

Written by Allan Besselink

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The flicker of an idea had been there for some time, but the flame was doused with gasoline when I read the article from "Guitar Player" magazine. It was entitled "Big Guitars From Austin". The issue: December 1986.

Stevie Ray Vaughan and his smoldering blues guitar had initially brought Austin to my attention in 1983 or 1984. But when I read this article, I realized that Austin was nirvana for guitar players. There was a seemingly endless list: Eric Johnson, Omar Dykes, Denny Freeman, Derek O'Brien, Doug Sahm, Jimmie Vaughan, W.C. Clark. Apparently, this was a city that I needed to explore - pronto.

But looking back on that article, there is one musician that now truly stands out in a sea of Austin six-string guitar slingers: David Grissom.

I will admit that in 1986, I knew absolutely nothing about Grissom. The article exposed me to the presence of the then-26-year old "stellar country rocker who is equally at home playing blues" who was playing with Joe Ely at the time. My curiosity grew, and I started to become increasingly aware of his name and the reviews of his guitar prowess.

Of course, that was solidified when I heard Ely's "Live At Liberty Lunch" (1990). This may in fact be one of the best live albums ever recorded - and right here in my own backyard! That one blew my doors off. Although the band was incredibly tight, it was the chunky sound of Grissom's PRS laying the foundation and his solos bewildering me with sounds that I'd not heard pulled together in one place that really caught my ear.

Fast forward a few years in the Grissom timeline and you will find the band Storyville. To this day, I believe that they were one of (if not the) greatest bands that Austin has ever witnessed. I first experienced them at Stubb's Barbeque - in the small, dimly-lit downstairs club - and I was blown away. End of story.

It was a sad day when I heard the news that Storyville were splitting up. As you might imagine, there was no way I was missing that show.

Now, Grissom has his own band - and what a band it is. What is hard for me to imagine is that I have the opportunity to see him live, weekly, at a free happy hour show on a Tuesday night at the Saxon Pub. Only in Austin - the Live Music Capital Of The World - can you see someone like Grissom wood-shedding, testing the waters and extending the boundaries before he goes on tour. Oh, and grab a word with him after the show as well. Pretty cool, indeed.

There is an incendiary quality to his playing. Grissom is more than just another guitar player stringing a bazillion notes together to sound like just more widdly-widdly-widdly. The beauty of seeing him perform up close at the Saxon is the moment during a song - a solo, a riff, a moment - when you see and hear him go someplace new. Epic and surreal moments of sonic exploration.

But it's more than that. I can distinctly remember a day this past summer when he tore into Albert King's "Crosscut Saw". It brought a moment of clarity and purity to an otherwise difficult day. His playing cut to the core and, once again, spoke to me in ways that only the notes could do. He's also penned some fine lyrics.

It also reminded me of the importance of my own playing, and triggered me to put renewed efforts into an instrument and mode of expression that I so dearly love. Thanks, David, for the reminder and inspiration to regain those calluses.

Over the years, [David Grissom](#) has become one of my favorite guitar players on the planet. And to think it all started for me in the pages of "Guitar Player" back in 1986. Play on, David, play on!

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