

Interviewee: Nick Gaitan

Interviewer's Name: Mary Manning

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Transcription Conventions:

" . . . " after a phrase that is not completed.

Repeated words/short phrases and fillers such as "uh", "um," and "ah" are usually not transcribed.

Pauses and laughter are not noted or transcribed.

Mary: [00:04] Today is September 21st, 2017. I am Mary Manning with the University of Houston and I'm working on a research project called Community Practice, Identity Building, and Gulf Coast Sound. I am at my home with Nick Gaitan who is a bass player, guitar player, and singer songwriter, and he's kindly agreed to share his knowledge and experience about performing in bands as well as DJing.

Mary: [00:34] So the first question. First, we'll talk maybe more about being in the band, but if you think about something about DJing that applies, you can say something then. But we will save more of the stuff about DJing until the end.

Mary: [00:50] Describe the musical genres you perform.

Nick: [00:53] Everything I perform. Ranges from... just one... it depends on the band I'm playing with but everything goes. I like to say it comes from all roots music from blues from Tejano from conjunto. There's also my Mexican roots music that is influenced in there. I'm influenced by what I guess, when it comes to stuff that I play. It's blues, Tejano, country, and soul based. But then the other influences feed in from things that I listen to but don't necessarily play for example mariachi music, rancheras, things like that. But they find their way into the forms I think, you know.

Mary: [01:40] Describe how the different genres that you perform combine with or influence each other, if they do.

Nick: [01:48] OK. Well I think whenever you're doing something like soul music or you're doing something like say some sort of you know Gulf Coast soul or blues-based music, like swamp pop for example mixes with some of the songs. There's some songs in Spanish, some Mexican songs, that actually sound like that or that could be easily translated into the swamp pop.

Nick: [02:14] Just like it happens in Zydeco . . . can be turn . . . some R&B songs can be turned into a zydeco song and vice versa. And in the end, one of the main ingredients of Zydeco is R&B but that's kind of the way genres already have snuck . . . you know they merged . . . they become hybrids just because . . . that's the way jazz was created in the first place. There's always a place for other type of music to mix with each other or other genres to mix with each other. It kind of just happens. And the more that, I believe the more types of music that you're familiar with, that you feel, that you actually feel and

identify with, you can mix those. I mean that's what so many genres have been sort of created, based on that.

Mary: [03:09] Tell me about . . . well, tell me more about maybe some of the genres, the more historical genres, that are based on mixing.

Nick: [02:14] That are based on?

Mary: [03:27] Mixing genres, you know

Nick: [03:27] For example, you know something like Zydeco that's a heavy influence to lots of musicians on the Gulf Coast all over, but really down here, it's where it comes from. I think that's a mix of you know . . . there's clearly a mix of R&B and the old, the early la la music, the early stuff from the old Creole tunes. I mean lots of Cajun music mixed in there. That's one of those things. Those two just merged together and became one thing because people were feeding that influence and fast forward to bands like, on the other side of things, like Los Lobos, bands like that genres were recreated because they were influenced by rancheras, by rock n roll, by soul, by Tejano, by . . . you know... this how I think it happens there. Stuff that I end up playing myself is mixed, you know has all of those genres that I mentioned earlier, mixed in together, because when I'm writing a song . . . you don't . . . unless you're picking out, "I'm going to write a blues song," and you stick to that formula. I mean sometimes I just let my songs write themselves as far as what the influence goes . . . what kind of song is it going to be. Well I don't really know yet. I'm just going to write the music. And that would happen a lot. That's happened in all my bands. We're recreating, and it doesn't become one thing. It's kind of one of the things I learned early in Skarnales because we would mix ska and rockabilly, which are . . . to us they're connected. But those two musics, those two genres on their own, they've had they both have their own history and they're both very different from two different places. But we found a way to connect them.

Mary: [05:22] Describe how audience interaction influences what you play and how you play it.

Nick: [05:30] The main thing that I think about when you ask me that question is when people are dancing. It's not a one on one, or it's not you know the audience and the band are not say looking right at each other or getting that type of one that that type of reaction from each other. But when a band is playing and you see people out there dancing, even if they're in their own world, that's the type of audience band interaction that I had, that I think I appreciate the most because as a musician. Yeah, you want the audience to be captive. Sometimes that means having them stand there and you know watch you do what you do. But something that really gets me is when people dance, and I think that's one of the most rewarding things because you know, in the end of the day, if you're somebody . . . You know, you're up there on stage. You just you want that . . . you want that feeling to reach everybody who's watching, and you want that feeling to fill the room. And some people just react differently to what you're sending out.

Mary: [06:45] Describe the different venues that you play in locally and maybe about how audience interaction may be different at different venues.

Nick: [07:00] All right. So as a musician for the last 18, yeah about 18 years, I've played everywhere from house parties, you know early early days, house parties when you're in that band in high school. And I've played in you know clubs and bars around town. I've played in bigger stages where there is clearly some sort of Race Park or some theater or some huge festival, and they're all different. So I think whenever

you're playing at your local, you know your dive bar that you hang out at in your neighborhood, and you play there because you love to play there, that audience reaction is a big mix because there's people checking you out in the perimeter, there's people sitting at different tables, if there are tables, people standing in front of the band. So some people are looking at you. Some people are watching; some people are standing around like you would at a party, and there's just a band going down.

Nick: [08:25] There's just a set going on. There's the people that dance. That same environment, even in a small dive that holds maybe 50 people inside, that same thing transfers to . . . it applies to all the size venues. But sometimes you get into a sort of situation where you're playing at a theater for example, and it's all seated audience you know. How do you turn those people on? All they can do is sit there and look at you. They get up off their seats and dance. That's cool. So there's different situations, and I think they can all be appreciated because you can tell when an audience is engaged. When the audience is engaged, it's clear. The energy the electricity is going. The difference to me is not of . . . of course if you stand in front of a few thousand people you're going to have a different feeling than whenever you're in the bar of 50.

Nick: [09:21] But the energy and the love is just as big whenever they're into it. When the audience is engaged and digging what you do and they move to what you're doing, it doesn't really matter where you are at. The magnitude of that love comes through, and it's awesome. The heat in the room, those hot summer nights you're playing in a bar, they're just as cool as when you're on that big old stage. But yeah of course, the electricity, the love, doesn't change.

Nick: [09:49] But I think the size of the audience it affects you mentally. For in different situations, you get in a different mindset. If you're playing in the theater or some quiet songwriter room where you can hear the crickets chirp. "He can hear a pin drop," as they say. And then the bar where sometimes, you're not the wallpaper, you're competing with the loud because you're in a loud bar, or you're hanging out. But they're there at a party, and you kind of have to engage, you know, with that too, so.

Mary: [09:49] Tell me about, and this pertains to Umbrella Man.

Nick: [09:49] Ok.

Mary: [10:35] With Umbrella Man, is there a difference, and if so, describe the difference between the local show and a show out of town.

Nick: [10:46] So Umbrella Man, when we were doing that, and we had that set line up of four musicians, and the instrumentation was still guitar, upright, accordion, and drums, and vocals of course. Locally, we had played a lot and got our stage show to be a lot of country going into swamp pop, Tex-Mex, cumbias, rock and roll, some rockabilly. We would mix all those genres that we like, and locally, that would always get . . . that was always a cool thing because we would do different gigs around here, from . . . everything from D&W lounge, a real small bar in Second Ward, to you know something downtown say during the Super Bowl. So the gigs were . . . they had that whole dynamic of either I'm doing something down here in the neighborhood or I'm playing in a more international stage because of what's going on. Because the context changes of course.

Nick: [11:57] There have been other times. Those are all local. They're just all of different sizes. But then there's the times that say you know we played in Fullerton California for Kid Ramos's birthday or we did a PBS recording in Chicago on the main stage, and that that ended up coming out on TV. And well, there

was two PBS recordings. There was one in Chicago, that was a live show, and there was another one in Houston, the first Skyline's sessions, but I guess that's different because you have a studio audience, you don't have a stage audience.

Nick: [12:37] The only way that it was different for us was because, the way it compares to each other, I mean locally you see all the familiar faces . . . you see the people who you know support you in your town. And of course, the different nature of a different show, you're going to run into strangers. You play a festival, you're going to get a lot of new fans. So it's kinda, I want to say it's the same everywhere you go, but it's different everywhere you go. It's different in your own town, so every show is a sort of case by case type thing for that question. They're all different; they're all the same.

Mary: [13:18] Could you make many generalizations about the differences between playing for the audience at the D&W versus playing for an audience at the Big Top?

Nick: [13:28] Those two they are pretty similar because the Big Top is part of the whole Continental Club building and that whole block there. So there's been a set, there's always been a love for roots music there. I mean the place you know. I mean where little George Washington lived. I lived there for 10 years. I've seen that place from the day it was opened, from the year it was opened, when I was opening and of shows for Flaco Jimenez, when I was in Los Skarnales to when I had Umbrella Man, that band going on, we were opening up for different you know Southern Culture on the Skids, the Super Suckers, Flaco again, you know. Then you know side . . . you know what do they call them spin offs of my band started by my other members would open up for other bands there.

Nick: [14:24] So there was always that. We always had established our audience, friends, and fans there. And since it's, you know, really you know, distance wise, it's not that far from here in the barrio. You know you go to D&W, and a lot of times those same people will frequent those same bars. The regulars however like different things. The regulars at the Continental liked certain something, but if you spin off and you do certain tunes at the D&W for example, then you get . . . it's just that they're very similar. They love a lot of the same things. Sometimes this bar A will, you know, freak out over these songs and Bar B will do that over another set of songs.

Mary: [14:24] Tell me a little more about which type of song that they may freak out at . . .

Nick: [15:16] Oh yeah. Like specifically OK. Yeah.

Mary: [15:16] Yeah, like what type?

Nick: [15:30] For example, we . . . cumbias were real big at the D&W. We had a lot of dancers that would dance to cumbias. And you know, honestly, I think for that for this specific question, I think cumbias, swamp pop songs like "Matilda," "Wasted Ways and Wasted Nights," things like that. People dance to those all the time. Cumbias would get the whole room going. Swamp-pop-type songs would get the couples going and would get the guys that were brave enough to, you know, go ask the girl to dance. The Tex-Mex songs were from people who just get bouncing because they hear that polka beat. I guess for those three genres let's say, that works in both clubs, you know in both bars. And then again, like I said, the audience is generally the same. You just, you have your regulars over here, you regulars over here, both you know at both bars, and then, you have the ones that will go . . .

Nick: [16:17] They don't you know, they leave their neighborhood, they leave their regular bar and go see other bars. So it's really when the band goes over here, they know that's the sound that that this band is going to bring, so they kind of know the night that they're anticipating. "I'm going to dance when they play this song," or "I can't wait. This is our favorite song." We have those types of things. The age difference makes a little bit, you know, makes some sort of impact. So sometimes I play the slower dance songs like a Freddie Fender's song or "Matilda" by Cookie and the Cupcakes. I'll play that one earlier at say a gig that I know that the older folks that are hanging out are going to be catching my first set.

Nick: [16:59] I'll play the things that they can dance, for the ones that still dance. Our shows at, and you know so that, having said that, our shows start earlier when we're doing a neighborhood bar, especially when you have regulars that sometimes go up to the age of 80. I've seen them older. Like we . . . it's an easy bar to park at. It's a neighborhood bar, and people have been going there for decades. So then, the older clientele have their regular you know nights that they go out and you know drink a few beers. What we would do at the Big Top would be a little bit later and our gigs wouldn't start until about 10:30. So we had to go after the night was already spinning, and it was really going hard.

Nick: [17:41] But then you have a bar that you have to park at one end of a place, and it was a little bit, more to get to. So we had a younger audience. You know that, and I think that had a big impact on it because sometimes older folks are going to go where they're going to go, and they're going to you know . . . they've have their routine set in. So I think that's why we had our older audience early on, then as the night progresses and gets you know gets later, and you have different crowds come in different waves of people. When you're doing one of those bar nights where you're playing more than one set-- because these aren't just those two places those two situations aren't like the feature shows where you come out you're doing a 40 minute set, 60 minute set, and then you get off. These are the things we . . . these are the shows where you're entertaining the bar all night. Bar gigs, that's what they're called, that's how they work.

Mary: [18:40] Describe any type of verbal feedback that you get from the audience members, maybe after the show. Do they ever talk to you about your music?

Nick: [18:47] Yeah. There's all kinds of feedback. It can go from the person that wants to talk shop with you after the gig about music. It's about the person that says, "I can't believe you know that song. That is so cool. Aren't you too young to know that song," or "Man, that's a real. . . ." like you know, other times when people like, "Man, that's not a very . . . that wasn't a very popular song from that band. That's cool that you do that." These things happen. And of course, then you start nerding out, you know, with somebody about how you know that. Well, I got into this band because of this and this. And you know. Especially your record collector friends or just your music lovers, music nerds in general. "This was the B-side for this," and that "I always wanted to sing that song. I know it wasn't very popular, but this is awesome that it's on this record you know." And that can, that could apply to any band, you know, because we like what we know is popular by say Hank Williams you know, but there's some of those songs deep deep in there. I mean, of course so many of his, all of his to me were great, but I'm like, there's those that are sort of on the outer edge of what everybody else sees. You know, and that happens with every artist I think. And B-sides in general. Jazz songs that are not that common.

Mary: [18:47] Would you describe any of the genres that you perform as less known currently?

Nick: [20:33] I think I've been asked before, like most, out of all genres we do play, a thing I've been asked before, "what is swamp pop?" But anybody from around here knows what it is because they've heard the term, but I think know that's the . . . Crap I forgot the question.

Mary: [21:02] Don't worry about it. How did you get into swamp pop?

Nick: [21:05] Through records, through old records and old songs. I got into it, just by kind of hearing it all my life, because it's one of those genres that sneaks in the country, sneaks into you know Mexican music, sneaks . . . and it's everywhere, and it's just as sort of a blues format. It's like if . . . it's like Fats Domino music being applied to any other genre around it you know

Mary: [21:05] How does your band get gigs?

Nick and Mary: [21:05] [cross talk]

Nick: [21:54] I do the booking for my bands or any sort of combo of musicians that I know. I'll get to work for us. I get called a lot. I get called by different bars or promoters, or there's an event coming to town and I'm going to be a good fit. So I'll get a call, for example from Heights theater, to open up this show because they found me to be . . . A lot of times bands come to town looking for local support. National bands come touring looking for local support. If you fit that type of show or that that type of . . . whether it's demographic audience, whatever the factor is, if you fit that show bill then you're going to get a call, especially if you put your name out there, and that's what I do.

Nick: [22:42] I've have music out. We get some, you know, local radio play from KPFT for example. That's our main source of any play on FM that we get. The rest is internet. The rest is Internet promotion, social networking, word of mouth, and just events that we throw in the community with this scene of folks. And that that's a whole other different thing that has all these channels, connections, and loops through it. But I get gigs because people either see me fit for a bill, but there's other times where they're creating an event and they want a certain vibe, and I'll get those gigs based on that, "Can you come play a few sets? We're having you know our one year anniversary party for this barbershop that we have had open it's been successful. Can you play our one year anniversary?"

Nick: [23:37] It's the same way you get called for weddings. Somebody saw your band out at a bar, and they're like, "Oh, I love these guys. I need them at my wedding." We've had that happen plenty of times. Weddings are one of our cooler things because they don't want us to do a bunch of you know wedding band stuff you know, and we don't. So all we got to go is . . . all we have to do is go in there and be ourselves. And that's really all we ever intended to be.

Mary: [23:37] Tell me more about the scene of folks and the channels and the connections and the loops.

Nick: [24:11] OK. Yeah. There are people that you meet from your neighborhood that influence you, in music, or cars, or they do something in some sort of subculture that you find yourself in. Whether you grow up and you're . . . you're a skater or you're a guitar player or you're something. You match with these . . . match up with these smaller groups, just like any, you know, people do when they're kids. They find they're a group of weirdos, or their group of friends, or the group of people with that outer circle outside your family. You know that secondary sort of circle that you meet in life that is not your

blood, but then they're the ones that you identify with. And you find that you're not only this one thing in this group, but you have these other friends that do this.

Nick: [25:02] Well, that happens whenever . . . that happened to me with being a music lover, say in high school, and meeting people that like the same music. So then . . . that's how high school seemed for me. It was funny. That's why there were groups of people like the kickers and the punk rockers and the head bangers and the . . . this and the vaqueros and everybody else. And it was funny because the majority of what sort of grouped these people together . . . this identity was based on music, music being such a big part of lifestyle. It's peoples' like soundtrack of life. So, there's that. You have these friends that like the same music as you. But then you have this other group of friends who does that other thing you do, whether it's play . . . You know, you're a skateboarder or you're a basketball player or you're a football . . . It could be sports. It could be any extracurricular activity. These are the people that do that. So I identify with this group.

Nick: [26:02] Well then, somehow these two groups you know they end up being connected or somebody that you just met along the way. It's basically just a network that keeps expanding. So it happened with me, for example in our scene of people, you have you musicians, you have your artists, and those two end up finding their way together really fast. I mean I've seen it time and time again throughout my life with a beautiful scene that you know I get to be part of as a musician. I've met some of the best artists and then you know we grow together, we dream together, we talk about stuff. The ones that you know the ones that you hang with and you know. You see them going through the same thing you're going through there, and they're doing their showings you know in galleries and stuff, they're doing these different parties. You're playing bars, you're playing parties, coming up. Everybody's coming up.

Nick: [26:51] And when the opportunity presents itself, or something ends up, this different occurrences that go on. You notice, there I am on this stage. How do we get here? And somehow your friend did the graphic arts or did the painting that's represented in the sign that's being used for the same event. That connects us. Then part of entertainment. All your entertainers know each other. You know your deejays, you know your mariachi groups, you know your rock and rollers, know the other musicians. Everybody somehow finds their way to know each other. A lot of the creatives do. A lot of the fans do.

Nick: [27:27] Then there's those extra you know rings of friends outside of that. So it's this great glue that brings us together. But usually music is something that I've seen bring people together that way. That community is based around music we like. Then it turns into something else. Or our culture, our common culture that we either are or identify with, because it's a mixed bag of people that come from all over too.

Mary: [27:27] Tell me more about the networks within the music scene . . .

Nick: [27:27] Okay.

Mary: [27:27] . . . amongst the musicians

Nick: [27:27] Ok, like how do you mean more than just. . .

Mary: [27:27] Maybe, how do you . . . do you help people get gigs or . . .

Nick: [27:27] Like that, ok...

Mary: [27:27] or maybe how you make connections across time?

Nick: [28:20] So you play in several bands across you know over the span of 10, 15 years. You've played in several bands. So you make different relationships with those musicians. They happen because you're in a band together, you travel together. Things like this happen. So you just you kind of look out for each other as you would any friend and sometimes a job opportunity comes up. I'm a bassist primarily and that's most of the . . . that's the instrument that's taken me all over the world now. And you know so that's what identify myself as the most, as a bass player, because the results have been . . . that's what's taken me, and that's the reason I say that. But if I'm out of town, and I have this great gig in Houston that I just physically can't be at because I'm going to be somewhere else. There are different people, through this you know through all this time and me playing music, playing bass. There's a list of people that have either . . . usually when they live in town, I can give them the gig because it's just more practical, right? I've had friends that have moved away where it's like well that was the person that I called but then other people come up that you know, other bassists for example, that I know, the guy I'm going to plug into. That's what . . . they're like plug the . . . give him the work. And then he plugs into my spot, and then you're giving somebody the work you would have taken that you couldn't take.

Nick: [29:54] That's one way that we network. The other way we network is, you have . . . you know you're a musician, and you have this friend that's opening up a gallery, and he needs some entertainment. And you sort of end up . . . it can be . . . unless there's you know . . . it depends if there's funding. The situations change, but if it's somebody just independent without a budget, you end up bartering something out of it. If it's people with sponsors, you . . . and you know these networks can happen any kind of way. But there's a million ways to skin that cat.

Mary: [30:37] There's kinda two ways to answer this question, I think. Tell me about performers or acts you perform with. And I'm thinking about bands you perform with and other performers you perform with.

Nick: [30:37] Tell you about them, tell you what about them?

Mary: [30:37] Who they are?

Nick: [30:57] Oh, ok, I can tell you all the people I've played with and things we did. In the summer of '99, I joined Los Skarnales, a Houston Mexican-American ska band led by Felipe Galvan. And this is a band I used to go watch in high school that I ended up being in. I would go to all their shows. I met a lot of friends there, established some of these networks that we talked about, because you're just fans of music coming together, but you come from all walks of life. So when I joined this band, I meet seven people that I--it was probably seven or eight--that I didn't know before. So you meet all these you know these talented guys you're about to go play shows with. And you get to know each other.

Nick: [31:49] And the more you travel . . . because at that point in '99, I hadn't been anywhere but the Alamo and maybe Austin, Texas for a basketball tournament in junior high. First thing I did was travel with them to Sunken Gardens, and we ended up playing so many stages over the years. The International Accordion festival, gigs in Monterey, Mexico. I mean Mexico City, Juarez. We did a U.S. tour. Did a lot of stuff with them. So a lot of that was just raw experience . . . was that first band that I was in, Los Skarnales.

Nick: [32:36] When I started my own band, by the time I left Los Skarnales, I was starting The Umbrella Man, and that band . . . I had already known, had started knowing how to book shows, how to put shows together. I was doing my original writing. I had understood the nature of the show, so I was able to put those on together. So I went from a position of being new with my first band and going through all those years with that experience to where I ended up being . . . the booking . . . I was booking the band. I was sort of managing it in my last years. You know the last several years co-managing with Felipe. But I would do a lot of the booking there the last two years. And like I said, when I was taking off with my own band, I already had . . . the wheels had been greased, and I knew what to do.

Nick: [33:13] So after starting booking my own band, then I was also getting sit-in gigs, and that's where I would go play bass for say a country band, for a rockabilly band. I would do a set with them. So I started knowing . . . I started learning how to be like . . . freelance myself, put myself out there and go be a freelance musician playing for everybody who had time to. This is going to get me closer to playing full time. At that time I was playing with a band called Sean Reefer and the Resin Valley Boys our back up people like Mack Stevens on the Continental stage. I would backup other bands that came through and needed a bass player and started learning how to do that. I was like, "this is cool. This is how you play with anybody and everybody." A few years past that, I got hired by Billy Joe Shaver. And playing with a songwriter of that magnitude was really life changing because I drove right up to his front yard, I mean I was given a ride. When he hired me . . . The story about when Billy Joe hired me started six months before it even happened. Because there was a record label, at the Rice Mansion on Hadley in Midtown that was owned by an old family, called Music World. And there was a sublabel of that called Compadre Records. There was a guy named Brad Turcotte that owned that label or ran that label, and he asked Thomas Escalante who owns Sig Lagoon's Record Shop if he knew a bass player that could fill in for an audition for a female country singer that they were trying to present. They needed to put a band behind her.

Nick: [35:19] So he told . . . he got the word to me that they are looking for a bass player to do this, so you should check it out, "Would you be interested?" I said, "Sure, I would be interested. I ended up setting up the appointment and went to the audition. And that went through its audition. We did three songs with her, and after it was all said and done, I left you know and went about my gigs and my life. Six months later I get a call from the same guy Brad Turcotte, and he asked me . . . here I am leaving a gig it's 1:30 in the morning or something and I'm checking my messages, and he says, "Hey, this is Brad I haven't talked to you in a while. I have a job for you. I want you to become . . . I want you to be Billy Joe Shaver's bass player. So I'm just like, "That's the greatest news, that I can get hired and get out of town on tour. This is what I've been wanting to do, and it sounds like a full time thing." So I called him back in the morning, and I rode my bicycle to Music World because I didn't have a car at the time. I rode my bicycle over there, and I couldn't get those gates to open because they usually take the weight of a car before the sensor goes off.

Nick: [36:31] So I had to call them. And mind you, at that time, I was working at HCC as a teacher, was bartending at the Continental Club on Wednesdays, selling tacos at Tacos A Go Go, selling records at Sig's Lagoon, and bartending at the Big Top all during that time. So in this day off, I went over there and sat in the office with him, and we negotiated with . . . what was going to happen. He told me about what was going on, and I said, "Well, I'm going to have to quit five jobs to join Mr. Shaver, but I really want to . . . this is something I need to do, so I'm all about it." Oh, and the reason he had thought about me was because Billy Joe had wanted an upright player at the time, and during that audition six months later, I thought it was a good idea because it was an electric bass gig.

Nick: [37:18] I thought it was a good idea that I got the upright, so somehow . . . because I wanted them to see me. That was the instrument I shine on. You know I felt at least . . . and I got the singer to talk them into letting me bring it, so we could do a song with upright bass. So it turned out to be a good thing because it got me the gig with Shaver. So here I am getting . . . I got hired by Shaver, and we . . . I get the call and I have a certain date that I'm supposed to meet in Waco, and I'm thinking there's a bus or there's a van going to pick me up at a parking lot at a truck stop somewhere on I-10 or 290 that can get me to Waco. And as I am setting all the arrangements up to get to Billy Joe. I'm thinking somebody is picking me up. Well, I call Brad, and he's like, "No. I mean you've got to get up there yourself. You know you've got to go to Waco yourself." And I'm thinking, "Alright, well I don't have a vehicle." I needed to figure this one out.

Nick: [38:22] Well, my sister at the time . . . she . . . Well, of course, I told my whole family that I just got hired by you know country legend Billy Joe Shaver. And they're really excited for me and kind of going. "Well, how do you do it? How do you do this?" Because it's the first time I'm leaving town, you know for a while, to go play music full time. Well I'm sitting there and I'm living at the Continental Club at the time. I'm living upstairs from it. Packing up my bass kind of wondering who's going to give me a ride over there. I don't know what I'm gonna do. You know I really don't, but I'm not going to give up. I'm calling rental car companies about one-way dropoffs and asking friends if they could take me. Well, my sister calls me at one point, and she's like, "Man, Nick I'm not gonna let you lose this opportunity. I'll take the day off tomorrow, and we're going to get in a pickup truck, and we're going to drive you to Waco."

Nick: [39:17] So, here we are. It's 9:00 or 10:00 at night. And she says, "Let's drive overnight, that way . . ." Because I was due to be at Bill Joe Shaver's, at his door, at I think 8:00 that morning or something like that. So I'm just like, "Really you'd do that?" And she is. "Of course, I can't let you lose this, man." You know my sister she loved what I was . . . She's always supported what I was doing. So now I'm downstairs at the Continental Club getting their . . . the oversized trash bags that they use in those big barreled trash cans. I'm wrapping my bass up, my upright bass, in this thing because we're going in a pickup truck. We're not going in some van or anything that's . . . And it's raining outside mind you.

Nick: [39:59] I'm wrapping the amp up. I'm rapping the bass up. I'm doing all that. And then finally just telling them, "Alright send me the address. I'll see you there." I had to ask Brad one more time, "What are we . . . what I do? Do I meet him at like the Flying J or the Love's Truck Stop or something?" He's like, "Naw, you go to his house. You go knock on his door." And I was like, "Wow," just because I didn't know him, and I was like, "This is a trip, and I'm going right to this guy's door."

Nick: [40:25] So overnight my sister and I we're going . . . we go meet my sister and her friend. We go through Waco, and we make it to Waco. It's late. We get a room, and I'm going to get up early in the morning tomorrow, and we're going to go meet Billy Joe Shaver. So when they dropped me off in the morning, here I am pulling off my stuff wrapped in plastic, and I go knock on his door, and here comes Billie. There's the man that you see in the pictures in the magazines and everything and all those old pictures with Willy and Waylon and everybody else. And he opens the door, and there's two pit bulls next to him, and he looks at me and kind of cocks his head and eyebrows kind of for a little bit and goes, "Oh, that's right. You're the boy from Houston. So, there I am at his door "Yes, sir." "Yeah, hang on a second. Let me put these dogs up," he says. And he goes and puts the dogs back in, and lets me in the house, and we sit down. We sit down, and he says "hi," but then, he's still packing his gear up because there's a tour bus coming for all of us. And it's just him and I there at the time that the band starts showing up, and they all show up in the tour bus, and then, this is my first time on a tour bus tour, too.

Nick: [41:45] So here I am. I'm getting my stuff out there. We introduced ourselves briefly. Billy wasn't big on words right away. Of course, he was concentrating on getting on his stuff, so he wouldn't forget anything. And as we load up the tour bus, and I meet all these other guys for the first time, you know, his guitar player, his old bass player that he just let go, but he's still on this tour. So he . . . that was weird. But he was a cool guy, and he had a bus driver's license.

Nick: [42:17] See I don't know which, you know, which license it is that you do with a bus driver on a tour, bus driver. So Billy didn't quite get rid of him but gave him another job. That's the kind of guy Billy is, too. You know he you stays friends with people, and he doesn't . . . you're not in his band, you're still his friend somehow. You could work him some other way. And we get rolling. And as we get rolling towards North Carolina for the first time since 2008, there we are. We get on the highway after Billy gets himself situated. Then he comes out to the common area on the bus and introduces himself because there's a few new guys in there. There's me there's a tour manager he had. But then, there this band that he really knows. So that was that was the first day on tour with him.

Nick: [42:57] And out of all that . . . you know the those memories are distant, but they're still the most recent because that was the one that big, you know the national gig that I got into, even international. We went to Europe when I was with him, but that was the biggest gig I had had to that, you know, to that point in my life, and it was it was something so different from playing a local band. And playing like . . . My buddy Jeremy always calls him a three-county band you know, but we're getting out there now, and this is it. I don't have another job except music. You know, and I have to make jobs when I come back if there's going to be a lot of off time, and that's a whole other side of survival in music . . . it's the other things you've got to do.

Nick and Mary: [42:57] [crosstalk]

Mary: [42:57] Do you want to add something?

Nick: [43:50] Oh there's . . . after Billy, the . . . you know of course I continued playing with you know my band here in town. But then I got hired by Nicky Hill, and that was this year. So that's the most current thing, and since . . . and that's been four months, and I've already been . . . I've played a tons of shows on four continents with her already, and they are . . . they're just a really hard working band. And that band that I play with now, The Nikki Hill Band, is about the busiest I've been in all of these years I've been playing, and that's all I was going to say about that.

Mary: [43:50] Let's go back to before you are touring so many continents. [cross talk] What did you do to make a living and specifically did you book other events or shows, did you promote any bands, did you book for any places?

Nick: [44:47] You're talking about things I do for work, like to make it, to pay bills and stuff or just in general just the thing that I do to everything that I do to help other people or do the . . . to book other people. I've booked . . . Yes, I've done tons of things in between those gig times. Those tour runs. I come back from tour. After I was done playing with Billy Joe last year in 2016 in the fall, I sought out some other work like some manual work. I got hired. You know I would do different odd jobs around the neighborhood or for friends, or stuff on cars for family. But the thing that had a big impact on me most recently was you know those times . . . you'll do anything, you get part time gigs, you go sit in with other bands live. You go to session work. You go to a studio, and you get you know per song and per day sort

of you know deal worked out with somebody who's hiring you for something, or you trade it for studio time or you barter in some other way.

Nick: [45:56] The thing that I got picked up on recently was becoming a plumber's apprentice with my friend John Grayum. He hired me and took me in and gave me a lot of work during the time that I was planning not to be playing a whole lot. So then, that these I'm learning trades that are going to help me in the end anyway, when you buy another house and you have these troubles you don't really have to go . . . you save lots of money. But that type of work I've done. Through the years the work has changed because part time gigs like library shelving or working at the smoke shop or working at the pawn shop . . . all these different shops, odd jobs, aquariums. You know things like that have all come in between different labor jobs but plumbing you know . . . You can have booked for bands. I've been their booking guy. I've booked for different bars. Keep the entertainment going on a weekly basis or however much the bar does. I've done the, you know, the press listings for different bars so there's all these angles of music that you can take. It's not just about being on stage. There's merchandising; you can get into that. I haven't done . . . well, I have done that. I've jumped into making buttons at one point. I started the small button business based on that.

Nick: [47:15] So booking bands, making buttons, booking the entertainment, being the talent buyer for the bars, for certain ones you know and do promotions for different you know different bars too. And these things are all sort of these supplemental incomes that help life you know be a little bit easier while you're off the road and you still need money coming in because you know if you're not making it you're spending it.

Mary: [47:15] So Tell me more about the places that you may book bands and which bands you book.

Nick: [47:49] OK. We'll book for the D&W lounge for example. Still currently I do that and some of the bands I book for I will plug them in there. But then there's . . . So let's say I pick up the entertainment . . . I'm a talent buyer for every Friday night at the D&W lounge at the time, and that's been the last several years.

Nick: [48:16] And everybody . . . not everybody that comes through there that plays there . . . Some of those bands, I will book for in other places. I've gotten busy these last few months, but it's something that I'm not doing as much as I was doing when I had the time to be you know kicking at it all the time. Now some of the bands that I've booked for have been my own, any combination that I get hired for. If somebody calls me from downtown and has an event from the Special Events, you know the mayor's office, I get to put anything together. I get to custom make a band for a certain set depending on what they want. I get . . . but I also book for a country band the Broken Spokes doing honky tonk, rockabilly, and classic country. I get . . . if gigs come up, I sort of . . . I can connect those two people doesn't necessarily mean even like if I get a gig for Robert Rodriguez's band Mas Pulpo because something comes up that just . . . Like I could pass on bass work, I could pass on gig work to the next guy too. And that's how I do that. The latest band I was booking for was the Broken Spokes, and the D&W Lounge I still book for, but I've worked for the Continental Club doing some booking, some show production, and some of the press listings. Done the same thing for the Big Top. And there's a few other bands that I can remember getting gigs for but the Broken Spokes are my main one that I sort of booked for and got shows for, and even that was a little while back.

Mary: [48:16] Tell me about some of the all day festival type shows that you've done.

Nick: [50:03] Okay, I've done . . . the latest ones that I've done that have been a really big . . . you know have had a big impact on me were Byron Bay Blues Fest in Byron Bay, Australia and that thing is huge. I mean Carlos Santana was there. Buddy Guy I want to say. We saw Houston's The Suffers there. I was there with Nicky Hill. I mean this is like days and days of those all day . . . I mean this is like a week-long festival. There are shows like he Cazorla Blues, Cazorla in Spain, which is a blues festival that is . . . it's put on inside a bull ring. So that was a really unique experience. I've played Houston International Fest several years while it was still going on. Gigs on college campuses are always fun because that's a crowd that's energetic and interested in you know . . . in anything that's happening on campus that seems to be a cool hit, especially when music is involved.

Nick: [51:15] I played the Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival with Billy Joe Shaver and that was the same time that I got to me like Dave Alvin, Richie Havens, got to see Steve Earle perform, watch the Flatlanders after not playing together for so many years. It was really cool. I've played a thing called Ska Wars in Monterey, Mexico, and that was a long time ago, that festival's a big event still going on all these years later. Rock Baby Rock It, which is Edgar Salazar, Big E, owner of Big Kats barbershop. He's put that on that rockabilly . . . Houston's only rockabilly festival. And that's been going on for 17 years now I want to say. So those are just a handful of those festivals that I've done. Those have been great. And there's so many more. And just at the top of my head, those are the ones that are those snapshots. Huge memory.

Mary: [51:15] And bouncing off what you said about Big E and Rock Baby Rock. You've put together some events like that, haven't you? Tell me about those.

Nick: [52:27] OK. I've put together two events so far that I could say were significant enough to mention and that's sort of where I take my angle of interest and influence and plug them in. One is the Old Moon Festival that started about five years ago. And I put that on at the D&W lounge because as a kid I've always loved the fall season, and the weather gets cooler and the earth goes to sleep a little bit, and people's moods change, and these different, magic things happen. So I always love that celebration of the fall. I've always been a fan of Halloween and that All Hallows season there. You know before November and into November early November. So I wanted to throw what would be a fall, Halloween, and Dios de Los Muertos, all tied together sort of party, where everything was just celebrated and people just have a good time. And you know for fun, for entertainment, but also just, you know, really just a celebration, just a fall celebration. But all of these things are included. So music's a big part of that because that would be the main thing that I could be in control of and can contribute to first. So the Old Moon Fest is where I bring in vendors, musicians, a lot of people from the neighborhood, and we're talking food vendors, art, you know clothing, vintage, recycled, resold, everything.

Nick: [53:57] And then it's . . . so it's a gig inside a bar. But in the parking lot . . . turns to this sort of flea market because I've always loved the pulga and I've always loved hanging out and playing gigs at bars, so I could tie this thing all into one thing during my favorite time of the year. And that's what Old Moon Fest . . . it became.

Nick: [54:18] The other annual thing that I put together is the Tejas Roots Showcase for my Tejano roots that I like to celebrate with . . . a lot of the music that I play and that I take part in, bands that I play with and I identify with, usually have one root . . . they have some roots in Texas music, in Tejano roots. You know the Mexican-American side of you know conjuntos, rancheras, you know everything to the modern music that we love.

Nick: [54:44] But it was a celebration of that. So and that's something, and it's about two years old now and now that, that is not a festival, it's more of a showcase that just you know celebrates our history and celebrates where we're going. And that brings together our community. It brings the classic music in with the newer music. And you know I brought in Manuel Mendiola of the Exiles, a Houston band . . . formed . . . Tejano band formed in Houston in the 60s, and he has a big history in Chicano soul, and early Tejano music, the Pan-American nightclub, all of these things that are significant in our own history here. But then I'll bring in a band like Los Nahuatlitos from San Antonio who are Chicano soul fusion, a band from the 2000s, cats that I know who from San Antonio. These fit together. This is Tejas music is. This is Tejas Roots. We're all connected to it. So that's what the Tejas Roots Showcase celebrates, is that diversity or history and where we're taking it.

Mary: [55:51] Tell me a little bit more about what it means to you and also what it means to the community, the people who go to the show.

Nick: [55:58] Ok. Yeah. Well what it means to me is that I get to showcase and introduce people to music that . . . this is what young Tejanos are doing, this is what somebody who has had the same roots that you do in Texas . . . this is what they're doing with the music that has influenced them. So when we bring the old and the young together, people of all ages, it's as diverse as all the colors that our city is. We can be brought together, not you know, not based on any number or shade, you know is what I think. It celebrates that, but we focus on our own region. We focus on our history, and it goes beyond just a one sided thing. For example, music evolves. Orquestas and conjuntos became Tejano. Tejano picked up influences from other stuff along the way.

Nick: [56:52] And now here we are again, I'm you know I'm several generations in you know Tejano, so then, here is where I'm taking it, because I'm influenced by a whole lot of other stuff now, and I happen to be a musician. So I get that control to . . . that creative control to put those things together and to put them out. That's what it means to me is that we get to see the ever evolving soundscape that is Tejas Roots. What it means to the audience is . . . it could mean . . . I don't . . . you know it could mean anything to them. It can mean come into a show and hanging out having a good time. It could mean coming out and meeting lots of people that you end up identifying with that you didn't know were there in the first place. It could mean. "Wow, this actually happens, I love this. This feels perfect like home to me." Or it could mean you know, "Hmn, this is a side of it that I didn't know about. I don't know if I'm crazy about it, but it's there." You know it's all about getting to know it regardless of how we feel about it.

Mary: [58:07] You talked a little bit about how Tejano music was a mix of different genres of Mexican-American music and later that maybe some different types of music was thrown in. I was thinking that you were saying your band was like that as well. Would you say, and if so how, is it that bands like Nauhualitos?

Nick [58:17] Yeah, Nauhaulatos

Mary: [58:07] Nauhaulatos

Nick: [58:20] Do they do the same thing and how do they do that?

Nick: [58:23] They do something similar. They do their own brand of it I think, and of course, we pull from a common root as conjunto music is the common ground between us both. But we're all fans of

jazz and lots of us have been in punk rock bands or punk rock type bands that are just do it do it yourself type you know write your own music don't fit into a genre. Write what you feel. It's kind of like we're still doing that--only we just have a little bit more of our own cultural roots plugged into it. That's why the accordion is there. That's why there are congas there. That's why there's a bajo sexto sometimes, but that's also why there's electric guitar and upright bass and steel guitar if we want you know. So it all works. Yeah we're doing the same thing, just differently.

Mary: [59:11] If it's OK with you, I think we may move on to DJing, and I kinda see some similarities between what you do with your programming for, is it? Tejas . . .

Nick: [59:27] Roots

Mary: [59:28] With the Tejas Got Soul.

Nick: [59:29] Yep

Mary: [59:30] So if you wouldn't mind taking a short break

Nick: [59:32] OK

Mary: [59:33] Do you have a little time to talk a little bit about DJing

Nick: [59:34] Yes, yes, absolutely.

Mary: [59:36] Great, thanks.

[BREAK]

Mary: [00:59:40] Tell me about Tejas got Soul.

Nick: [00:59:44] Tejas got Soul is something that started with Isaac Rodriguez who is a big fan and historian of the Tejano music and Chicano soul music, but he's also a big fan of lots and lots of other musical genres. But these are his main ones. He has a vast knowledge about the subject, and it's really cool. Well, he and I have been friends for a while.

Nick: [01:00:16] We met through the Houston music scene when I was in Los Skarnales and Isaac was in several bands around town. I believe in the last one he played with Fusca, but Isaac and I ran into each other one time. He remembers it all the time.

Nick: [01:00:34] He reminded me we ran into each other one time at a Tejano music event called "Party on the Plaza" in downtown on Jones Plaza. And he always reminds me that . . . he's like you're the only guy I remember seeing out there from the music scene, from the ska and punk and rockabilly scene, that I would see at these old school Tejano events, and we laughed about it. And Isaac was big into vinyl, and he started to find a lot of his classic records, and then, he ended up DJing as D.J. Simmer Down, and he at one point came up with this great name called "Tejas got Soul." And to me it sounds like something cool. It rings into our culture, but it also hints to the rude boy—the Tejano and the rude boy together. Tejas got Soul. It reminds me like "reggae got soul." You know anything got soul that you hear.

Nick: [01:01:33] But it Tejas got Soul is a celebration of our culture and our music that comes from the barrios everywhere. It comes from our musicians like Rocky Gil, like Little Joe y La Familia, Little Joe and the Latinaires, Sunny Ozuna, Sunny and the Sunliners, different record labels around you know Texas Teardrop, Chestnut, you know there's so many. Well, Tejas got Soul primarily focuses on these genres of classic Tejano, oldies, swamp pop, and early soul and anything from . . . I think the way I see it is a lot of stuff from just Texas gets played, but we don't we don't limit it to that. This is one of the things that we do in some of our neighborhood events or at Tejas Roots event or the D&W, our neighborhood bar, and it brings in the community again young and old to celebrate this music that is of us it is ours it is of our neighborhood of our cities of our culture. And it's . . . yes, sure it's two guys or more spinning records. People are dancing, and it's just a bar hang out. So what? Well it's that, but it's part of our cultural identification and that draws people out. And that brings our people out in numbers to come celebrate it. And then, it works its way into other shows—like if I put on a showcase with several different great bands that have one foot in Tejas roots music. Well, I feature Isaac Rodriguez DJing to showcase the classic forms of this music that it came from and what it sounded like in the 60s and on. So it bridges the gap.

Mary: [00:03:25] I am going to ask you some of the same questions I asked you about the band, and about audience interaction and that type of thing. Describe how the audience interaction influences what you play, or whether it does.

Nick [01:03:47] That one I can think of in this particular type of context and situation where if you're playing one song that actually gets people up and dancing. If you're playing a song that lights up the room, then you try to connect it to another one that keeps that electricity going. That's the way I think of it. The best interaction is when people are dancing to the music you're playing. Whether you're actually playing an instrument or spinning it on a record. If it gets the room going, then you're really thinking ahead. What am I going to connect? How do you sort of ride that wave. You know you catch them dancing, and you try to keep him dancing. And after a while, you shift gears and change the mood. That's the fun part about spinning records like that. You know when you're playing, these things are very subjective. You're picking out the stuff, but you also think about what people are going to get down to. They're going to get up and you know get up off the table and off their chairs and start dancing because you play a particular song. It's probably a good one, and you probably want to do it.

Mary: [01:04:48] This kind of bounces off that. I think we have already hit on this a bit. But tell me how the audience response to the music that you play.

Nick: [01:04:55] Either by enjoying it, engaging it, and dancing, or they'll come up and ask you what was that or “God I love that song,” “Do you really have that on record,” and that kind of thing. And one of those . . . like for that second deal, where people actually come up and ask you about what you're spinning, that's kind of fun too because you meet somebody else who loves this music. And let's face it if you're DJing, you're just back there. It's not that hands on involved that you can't interact with people so while that song's going . . . you know I'm not talking about this high tech DJing where you get to be like you're controlling a rocket ship. I mean we're spinning records here a song at a time. So it's kind of cool when people come up and compliment your taste or they say “I have a whole collection of that,” and you start talking music, and again, it's musicians or music lovers just nerding out with each other and just totally geeking out on something that they both they both think is cool.

Mary: [01:05:51] Do people ever come up to you and tell you stories about how they know that song or where they first heard that song or why that song is meaningful to them?

Nick: [01:06:02] Yes, there's been people that have come up that say "I love that song so much because I used to go see them live at the Pan-American ballroom." You have the people that come up and say "you know my uncle owns that record label," or "my . . . the guy I went to this church with owns that record label that band was on," or you have the ones that come up and say, "I used to know that guy, and they used to call him this, or they had this nickname for him, and he lived over here on this street in Second Ward," because a lot of the stuff we play is local, local meaning either Houston or just Texas, so we have you know . . . those roots are still very strong there.

Nick [001:06:42] So you can meet somebody who's the nephew, the neighbor, the friend of somebody who's on one of those records, and it's really a trip. Even my barber on Capitol over here in Magnolia, he's telling me the other day that he finds his brother in law's name in a song credit for an Exiles record, and it's that kind of small world stuff like, and that's what a thrill it is to find out that's like his history gold/ Local history gold right there.

Mary: [01:07:23] What do you think it means to somebody in the audience who remembers those songs, from when they were new songs, to hear them now?

Nick: [01:07:28] I can identify with that mostly to where I would hear my parents identify with music or different songs that come together. Give you an example--like driving down Lawndale with my father going to pay bills and go to the grocery store and go buy charcoal because we're going to barbecue. An oldies song comes on, and he's beating on the steering wheel to the rhythm and singing everything like he's just loving it, and he would often say, "Oh man that song right there I was in sixth grade when that came out," and "oh, man, and we were just fixing to go to school. It was it was already you know September was coming around the school year was going to start. And I was just you know wondering you know which girl I was going to fall in love with that year," or something like that because music takes us to a time and a place you know. Songs are . . . I mean a commercial, anything, music just sneaks in our hearts and minds and our souls it just gets in there. So when I think of that and I think of my dad reacting that way to songs himself, that's the same way I feel. And if I hear like a tune that was big in the 90s, it takes me back to high school now. And you know once we've lived enough years, I think that we know the time and place that music takes us to. You know it triggers some memory.

Nick [01:08:50] My mom, same thing, certain music reminds me of being a kid around you know around the house and whenever she was taking raising us and taking care of us. The nightly news like theme song makes me think of being at home and both my parents are home from work and the family is settling in for the evening you know. But now I have a show. If I'm ever spinning records, and we're getting you know, we're getting people into it, it means the same things for them what music means for us individually, like we have in all of these experiences with music. It means the same thing for the people and whether they vocalize it or they just you know . . . it just makes them want to dance. It reminds me of a time. I think music just brings feelings. It just makes feelings happen, all of them. It's like listening to Ray Price. I don't know if I'm happy, sad, or you know I mean I have like all these emotions going through, but it's just what it is.

Mary: [01:09:45] On the other hand, have you heard much from people who are younger and maybe have never heard any of this music before.

Nick: [01:09:55] Most of the time younger people would, if they hadn't heard it, or if they weren't that familiar with it, they will say something to the effect of "Oh, that's my dad's music. He loves that stuff."

"Oh, this is my grandfather's music. He loves Trio Los Panchos." See. "Oh man, my mom loves Vicente Fernandez" or "Man, my mom used to dance to Sonny Olsen and, you know, with my dad." You know my case I hear music like that. I'm like "Wow, this is the kind of stuff" . . . when I hear early Tejano, I'm like, "This is what my parents met to and were dancing to." You know, "Talk to Me," Sunny Ozuna, you know. You know all these different songs you know, "Smile Now, Cry Later." Like these were the records my mom would collect as a teenage girl. So what it means to me is like, "Wow this is cool. This is our history, and this is where a new generation . . ." So when I hear young people getting hip to older music, it's the same experience I had the first time I heard you know anything that I really liked that was from before my time . . . it is thing that made me. You think at some point, "Oh man, it would have been really cool if I was born in you know X, Y, or Z decade," because you like the music so much from that, you think you could have like lived that.

Nick [01:11:10] You know I don't think I would have wanted to be born any other time, but I mean I do like . . . the good thing about music is it is forever as long as there's media to put it on. I mean we're going to have these recordings forever, so anybody can always identify with and enjoy them at least. I love Bessie Smith. You know I'm a huge Bessie Smith fan, for the longest time now, and could I identify with that time, place, or anything? No, but as a musician I love what I'm hearing and love that roots sound, and yeah, I can identify with the emotions that are there. But the life that she lived as a person? No, I mean I don't know. That was a different time. You listened to . . . the world changes constantly music changes, but there's always this common thread, common vibe through it all. I think that that makes us able to understand music from a different time.

Mary: [01:12:00] A quick question, I believe that I remember you saying that your parents met at the Pan American Ballroom.

Nick: [01:12:11] Yeah.

Mary: [01:12:12] Is that true?

Nick: [01:12:13] It is. It is. My parents met . . . they were teenagers, and then, my parents met at the Pan-American Ballroom. They would go to shows different shows there, and I've heard that there were there were shows all the time, so I don't know if the teenagers . . . I think teenagers went to a matinee show or something like that something like that type of deal. But you can talk to so many people that live here in Houston that remember that place that that's where they hung out. And Pop A Burger-- that's still there across the street--was there the whole time. That's where they would go to get a burger. But then you'd hear . . . you hear different sides of that. You know everybody . . . like I've heard people call it . . . like to me that's the place my parents met.

Nick [01:12:55] I'm thinking, "Oh wow, that's cool, they met as teenagers and I can only imagine." You put it in the context what your imagination lets you, based on your meeting . . . you met people at bars or shows before. So it's like you think, "OK, it's probably the same thing." But you also hear like a dark side of that place, where you heard there was a lot of fights. You heard there was a lot of rough stuff going on. But it's funny because I can't imagine. But then again my parents were kids when they met. So who knows what was going on. You know in the 60s, and that was before, you know before my dad went off to Vietnam. So my parents were dating, and they were both from the East End, Houston, and my dad grew up in Clayton homes. My mom grew up right there on Jensen drive behind our Lady of Guadalupe and Pan-American was North Main. So they would go over there. I think my grandmother would take her daughters out to the matinees. Take them, you know, take them out to those events. I

wish those types of places were still around. But I guess you know musical culture and shows have changed since then. The whole nature of the show . . . you go to a show. Now, if it's not some festival, you going during the day, you go that night time. You know I wish that type of place was around. That's where my folks met. That's what they got to be friends and started dating. I think a lot of people got, you know, they met there. I know Isaac's, my buddy Isaac's family . . . I don't know if they got married there or renewed vows or something like that. But there was some sort of deal that's similar. And of course that's a big part of the history of a lot of this larger group of friends. You know that they have some sort of memory or family memory of the Pan-American ballroom.

Mary: [01:14:38] I'm going to shift gears.

Nick: [01:14:40] Pan-American nightclub not ballroom.

Mary: [01:14:43] I'm going to shift gears a little bit.

Nick: [01:14:44] Yeah, ok.

Mary: [01:14:46] And, you've mentioned the roots sound, or roots music. And, I want to know what that means to you?

Nick: [01:14:51] Ok. That one I can answer in just several genres that I find that are the roots.

Nick: [01:15:01] There's blues, there's Tejano, there's jazz, there's rock and roll, and there's country, of course. All of those can make up anything of what I'm doing, I believe, those genres right there can all be . . . the songwriting is a lot . . . It's very similar to each other in different ways. There's so many common areas in songwriting structure and the themes. They all fit. And to me, that's the roots music, that's the, that's the old, the music that people were playing 50 plus years ago, 60 plus now. I mean, it's many decades, but that is what has formed rock n roll, that has formed other genres. I mean that's what started it all for me. That's what I think when I consider it roots, American roots music is what I'm talking about.

Mary: [01:16:00] And going back to Tejas Got Soul, can you describe some of the venues you play at?

Nick: [01:16:04] Tejas got Soul is really an operation that has been used in neighborhood bars or like sort of nightclubs like the Continental Club those type of situations, bars like live music venues or smaller neighborhood bars. That's it can go anywhere. But that's where it . . . that's where it is formed out of.

Mary: [01:16:27] And, how do you guys get your gigs?

Nick: [01:16:30] The same way I do when I book bands. I just you know either get a call or make the call, and that's just depending on the nature of a show. If you see yourself a fit, and maybe that that client isn't aware of you yet, then you make yourself aware. If you get the call, well, they knew what they were doing, and they want you. They want you in there because they want you to be part of that vibe that the room is selling. You know that's what it is.

Mary: [01:16:56] What would you say about performing with your act or DJing that we haven't already covered in this interview.

Nick: [01:17:07] It's our culture, it's our history, but it's also a job that we have to keep interesting, so we have to plug ourselves in wisely to keep ourselves employed and relevant. To us it's relevant because it's ours. How does it fit in the bigger picture?

Nick: [01:17:31] You have to start locally, like we did. You have to expand, like we did, we end up on . . . you try to get on big TV stations or shows or big events that make him more visible. But then you have to sustain. You have to sell the records, you have to you know write the songs and keep them alive . . . because we can be you know covering people's music until you know you can do that and do that and do that all day long. But until I come out with something original, I'm just kind of putting out what's already been out, so it's our responsibility to take it to the next step. And this is a wide open door because no one says what can and what can't. That threshold is not dictated by anybody and each individual has their own mind. So my band or the musicians, that I work with I should say, because it is almost like no official bands so much as there is just like this gang that plays music. And that's what we all give each other: work. It's like this union this unspoken union between a circle of musicians that looks out for each other. Everybody's independent. But when they see that they can offer a little bit of money this way or that way, or I can use your services and get you paid, then we do it. We get . . . we hook each other up. So it's a matter of the guys I play with becoming more than just musicians. We look . . . I mean it ends up sort of circling around music and entertainment and events.

Nick [01:18:51] But it's again just to stay plugged in and to stay relevant and to keep playing and putting out original stuff is what takes us to the next step, or else you know we're just cover bands, and we don't want to be cover bands, only cover bands, You know those guys get lots of work too, but that's just not what I do.

Mary: [01:19:12] Anything else you would like to add?

Nick: [01:19:15] I think I'm good.

Mary: [01:19:18] Good. Thank you very much.

Nick: [01:19:19] Thank you.

Mary: [01:19:19] For your time today.

Nick: [01:19:21] Absolutely.

Mary: [01:19:21] I've enjoyed it very much.

Nick: [01:19:22] Thank you. Me too.

Mary: [01:19:23] This concludes the interview with Nick. Thank you.

Nick: [01:19:28] Thank you.