

Success leads musician to Hill Country

'Big-time' bassist prefers simple life

Stephen Mendell has played bass guitar with most of the brightest stars in American music: Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton, James Brown, Neal Young. The list is long and each name impressive.

As a successful studio musician in Nashville 10 years ago, Mendell says he "drove a Mercedes, received constantly and thought I had it all." Then one day, Mendell's best friend, another successful studio musician, "drove to the top of a mountain and never came back."

Today, Mendell credits that tragedy with spurring him the same disastrous end. Forced to re-evaluate his lifestyle and career, Mendell came to grips with the fact that he was unhappy with his work as well as living in Nashville.

Mendell had played with bands in Austin a few times, and had become friends with former University of Texas Head Football Coach Darrell Royal.

"Coach (Royal) is an avid Texas fan and an avid musician, and you could say I fell in love with Texas through his eyes," he said.

Mendell left Nashville and headed for the Hill Country. Today, he and his wife Denise, and children Zach, Li, Eric, & Nicole, 3, live on seven acres west of Dripping Springs. Mendell, appointed by former Gov. Mark White to the Texas Music Commission, is now a music producer, selecting his projects with extreme care and limiting the number.

"I believe now that something good comes from a tragedy," Mendell said as he illustrates the differences between his work in Nashville and Texas. In Nashville, Mendell would play for so many artists that he cannot recall individual songs he helped record. Not only a studio musician, Mendell also played on the road, and the hours and work eventually melted together, hour upon hour, song upon song.

Since moving to Texas, Mendell selects each project carefully and allows time to perfect the final product. He has become a recording engineer in an effort to facilitate the exact sound he wants, explaining, "music is a business to me, but I also want to keep it an art."

Mendell is particularly proud of an educational two-record set that will be on the market this year. Sporting a tooled leather jacket, the album is entitled *K.R. Wood's History of Texas*. Written by K.R. Wood, the record relays the history of Texas through songs through songs ranging from country to rock to traditional.

In the final stages of mixing and editing, Mendell is proud of the artists contributing their talents to telling the tale of Texas. Steve Frenkel, Tom F. Hall, Deibert McClinton, Tommie Van Zandt and others.

As Mendell explained, "K.R. Wood researched the history of Texas for ten years in an effort to this project. We've taken it to the Texas Historical Society to have them verify its authenticity and have spent two years in the studio recording it and perfecting it."

"The effort will bring the Texas history alive and perfect it," Mendell believes, adding "the irony of it is that most of who worked on the album were not native Texans."

Mendell has also recently produced a record with Tommie Van Zandt, titled *Live and Obscure*, which was released in England six months ago and will be released in the United States this summer. At the moment, he is producing an album for a Houston rock group called Duke Jupiter, which should



Stephen J. Mendell holds the front and back covers of his latest project, an album entitled *Fathers of Texas*. The album teaches the history of Texas through song.



Susan Karnes

Dripping Springs

also be released during 1988.

Mendell is presently scouting a location for his new recording studio to be located in Dripping Springs. Explaining why he selected Dripping Springs rather than Austin, Mendell said, "I think the clients that I work with are very private and like to get away from the city. There is a lot of hope and energy in our business, which I don't like, so I feel it is healthier out here."

Dripping Springs residents may recognize Mendell as one of the people involved in the fiery accident at the intersection of U.S. 290 and RR 12 on Christmas Day. Still recovering from his severe injuries, Mendell recounted the dinner when a couple turned in front of us without looking. I kept saying "Please see me," but the driver didn't. I knew if I kept going I'd injure myself, so I edged my way off the road. They hit my car and rammed it into a pole."

From the wreckage, Mendell was unable to work his way out of the car until he realized there were flames resulting from the wreck. Finding a way to work his way free, Mendell pulled his unconscious wife from the car and returned for his children. Unable to free them, he pulled an entire car seat from its bolts to enable himself to reach them. Once all three children were in the care of a DPS officer, Mendell turned and walked from his vehicle, despite a broken hip.

Suddenly, he said, "I felt an incredible warmth and realized it was from my car exploding. I could see the flames reflected in witnesses' faces."

Reflecting on the experience, Mendell said, "Once again, I think some good came to me personally as a result of that accident. The people of Dripping Springs were unbelievable in their effort to help us, and the accident made me stop once again and remind myself to keep my life simple. We are all alive, and that's the important thing."



Sean Carpenter, left, teacher Shirley Thompson, and Holly Grimmie share graham crackers and juice during snack time during Dripping Springs United Methodist Children's Day Out.

New church facility

The Rev. Grady Roe of Dripping Springs United Methodist Church takes a lot of pride in his congregation's new home on RR 12. The building still lacks some finishing touches, such as carpet, but Roe feels those things are insignificant in comparison to having church activities in full swing in the new building.

Like the building itself, the congregation has a new face in many ways. Due to the popularity of Dripping Springs as a bedroom community to Austin, Roe's congregation has doubled in the last 10 years, and he finds that seven or eight of every ten members are young couples with young children. Because of this, Roe has placed special emphasis on the regular Sunday services.

Each Sunday's program is illustrated by a child's drawing selected from Sunday school lessons, and Roe conducts a special children's activity during the regular Sunday services.

Mary Lehmann, the Children's Day Out director, is excited about the new building because it has allowed her program to expand from 18 children to 30. Presently, 28 are enrolled in the Tuesday and Thursday program which provides children ages 2 to 6 a special morning to play and learn.

The old and new will still March 8, when the church's annual group will serve a dinner planned and created by children in the Children's Day Out program. As a finale to studies focusing on nutrition, each child will bring a vegetable to contribute to a vegetable stew for the evening's menu. Proceeds from the meal will benefit the children's play space.

For additional information re-

chmanist, Jason Shaw and Kim Kelly.

Middle School

Students Samantha Harlan and Jennifer McGee made All-Region Band. They competed against band students from 54 Austin area middle schools to receive this honor.

The Dripping Springs Middle School Science Fair was held Feb. 23. Students' projects were exhibited in the cafeteria. Students trying out for sixth-grade UIL Oral Reading are busy choosing poems to work with.

day, sponsored by the Austin Writers' League and the Austin Public Library (pre-registration required; call 475-4342). Bring paper and pen. At 11:20 a.m. on Saturday story time will be held, followed at 2 p.m. by the films, *Blue Dasher*, *Country Cousins*, *Curious George Goes to the Library* and *Broderick*, will be shown at 10 a.m. on Monday. Three films will be shown at 10 a.m. Tuesday through Thursday.

Lake Travis school notes

High School

Eric Davis, junior at LTHS, was awarded the High School Student Ambassador Award for this year. Eric is one of 12 students from the Austin area going to Hawaii, New Zealand and Australia in June. Their group will total 30, being rounded out by students from the Dallas area.

The students, along with their parents, will attend intensive orientation sessions in the spring. All of the preparation will culminate with a two-day orientation in Honolulu, Hawaii followed by 33 days in New Zealand and Australia.

Computer Science II and English IV Honors students took a field trip to three computer centers at the University of Texas Feb. 3. The students attended the school of Business Classroom 2000, the School of Communications Computer Graphics Lab and the Writers' Workbench Lab, also in Communication. They entered an original essay and had it analyzed for readability and structure.

Class assemblies at the Sweetheart Dance include: Ninth-graders, Jason Matthews and Leann Hillman; 10th-graders Burk Bauda and Rusti Norwood; 11th-graders Josh Brindrick and Jani Derwin; and 12th-graders Benny Spargo and Stephanie Byrd.

The LTHS Spyle Team competed in the Copparrs Cover Speech tourney on Feb. 13. Christy Zoller placed first in Poetry Interpretation, Katie Henderson placed second in Extemporaneous Speaking and Rusti Norwood placed first in Preliminaries in Prose Interpretation. The students are coached by Mrs. Denis Pyle and Mr. Daryl Collier.

The LTHS Cavallette Dance Team won a total of 14 first division medals at competition in Tyler on Feb. 12. Erin Smith was selected Miss Blue and Gold Drill Team with the most outstanding solo out of 60 contestants from 2A, 3A, 4A, and 5A schools. She received a perfect score from the judges. The Dance Team was selected as the "Most Outstanding 3A Dance Team."

Receiving top honors as Outstanding CerTex Students were J. Chris George, in math, and Eric Brindrick, in science.

Also honored for representing Dripping Springs High School were Lee Appelt, art; David Robbins, community service; Shelli Tyndale, drama; Jennifer Hodiak, instrumental music; JoAnn Baker, religious; Peter Gerdes, education; Charlotte Carothers and Clinton Baly, sports; and Katherine Thompson, journalism. Miss Thompson was also nominated for the Teenager of the Year award.

To help Susan keep up with activities in Dripping Springs, call her at 288-4396.

Students honored

The Capital Area Optimist Club honored several students from the Dripping Springs area during their 14th Annual Youth Appreciation Ceremony, held last week in the House Chambers of the Capitol.

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Middle School

In preparation for an upcoming tour on the Mystery and Suspense, Lake Travis Middle School received Honors and Accelerated Honors Composition classes will be attending Chamber Repertory Theatre's "Triple Billing" at Palmer Auditorium on Monday. The students will view the performance of a variety of actors as they reveal adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat," Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" and Mark



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Twin's "The Inevitable Tale." The students will use this experience as a basis for writing a play review and a mystery play based on a short story. The teacher sponsor for this activity is Jan Shelton.

Lake Travis Elementary

Seven third grade students were selected by teachers as "Most Improved" for displaying commendable improvement over the course of the year. Hiah Johnson, math and handwriting; Erin Van Fleet, math; Martina Guerrero, handwriting; Jennifer Pruitt, math; Raven Johnson, creative writing; Erica Norman, handwriting; Todd Koenig, handwriting.

The Lake Travis kindergarten teachers have learned all about dinosaurs including Brontosaurus, Pterodactyl, Stegosaurus, Tyrannosaurus Rex, and Triceratops. The students learned about each dinosaur's characteristics and habits. Activities consisted of making large model dinosaurs, dinosaur stamping, fossil finding, dinosaur used painting, giant dinosaur floor puzzles, outside measurement of dinosaurs, singing and moving to dinosaur music, dinosaur murals, and sharing individual dinosaur toys.

February is Dental Health Month, and third grade classes are teaching the Tattler Tooth programs with materials including toothbrushes and toothpaste donated by Crest. The local dentist will be coming to the school to screen all students for dental problems.

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Dripping Springs school notes

High School

Dripping Springs High School recently announced High School Favorites for the 1987-88 school year.

Chris M. George was voted Mr. D.H.S. and Julie Henderson was voted Miss D.H.S. Boy most likely to succeed is J. Chris George; girl most likely to succeed is Bobbi Hohmann. Clint Bay won for most athletic boy; Charlotte Carothers is most athletic girl. Charlotte Carothers was chosen most beautiful girl. Chris M. George is most handsome boy.

Library shelf

The Austin Public Library is offering Southwest Austin the following activities Friday through March 3.

Manchaca Road Branch, 3500 Manchaca Road - A craft will be featured at 10 and 10:30 a.m. on Friday. Two films will be shown at 10 and 10:30 a.m. on Monday: *Happy Birthday, Moon*, and *Lin Foxberry and the Four Seasons*. Preschool story time at 10 and 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday will be "Rivers, Lakes and Oceans."

Class favorites are: Seniors J. Chris George and Bobbi Hohmann; juniors Mark Tinsley and Laura Hayden; sophomores Brett Boydston and Laine Crowwell; and freshmen Denny Smith and Robin Puryear.

Winners of other titles are: friendliest, David Robbins and Julie Henderson; most spirited, Danielle Baham and Kirsti Coleman; wittiest, Bruce Hogg and Kim Kelly; best dressed, Todd Heimers and Laine Crowwell; worst driver, Cooper Verts and Nicole Hall; most likely to be late, Mike McShane and Patricia Hill, and

Toddler story time will be held at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, followed at 10:30 a.m. by preschool story time, "Rivers, Lakes and Oceans." Preschool story time on March 3 will be "Rivers, Lakes and Oceans."

Central Library, 800 Guadalupe St. - Preschool story time at 10 a.m. on Friday will be "Happy Birthday, Moon" and *Lin Foxberry and the Four Seasons*. Preschool story time at 10 and 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday will be "Rivers, Lakes and Oceans."

day, sponsored by the Austin Writers' League and the Austin Public Library (pre-registration required; call 475-4342). Bring paper and pen. At 11:20 a.m. on Saturday story time will be held, followed at 2 p.m. by the films, *Blue Dasher*, *Country Cousins*, *Curious George Goes to the Library* and *Broderick*, will be shown at 10 a.m. on Monday. Three films will be shown at 10 a.m. Tuesday through Thursday.

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