Say what you want to about West Texas—the dust, the tornadoes, the intimidatingly flat horizons—but it breeds a ferocious work ethic in its inhabitants. Work is what the day consists of, be it chopping cotton, hustling tables in a café, working on cars, or, in Kimmie Rhodes’ case, making art. You get out of bed, eat breakfast and then set to it, whatever “it” happens to be. You do your damndest to do it well, because that is how you were raised, and also because some small part of you wants to be the best at whatever “it” is.

In Kimmie’s case, there are lots of “its”. During the course of her long career, the Lubbock native has run the artistic table, from songwriting and performing to writing cookbooks and memoirs to authoring and acting in plays, all the while serving as an international cultural ambassador under the auspices of the Buddy Holly Education Foundation.

As a songwriter, she has seen her tunes covered by the likes of Willie Nelson, Wynonna Judd, Trisha Yearwood, Amy Grant, CeCe Winans, Joe Ely, Waylon Jennings, Peter Frampton, Mark Knopfler, Emmylou Harris, and others.

She herself was inducted into The West Texas Walk of Fame for her “outstanding contributions in the field of art music and entertainment” in 2023.

She has released 19 albums over the course of her career including her latest, *Hypnotized*, which marks the latest iteration of the long and fruitful personal and professional relationship she has formed with her son, musician/songwriter/producer Gabriel Rhodes.

Kimmie began her singing career at the age of six with her family gospel trio. She moved to Austin in 1979, which at the time was gaining an international profile for its unique blend of country and rock, which some christened “progressive country.” There she met one of the scene’s most important influencers, KOKE-FM disc jockey Joe Gracey. They married and Gracey became her foremost partner, both in music and in life. Joe was her constant companion, muse, bass player and general “partner in crime” until he died too young of cancer in 2011.

Kimmie’s recording career began in 1981 when she recorded her first album, Kimmie Rhodes and the Jackalope Brothers, when Willie Nelson heard her and invited her to use his studio. In 1985, she recorded her second album, Man In the Moon. Her third album**,** Angels Get the Blues, recorded at the original Sun Studio in Memphis, was released in 1989. Touring behind those initial albums, Kimmie established a solid fan base in the U.K., Ireland, and Europe. She headlined with her band at festivals all over the world and has appeared on many European and American TV and radio broadcasts. She has also appeared at many of Willie Nelson’s annual Farm Aid concerts and Fourth of July Picnics. Nelson paid her the ultimate compliment by collaborating with her on her 2002 release, *Picture in A Frame* (which was re-issued on vinyl in a limited-editon vinyl pressing in 2024).

In recent years Kimmie has appeared on the PBS music series Austin City Limits with Emmylou Harris, Dave Mathews, Patty Griffin, and Buddy & Julie Miller. She guested on Late Night with David Letterman, performing “West Texas Heaven” at his request. She performed in two segments of the Nashville Network*’*s Legend series hosted by Willie Nelson, and another segment hosted by Waylon Jennings.

In 2000, Kimmie and Joe co-authored a novella/cookbook, The Amazing Afterlife of Zimmerman Fees through their own publishing imprint, Sunbird Press. The project is a whimsical fantasy that combined their knowledge of travel and cuisine with a generous serving of humor. Some of Kimmie’s most requested recipes are included in the book, making it a standard on cookbook collectors’ shelves.

She has contributed music to television and movie soundtracks, including *Babe: A Pig In the City*, Mrs. Winterbourne, *Touched by an Angel*, and other productions. In addition, she served as an associate producer on filmmaker Eric Geadelmann’s six-part documentary, They Called Us Outlaws.Dedicated to the memory of Joe Gracey and Waylon Jennings, it was presented in association with the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum’s Outlaws and Armadillos: Country’s Roaring ‘70sexhibit which ran from 2018-2022 in Nashville.

After several years of sifting through archives and journals left behind by her late soul mate, Rhodes published Radio Dreams: The Story of the Outlaw DJ and the Cosmic Cowgirl,in 2018. Billed asa “duet memoir” that weaves her own poetic prose with wry and witty posthumous musings from Gracey. Released in 2018, Radio Dreams invites readers into their private world, spinning her trippy songwriter tales and his alternately hilarious and poignant writings into an affecting and enduring love story.

Fueled by the popularity of Radio Dreams, Kimmie has delighted audiences with tales and songs related to the book with speaking/singing engagements at bookstores, university forums and graduate classes, on cruises and of course at her own concerts in the USA and Europe.

A playwright and actress as well, Kimmie’s debut theatrical project was her musical, Small Town Girl, directed by and starring Joe Sears, co-creator of the play Greater Tuna. She also released an album by that title of the music featured in the play. She and Joe Sears then wrote and produced a musical revue, Hillbilly Heaven. She once again worked with Sears as musical director for his outdoor drama production of Trail of Tears, which was presented at the Cherokee Heritage Center from 2001 through 2003.

More recently, she co-starred in a theatrical production with fellow playwright Jaston Williams (also of Greater Tuna fame) in a hilarious and poignant onstage storytelling romp called Is There Life after Lubbock**.**She as toured England in an “evening with” format, swapping musical adventures and singing songs.

Kimmie is very involved as an honorary ambassador for The Buddy Holly Educational Foundation. The foundation’s mission is to honor Buddy’s legacy as well as to fulfill Buddy and Maria Elena Holly’s dream of extending musical education including songwriting, production, arrangements, orchestration, and performance to new generations regardless of income, ethnicity or learning levels. Foundation co-founder and Holly’s widow, Maria Elena, celebrated Rhodes’ efforts by presenting her with a custom-made guitar, a replica of Buddy Holly’s 1943 J-45, encased in hand-tooled leather.

The *Austin Chronicle* calls Kimmie Rhodes “a prolific fixture in Texas music.” Today, she continues to make her home in the Hill Country outside of Austin and is working on a new book with the working title “Eat or Die,” which, in her signature humorous style, offers gourmet reminiscences & recipes gleaned from her intrepid life as a touring artist & all around “foodie.” She also publishes a monthly subscription newsletter, “Sunbird Sings” which she describes as “a monthly magic box of original songs, recordings, poetry, handmade mini movies, short stories, musings on travel, books, art, food, archives, history, gardening, humor and all things life.”

In addition to recording and performing, Kimmie serves the Austin music community as an advisory board member for HOME (Housing Opportunities for Musicians and Entertainers) which helps raise funds and awareness to ensure that Austin’s elderly musician veterans have secure housing.

Kimmie spends several months each year at her second home in the South of France, writing, painting, and performing – and making plans for “what happens next.”

That, in a nutshell, is Kimmie’s eclectic and far-reaching “work.” But then that’s the paradox at the heart of Kimmie’s art—It’s the place where “work” and “play” come together.