

BUDDY

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Beneath a blue roof, just don't fence him in

Kyle Park to release his newest, *Blue Roof Sessions*, this month
by Mary Jane Farmer, Scene In Town

HE'S EVERYWHERE NOWADAYS, THIS Austin-based musician named Kyle Park, who only 10 years ago loaded his band up in a crew cab pickup, his equipment in the pickup's bed, and headed to points across the Texas Hill Country to sing his songs.

Now, Kyle and his band are cruising in style, in a bus complete with its own driver so the band members don't have to take turns at the wheel. And that bus is taking them all across the Lone Star State and beyond. As Kyle put it, "east to west, north to south." The bonus of it is that they can finish up one gig, spend a half day on the road, and arrive at the next gig all rested and ready for their next concert. Now, that's luxury.

Just as an example, on October 23, the day for the official release of Park's newest CD, he'll be gracing the Billy Bob's Texas stage in Fort Worth. When that done, along with the surprises he's planning for that CD release party, they'll jump in the bus and head down to the Rio Grande Valley to play at the Las Palmas Race Park. In November, they'll be in Oklahoma one night, finish up and load up, and the next night they'll wake up in Nebraska.

"The thing I am most proud of is — I'm debt free. I own my house and my bus. I love to work. I love music," said Park about a feat borne of many days of hard — and smart — work.

And that ain't shabby — Park just turned 30 this year.

As mentioned, Park is releasing his newest CD, *The Blue Roof Sessions*, October 23. This fifth offering is quite a step outward from his previous four CDs. To

start with, he explained, he didn't want to make the same record over and over again. His first decision was to step out of the traditional studio but not cut a "live at..." project. His unusually fresh approach was to record inside a house, in his native North Austin, it's only coincidental it had a blue roof atop that spacious dwelling.

"I cut 19 songs. We kept 12. Some were left off because they were unfinished lyrically. On others, we put horns, trombones, and that just didn't feel right, either." This project epitomizes the 'country-rock' label, so often over-used. In this case, it's a truism.

Ten of the songs Kyle wrote himself. Two are covers — Dean Dillon's "I See Red" and Billy Squire's "Rock Me Tonight," with a hint — no, a holler — of just how much depth could come out of a high-ceilinged living room.

The first radio release, "What Goes Around Comes Around," speaks lightly of lost love, and there's already its own video available on YouTube. It's now high on the Texas music charts. That tune is a dynamic distance from the intense "Drive You," also about lost love.

Of all the great songs on this new CD, why did Kyle choose to release "What Goes Around Comes Around" first? He said, without hesitancy, "It's one of

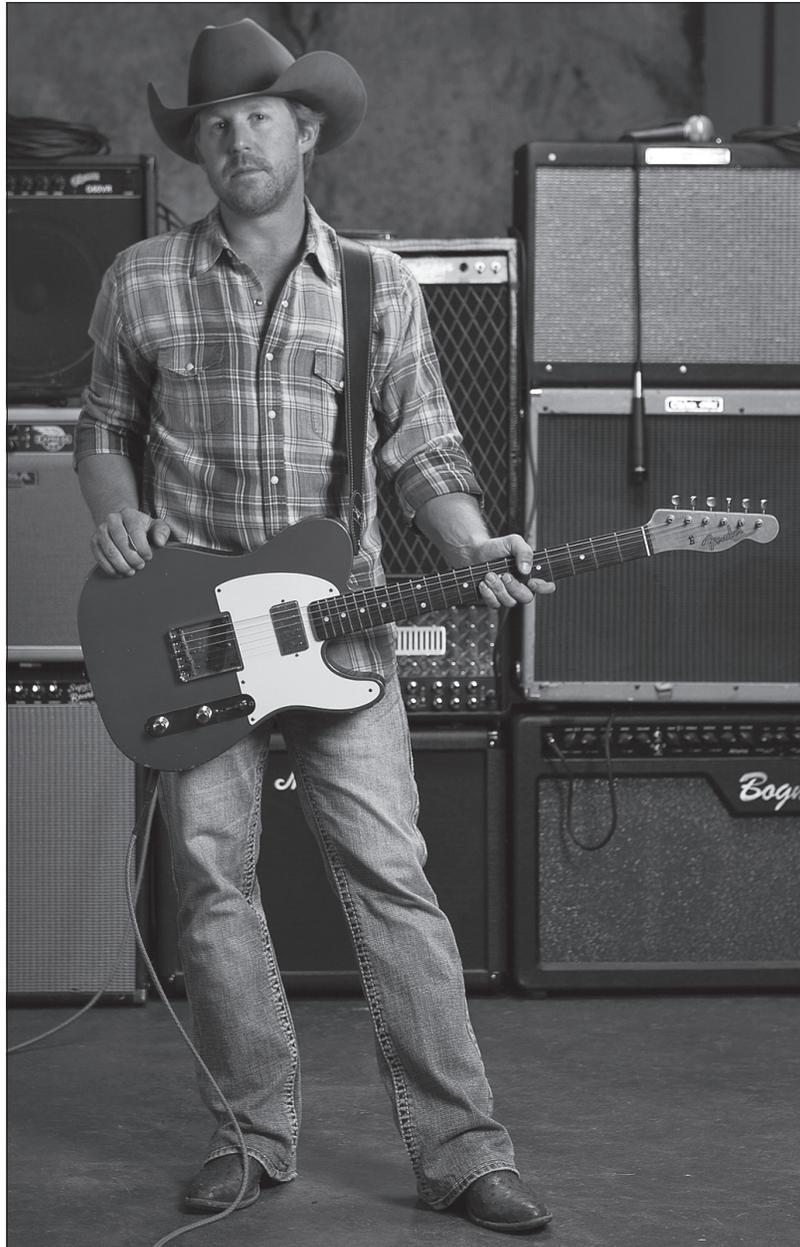
the more easily digestible, simple songs (on the CD) and that's why I liked it. The message is fun, a song about karma and getting shafted. It's a happy song, in a weird way. And, most importantly, I want the radios to play something I can be happy playing. It's a really fun song."

About "Never Slow Down," this song-warrior said, "It's the most auto-biographical, ever, of my songs. 'It's about me being musician. 'I'm never on time, caught up in the scene, meaning I'm the last one to have the idea. 'But the harder I try, the more I realize, that all I do is ask for too much.'" He continued to say that he can't slow down.

"There's a bunch of great singers out there, better than I am. Talent can only go so far, and I can tell you — I can work as hard as anyone. And if I slow down at all, they could pass me by. My focus is on my career. Someday, someone will surpass George Strait, and there's a new top (dog) then." He knows he's got to stay ahead of the game.

Drums are prevalent through *The Blue Roof Sessions*, echo drift and then hang around on "Like The Rain," and there are nice fade-outs at many of the tracks. The arrangements complement rather than distract from the vocals. The final cut, "Four Walls," says, "I don't wanna leave this house anymore," but is another way of saying 'life is perfect with you.' "Everything I need is within these four walls."

The songs on this latest project are like white highway lines — marking the path this almost-overnight success has



The October 23 show at Billy Bob's Texas will be the first of several release parties: Kyle Park

through come through musical mountains and valleys of sound.

"There are things that I believe now I didn't believe then, and vice versa. Every song on the new album, I wouldn't have put (any of) them on my first one. I'm more sure of myself now. I definitely know what I want now, more than I did then."

In the end, Park insists, "I think my voice makes *The Blue Roof Sessions*' country. No one can say it's not me. It would be easy for me to keep making the same record over and over and just have fiddle and steel — a good, clean, nice traditional record. I'm not looking for shock factor, but I am looking to stand out amongst the crowd as far as pushing boundaries."

Ten years

So, now after 10 years as a road

musician, does Kyle Park consider him and his band a concert band or a dance hall band? Simple, he answered:

"I think we're a really good 50/50. I know we are a great concert band, high energy, but then again I would tell people we play more two-step and country than most."

Park first played in a band when he was 16 years old, and started his own band at 19 tender years of age. "The first thing we did was book ourselves in San Marcos and College Station (college towns) and it snowballed from there. We spiraled out to Northeast Texas, and then Oklahoma and New Mexico. That solar bubble kept getting bigger. Obviously, the goal is to play as many markets and cities as possible to keep growing the fan base." They've even had tours

across the U.S.A. and in Europe.

Billy Bob's

THE OCTOBER 23 SHOW AT Billy Bob's Texas will be the first of several release parties. "We never stop touring. There's always a CD release going on," he said with that smile that defines his charm and charisma. "We'll be playing a lot of the new songs and maybe, just maybe, I'll do something special."

Park has garnered several "attaboys" and awards, including the charting of several of his previous songs. But, cites one achievement, not even an award as such, that stands out atop them all. His name is now on the back wall at Billy Bob's Texas.

That happened before (Billy Bob's band liaison) Robert Gallagher retired. "I'm not a trophy collector, never been going after that kinda thing. When I got my name on that wall (alongside Pat Green, Blake Shelton, Brad Paisley, and so many others), I feel like it was more important than any award I could win. It is the coolest place in the world. Awards are things you receive in the moment, and having your name on the Billy Bob's wall is something you have forever."

That European trip happened with Park was 21. He had already been learning about how to keep the crowd on the dance floor, what the audiences respond to, how to build a compatible tour crew, and how to make the economics of the road work.

"We were in Europe, without cell phones. We learned a lot there. It really was a school of hard knocks."

Influences

Something that Kyle said his fans always seem to find interesting: Of all his influences, and those include Strait, with whom he has traveled and opened, and Chris LeDoux, Mark Chesnutt, and the classic country artists his (now departed) dad listened to — and he even considered it an honor to play El Paso last month on Marty Robbins' birthday — it's really Clint Black who he idolizes more than all of them.

Park summed his life in music by saying, "I am fortunate I have a career. Most people have jobs and not careers. I'm fortunate and I know my direction."

Follow Kyle Park on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and SnapChat, and keep up with his tour on his Website: KylePark.com

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—KYLE PARK