darleen and I had finished interviewing Rocky Athas



Family Style *Buddy* cover photo: Doyle Bramhall with sons Chris Hunter and Doyle II

and Lightning (featuring Rocky Athas II on bass and Walter Watson on drums) in January 2008, we put the tape recorder and notepads away, and Rocky grabbed a guitar, I took my bass out and we plugged right into the board. We recorded "Little Wing" in about three takes, with Walter singing and playing drums. It's my favorite rendition of the song — even if I wasn't on it, it would still be my favorite."

Chuck left Dallas in February 2017, returning to his hometown of Corpus Christi, but strangely enough, through his laptop keyboard, he said he feels even more connected to *BUDDY* and our readers.

McKeown and Flores ushered the magazine through the Millennium Y2K scare (both years) publishing *Buddy* with a stubborn and unorthodox approach, with the help of Tom Geddie and Rick Koster. Now Shawn Henderson, Jan Sikes, Jackie Don Loe and Mary Jane Farmer have joined the fight.

Lisa DuPre said, "When I look back at the years I spent working at *BUDDY* Magazine, several things come immediately to mind: the times spent working late into the night in our little office off Royal Lane & I-35 with Ron and Brent Butcher. I used to frequent two to three clubs every Friday and Saturday night to get material for my *Not Just Blooze* column.

"Some of the most fun I ever had was hosting the *BUDDY* Texas Tornado Jams. One of the highlights of all of the shows was at the Hard Rock Cafe which we worked with Liz Mann. Being surrounded on stage by so many talented musicians was an incredible honor.

Stoney Burns and Rob

Edleson planted the *BUDDY* flag July, 1973, just hoping to have enough money left over to buy beer for the next concert. Today, Ron McKeown publishes the 45-year old *Buddy* magazine from his home in Sulphur Springs (on a shoestring, of course). The challenges will continue, as we will deal with an overall ten percent printing increase because of the Canadian paper tariffs.

Robert Earl Keen wrote, "The road goes on forever. And the party never ends."

And so *BUDDY*, the "Original Texas Music Magazine" will remain vital to the music scene as we continue our mission to record Texas music history for posterity.

The Dallas International Guitar Festival will present Benefit *Buddy* Magazine from noon until 10 p.m. Sunday, August 12 at the legendary Longhorn Ballroom at 216 Corinth St. Dallas, TX 75207. The anniversary event and benefit will celebrate not only the 45-year history of *Buddy*, the Original Texas Music Magazine but also 40 years since *BUDDY* founder Stoney Burns first selected Rocky Athas, Jimmie Vaughan, Billy Gibbons, Eric Johnson, John Nitzinger and Bugs Henderson as the first *BUDDY* Texas Tornados in 1978.

The event will feature a host of *Buddy* Texas Tornado performers. There will be a silent auction and a photography exhibit. The photo exhibit and sale will offer a look at *BUDDY* covers and event coverage from Ron McKeown, Chuck Flores, James Bland, Darleen McAdams, Michael Insuaste and others. For more information on contributing to the silent auction, please email [info@guitarshow.com](mailto:info@guitarshow.com) or call (972) 240-2206.