

# Home with the Armadillo

Gary P. Nunn is the Ambassador of Texas Music, an iconic pioneer of Texas "Outlaw Country," and newly pressed author  
By Jan Sikes

**N**O ONE CAN DISPUTE THE FACT THAT music in Texas during the sixties and seventies was blossoming, growing legs and taking flight.

And no one can argue that Gary P. Nunn was at the forefront, leading the way.

In his new hot-off-the-press memoir, *At Home with the Armadillo*, Nunn shares an in-depth and personal look at what was going on behind the scenes as Texas music transformed into an exciting and fresh sound. It was a time when artists began to realize they no longer needed a record deal to make an album and Indie music was born.

When asked what inspired Gary P. to write his memoir, he responded, "It was something I'd thought about for years, and I had in my mind to write a musician's manual, to pass on what I have learned to my son. Then my road manager, De Foster, encouraged me to write a book. So, that was all I needed. That little nudge put me to work."

## The beginning

WHERE DOES THE BOOK begin?

"It starts the day I was born," Nunn said. "My father was the superintendent of a small country school in Oklahoma. Our old car was broke down, and the only vehicle he had at his disposal was a school bus. So, he drove my mom to the hospital in a school bus."

That's the beginning to one of the most well-written and interesting memoirs that I've ever read.

In his book, Nunn takes us through his childhood where a lifetime of values formed. Academics took center stage with sports coming second. Nunn excelled at both.

He understood the value of teamwork early on, and that served him well in later years. But, the one thing that stood out to me about his childhood was the work ethic that seemed ingrained in his DNA. At the early age of eight, he was working on his uncles' farms during the sum-

mer months driving a tractor, baling hay and laboring from sunup to sundown. Family bonds were strong.

It seemed that young Gary P. Nunn had a knack for most anything he tackled. Around this time, his parents insisted on piano lessons. His piano teacher entered her students in a contest at Southeastern State College in Durant and Nunn received top honors for his level.

## Move to Texas

THE FAMILY MOVED FROM Oklahoma to Brownfield, Texas in 1957 and it was perhaps the single biggest event that would change twelve-year-old Gary P. Nunn's life forever.

In his book, he recalls a day at school when the buzz was about a classmate who'd gotten a new guitar. Even though he didn't know the kid, Nunn went to his house after football practice to see the new music-maker.

"I knocked on Alton's door and introduced myself to his mom and asked if I could see him. I walked into his bedroom, and he was playing this shiny new electric guitar. I was mesmerized and enchanted," Nunn recalls.

As it turns out, Alton Nicholson, would be a part of the first band Gary P. ever played in, "The Rebels," and they won a talent show contest in eighth grade. Gary P. played drums.

And, as they say, the rest is history.

I commend Gary P. for the detailed way he followed a timeline through the book. He played in a band with Nicholson all the way through high school; then enrolled in Texas Tech, where he would be led farther down the path of a music career.

Nunn recalls, "I discovered this band, 'The Sparkles.' They played my junior prom and were the big band in West Texas. They were really, really good. I be-



He is scheduled to perform at Love and War in Texas Plano on March 2 and the KHYI Texas Music Revolution on March 22: Gary P. Nunn

friend them and followed them around and eventually wound up playing guitar with them."

In the next band he joined, Nunn played bass and started to develop versatility with all the instruments.

I asked Gary P. about the first song he wrote.

He hesitated for a moment. "I was in a history class at South Plains College in Levelland, Texas. I had transferred there from Texas Tech in order to get a pharmacology course I needed. I was studying to become a pharmacist. So, I was sitting in class and started writing this song. I was always kind of a moody child, felt lonesome and blue, an outsider, and I write about that in the book too. So, this song was 'I'm Tired of Living this Way.'"

## Meeting legends

"TOMMY ALLSUP GOT WIND of it and sent someone to my house in Lubbock with a publishing contract. It was the first publishing contract I'd ever seen. I signed it and Tommy got a band out of Dallas to come into the studio and record it. At that time, in my world, songwriting wasn't encouraged or even recognized as something legitimate. It just sorta forced itself out of me, and that's the way with most of my songs."

For those who may not know, Tommy Allsup was well known

Oklahoma got postponed.

"That was in 1972, and I had literally given up on the music business. But, it was a whole new ball game with Murphey," Nunn said. "He had a record deal, promoters and was traveling the United States and even the world."

Michael Martin Murphey, Jerry Jeff Walker, and the Lost Gonzo band were all instrumental in the launch of Nunn's solo career, which came about (as did many things in Nunn's life including his marriage) quite by accident.

With such a long and fascinating journey through a monumental changing time in Texas music,

Gary P. Nunn has a multitude of stories that he shares in his book. It seemed he was destined to learn every aspect of the music business and his personal life through trial and error.

Nunn was always willing to lend a helping hand, and because of that, many artists today give him credit for boosting them in their careers.

He played an epic role in establishing the raw, honest Texas music that we love today. It's no wonder that he was named an Official Ambassador to the World by Texas Governor Mark

White and years later Governor Rick Perry gave him the title of Ambassador of Texas Music.

Gary P. Nunn earned those titles as well as his place at the top of the pile of Texas music artists. His signature song, "London Homesick Blues," is a standard and has been the theme song of the iconic Austin City Limits show for many years.

What's next for Gary P. Nunn besides promoting his new memoir, *Home with the Armadillo*?

## New CD

"I'M GOING TO BE RELEASING a new CD in April that's different from anything I've ever done. I've asked some of my peers to join me on an album of duets," Nunn said.

This album features twelve Texas Music Artists including Robert Earl Keen & Lyle Lovett, Kevin Fowler, Bruce Robison, Wade Bowen, Cory Morrow, Cody Canada, Roger Creager, Kimmie Rhodes, Dale Watson, Red Steagall, Cody Johnson, and Sunny Sweeney.

For more on the album, the memoir and tour dates, visit [garypunn.com](http://garypunn.com).

Gary P. Nunn will be performing at the grand re-opening of Love and War in Texas in Plano on March 2 along with Tommy Alverson. He will appear at KHYI's Toyota Texas Music Revolution on March 22 and Outlaws and Legends Music Festival in Abilene on March 24.

Also, Nunn will be a large part of a Country Music Hall of Fame Exhibit, "Outlaws and Armadillos: Country's Roaring '70s," which will open May 25 and perform at Poor David's Pub with Bob Livingston on April 26.

For more information, visit [countrymusichalloffame.org/exhibits/exhibitdetail/outlaws](http://countrymusichalloffame.org/exhibits/exhibitdetail/outlaws)

If Texas Music history fascinates you, pick up a copy of Gary P. Nunn's memoir. I promise you will find it entertaining.



The Lost Gonzo Band performed with Jerry Jeff Walker in 1974: Bob Livingston, Gary P. Nunn and John Inmon

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—GARY P. NUNN