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Readers' Choice - Best Dance Hall: Gruene Hall is a two-step hotspot

BY LORNE CHAN : JUNE 22, 2014 : Updated: June 22, 2014 12:00am



Photo By mysa

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Gruene Hall, built in 1878, isn't air-conditioned, "but it's got good karma and we take good care of you," said owner Pat Molak.



SAN ANTONIO — There's no place to two-step like Gruene Hall, which was built in 1878 and is Texas' oldest continually operating dance hall.

George Strait and **Garth Brooks** played here when they were new artists, and the historic venue is still the place to discover Texas songwriters and kick up your heels. That legacy has helped Gruene Hall earn the Readers' Choice for best dance hall.

Gruene Hall, 1281 Gruene Road, New Braunfels, is the centerpiece of historic Gruene and has live music almost every night. Upcoming artists include The Mavericks on July 17 and 18.

"There's something about the old joint that there's a bit of magic in there," said **Pat Molak**, who has owned Gruene Hall since 1975. "It's old, it's not air-conditioned, but it's got good karma and we take good care of you."

The hall holds about 800 when it's full, and there's just enough space to twirl a partner or to sit back and drink a cold beer at the hall's front bar. There's the Gristmill River Restaurant next door for food, and many shops surround the hall.

As more and more dance halls have popped up, Gruene has remained the standard by serving as a familiar, intimate setting for some music giants while continuing to book rising acts.

Merle Haggard, the **Dixie Chicks** and **Lyle Lovett** count among the artists who have played on the old stage.

One summer tradition is Two Ton Tuesdays, with the band Two Tons of Steel. What began as a small Tuesday residency is now in its 19th year, logging more than 160,000 fans showing up to see the rockabilly band's dance party.

"I think Gruene Hall brings out the Texas in us," said Two Tons' frontman **Kevin Geil**. "It's the real deal, no frills. We've played at the **Grand Ole Opry** in Nashville, and Gruene is the Texas version."

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