

Song about Texas Avenue cruising up and down Americana Charts



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BAYTOWN — “Cruisin’ Texas Avenue” by Mean Gene Kelton and the Die Hards has been up and down the music charts during the past year, at one point holding the No. 1 spot on the Americana charts.

Kelton wrote the song in 1987 about Baytown’s Texas Avenue. He said he was inspired to write it after Robert E. Lee High School caught fire that year.

In the song, Kelton said he tried to capture Texas Avenue’s glory days.

“It was like a drag strip,” he said. “Every night on Texas Avenue looked like a scene from American Graffiti.”

Kelton said the song is extremely popular locally. When he plays near Baytown, he often plays the song four or five times per night.

Kelton released a CD in 1999 titled “Most Requested.” Since then, his popularity has steadily been increasing. Several of the songs have been in the Top 10 on blues and rockabilly charts. And “Cruisin’ Texas Avenue” went No. 1.

“It’s been overwhelming for one thing,” Kelton said. “A lot of young people that never got a chance to cruise Texas Avenue are turning onto (the song).”

Kelton said the song’s popularity may be due to a universal element it possesses that lots of people can relate.

“Everybody thinks back to their own glory days,” he said. “When all you had to do in those days was to cruise up and down the local strip and hit the Dairy Queen and whatever else their was. Everybody relates to those things.

Originally from Mississippi, Kelton moved to Baytown in the 1980’s. Although he lived in Baytown while he wrote many of the songs, “Cruisin’ Texas Avenue” is the only one that references his hometown.

“There’s a Texas Avenue in everybody’s life, no matter where they’re from,” Kelton said.