



Fire in the Water, Earth in the Air: Legends of West Texas Music (Brad and Michele Moore Roots Music)

Christopher J. Oglesby

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From Buddy Holly and the Crickets to the Flatlanders, Terry Allen, and Natalie Maines, Lubbock, Texas, has produced songwriters, musicians, and artists as prolifically as cotton, conservatives, and windstorms. While nobody questions where the conservatives come from in a city that a recent nonpartisan study ranked as America's second most conservative, many people wonder why Lubbock is such fertile ground for creative spirits who want to expand the boundaries of thought in music and art. Is it just that "there's nothing else to do," as some have suggested, or is there something in the character of Lubbock that encourages creativity as much as conservatism?

In this book, Christopher Oglesby interviews twenty-five musicians and artists with ties to Lubbock to discover what it is about this community and West Texas in general that feeds the creative spirit. Their answers are revealing. Some speak of the need to rebel against conventional attitudes that threaten to limit their horizons. Others, such as Joe Ely, praise the freedom of mind they find on the wide open plains. "There is this empty desolation that I could fill if I picked up a pen and wrote, or picked up a guitar and played," he says. Still others express skepticism about how much Lubbock as a place contributes to the success of its musicians. Jimmie Dale Gilmore says, "I think there is a large measure of this Lubbock phenomenon that is just luck, and that is the part that you cannot explain."

As a whole, the interviews create a portrait not only of Lubbock's musicians and artists, but also of the musical community that has sustained them, including venues such as the legendary Cotton Club and the original Stubb's Barbecue. This kaleidoscopic portrait of the West Texas music scene gets to the heart of what it takes to create art in an isolated, often inhospitable environment. As Oglesby says, "Necessity is the mother of creation. Lubbock needed beauty, poetry, humor, and it needed to get up and shake its communal ass a bit or go mad from loneliness and boredom; so Lubbock created the amazing likes of Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Butch Hancock, Terry Allen, and Joe Ely."

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