

# A.V.A LIVE RADIO

The Voice of The New Music Generation!

## {Behind The Music} Mike Allen on Barroom Hell

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**“Echos of your last goodbye, ring out with every drink.... There’s nothing quite as lonely as memories of a love that’s died.. ” – @mikeallensongs**

Played on..

Episode #316 : A.V.A Live Radio Behind The Music with Jacqueline Jax :

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by AVA LIVE RADIO

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## GETTING TO KNOW MIKE ALLEN

by [Jacqueline Jax](#) host of A.V.A Live Radio

### I was surrounded by music...

from an early age. My mother always had the radio on and watched all the Saturday night country music shows: Porter Wagoner, Buck Owens, Hee Haw... and my brother and sister were always playing CCR, Cream, Rolling Stones. I was getting everything all at once. I originally wanted to play piano like Jerry Lee Lewis or Elton John, but for financial reasons I got an acoustic guitar for Christmas when I was 14 lol. I fell into Jim Croce and soon moved on to electric when I got into Clapton, Allman Brothers and Skynyrd. I started gigging and went to work for the Little Walter Price Blues Band when I was 16.

### Barroom Hell ...

It's a pretty traditional-type Country song, which I love. There are thousands of drinking songs and tear-jerkers, but they are always from the point of his fault or her fault. I wanted to go a little different. I did it from the perspective of the bar trapping you once you start, which happens in a lot of cases. You start drinking to get over something and you keep going so you don't have to deal with anything.

I am an observer. An eavesdropper is probably a better word, but observer is nicer lol. I get most of my song ideas in clubs watching people and listening to conversations going on around me. You can pretty much figure out a person's story just watching them for a little while. (*Support the artist, Buy the song:* <http://www.cdbaby.com/Artist/MikeAllen5>)

### I wanted to do something completely different with this CD...

I wanted to showcase a little of everything I do and write, which I hadn't done before. My first CD, Good For Something, was a Texas Country album. All electric and bouncy. My second, A Mile Of Bad Track, was an acoustic album that went in more of a country/folk direction. I wanted to do one that had a little bit of everything. Acoustic ballads, straight-up Country, Southern Rock and some Blues. Everything you'll hear at the shows. I'm always proud of the new baby, but I really feel this is the best work I've ever done. [Greed Is The Devil's Handshake](#) is a song I co-wrote with Nashville songwriter Bobby Keel ( Hank Jr's Whiskey On Ice and Confederate Railroad's Time Off For Bad Behavior). It was funny because we got into a political argument as to which side is more crooked, Democrat or Republican ( as we do a lot lol) and he came off with that line. When I agreed, he challenged me to write a song with that title. The song isn't political, but it's fun with a story.

### I live in Conroe, Texas...

about 30 miles north of Houston. It was a great scene around here when I was growing up. I mean, you had from ZZ Top Top to Gene Watson coming out of this area. But it's kind of stagnated lately. My wife and I are talking about relocating to the San Antonio or Austin area. We have a local club in the nearby town of Cleveland, TX called Buffalo Too that all the local bands work to get into. Fun music venue.

Well, not that we have gotten to lately, but my wife and I both love to go camping. I want to take her down to South Texas and camp out in Big Bend National Park and explore the old Indian caves, which she hasn't gotten to see.

### Music business...

That's a tricky one to answer. I love music, writing, performing, but the business side...not so much. It's all become corporate and a business and very little about music. Bands that you hear in mainstream are manufactured and disposable for the most part. There's very few that anyone will remember and be listening to in 10 years like the old artists that everyone loves still.

### Pros and cons have you experienced...

A lot of everything from both sides lol. The pro side, I've gotten to play all over this country and in Canada and Mexico and do what I love. I've met most of my heroes from Stevie Ray, BB King and Albert Collins to Johnny Rodriguez, Toby Keith and the Dixie Chicks. I love it! The con side...I've been in music for 35 years, so I've not only been screwed in all the traditional ways, I've had promoters and

agents think up some new and inventive ways lol. But all in all I still love it. Not everyone gets to make a living doing what they love.

### **Hurdles and pitfalls...**

You just keep pushing forward. You have to realize that the people running the business side of things are not about the music and their opinions don't matter. Just because they don't like your music doesn't mean it isn't good, it just means they can't mass-market it to their particular audience. If it's good, it'll sell. You just have to find your audience.

### **Social media...**

Everything. It's completely changed the game. In the old days, if you weren't getting airplay you were always pulling into cold towns that didn't have a clue who you were. It would take 2 or 3 return trips to start building an audience. Now, with Facebook, Twitter, Reverbnation and the rest, you have people all over the world who are already listening to your music and asking you to come play. I have a guy in South America that stumbled across my music on Facebook and went nuts over a song of mine called The Ballad Of Brushy Bill Roberts. The music goes from a Spanish feel in the verses to a Country Rock on the chorus. Thanks to him turning all his friends onto my music and them sharing it with theirs, I have a ready-made audience down there.

### **Challenges that you've had to overcome...**

Just the normal. Finding like-minded musicians, Finding stations where your music would fit, finding people that will play it and not just scalp you for large fees. It's always a struggle, but it's worth it.

### **Singles vs an album...**

It goes both ways, depending on the medium. If you are pushing for mainstream radio, a single is the way to go to get your foot in the door and get people listening. But it's hard finding a station that will play someone new and indie except for one spin at 3am lol. I think the biggest medium has turned into internet radio. Reaching an audience that's not listening to mainstream: colleges, traditionalists, Americana audiences, that's the way to go. You have a broader listener base that's world wide and the DJ's will play favorite cuts from the whole CD and give the audience a broader scope of what you do. Singles are kind of unnecessary.

### **I would love to have 5 minutes alone with...**

So many, but I would have to say Guy Clark. He has always been idol and inspiration when it comes to songwriting. To say so much so simply and be able to make everyone see and feel something completely different from the lyrics within a single song is what we all aspire to. I'd love to pick his brain lol.

### **Music trends..**

I will NEVER be accused of being trendy lol. I guess I'm old school, but I believe music should mean something to you or won't mean anything to anyone else. Not only should the words affect people, but they should walk away humming the melodies. When every song is about trucks, drinking and sex at the river, why would they remember your song over the 100 just like it? I try not to repeat myself too heavily and go for a different feel. Seems to be catching on.

### **I am most afraid of...**

I guess just being stagnant. It's too easy to look at all this as a giant staircase that you have to climb. If all you see is the top, it's a long way off. If you just keep looking at the next step, it's a lot easier to keep moving.

### **My personal definition of success is..**

Just staying current. It's a challenge to stay true to your music and style but continue to grow. A lot of artists sound nothing like they did 5 or 10 years ago and alienated their old audience. A lot of artists sound EXACTLY like they did 20 years and their audience gets bored with the same old thing. You have to learn how to stay current, let yourself grow but not outgrow your audience. George Strait has always done it and Blackberry Smoke is doing it from album to album. I have a DJ in New York that has been a steadfast supporter and pushes my music. I gave him the new CD and he went nuts. I was a little worried I had overreached on this one because the was a lot more rock than the the other 2. He told me that I had really captured myself this time and didn't sound like anyone else. Doesn't get better than that.

### **My over all goal for my life & career is...**

Sustain myself. My long term goal is to be a songwriter. I have my own publishing house and I'm pushing my songs to other artists. I want to keep myself viable and play my music as long as I can, then continue to have my songs recorded.

### **3 Ways that I challenge myself...**

- 1) In my writing I try to always tell a story that is relatable to what others may be going through. Never lose sight that if something hurts you, no matter how small it probably has a few hundred other people too. There could be a good story in there.
- 2) My playing, where I started, is my main focus as always. To stay current and still sound accessible. I love lead in all styles, acoustic fingerpicking, slide, lap and blues dobro, mandolin and TRYING to learn harmonica.
- 3) To keep my music fresh. If you don't enjoy what you're doing and believe in what you're doing, no one else will.

**Bio:**  
**Mike began playing for a living at 16, working for the Little Walter Price Blues Band. Switching to country in 1980, he spent years on the road playing for Jeff Hord and the Texas Fullhouse Band, Hatfield and McCoy, Phoenix, and others. Mike has opened for and played shows with Toby Keith, Dixie Chicks, Johnny Rodriguez, Gene Watson and many, many more. He had his first song, "Whiskey and Tears", recorded in 1984. Mike has 3 CD's out, "Good For Something", "A Mile Of Bad Track" and now "Pieces Of Me".**

**Website:**  
<http://mikeallensongs.net/>

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**Video Link:**  
<https://youtu.be/SU4auGm6lVg>



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