Kirby Warnock gives us the inside scoop.

by Kirby Warnock

In the SPRING OF 1976, I DROPPED BY a set of cheap apartments on McKinney Avenue to pick up a check for $7. It was payment for a photo of Jerry Jeff Walker I shot and sold to BUCKY, the original Texas music magazine.

Bucky was already humming along nicely by the time I arrived. Its earliest struggles, such as the publisher, Stoner Burnes, spending a month in Huntsville prison, were behind it. Now it was an established "alternative" music magazine, the grandchild to underground newspapers that included Dallas Nuts, and The Konocas.

Dallas in the '60s and '70s was a hotbed of live music. Every bar, no matter how much of a dump it was, had a live act playing there. And all of those bars needed bands. Add to the fact that Big D served as the vinyl record distribution hub for the entire southwest and you had a lot of people making money from music in all of its forms.

This led to tons of promotional advertising dollars getting pumped into the local economy. At that time (1976) every major record label (Warner's, CBS, Capitol, RCA) had two budgets, radio and print. Because Dallas was the only viable print medium in DFW (they sure weren't going to advertise in stuff old The Dallas Morning News) we picked up the entire print budget for every new record release and nearly every live music venue. The only way to find out what band would be playing at what time was to buy a copy of old Buddy and look at our calendar page.

There was no Dallas Observer, Weekend Guide, Yelp, web, social media or cell phone app.

Burnes was it.

Sometimes the stars just come into alignment and everything goes right for no particular reason, and that's what it felt like during my time there from 1976-1982. It was the best of times, it was the most untrial of times.

It seemed that nearly every day, something crazy good happened. When we weren't going to a live show in Dallas for free (and I mean every show) we were meeting gorgeous women, listening to great music and drinking for free. It was like a dream, on the cheap, because that's pretty much what it was to be out on the frontier there were lots of perks, too.

Back then, all of the record companies regularly held "listening parties" where they invited the managers of all of the metroplex record stores to hear a new album. What they needed, and so precluded in today's era of auster- ity and low wages is how much money was flowing freely back then. For nearly every record party, concert or show we attended, we not only enjoyed free admission, but free drinks, and it usually food.

This was all sponsored by the major labels because the real money was in records. Vinyl records, not free downloads or streaming services like Spotify.

If you sold a million LPs in 1976 at $5.50 a album, you grossed $5 million in sales ($21 million in today's dollars).

With this much money available it was only natural that we could afford to "spend" concert but actually used tracks from popular rock bands' live albums and some promos for it by Rod Serling of the Twilight Zone (I am not making this shit up). It sounded so real that listeners called KNUS wanting di- rections to the "live concert" that didn't exist.

Steve's original vision was to hold the Texas Music Awards show in the Grand Hall of the Apparel Mart and have ZZ Top, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Doc Hawley, and ZZ Top, Stevie Ray Vaughan.

His plan was that the three would get to get (1-winner's capital and Columbia) would split the costs to promote their artists. It all sounded good on paper, but it didn't quite turn out that way.

We held the show at the Dallas Palladium, and it had broadcast live on K2EWM (The Zoo). The line-up that included the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Johnny Winter, Waylon Jennings, & McClintock and Bugs Henderson. We even coaxed Buddy Holly's widow, Maria Elena Holly Datz, to come out of her home in Irving and perform a song.

The only problem was that when it came time for her to ask for, "the envelope, please," there was no envelope. We had set up all of the bands and honorees and forgot about complexion.

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