

**Mike Darnell**  
**SONG OF THE YEAR 2011**  
***Ridin' With The Raineman***

*Mike Darnell has been a long time member of HSA. In 2007 Mike was Songwriter of the year. Mike was president of the HSA from 2008 through 2011. During his tenure many advances were made in bringing HSA into age of technology. Mike has just issued his third CD "Ridin' With The Raineman". His previous CDs were **The Promised Land** and **It Takes Two to Mango**. Take the time to check out Mike's songs on [mytexasmusic.com](http://mytexasmusic.com). Mike plays in a band with other singer/songwriters in "Big Lizard Boys.*



*Mike Darnell at the Hops House*

**Tell me a little bit about your general background.**

I started off as a child, born in San Antonio.....at least that's what I've been told. My dad was in the military and we spent time in Roswell, New Mexico (1947 Roswell Incident) and Minot, North Dakota (lots of UFO sightings). We finally made it back to Texas in 1968 and it's been home since. My day gig is that of a research scientist in petroleum geochemistry but guess I always wanted to be a rock n'roll star. I'm just taking the extended route in getting there.

**What was the first song you learned how to play, and on what kind of instrument?**

500 Miles by Peter, Paul and Mary on a parlor size Kay guitar with action so high I could barely hold

the strings down. Somewhere along the line I broke the guitar player's rule....."never trade away a guitar." I do wish I still had that one to hang on the wall.

**What are your primary musical influences?**

The music of the '60's and early '70's.....folk and rock and roll. The most influential band would be Buffalo Springfield. My dad was a great music lover and I remember listening to Louie Prima and Keely Smith, Frank Sinatra, the Harmonicats and the Kingston Trio on the HiFi, so I'm sure some of that rubbed off as well. I was drawn to the blues in the 1990's and that's been a huge influence in my later years.

**Do you perform as well as write songs? If so, at what venues can people find you?**

I perform solo as well as with a band (Big Lizard Band) and can be found playing around the Houston area wherever they'll have me and the band. JP Hops House, Bohemeos and several of the Farmer's Markets are my more frequent gigs.

**How would people describe your songs? What do you think sets them apart from other writers?**

I've heard "clever lyrics" before, so I'll go with that. I write in different styles and genres, so I think it's an amalgamation of all of these things which help set my songs apart from others.

**How long have you been writing, and what is your process for developing a song?**

I've been writing about ten years. It usually starts with a melody line and builds from there. Historical ballads are an exception.....lyrics often come first and I build a melody around them. My main instrument is the guitar and I dabble a bit with the mandolin.

*(continued on next page)*

**What are your musical goals?**

Well, I figured out that rock n'roll star probably isn't going to happen at my age so I'm just trying to have fun and hopefully bring a little joy to others. I've done more with my music than I could have ever dreamed. I've got a couple of CDs to my credit and still play out. It's all been a natural progression so I'll just take things as they come and see what's around the bend. The best part has been all the great songwriters, musicians and friends I've met along the way.

**What three albums influenced your style the most? What five singles would you take with you to a desert island?**

Three albums:

“Retrospective” - Buffalo Springfield  
“Willis Alan Ramsey” - Willis Alan Ramsey  
“Manassas” - Manassas

Five singles:

Suite: Judy Blue Eyes	Crosby, Stills and Nash
Mr. Soul	Buffalo Springfield
Dixie Chicken	Little Feat
Sweet Baby James	James Taylor
You Turn Me On (I'm a Radio)	Joni Mitchell

*Interview arranged by Buddy Trotter*