

Written by Allan Besselink  
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It was a solitary musical moment that would be forever etched in my mind. What it became was a life-changing event of epic proportions.

August 16, 1984. Thirty years ago. It was an early 15th birthday present - a show at the National Arts Center in Ottawa featuring none other than Stevie Ray Vaughan.

The first notes fired out from the worn-down Fender Strat that night can still be heard echoing in the back of my mind. My jaw dropped and I sat there mesmerized. I remember the moment like it was yesterday.

Stevie Ray spoke to me in a language that I understood. Direct. Heartfelt. Raw. And it changed my life.

I'd already cut my teeth on "Texas Flood" (released 6/13/83) and "Couldn't Stand The Weather" (released 5/15/84). I found myself deeply immersed in Texas blues. It was other-worldly to a Canadian kid in small town Canada.

But then there was that fateful night at the NAC. I sat there dumbfounded, in awe of Stevie's guitar prowess and showmanship. This three piece was tremendous - Chris Layton and Tommy Shannon holding down the rhythm, and Stevie out front doing his thang. Add to that the acoustic splendor of the National Arts Center, one of the finest performance venues in the country, and you have quite the visceral experience.

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I walked away from there that night realizing that I needed to find out more about Austin and the music scene that was Stevie's foundation. Something inside me was drawn to it. I felt compelled to learn more about it and to fully experience it some day.

It wasn't that long after that I taught myself how to play guitar.

**And the rest, as they say, is history.**

I made my first trip to Austin in the spring of 1988. I returned the following year and played at my first open mic here. The next step was to move here, setting foot in the heart of Texas on August 15, 1990.

Over the years, I had the opportunity to see Stevie Ray Vaughan 4 times before his tragic death on August 27, 1990. His passing came on my birthday, of all days, and I always spend a few minutes of that day, year in and year out, listening to "Texas Flood".

Looking back, that one night in Ottawa would be the ticket to a life lived deep in the heart of Texas. After 24 years, it is most certainly home.

Thank you, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble, for putting Austin on the map for me. Life wouldn't have been the same without you - in so many ways.

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