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Without music to decorate it,



photos by Chris Fritchie

CAN YOU HEAR THE RHYTHM?

By Cynthia Howe

While the arts give a city its beauty and aura, it is music that sits in the center providing the city its very heartbeat. Frisconians are fortunate enough to live in a great city where music can be enjoyed, explored and cultivated. From small groups of musicians who get together to share their passion, to restaurants with live music, to live concerts at Pizza Hut Park and summer concerts in the park, Frisco has numerous venues to bathe your soul in music's healing waters.

Time is just a bunch of boring production deadlines

bills must be paid. ~ Frank Sinatra

or Sales by Church



*provided by Stonebriar
Community Church*



*Acoustic guitar circle at Anderson Guitar Gallery (above); Mike Glanton (left)
photos by Chris Fritchie*

IS IT NOT the soul that we hear music with? The spirit of man cries out to be comforted by the knowledge that we are not alone and music has that immutable power. It soothes us in our anxieties, it comforts us in our heartaches and it moves us in our worship. It can echo our frustrations or mimic our exultations. Whether it is a love song, a worship hymn, a classical concerto or a “he did me wrong” ballad, music is powerful and it has the power to bring people together in unique and wonderful ways, just as it’s doing right here in Frisco.

NEIGHBORHOOD GUITAR FORUM
Every Tuesday and Thursday night for

more than three years now, you can walk into Anderson Guitar Gallery and find the place packed with a large variety of fellow guitar enthusiasts sharing their passion for music. They trickle in, making room for each other, both physically and musically. Being amidst this group you sense a camaraderie that is authentic and warm. And while the guitar is the featured instrument that binds this group, there are others who bring some rhythm pieces; Brenda usually brings her keyboard while Ben has his harmonica tucked away in his pocket.

Steve Anderson, co-owner of Anderson Guitar Gallery (along with his wife Jennifer), had a vision for this group when they first started. “From the very beginning we wanted this to be a community place, like a barbershop or coffee shop; the acoustic guitar circle is where that sense of community begins. It reflects our attitude toward what we’re doing here. This is a mom and pop business and we want them to feel like family.”

Each group member take turns leading a song out and within a few beats they are not only playing together, but also creating harmony with vocals to follow and the song takes on its own life. It’s the way music should be, the give and take of sound harmonizing with the give and take of musicians, all working together to make the best of what is there, the song itself.

One of the first to perform is a young professional named Jason Wiese. While Jason probably spends most of his time taking his life very seriously in sales, he takes his musical endeavors slightly less serious. For example, this evening he makes everyone laugh at his song, *Moe* by George Wurzbach, about a son who is mortified by his father’s hairstyle: it looks just like Moe’s from the Three Stooges. As the night goes on however, you begin to realize they don’t just delight in one or two gathered there, the adoration is for each of them.

Jason’s style is very laid back and unassuming. He has a beautiful voice and



Music program at Stonebriar Community Church

provided by Stonebriar Community Church

plays the guitar with the ease and grace that years of practice and dedication have brought him.

Mike Glanton came in toting a mandolin, which he plays beautifully, but after a few songs he begins to switch back and forth between the mandolin and a guitar he built himself. He flew for years as a pilot and currently works for Southwest Airlines as a pilot instructor. While his professional skills came from years of education and experience, his musical skills have come quite naturally. He is completely self-taught and has learned most of his skills by trial and error supported with a natural gift.

When Mike was five years old he was given a harmonica and began playing almost immediately. The sounds and rhythms just came to him as he picked out various songs. A few years later he began to play the guitar, mandolin, lap harp and banjo. Each new instrument came to him just as naturally as the harmonica had. "I was just born to it," Mike explains. Just as easily as his music skills have come to him, so has his ability to meld into the group that meets at Anderson's.

"Anderson's provides an outlet to let us get together and share our music," explains Mike. When Mike contributes his music the genuine respect for him among the group is obvious. Mike poured his heart out in a Simon and Garfunkel tune,

The Boxer. Everyone joined in, picking out the harmony, strumming along as each person's skill could adapt. Everyone compliments, none distract. His smooth tenor voice gives an amber glow to the piece, as if aged for the song itself.

It's the way music should be, the give and take of sound harmonizing with the give and take of musicians.

He has been playing for more than forty years and his passion is expressed through his music in a beautiful way. He has a sharp sense of rhythm and harmony, a well-defined style and serves the group as a facilitator, making others feel welcome. "It doesn't matter how good you are," Mike explains, "there's a place for you here." Since joining the group more than two years ago, he has begun playing in local nursing homes with a few of the other regulars from the circle, regulars like Brenda Whitley.

Brenda usually comes in with her keyboard, but tonight she strums on her guitar. She beams in admiration for

those she plays with, an admiration that is reciprocated. Tonight she leads the group in *Yellow is the Color*, by Donovan, a perfect song for this group.

John Wehlege loves to join in the acoustic circles because every week is different, yet the same. "There's a bunch of talented people who love to play together and the music is always different: some original, some old pieces and some new." By profession, John is a photographer, highly respected and known in the industry, with clients such as Tommy Hilfiger, Saks Fifth Avenue, Dillard's and Youngkers to name a few. While his career monopolizes most of his time, the heart of the artist remains the same. "I use the same creative principles in my photography as I do in my music. It's about getting your own artistic style to come through in whatever you do."

John has been playing for more than thirty years. His interest was sparked by his neighbors who were jazz musicians. They played for the big bands of the 40s and 50s. But what turned the spark into an all out flame was when he went to his first concert to see Jerry Lee Lewis and John stood the entire time right next to the stage.

John plays at St. Ann Catholic Church in Coppell and has a great respect for the choir director there. "He does a lot of writing and has been taking old hymns



Scenes from Frisco Grooves Summer Concerts

photos provided by American Bank of Texas

and making them more contemporary.” And while he may come out with a rendition of *Amazing Grace* one week, he is just as able to play *Oh My, Do I Feel High* the next week. He lives a life of balance and artistic expression. “Our guitar circle, for me, is like a learning process. It’s sharing ideas and integrating them into your style and what you like,” he says. With twenty plus years of playing experience the maturity of this artist is obvious for only the mature continue to understand their own need to learn.

As Harlan Howard put it, “Country Music is three chords and the truth.” That’s the kind of music that Ben Beardon enjoys playing the most. He is an older gentleman, who appears like “Uncle Jess” from *Duke’s of Hazzard*, in his overalls, welcoming smile and warm heart. Ben likes to play old country pieces and is memorable as one of the last bards of the Wild West. When asked how long he has been playing his reply was, “Long enough to be a whole lot better than what I am.” He got his first guitar when he was a teen and still living in north Alabama, but never took it seriously. He grew up listening to the Grand Ole Opry every Saturday night and loved to listen to the country crooners such as Bob Wills, George Morgan and Jim Reeves.

His first guitar was a Gene Autry guitar with a picture of Autry roping on the front of it. Interesting thing is, he still has it. After moving to Texas in '58 his musical drive went through a dry spell until about twenty years ago when he moved to The Colony and found some folks to play with. He’s played at some of the local Opry’s, Wiley Opry and McKinney Opry, but hasn’t tried to do too much on stage. His passion lies in the music itself, not in the performance.

Ben has an authentic aged sound that exudes the wisdom he represents. As he shared his honky-tonk ballad the group was intrigued not only by the music but by the story it told. He has a gifted ear and a smooth, unique style.

This night Steve Anderson is one of the last to lead out. He plays *Crossroads*, by Eric Clapton, but gives it a Stevie Ray Vaughn feel. His twenty plus years playing shines through, as does his passion for the guitar itself. He has played in numerous bands since his teens and besides opening his own guitar store, he assists numerous churches as well as such groups as MercyMe as a guitar technician.

When asked where his passion stemmed from, Steve reminisced about when he was a boy. “My father bought



a guitar and started taking lessons. I’d watch him, and as soon as he put it down, being done for the night, I would start. I had learned how to play the piano, but it was the guitar that was cool, so I taught myself how to play and it’s been a passion ever since.”

The Anderson acoustic circle provide a terrific venue to participate with a variety of talents, some beginning their musical endeavors and others of a professional standard, but it is a comfortable place to learn and grow.

SACRED GIFT OF MUSIC

Another local musical venue is of a more sacred nature: the church.

When you look at the professional music artists that span over the past hundred years, many of them will attest to their humble beginnings found

within the foundation of the church. Whether Catholic, Methodist or Baptist, music appears to be the language that crosses over denominational lines. Musical education can still be found in the churches today, churches such as Stonebriar Community Church on Preston Road.

Teaching music is teaching the soul within each of us the language in which we worship God.

Paul Mayer, pastor of worship and music at Stonebriar, is passionate about music education. "Teaching music is teaching the soul within each of us the language in which we worship God," Paul explains. Beethoven expressed it best when he said, "Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the [physical] life." At Stonebriar, music education starts at the age of four and continues through adulthood. They provide opportunities not only for choir, but also for instrumental groups and music appreciation.

Francine Kelso serves as the children's choir director, introducing and teaching children rhythm and style as well as how to read music. While the children enjoy Mrs. Kelso's program, the adults thoroughly enjoy the adult choir.

"There is such a wide variety of talent found in this choir," one church member stated. A number of choir members have a background in music education, holding degrees in music from such places as Baylor and Louisiana State University; others are just starting their journey into music. The beautiful thing about this



choir is that there is a place for everyone. Likewise, there is a place for just about every instrument as well.

Stonebriar has a wonderful brass quartet, handbell ensemble group, woodwind quartet as well as a band that plays some of the best contemporary Christian music of our time. There are other opportunities to participate for musicians in various events. With plans for an extensive Grand Organ consisting of sixty to seventy ranks of pipes, the commitment to music is in a caliber of its own. In a time when many churches are getting rid of their organs, Stonebriar is embracing theirs with an excitement that is contagious. It is an act of inclusion, not exclusion: they will still have their

contemporary band that rocks the place, but it also reflects their dedication to music and the role music plays in the hearts of mankind.

Contemporary Christian artists such as Twila Paris and Steve Green have come to Stonebriar to share their talents, while the church choir has performed *The Messiah*, as well as a *Festival of Carols* at Christmas. Age does not define the music at Stonebriar. You are just as likely to hear a piece from Bach as you are from Amy Grant, but one thing that is consistent; there is a love of music and lots of opportunities to learn.

LESSONS FOR ALL AGES

Other opportunities to learn are abund-



Area musicians in concert

ant in Frisco. The Music Conservatory of Texas on Preston Road provides classes for beginners to advanced musicians. Whether you learn best in a group setting or private lessons, you are a kindergartener or a senior citizen or you want to learn the banjo, harpsichord, piano, drums or rock out on the guitar, the Conservatory has a place for you to expand and grow as a musician.

BRING ON THE BAND!

Summer time is a great occasion for outdoor live music and in Frisco, the experience of a lifetime may be right around the corner at Pizza Hut Park. Many a childhood memory includes a first concert and many locals look forward to the events every year. Last year the city rocked and crooned with the sounds of Jimmy Buffett, Kenny Chesney, Sugarland, Nickelback and Texas' own Taylor Swift. This year Kenny Chesney will be returning for a May 3rd concert. Nick Schaeffer, business operations manager of Pizza Hut Park couldn't give any definite information but made it clear that it was going to be a terrific summer of concerts for Frisconians.

While Pizza Hut Park concerts provide big names on a large scale, smaller concerts are just as entertaining in a different forum. Plans are already under way for the 2008 Frisco Grooves



photos by Chris Fritchie

Summer Concert series sponsored by American Bank of Texas. For the third year, each Friday night throughout the month of June spectators can sit out and listen to some fantastic music at the Warren Sports Complex located on Eldorado Parkway while watching the stars come out at night.

LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM THESE ARTISTS THIS SUMMER:

June 6 Terri Hendrix with Lloyd Maines: Terri has been touted as the Janice Joplin of Country Music, while Lloyd Maines represents generations of talented musicians. Lloyd may be known as Dixie-Chick's Natalie Maines father, but Lloyd's career stands alone and he is just following in the footsteps of his father and uncles before him. The result: a music business giant is stepping up on stage. You won't want to miss this duo.

June 13 The South Austin Jug Band: They may not be completely bluegrass, or even newgrass, but they're definitely a talented group consisting not only of fiddle, mandolin and upright bass, but also drums and a mean electric guitar. Sometimes the sound is down-home country and sometimes progressive-acoustic, but rest assured, what you hear, you'll love!

June 20 Sisters Morales: This striking

duo, sisters Roberta and Lisa Morales, sings a beautiful blend of Spanish and Mexican traditional songs and ballads with their signature charisma. Look forward to a combination of blues, rock, country and mariachi-style music sung in both Spanish and English.

Many a childhood memory includes a first concert which is why locals look forward to these events every year.

June 27 The Derailers: Dubbed, "Hang dog honky-tonk at its best!" by NPR, this band is sure to please with an obvious Buck Owens influence. They have worked on perfecting their "Beatles-meets-Bakersfield" sound since the 1990s and it shows. Having just come out with their eighth album, this is a group you won't want to miss.

The concerts in the park have created a great venue for music enthusiasts who like to socialize, picnic and basically hang out with family and friends while enjoying some terrific country music. Friday after

work take off your work shoes, throw on your flip-flops, grab a lawn chair, the dog and the kids and head out to the park. Concession stands are available to make your outing all that much easier. It's a laid back atmosphere that exudes what community is all about, enjoying cultural events while enjoying those you hold dear.

When asked about why American Bank is so enthusiastic about these concerts, the answer was obvious. "We thought it would be a great opportunity to reach out to our community and physically meet them," Ginger Nye explained. "Mailers are so impersonal and music brings people together in such a wonderful way." The feedback has been tremendous and the American Bank family has certainly prospered by trying a new tune.

While these concerts, both large and small, are limited to a season, you don't have to wait until summer to enjoy live music in Frisco. The artists play on at some of your favorite restaurants.

LIVE MUSIC AND DINING IN FRISCO

Dining options in Frisco have continued to increase from the local diner to very upscale and elegant evenings out. More and more restaurants are offering live music for their patron's enjoyment and the selection is wide and varied. In



Jimmy Buffet concert at Pizza Hut Park

photo provided by Pizza Hut Park

addition to some of the eclectic choices described here, other new eateries offering live entertainment include Coach Joe's where music and sports are mixed and Chaucer's Sushi & Grill offering sushi and an over 21 club after 9 p.m.

Music is known to arouse the senses and many a romance has blossomed in similar settings.

Sláinte! That's Gaelic for "Cheers!" Across the street from Pizza Hut Park is an authentic Irish Pub, Lochrann's. It's a great location to meet up with friends on a given night just for the full bar and terrific food, but when you realize what all goes on here, you realize that the emphasis is on Craic!! (that's Gaelic for "fun").

Lochrann's provides live entertainment Thursdays through Saturdays with a variety of artists including, among others, Irish guitarist Michael Harrison as well as Irish folk singer Jeffery Phillips. Michael Harrison has toured all over North Texas, belting out rousing Irish pub songs and bringing tears to many an eye with a soft spun ballad. Jeffery Phillips is known as a balladeer with a wide repertoire of traditional Irish ballads as well as feisty Irish drinking songs. If you haven't jumped in on a rendition of "Wild Rover" lately you may have to make a night of it soon. No matter the night of the week, or the artist, the evenings often take on a life of their own as the audience is encouraged to sing along and participate, or quietly drink it all in.

At Terilli's you'll find a wide variety of jazz from Latin to straight-ahead to blues jazz to classic, there's a wide variety for the jazz connoisseur to enjoy. Terilli's prides itself on its Italian cuisine combined with a romantic atmosphere. Music is known to arouse the senses and many a romance has blossomed in similar settings. The extensive Italian

menu is ideal for families providing fare selections right for every age. Terilli's in Frisco is on Preston Road.

For a night of fabulous food and the enjoyment of live jazz in the background try Zea WoodFire Grill located on the southeast corner of S.H.121 and the Dallas North Tollway. Every Friday and Saturday night folks can enjoy such artists as Bobby Reese or the Pearson Brothers. Sally Coleman of Little Elm recently met up with her husband at Zea's. "We enjoyed the food; very flavorful and plenty of it. Our server was friendly and attentive! The atmosphere in the bar was cozy and the live music was light jazz; just right for relaxing on a Friday evening."

There are so many things that make a city great and music is definitely one of them. Ralph Waldo Emerson may have only dreamed of such a city where music to his liking could easily be found. One thing is for certain; we're fortunate enough to live in one.

Cynthia Howe is a freelance writer living in Little Elm.