

## **The Day the Music Died Revisited in 2020 and How San Angelo Musicians are Trying to Make a Difference**

This morning while strolling down the lane of Facebook memories, I came across a post we made on our Discover San Angelo page on July 9, 2019. One year ago, today, San Angelo was presented with the Texas Music Friendly Designation by the Texas Music Office, which is under the Office of the Governor. As the appointed music liaison for the city of San Angelo and as the Vice President of the San Angelo Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), I was incredibly proud that day. The live music venues, bands, musicians, songwriters, music stores, event planners, and other music supporters were recognized for their importance to our community and the roles they play in improving the quality of life of our city and, in turn, helping us to attract businesses, workers, families, and retirees to our community. At that time, we were only the 8<sup>th</sup> city in Texas to receive the designation. Since the CVB is also a division of the San Angelo Chamber of Commerce, quality of life is extremely important to us for marketing San Angelo as a destination and a place for business to be.

From the press release shared by the Governor's office a year ago today, "With support from the Texas Music Office, the Texas music industry created more than 209,000 direct and indirect permanent jobs in communities all across the Lone Star State last year and generated \$23.4 billion in economic activity," said Governor Greg Abbott. "Music Friendly Communities certified by the Texas Music Office are serious about attracting and developing local music industry growth, and I am proud of all that the Texas Music Office has accomplished in helping communities like San Angelo grow their local economy."

### Cue March 19, 2020

As we are all aware, a few short months ago, things changed for all of us with the introduction of the coronavirus followed soon by the announcement from the Governor's office to close bars and to limit restaurants to curbside and takeout only. Within minutes, the Discover San Angelo calendar of events went from full to empty, as events and performances were cancelled due to closure. One of the first things that came to my mind when I was pulling music events from our calendar were the lyrics from the great Don McLean song, American Pie. "Something touched me deep inside, the day the music died." Some businesses were able to participate in the paycheck protection program. Some employees were laid off, but for how long? That was the question.

### Cue June 3, 2020

Bars, live music venues, and restaurants received a reprieve from the Governor's office and were once again allowed to open or increase their occupancy. The public was again able to experience live music at our venues, even if it was limited seating. Employees were brought back to work, musicians performed, and life was returning to our venues.

Cue June 26, 2020

With less than four-hours' notice, bars and live music venues were once again told to shutter their doors by the Governor's office due to a spike in the coronavirus. Musicians who had not played in months, earning little to no money, packed up their instruments and went home. Venue and bar owners closed their doors once again and had to share the news with their employees that they no longer had jobs.

Yesterday, I learned from an article in the Austin Monitor of a survey commissioned by the Austin Chamber of Commerce in coordination with the Central Texas for Business Task Force. The survey predicted that 90% of Austin's live music venues could be closed by Halloween due to the shutdowns. Doors already darkened in the Live Music Capital of the World are two beloved locations – Shady Grove and the original Threadgill's with other locations permanently closing their doors behind them.

As we see the COVID 19 numbers rise in our state and our community due to numerous reasons, the music venues that happen to have bars inside them are hurting. As the music friendly liaison for the community, I have heard and read many comments from people saying, "It's just a bar." That is indeed the perception of many. However, it is a business for the owners. I hear the pain and suffering they are experiencing as they struggle to survive from almost four months of having their doors closed. If you were a business owner, would you be able to survive? If you had put years and decades into making your enterprise successful, how would you feel if you were not able to open? I ask our citizens for empathy for these businesses. Many abided by the rules presented to them but they were still forced to close.

Certainly, the leadership could have chosen to go against the Governor's order, but the Texas Alcohol and Beverage Commission (TABC) would have followed suit, written the venues citations, and they would have still been told to shut down.

Heavy on my mind today is what happens to the 209,000 direct and indirect permanent employees across the state who work at these businesses or make their living as musicians, performers, event planners, concert promoters, etc.? While San Angelo businesses and individuals only make up a small portion of this number, what happens to these unemployed families? Those voices are now silenced. Their doors are closed with no idea when and if they will open again or how they will pay the bills that don't stop coming just because they are shut down.

If indeed these businesses make up \$23.4 billion in economic activity, how much of those dollars will not be seen? To be clear, the safety of our citizens is vital and I want to stress that during this time of COVID 19. Livelihood is important, as well, and I see the two going hand in hand. I don't have the answers, though I wish I did for the sake of my friends in the industry who NEED to make a living. While I have no solution, I have seen some light from our music community.

Last week, Bob Simpson, a regional artist, reached out to me and shared that he was creating a movement to help those establishments that host live music in San Angelo by

starting a fundraiser. *Sounds of San Angelo* is a compilation album of bands and artists of all genres who have stepped up and have chosen to give back to those venues that have given so much to them - a stage to share their music, an audience to hear it, and the opportunity to see their own dreams be realized. The album features nearly 75 bands and artists who have provided original performances. They reside in and around San Angelo. A digital download is available for purchase at [www.soundsofsanangelo.bandcamp.com](http://www.soundsofsanangelo.bandcamp.com). 100% of the proceeds from this album will be split evenly and given to those businesses in the local bar scene that are in need during the current shut down. The album will be available for download on Friday, July 17. Consider supporting the efforts of these great artists who are sharing their talents to help others in the industry they rely on for their own successes. For more updates, please visit [www.facebook.com/soundsofsanangelo](https://www.facebook.com/soundsofsanangelo).

Currently, there is no “dance time in Texas” that King George sings about. From the great Texas singer/songwriter Lyle Lovett, “Closing time. Unplug them people. Send them home. It’s closing time.” Our hope is that soon that time will be over and these businesses are able to once again open their doors, bring in the creative class of musicians and bands to share their talents and entertain our citizens and visitors to San Angelo. Until then, I once again ask our citizens and friends of the music industry to keep these businesses in your thoughts as they struggle to survive in the time of COVID 19 and offer assistance if you are able.

# Sounds of San Angelo

Manzy Lowery  
Jeska Forsyth  
Wrather McGinnis  
My Education  
Darren Morrison  
Patrick Venne  
Sam Knox  
Whiskey Mike  
Ross Fleming  
Air Raid Summer  
100 Smokes  
Bob Simpson  
Rita Capuchina  
Daniel Makins  
IfNothingElse  
Clay Thrash  
Oscar Ornelas Band  
Bryce Jones  
Daycee Oswald  
Holli Garett  
Dallas Owens  
The First Part  
Don Gabbert  
Drawing a Blank  
Lori Jo Thomas  
...and many more

