

SXSW Review: Doug Sahm Tribute at Antone's

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(8 p.m., Thursday)

I've been in a Doug Sahm frame of mind this week. It's hard to avoid reflecting how much SXSW, with its relentlessly catholic blend of genres and its communal search for the ultimate chord, owes to the spirit of the musically restless San Antonio native who never met a groove he didn't like.

Thursday night's tribute to Sahm at Antone's, marking the decade since his untimely passing and the release of a new star-studded tribute album, was much like a conversation with the man himself: overstuffed, wide-ranging and ultimately exhilarating.

Blues guitarist Jimmie Vaughan kicked things off with a tribute to the greasy, horn-laden Houston R&B Sahm loved so much (think Bobby Blue Bland and the great Peacock/Duke Records hits to come out of the Bayou City). Backed by an ensemble that included Sir Douglas Quintet drummer George Rains and an A-team horn section composed of Mark "Kaz" Kazanoff, Greg Piccolo (ex-Roomful of Blues) and Ephriam Owens, Vaughan's guitar fireworks jumped-started a crowd already brimming with anticipation.

The Gourds followed with an homage to the Tex-Mex border fusion of rock and conjunto/norteño that were the backbone of great Sir Douglas Quintet hits like "Nuevo Laredo," "Nitty Gritty" and their own tip of the hat to the SDQ legacy, "Shake the Chandelier."

Doug's son Shawn continues the legacy with his own band, the Tex-Mex Experience. Joined by Dave Alvin and steel guitarist Cindy Cashdollar, the younger Sahm embodied his father's joyful, effervescent embrace of the musical moment: "Awrite, now we're grooving!" he shouted after "Dynamite Woman," "Now, let's bring up some horns. If you guys want to play, come groove with us, that's what it's all about!"

After two numbers by Sarah Borges, Shawn Sahm returned to the stage to conduct the evening's final segment, a stomping, shaking recreation of his dad's last great ensemble, the Texas Tornados. Joined by Tornados stalwarts drummer Ernie Durawa and guitarist Louie Ortega, and featuring accordion king Flaco Jimenez, trumpeter Al Gomez, bassist Speedy Sparks and Doug's right hand man, keyboardist Augie Meyers, the ten musicians punched thorough "Who Were You Thinking Of," "Hey Baby, Que Paso" (the national anthem of San Antonio), "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights," "She's About A Mover" and "Mendocino" — five perfect songs, a 20-minute seminar in the solid gold musical legacy of Sir Doug Sahm.