


*Frisco author
explores state's best
dance halls, dreamers*

BOOT SCOOT BOOGIE



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Frisco author Luke
Gilliam collaborated
with Pat Green,
shown here at
Gruene Hall.

BY ANN MARIE SHAMBAUGH

STAFF WRITER

As someone who loves country music and writing, Frisco resident Luke Gilliam was eager to fuse his two passions into the book called "Pat Green's Dance Halls & Dreamers."

Gilliam spent the last two years working on his first book by traveling across the state to 10 dance halls that are bursting with Texas culture with every chord strung and foot tapped inside their classic doors.

At each stop he and photographer Guy Rogers III chronicle a performance by artists such as Willie Nelson, Jack Ingram, and Pat Green, who came up with the idea for the book, creating a vibrant guide for anyone interested in Texas music culture.

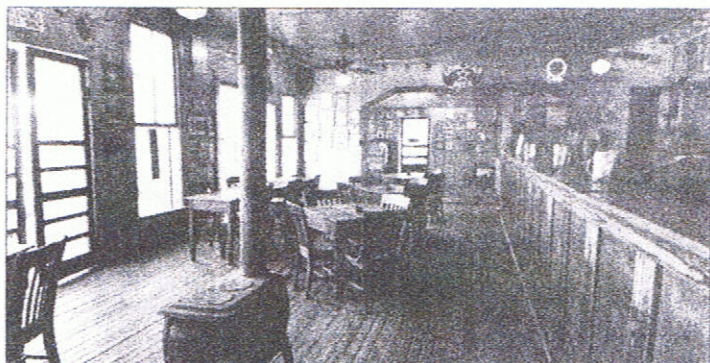
Gilliam met fascinating people, visited legendary places, and listened to lively music all in a day's work, and found that "work" wasn't a misnomer.

"Every time we did a chapter, we couldn't do that dance hall again or that artist again, so our pool kept shrinking and shrinking," Gilliam said. "As we got toward the end it got more and more difficult finding somebody that we wanted in the book playing at one of those places. You're really at the mercy of their tour schedule."

Gilliam and Rogers were also at the mercy of their own sched-

TRAVELS

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GUY ROGERS III/SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Gruene Hall in New Braunfels, Texas, is one of 10 featured dance halls in Frisco author Luke Gilliam's newly released book, 'Pat Green's Dance Halls & Dreamers.'

ules. Both work full-time during the week, and spent the weekends traveling as far as Schroeder in southern Texas for performances that lasted until 2 a.m., then driving back on Sunday.

The book was named after Green's first CD, "Dancehall Dreamer." Green came up with the idea for the book as his music career blossomed and he traveled to the many dance halls across the state.

"We just wanted to do a project that memorializes places and the impact they had on the history of Texas music," Gilliam said.

The project began with a list of about 20 dance halls and 20 artists, but was whittled down based on which artists were playing at certain venues. Nelson, for example, only played two shows in Texas during the time of the project, and Green wanted his chapter to cover Gruene Hall, one of his favorite places.

Gilliam was drawn to the project through his friendship with Green, which dates back more than 10 years, before Green found national success. They met in Waco through Green's first manager, who was Gilliam's best friend in high school.

"The first couple of times I saw [Green] play, there was no cover charge. He was just a guy singing in any place they would let him play, working on his sound," Gilliam said. "To see him become a country music star is pretty awesome."

Gilliam had visited about half of the featured dance halls before the project began, which provided him with a context for those chapters.

The other dance halls, some of which were in the middle of nowhere, opened up new corners of Texas that crooned their own type of education to the author.

"When you go in with your eyes wide open, really looking for every detail about the place, you learn a lot more about it than when you have a preconceived notion of what a place is all about," Gilliam said. "I really enjoyed that blank canvas."

The dance halls included Billy Bob's Texas in Fort Worth, Coupland Dancehall in Coupland, Stubb's Bar-B-Q in Austin, and Saengerhalle in New Braunfels, but Gilliam said that after spending quality time at each one his favorite was Luckenbach Dancehall, in the



GUY ROGERS III/SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Billy Bob's Texas in Fort Worth is one of 10 dance halls featured in the newly released book, "Pat Green's Dance Halls & Dreamers."

legendary town with the same name.

Gilliam said he loves the uniqueness of the place, the fact that there's nothing around it for miles, and the accepting atmosphere.

"It's uniquely Texas," Gilliam said. "They'll throw their arms around anybody that walks in their doors, and I think that's such a culture shock for people to go there who are from different parts of the country."

"Pat Green's Dance Halls & Dreamers" hit stores Feb. 13, and now that the project is complete, Gilliam is adjusting to a calmer pace of life with his wife and first child, who was born in December.

Not only has the book release allowed Gilliam to spend more time with his family, but he also recently started a job with United American Insurance in McKinney as the managing editor of the marketing department, which frees up his evenings.

He worked in the news business for the previous 10 years,

which often kept him away from home until the early morning hours because of deadlines.

Gilliam has lived on the west side of Frisco since 2003.

"We love the area," he said. "There's so much to do, and it's a great place to raise a family."

As Gilliam adjusts to the consistency of a 9-to-5 job, he said he has thought about the possibility of writing a sequel to his first book, but is more likely to pursue other types of books about music — ones that don't require the rigorous travel and logistical problems that "Dance Halls & Dreamers" presented.

Looking at the finished product, however, Gilliam said he is proud of the book and thankful for the many experiences he had along the way.

"The biggest takeaway for me was that it was a great and powerful reminder of how great the people of Texas are, from the dance hall owners to the bouncers to the bartenders to the artists themselves," he said.