

## TOMMY ALVERSON

www.tommyalverson.com

Even though Tommy Alverson's new album is called *Country to the Bone*, he would like y'all to know he's been to Nashville, country music's supposed nerve center, exactly once.

"I came home and kissed the ground and I've never been back," he confesses, adding, "I don't think I'm missing anything."

Alverson, a Fort Worth resident, could easily have called his fifth release *Texan to the Bone*. He emphatically makes that point at least once on every album; his new one includes "Got Here as Fast as I Could," a jaunty love letter that might serve as the answer song to Lyle Lovett's "That's Right (You're Not From Texas)." The chorus goes: *I wasn't born in Texas but I got here as fast as I could. I ain't never gonna leave here, no way in hell that I would.*

Even the slogan on his Web site reads, "Texas music the way it ought to be." The album was released at Alverson's 10<sup>th</sup> annual Texas Music Family Gathering, a steadily growing three-day festival that's about as Texan as it gets.

Alverson's been making music with a Lone Star state of mind – and sound – for decades, yet his popularity is still growing. When he won the 2007 Best Country and Western Music Award from Fort Worth Weekly, the paper declared, "If there is such a thing as Cowtown country music's elder statesman, he's it."

In fact, the album started out as a redo of some older Alverson compositions ("because songs evolve and change just like people do"), before it morphed into more of an homage to some of his favorite songwriters, from Jim Lauderdale and Doug Sahm to Mickey Newbury, Clay Blaker and the team of Roy Robinson (aka Amos Staggs) and Jerri Lynn Robinson.

"Jim Lauderdale and Doug Sahm and Clay Blaker, that's kind of a triad that we all followed probably 10 years ago," recalls Alverson, who used Sahm's guitar when he sat in at the legendary troubadour's last gig, the CD release party for the album Sahm produced for Alverson's friend (and Palo Duro labelmate – and birthday twin) Ed Burlison. Alverson knew he wanted to pay tribute to the late Texas Tornado; he just didn't know which song to use. So he searched for an obscure one nobody else had covered, and found "Be Real" on MySpace. "I'd never heard it," Alverson says. "I thought I'd heard them all."

He offers props to another hero in "Just Like Hank," a song borrowed from pal Walt Wilkins and co-writer Davis Raines. Alverson and Wilkins, another label mate, co-produced the 2006 Palo Duro release, *Luckenbach! Compadres! (The Songs of Luckenbach, Texas)*, the multi-artist celebration recorded live at Luckenbach. ("That was three of the best days I've ever spent anywhere," Alverson says fondly of the experience.)

Alverson has been hanging around with great Texas songwriters since his Itasca High School days – even if he didn't quite know it then. He played varsity football with Austin's Sam Baker (then known as Dick Baker). During junior college, he played guitar with James Hand, and later produced Hand's first album.

(Tommy Alverson Biography, Continued)

One might call all three late bloomers, career-wise. In their 50s, they're finally getting real recognition. Though Alverson has stood on Texas' honky-tonk and dance hall stages since way before he could be called an elder statesman of anything, the first time radio really paid attention was with the Jimmy Buffett-ish "Una Mas Cerveza," a song on 1999's, Lloyd Maines-produced *Me on the Jukebox*. Ironically, that one allowed him to quit his 30-year gig with Miller Brewing Co. so he could hit the road and sing more songs with clever twists on one of country's favorite subjects, like "This Buzz is For You" and "Upside Down," which humorously examines the flip side of irresponsible inebriation.

*Country to the Bone* contains another unmistakably Buffett-like tune, "Welcome to Paradise," but this one is an actual tribute to one of Alverson's other beloved artists ("I was a parrothead before they were called parrotheads," he proudly claims). Though it, too, has references to tipsiness, it's more about the camaraderie Buffett inspires among fans.

There was a lot of camaraderie in co-producer Patrick McGuire's Arlington recording studio, too. Topping a long list of players this time around are Alverson's regular bandmates: son Justin on lead guitar, Ray Austin on steel and Dobro, Ron Thompson on drums, Jerry Abrams on bass and Thurston Selby and Heather Woodruff, on fiddle. One special guest was Pauline Reese, who sang with Alverson on "Tequila Rose" – a Robinson-Robinson composition Alverson turned into a duet.

Even though he's clearly "country to the bone," Alverson says he would rather be known as an "all over the map" artist than a traditional country performer. Some of these 14 cuts contain South-of-the-border influences any self-respecting Texas musician absorbs at some point; Alverson heads in a country-rock direction on the closer, "Texas Woman." (And he did go to France last summer, to perform at Country Rendez-Vous, one of Europe's biggest country music festivals.)

"I don't know what you'd call it. It's just whatever we do," Alverson says of fan favorite "Texas Woman," which label founder Chris Thomas listed in the July 2007 *Cowboys & Indians* magazine as one of his favorite Palo Duro tracks. Thomas called it, "one of the finest love songs ever written. Another Texas classic."

After years of self-produced or poorly distributed releases, with his debut on Palo Duro, Alverson says, "I think I finally found a home."

A Texas classic himself, he got there as fast as he could.

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