



# REEL TIMES

SEPTEMBER 2009

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## 4th Annual Austin String Band Festival, Coming Oct. 16-18!

AFTM is hosting our fourth string band festival October 16, 17, and 18 at Camp Ben McCulloch across from the Salt Lick (directions below). Come enjoy great bands, fun jams, good food and top-notch workshops at this beautiful campground with shade trees, a creek, and all the facilities for a magical time. Gates open at noon on Friday, October 16.

**The Austin Lounge Lizards** are the headliners this year. The Lizards' music is a belly laugh at life's absurdities with a style that features precise five-part vocal harmonies and instrumental mastery.

Based in Austin, Texas, the Lizards have honed their music into a wicked-funny art form. They've delighted audiences from Texas to Trafalgar Square with their inventive style of satirical folk, country and bluegrass. Trademarks of a Lizards song are highly literate, sharply pointed lyrics that poke fun at politics, love, religion and the culture in general.

The Lizards are five-time award winners at the prestigious Austin Music Awards, and their version of the Irving Berlin's "C-U-B-A" was used in the Michael Moore film *Sicko*. The band has been featured by NPR's "Morning

Edition" and on the radio programs "Mountain Stage" and "E-Town." **THE DRUGS I NEED** (released in 2006) is the Lizards' 10th album and their second on the Houston-based Blue Corn Music label.

**Manuel "Cowboy" Donley** is a featured performer we are proud to have on the schedule. A composer, arranger, and performer, Donley is considered a pioneer of Tejano music. While he does not have the mainstream recognition of some other Tejano musicians many old timers greet him with the ultimate sign of respect: *Maestro*.

Donley was born in Durango, Mexico in 1928. He moved to Austin with his family at the age of seven and took an early interest in music, following the lead of his father, a classically trained violinist who once played with the Durango Symphony. In 1949, the 21-year-old Donley formed Los Heartbreakers, the first Mexican-American band to play rock & roll and rhythm & blues in Austin. But it was the *orquesta* music of the early Forties that captured Donley and led him in 1955 to form his own *orquesta*, Las Estrellas.

Not content to simply reproduce what had been done before, Las Estrellas infused Mexican

rancheras, polkas, boleros, and ballads with expressive horn arrangements, influences such as big band, rock & roll, and rhythm & blues. Over the years, Manuel has written music and arrangements for several movies, including *Remember the Alamo* in 1954, *Los Imigrantes* in the late Seventies, and local filmmaker Hector Galan's *Los Mineros* in the Eighties.

We've also got a varied bunch of other great Texas talent such as the three generations of talented musicians in Mariachi Corbetas and the beautiful dulcimer music of the Wright family. Unfortunately we don't have the space to tell you more about all of them. See below for the complete lineup.

Bring your banjos, guitars, fiddles, mandolins and other instruments – sit under the trees and jam, sing, dance, eat, and make merry. We've got some great musicians on stage, but we want everyone to get in on the act! We'll have some kind of fun for everyone. Help ensure that traditional string band music prospers as a vibrant form of musical expression.

We'll have plenty of food and soft beverages, but BYOB.

—continued on page 3

## Fire Ant Frolic Coming Soon!

Austin's 13th Annual Fire Ant Frolic will be held October 30-November 1, 2009, at the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs Grand Ballroom. This will be a great event with Seth Tepfer (Atlanta) and the Avant Gardeners (Virginia, Kentucky, and North Carolina). On Saturday morning we'll have a guest callers' session with the local band Mesa Rose (Andrea Katz and Marilyn Cooper).

Full information about the event is available through our website, [www.fireantfrolic.com](http://www.fireantfrolic.com) or you can pick up a flyer at one of the many dances in Austin. You'll see details about all of our wonderful talent, see our preliminary schedule of dance sessions, workshops, special events throughout the weekend (waltz workshop, skirt and top swap, Halloween night dance, and after-parties), and register online via PayPal.

The deadline for early registration is October 1, so make sure your registration is postmarked on or before that date. Hospitality requests or offers should be directed to Brenda Shawn at [hospitality@fireantfrolic.com](mailto:hospitality@fireantfrolic.com). We'd love to have your help! If you can help with setup, decorations, wrangling water, front desk, or cleanup,

please contact Richard Letts at [volunteer@fireantfrolic.com](mailto:volunteer@fireantfrolic.com). If you would like to help with food, please contact Paul Hawkins at [food@fireantfrolic.com](mailto:food@fireantfrolic.com).

FAF committee members are Richard Letts (president), John Kulas (vice president), Ann McCracken (secretary), Marianne Letts (treasurer), Stuart Spates (front desk and design), Mary Miller (band liaison), Paul Hawkins (food), and Brenda Shawn (hospitality). If you would like to serve on next year's board, please contact: [board@fireantfrolic.com](mailto:board@fireantfrolic.com).

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## AFTM/Central Market Showcase

Save Saturday evening November 14th on your calendar for a showcase of Austin bands sponsored by Austin Friends of Traditional Music and Central Market. Bands and other details will be announced by e-mail and on the AFTM website.

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## E-Reel Times

Reel Times is available by e-mail. Save a fast-growth pine by going to our web site ([www.aftm.us](http://www.aftm.us)) and signing up for e-mail delivery!

## Nigel Russell Passes

Nigel Russell was a great man, father, builder, musician and a long time friend of AFTM. He died suddenly in his sleep on August 14.

Born in 1948, Nigel emigrated from Scotland to Hamilton, Ontario, Canada with his family in 1952. Nigel moved to Austin in the early 1980s to build a sailboat and wound up staying. He quickly became a part of the music scene. A self taught and accomplished singer, guitarist and fiddler he played with many of us over the years. He was a member of Ptarmigan and the Studebakers, with whom he recorded and played many gigs in and around Austin. Nigel had an innate and infectious warmth and friendliness that cheered everyone he met.

A formal memorial service was held on August 22 with a party afterward with lots of music, food, and joy. This is the way Nigel wanted to be remembered!

*His boat sailed here for a while,  
Then departed for another shore.*



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## AFTM Officers/Board 2008/2009

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AFTM email: [aftm@yahogroups.com](mailto:aftm@yahogroups.com)  
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Directions: Camp Ben McCulloch is within a few minutes of Austin, located 11 miles south of Highway 290 West on Farm Road 1826. From I-35, take Loop 4 to downtown Buda. Head west on Farm Road 967 for 11 miles, then turn left on Farm Road 1826 for 1/2 mile -- Camp Ben McCulloch is on the left

**Program**

Friday October 16th

- 6:00 Seiker Band
- 7:00 Atomic Duo
- 8:00 Christy and The Plowboys
- 9:00 Electric Mt. Rotten Apple Gang
- 10:00 McMercy Family

Saturday, October 17th

- 1:00 Charles Thibodeaux and His Cajun Aces
- 2:00 Milkdrive
- 3:00 Double Eagle String band
- 4:00 Manuel "Cowboy" Donley
- 5:00 Lost Pines
- 6:00 The Wrights
- 7:00 Mariachi Corbetas with Anthony Ortiz, Jr
- 8:00 Hays County Burn Band
- 9:00 Austin Lounge Lizards
- 10:00 Big Jug Band

Sunday, October 18th

Gospel Sing about 10 a.m. until noon.

**Saturday Workshops**

The workshop times have not been set, and the topics are still in flux but they will generally be held Saturday in the late morning and af-

ternoon. We'll update you by e-mail and web as the workshop topics and times become solid. For now:

*Mandolin* - Billy Bright, Todd Jagger, Dennis McDaniel, Dennis Ludicker, and maybe others;

*The Fiddling of P.T. Bell and Thomas Jefferson Wootan, Early Texas Fiddlers* - Dan Foster and Tim Wooten;

*Harmonica* - Mike Rubin;

*Kids Beginner Celtic Fiddle* session with Vanessa Gordon;

*Cajun Fiddle* - Peter Schwarz;

*Cajun Accordion* - Charles Thibodeaux;

*Beginner Fiddle* - Lisa Schneider;

*Bluegrass Banjo* - Rolf Seiker and others;

*Bluegrass Guitar* - Tom Duplissey and others;

*Old Time Vocals* - Ellen Stansel, Malissa Mollberg, Elizabeth Pittman, and Tim Wooten;

*Beginning Dulcimer* - Margaret Wright;

*Advanced Dulcimer* - Lloyd Wright;

*Sacred Harp Singing* - Margaret Wright;

*Oldtime banjo* - Angie Wooten, Bernard Molberg, Jerry Hagins;

*Oldtime Guitar* - Sharon Sandomirsky, Ethan Azarian;

*Ask A Geezer* (conversations about all kinds of music in Austin with long-time Austin musicians)

**What's in Your CD Player?**

Jeanne DeFries has been asking various musicians around town what they have in their CD players (reel to reel, cassette, eight track, etc.). Here's what Darrel Mayers had to say:

Here's my music list. Please note that the Thomas Hardy poetry and writings are actually on cassette!

Radio Tarifa - 'Rumba Argelina'  
The Decembrists - 'The Crane Wife'

Jeff Moore - 'The Dove's Perch'  
Blowzabella - 'Octomento'

Winter Words - Poetry and Personal Writings of Thomas Hardy

Joanna Newsom - 'Ys'  
The Waverly Consort: '1492: Music from the Age of Discovery'

Fleet Foxes - 'Fleet Foxes'  
Tannahill Weavers - 'Are Ye Sleeping Maggie'

Ingrid Karklins - 'Anima Mundi'  
Sufjan Stevens - 'Illinois'

Texas Early Music Project: 'Convivencia'

Band of Horses - 'Cease to Begin'  
Anne Dudley & Jaz Coleman: 'Songs from the Victorious City'

Larry Unger - 'Waltz Time'

**Fall House Concerts**

See great musicians up close! Watch the AFTM web site for more information or call 476-3991 for details or to reserve space.

Friday, Sept. 25  
**David Greeley**  
Cajun fiddle

Saturday., Sept. 26  
**Joel Mabus**

Traditional music of all styles

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Friday only .....	\$15
Saturday only .....	\$25 (\$20 AFTM Members)
Weekend .....	\$35 (\$30 AFTM Members)
Children under 18 .....	Free
College student, w/ID, Friday only .....	\$5
College student, w/ID, Saturday only .....	\$20
College student, w/ID, Weekend .....	\$25
Primitive Camping, per tent, per night .....	\$10 extra
Camping w/electricity, per tent, per night .....	\$15 extra

# Dance News

## Third Saturday Contras Bring Local and Visiting Talent Together

This fall the Third Saturday contra dances will present both home-grown Austin performers and great talent from other Texas dance communities.

On Sept. 19, Linda Mrokso from Dallas will be calling. Linda has called contras and other dance styles all over Texas for over 20 years. College Station band the Jalapeno Honeys will make their Austin dance debut. The six-piece group features a wide variety of instruments, which offer a unique sound for dancing. A potluck dinner will be held before the dance, beginning at 6:30 pm.

On October 17, two long-time Dallas favorites will come to perform. Martha Quigley will make her first calling appearance in several years, and Squirrelheads in Gravy will once again bring their strong old-time sound to the stage.

On November 21, former Austinite Rich Goss will visit from his new home in Portland, Oregon to call for us. Music will be presented by the Lost and Nameless Orchestra, Austin's favorite contra dance band, featuring Chris Peterson on fiddle.

All Dances are taught and called, and no partner or costume is required. A beginners' session is offered at 7:30, and dances run from 8-11 pm. Admission is \$8, \$7 for AFTM members, \$5 for students. First-time dancers will receive a card for a free admission to their second dance. Dances are held at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 3501 Red River. For more information, go to: [austincontradance.org](http://austincontradance.org).

## First Friday Contra Dance

The dance is moving to Second Saturday for one month only because of the ACL festival. Join us on October 10 to dance to Carol Barry from Oklahoma with the Flaming Kelts. Optional beginners' session is from 7:30 to 8 pm, dancing till 11 pm. \$8 admission, with discounts for students and AFTM members, and newcomers are free. All dances taught, no experience needed, bring friends! 8-11 pm, Carpenter's Hall, 400 Josephine St., with parking at the back, one block N and one block W of the corner of Barton Springs and S. Lamar (behind P.Terry's Burger Stand). Contact: Nana Lopez, (512) 970-4919 or [sealantsby5@aol.com](mailto:sealantsby5@aol.com).

Upcoming First Fri. Schedule  
Friday, November 6 Chuck Roth with Mockingbird

Friday, December 4 Marc Airhart with the Home-Grown Contra Band

## Second Friday English Country Dancing

On Friday, October 9, Carol Barry from Oklahoma will call the Second Friday English Country Dance. Music will be provided by ECO (English Country Orchestra, consisting of Rowena Caldwell on piano, Terri Neubert on violin, Dave Neubert on various string instruments, and John Hunt on concertina). 7:30-10:30 pm; the location to be announced on the AFTM Yahoo group email list. Contact: Ann McCracken, [ann@mccr.org](mailto:ann@mccr.org) or 266-9949.

## Interview with Joel Laviolette of Rattletree Marimba

By *Vanessa Gordon*

I really enjoyed hearing Rattletree Marimba playing at the 2009 AFTM midwinter festival. While growing up in South Africa, in the 1970's I listened a lot to the music of Thomas Mapfumo, whom Joel considers one of his first influences in this music. So, I was interested to find out more about how he got connected with Zimbabwean music and he agreed to do an interview by e-mail for Reel Times.

**Vanessa:** Joel, could you tell us a bit about your musical background and how you first got interested in Zimbabwean marimba music?

**Joel:** I first heard the mbira in 1992 while I was living in Taos, New Mexico. I was sitting next to the Rio Grande in what you would call an 'altered state'. I began hearing music all around me as I sat there. I was watching the eddies of water circling around and around as I heard this music make the same circular motion that the water was making. There was someone there playing the mbira. I immediately knew that I needed to learn how to play that music, so I asked the person what the instrument was. He told me it was an mbira. From that point, my life's course changed and I began traveling the US and Canada learning mbira from anyone I could find...oh, and I also went to UNT for Jazz guitar back in the 90's some time.

**Vanessa:** For our readers, could you please explain the difference between the mbira and marimba. I noticed you played a little mbira at the beginning of the set.

**Joel:** The mbira is the traditional instrument played by the Shona people in Zimbabwe. It is well over 1000 years old. The marimba is a contemporary (to Zimbabwe) instrument that most resembles a xylophone.

**Vanessa:** I heard that you have traveled to Zimbabwe and studied there. When were you there? Who did you study with?

**Joel:** I was there in 1998 and 1999-2001. I traveled all over the country playing and recording many musicians, but my main teacher is Newton Gwara-whom I had a band with there-and Chaka Chawasarira.

**Vanessa:** What has been most challenging in learning the music, and in teaching it here?

**Joel:** I was meant to play this music, so I think the challenges were more just finding the music in the first place. Probably the most challenging thing about teaching this music is trying to get the idea across of there being multiple rhythms and melodies being played simultaneously and there is no "one" that is more important than any other point within the cycle - try teaching that to a drummer!

**Vanessa:** You sing in Shona, I think? Is it a difficult language to learn? Are the songs very old, or more contemporary? What are the lyrics about?

**Joel:** Yes, the language is Shona. I think Shona is a difficult language, but very beautiful! People spend a large percentage of their time speaking in proverbs and using ancient sayings and even old forms of language, so that is very tricky-even to native speakers. Many of the songs are over 1,000 years old. I generally sing what I am thinking about at the time.

**Vanessa:** Can one hear music like this played in Zimbabwe today? (Or, would it be more likely to be mixed with electric guitars, keyboards, synthesizers?)

**Joel:** Mbira music can be played on any kind of instrument-the instrument doesn't matter - it's the structure of the music that is important.

**Vanessa:** In the AFTM gig, you had a drum kit. Do you ever play African drums?

**Joel:** Sure! Mbira is like three drums at the same time. ;-)

**Vanessa:** Do you make your own instruments? Could you tell us about the process? What type of wood is used?

**Joel:** I do build all the instruments. The soprano keys are usually Padauk and the baritone and bass are usually cherry if I have enough money.

**Vanessa:** How do you transport all these large instruments to gigs? How long does it take to tear down/set up for a gig?

**Joel:** We have a trailer. It actually takes us less time than a regular rock band because everyone helps with all the instruments. We don't all have to wait around for one slow guy in the band. ;-)

**Vanessa:** Could you tell us a bit about the polyrhythms in the music? Is this difficult for most "westerners" to learn? How many polyrhythms are going at the same time?

**Joel:** There are an infinite number going on. Unfortunately, this is probably the most difficult thing for Westerners to grasp. There is no "one". All the parts have to interlock with each other in a specific

place within the cycle, but there is no overall starting point. It's like a bunch of clocks that are all overlaid on top of each other. There is no one important time, as long as they all agree on what time it is.

**Vanessa:** If you lose it, or drop a beat, is it difficult at first to come back in?

**Joel:** For some people it's difficult and for others not as difficult-it's all practice I guess.

**Vanessa:** How are the marimbas tuned (e.g. to a western diatonic scale, or a pentatonic scale or an African scale?)

**Joel:** The marimbas are all tuned to my matepe (the mbira that I play) It is a seven note scale but is not a western scale.

**Vanessa:** Please tell us a bit about your plans for the future, gigs, teaching etc.

**Joel:** My plan is to continue to expand Rattletree with more regional gigs. It's my job to play this music and spread the message of this music to as many people as I can.

**Vanessa:** Thank you so much for taking the time to play at AFTM festival. We really enjoyed having you!

**Joel:** Thank you!!!

Joel teaches Marimba classes and also does workshops and demos. Please check out the Rattletree Marimba website and come to a gig. I am sure you'll enjoy it! (Great for all ages.)

<http://www.myspace.com/rattletreeband>  
<http://www.rattletree.com>

**Austin Friends of Traditional Music**  
**PO Box 49608**  
**Austin, Texas 78765**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**AFTM Jam Session: Every Second Sunday, 2 pm • Artz Ribhouse on South Lamar**  
**Next Jam Sessions: Sunday Sept. 13, 2009 & Sunday Oct. 11, 2009 • Bring Instruments & Voices!**  
**Member Meetings before the session • All Welcome!**

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\$15 Individual     \$20 Family     \$30 Patron     \$50 Business/Sustaining     Renewal

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