

OTHER VIEWS

ANOTHER VIEW *by Steve Miller*

Thriving arts important to the future of Texas

Growing up in Texas set the stage for my career as a musician.

From the inspiration by teachers to the influence from well-known Texas artists, the arts in Texas have played a tremendous role shaping my more than 40-year music career.

As a child, I attended the Big D Jamboree in Dallas during the 1950s and had the opportunity to hear a variety of country music artists. I remember hearing the jazz band at what was then North Texas State University, now the University of North Texas. The diversity of Texas seasoned the variety of music available to hear, creating a unique experience at each performance. Arts events like these were in the neighborhood and available all



Musician Steve Miller received the Texas Medal of Arts Music Award in March.

the time.

The community performances are part of what makes a creative Texas. Art and music teachers have the opportunity early on in a child's life to inspire creativity. A Texas education filled with the arts gave me the strength to compete and taught me how to get artistic control of my work.

Outside of school, the arts influence continued through talented musicians. When I was 9 years old, Texas blues guitarist T-Bone Walker taught me how to play solo lead gui-

tar, and five years later, I had my first band. It was a dream come true to play gigs with Texas blues artists Lightnin' Hopkins and Freddie King. These Texas musicians inspired me to think creatively and find my own style in the music world.

Today, we are in a period where the arts are first to be cut from budgets. Arts programs are cut from schools and arts performances struggle for funding in communities, which is why for the past 12 years, I have worked with Kids Rock. This nonprofit organization has provided music lessons free of charge to 20,000 children.

The program expands a child's brainpower and teaches them they can be spontaneous. It is that same spontaneous



Houston Chronicle file photo

Blues artist Lightnin' Hopkins was part of Texas' rich arts tradition. Let's keep the tradition alive.

feeling I had as a child in Texas that led me to start my first band.

A creative Texas creates great Texans. The Lone Star State is home to many successful artists who followed their passion because of the influence from a teacher or someone in the arts industry. It's a real privilege to be an artist. It

takes you to the future and it takes you to the past.

Let's create a great future by keeping the arts thriving in Texas.

Steve Miller is a singer, songwriter and founder of the Steve Miller Band. Miller is a 2013 Texas Medal of Arts recipient.