





JOHN LEACH

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Choo Choo Ch-Boogie

The 26th annual “Best of Austin”

BY KATE X MESSER

The track unfurls with the promise of destinations ahead. The whistle and horn blow with the resonance of times passed. You can't see this perspective from car or air. The history of railroads, freight and passenger, is the history of Texas. As spoken at the August 2015 dedication of the historical marker denoting the spot at Third & Congress where Austin's twin train depots once stood, “When the trains came to Austin, it was like the Internet and I-35 happened at the same time. You could tell in the historical records all the big changes that happened. New people and new ideas came to town.” Indeed.

The **Austin Steam Train Association's** dedication to creating living history is evident in the real-life **Austin & Texas Central Railroad**, a fully operational rail system built from the rails up out of vintage cars and engines entirely operated by trained volunteers. This living history is not just a glimpse into the past, it's a living, breathing example of history's through line to the present, and a reminder of how important it is for all of us to play a part in making things like this happen.

As I stood at the dedication of that historical marker, I was struck by the lack of people under 40 at the event. Preservation movements are mostly populated by folks graying as fast as the topics they are trying to save. (The ironic sidebar to all this, of course, is that rail travel is also a potential mass transportation alternative for our future.)

Austin is doubling over on itself faster than a frat freshman doing one too many keg stands. We're losing as fast as we're gaining, and it's nearly impossible to keep up with documenting all of this, let alone trying to save any of it.

On that same morning a few weeks ago, one witness to the sign unveiling was **Lidia Pérez**, one of the **Pérez sisters** whose landmarks of industry – the late **Las Manitas** cafe and the current **La Peña** gallery and community hub – are located near that marker. She remembers when the train used to come through that very rail line and stop traffic on Congress. While I hate to objectify a sister, every time I see one of them, I think: MIGAS. Seeing Lidia triggered so many memories of great food and great times at the long-lost **Las Manitas** – a small cafe on Congress martyred to Austin progress (and the JW Marriott corporation).

As the crowd dispersed and I tried to find an affordable breakfast option (to also take advantage of the brutal \$10 I had paid for the required minimum three-hour parking), I decided to follow Lidia back to La Peña and commiserate about the current state of Downtown. In my smart-ass way, I figured asking her where to get a decent breakfast taco would be appreciated for the sad footnote that it was.

Instead, I learned something new: La Peña sells breakfast tacos. \$1.40 tacos! In their own way, the Pérez sisters are living by example, honoring what we love best about this town despite the changes that lead us to believe we are crazy for hanging on to the past.

It's not about the past. It's about resonance. It's about humility. It's about recognizing the Austin we love and preserving her right to exist alongside massive thrusts of sometimes thoughtless progress.

I don't need to tell you “BOA” veterans – and here's a head's up to those of you new to our annual tradition: Located within these pages, you will find many a testament to this grit, gratitude, and unabashed joy. Enjoy. ■



LITTLE ENGINES THAT COULD:

Assistant editors Andy Campbell and Neha Aziz, with M. Isabella Bejar, Waylon Cunningham, Blake McCoy, and Alexa Harrington; personal editorial support from Wendy Joy DeHoy and Mr. MCK III, without whom ...; web dudes Brian Barry and Mike Barnett; copy wranglers Danielle White, Joseph Mayfield, Kat McNevens, and Adrienne Whitehorse; front-desk staffers Jessi Cape, Sarah Marloff, and Chelsea Taylor; Creative Director Jason Stout and our chooglin' design/production team, cover photographer John Leach and model LaVie; and promotions and marketing engineers Sarah K. Wolf, Dan Hardick, and Dallen Terrell. Shout-outs to the diligent ad staff, interns, and editors-on-call. Thank you all so much!

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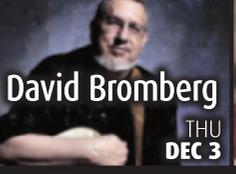
Mike Agresta, Claudia Alarcón, Neha Aziz, Nick Barbaro, Marjorie Baumgarten, M. Isabella Bejar, Wayne Alan Brenner, Andy Campbell, Barbara Chisholm, Cheryl Couture, Waylon Cunningham, Kevin Curtin, Robert Faires, Doug Freeman, Jordan Gass-Pooré, Kat Goins, William Harries Graham, Melanie Haupt, Alexa Harrington, Nina Hernandez, Raoul Hernandez, Shelley Hiam, Chase Hoffberger, Kimberley Jones, Amy Kamp, Michael King, Andrea Kinnison, Sarah Marloff, Wendy Martinez, Blake McCoy, Gerald McLeod, Kate X Messer, Caitlin Moore, María Núñez, Joe O'Connell, James Renovitch, Frank J. Rivera, Kali Robinson, Tim Stegall, Andrew Thomas, Mary Tuma, Brandon Watson, Adrienne Whitehorse, Richard Whittaker, Cindy Widner, Virginia B. Wood, Terry Woodroffe, Serena Yeh, and Abe Louise Young.



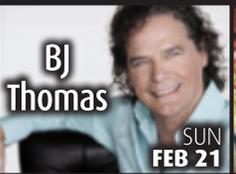
 <p>Kim Waters SUN, SEP 13</p>	 <p>Tuck & Patti FRI, SEP 18</p>	 <p>Average White Band SUN, SEP 20</p>	 <p>Clint Black THU, SEP 24</p>	 <p>Strunz & Farah FRI, SEP 25</p>
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 <p>California Guitar Trio SUN SEP 27</p>	 <p>Herb Alpert & Lani Hall MON & TUES SEP 28 & 29</p>	 <p>Kim Simmonds & Savoy Brown 50th Anniversary & CD Release THU OCT 1</p>	 <p>Dawn & Hawkes CD Release & Reception FRI OCT 2</p>	 <p>David Wilcox THU OCT 15</p>	 <p>Lee Ann Womack FRI OCT 16</p>	 <p>Loudon Wainwright III THU OCT 22</p>	 <p>Al DiMeola FRI OCT 23</p>
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 <p>Ricky Nelson Remembered THU OCT 29</p>	 <p>The Guess Who FRI OCT 30</p>	 <p>BETO & the Fairlanes SUN NOV 1</p>	 <p>Terence Blanchard TUE NOV 3</p>	 <p>AJ Croce THU NOV 5</p>	 <p>Marc Broussard FRI NOV 6</p>	 <p>Robert Cray SUN NOV 8</p>	 <p>Karla Bonoff THU NOV 12</p>
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 <p>Gino Vannelli FRI & SAT NOV 13 & 14</p>	 <p>Bruce Cockburn SUN NOV 15</p>	 <p>David Cook THU NOV 19</p>	 <p>Last Comic Standing FRI NOV 20</p>	 <p>Peter White Christmas w/ Mindi Abair & Rick Braun FRI NOV 27</p>	 <p>Gaelic Storm WED DEC 2</p>	 <p>David Bromberg THU DEC 3</p>	 <p>Michael Martin Murphey's Cowboy Christmas FRI DEC 4</p>
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 <p>A Gospel According to Jazz Xmas Kirk Whalum, Gerald Albright, Norman Brown & Sheila SUN DEC 6</p>	 <p>David Benoit Tribute to Charlie Brown w/ Jane Monheit FRI DEC 11</p>	 <p>Gregg Rolie SUN JAN 17</p>	 <p>Blood, Sweat & Tears FRI JAN 22</p>	 <p>Rachelle Farrell SAT JAN 23</p>	 <p>Lizz Wright SUN JAN 24</p>	 <p>Dave Mason FRI JAN 29</p>	 <p>Walkin' Woody's Road Jimmy LaFave, Eliza Gilkyson, Lance Canales SAT JAN 30</p>
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 <p>Nils Lofgren SUN JAN 31</p>	 <p>Branford Marsalis WED FEB 3</p>	 <p>Hal Ketchum FRI FEB 5</p>	 <p>Crystal Gayle SAT FEB 6</p>	 <p>Marc Antoine & Steve Cole SUN FEB 14</p>	 <p>George Winston WED & THU FEB 17 & 18</p>	 <p>BJ Thomas SUN FEB 21</p>	 <p>Fab Four SUN FEB 28</p>
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 <p>Solas WED MAR 2</p>	 <p>Altan TUE MAR 8</p>	 <p>Madeleine Peyroux THU MAR 10</p>	 <p>Herman's Hermits starring Peter Noone FRI MAR 18</p>	 <p>Spyro Gyra FRI MAR 25</p>	 <p>The Association FRI APR 1</p>	 <p>Bob Schneider & Mitch Watkins FRI APR 8</p>	 <p>John Hammond THU APR 14</p>
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 <p>Three Women & The Truth Eliza Gilkyson, Mary Gauthier & Gretchen Peters SUN APR 24</p>	 <p>Suzanne Vega THU APR 28</p>	 <p>Sawyer Brown FRI APR 29</p>	 <p>Jimmy Webb The Glen Campbell Years SUN MAY 1</p>	 <p>Kris Allen THU MAY 5</p>	 <p>Music of ABBA SUN MAY 15</p>	 <p>BWB Rick Braun, Kirk Whalum & Norman Brown FRI MAY 27</p>	 <p>Acoustic Alchemy FRI JUN 10</p>
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 <p>The Rippingtons FRI JUN 24</p>	 <p>Yoga Summit & Kirtan with Jai Uttal SUN JUL 10</p>	 <p>Euge Groove & Peter White FRI JUL 22</p>	 <p>Firefall FRI JUL 29</p>	 <p>The Lettermen SUN AUG 7</p>	 <p>Michael Grimm SUN AUG 14</p>	 <p>Paula Poundstone SAT AUG 20</p>	 <p>Pure Prairie League SUN AUG 21</p>
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This project is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department.

THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE
BEST of
READERS POLL
AUSTIN
 2015

ARCHITECTURE & LODGING

JANA BIRCHUM



Best Statue
STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

Arguably one of the city's most revered figures, SRV has reclaimed his reigning title set in stone (bronze, actually) for two years in a row. Sorry, Willie, there's always next year. And we have this statue to thank for one of the rare moments of levity during this year's floods – seeing el Vaughan with his No. 1 walk on water in a number of viral photographs was only confirmation of his glory (and how high the waters had risen). Auditorium Shores, Lady Bird Lake Trail between S. First & Lee Barton Dr., www.austintexas.gov/department/parks-and-recreation

Best Downtown View
THE LONG CENTER

When you want to see, truly see, what makes our city so special, this is the definitive place to go. Our ever-changing Downtown skyline frames the Auditorium Shores landscape, and the brightest mirror of the city, Lady Bird Lake, shines gloriously in the middle of it all. Perch on the city terrace, soak it all in, and thank the bright Texas stars above that you call this place home.

701 W. Riverside, 512/457-5100, www.thelongcenter.org

Best Skyscraper
FROST BANK TOWER

It's the bauble of Austin's skyline that puts Gotham's Wayne Tower to shame. At 33 floors and 245,000 square feet of glass, Frost Bank looms as beautiful as it is brutal. The crown's folded panes recall a blooming lotus flower, and the exterior lighting has won industry awards. It's also home for businesses, a coffee shop, restaurants, a dry cleaner, and a 30-foot cedar tree on the top.

401 Congress, 512/473-4343, www.frostbank.com

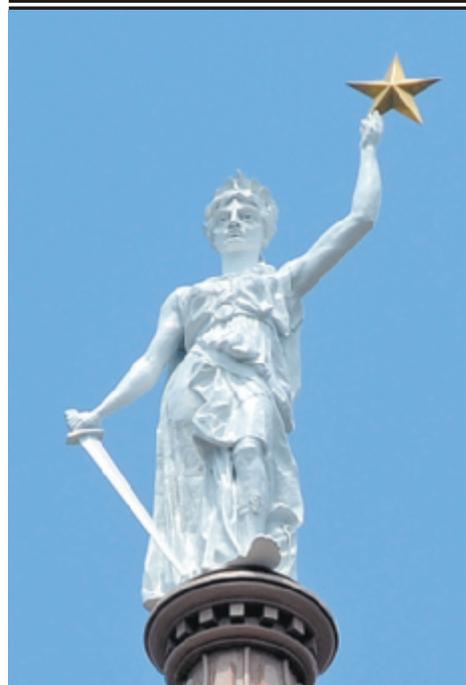


Best Historic Site
Best Building Under 10 Stories
TEXAS STATE CAPITOL

There's no need to tell you how breathtakingly monumental the Texas State Capitol is because you already know that. What you might not know is that on top of the dome stands a 15-foot, 7½-inch tall woman called the Goddess of Liberty. Perhaps you know her by her street name, Old Lady? Besides the fact that the original 3,000-pound zinc version of her was placed atop the dome in 1888, she's nothing like an old lady. In fact, if you see her face up-close (at the Bullock Texas State History Museum a few blocks to the north), she bears an odd resemblance to a stone-faced Christopher Walken. With a sword in her right hand and a star in her left, the Goddess is basically the baddest aluminum bitch on this side of the Mississippi. Not to mention that thanks to her, the Texas Capitol stands taller than the U.S. Capitol, and that's just one more reason to love it.

1100 Congress, 512/305-8400, www.tspb.state.tx.us

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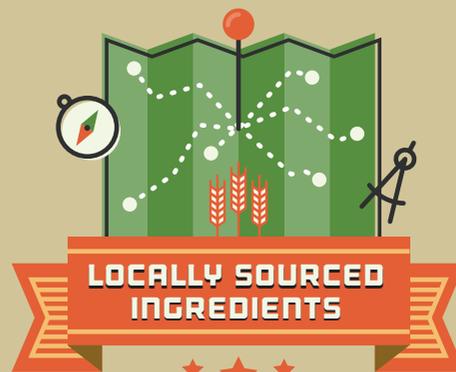
Best Small Lodging
(Under 11 Rooms)
HEYWOOD HOTEL

Who is Zelda? She's the neighborhood hen that sometimes pops by the Heywood Hotel, but don't let that eggcentricity lead you to think that this bundle of boudoirs (seven total) is one of those anything-goes/roast-a-goat-in-your-room pleasure palaces. Sure, there's pleasure to be had, but it comes from the concerted efforts of the folks at the Heywood who foster a sense of calm and quietude in the midst of a churning East Cesar Chavez. A feat. A dream. 1609 E. Cesar Chavez, 512/271-5522, www.heywoodhotel.com

Best Motel
AUSTIN MOTEL

Austin Motel's delightfully suggestive sign may serve as the unofficial gateway to South Congress, but it has so much more to offer visitors. An institution since 1938, it showcases the perfect mix of historic charm and local quirk, making it the go-to place for visitors who want an authentic taste of the city. Glimpses of classic Austin are fading fast, but Austin Motel – which rightly calls itself “modernized but not commercialized” – remains true to its roots. 1220 S. Congress, 512/441-1157, www.austinmotel.com

CONTINUED ON P.6



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ARCHITECTURE & LODGING

CONTINUED FROM P.4

Best Window Display BLACKMAIL

For the goth kid who grew into a stylish, black-on-black wearing adult, Blackmail's window displays can make the heart stop. Once bitten, twice in love, the boutique's noir style evokes something both brooding and beautiful. Like the Paris of Anne Rice, or the rumbling rhythm behind a Siouxsie & the Banshees song, Blackmail's storefront simultaneously frightens and invites SoCo shoppers to fall into the dark side. 1202 S. Congress, 512/804-5881, www.blackmailboutique.com



Best Hotel

Best Hotel/Motel Room Decor HOTEL SAN JOSÉ

Austin's epoch of maximum minimalism, the Hotel San José continues to set the bar in local lodging. People forget how unaccommodating the landscape was before Liz Lambert put her pomo boho SoCo paws all up in it. The Lambie empire now stretches to Marfa, San Antonio, and back (fame and fortune is a magnet, after all). But no matter the number of little chunky red pieces on the game board, the noble San José remains the flagship in her hotelopoly. Each room here is gloriously spartan, with feet-deep mattresses wrapped like tight little sushis in plain, luxurious white cotton and accented in Jaipuri playfulness. Reclaimed wood, simple accent chairs, and modest desk lamps round out an aesthetic that's as calming as it's been influential. Here it is, Austin, your moment of Zen. 1316 S. Congress, 512/852-2360, www.sanjosehotel.com



PHOTOS BY SHELLEY HIAM

The W

Best Restroom TIE: DRISKILL HOTEL; THE W

The bathrooms at the W and the Driskill Hotel couldn't be more different, but they share the fact that they are the best, according to the crossed legs of our readers. The W bathrooms are modern, chic, and geometric, and, unlike the johns in their hotel rooms, do have doors. The bathrooms at the Driskill are luxurious, rustic, classical, and popular for their spacious separate stall rooms. Thanks to these palatial potty places, Austinites get to pee not only in style but in peace. *The Driskill Hotel*, 604 Brazos, 512/439-1234, www.driskillhotel.com; *W Hotel*, 200 Lavaca, 512/542-3600, www.whotelaustin.com

Best Patio Deck THE OASIS

They've seen fire, and they've seen rain. They've seen the kind of drought we thought would never end. But Austinites know we'll always see Oasis sunsets again. Since 1979, folks have headed to the cliffside spot to glimpse the beautiful orb as it tucks behind the lake for the night. It's the biggest outdoor restaurant in Texas, so there's room for you, too. 6550 Comanche Trail, 512/266-2442, www.oasis-austin.com

Best Sign EL ARROYO

"Cat Puns Freak Meowt," "World Cup Austin, Free Enchiladas for FIFA Executives," and "Frankly, Autocorrect, I'm Getting Tired of Your Shirt," are just a few of the dispatches issued from El Arroyo (Spanish for *The Arroyo*) out toward passing traffic on West Fifth. Think Mark Twain with a margarita, and you, like so many bumper-to-bumper vehicles, are mostly there. 1624 W. Fifth, 512/474-1222, www.elarroyo.com



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ARCHITECTURE & LODGING

BEST ECO BAR Container Bar

Owned by Rainey Street bar maven Bridget Dunlap and designed by North Arrow Studio and Hendley Knowles Studio, Container Bar is one of the best examples of an eco bar in Austin. Driven by the movement of affordable and scalable reuse of shipping containers started by New York architect Adam Kalkin, they took seven shipping containers, stacked them at different heights, and spread them out to make a central courtyard. No easy task, it took the city of Austin four years to permit containers as a structure, but it was well worth the wait.

90 Rainey, 512/320-0820, www.austincontainerbar.com

BEST BOAT HOUSE Shore Vista Boat Dock

Boat down the waters of Lake Austin to catch a view of this gorgeous residential boathouse and waterfall. Designed by Bercy Chen Studio, the two-story cylindrical boathouse has a waterfall that recycles lake water cascading from the balcony on the second floor. A spiral staircase wraps around the house, accessible from the shore via a set of stepping stones. The first level includes a dock with space to cover a boat or small yacht. The second floor looks out onto the Canyonland Nature Preserve. It's so charming that it's enough to make you wish it was more than just a boathouse. Bercy Chen Studio, 1111 E. 11th #200, 512/481-0092, www.bcarc.com/project/55



COURTESY OF BERCY CHEN STUDIO

JANA BIRCHUM

MOST DAPPER DO-GOODER ARCHITECT Jack Sanders, Design Build Adventure

Jack Sanders was mentored by Samuel Mockbee at Auburn University's Rural Studio, which Sanders eventually ran. Sanders later co-produced *Citizen Architect*, a film about his mentor. Here are a few other accomplishments: He started Design Build Adventure in 2005, has taught architecture at UT, is representing District 9 in the city of Austin's Drawing Lines Project, and heads up the sandlot baseball team of architects, writers, chefs, and musicians, the Texas Playboys. His credits include the manifestation of Liz Lambert's El Cosmico, and projects with Robert Plant, Rick Linklater, Tito's Vodka, and New Orleans' Voodoo Music Experience. On top of all this, proceeds from his metal workshops go to HAAM. While he's known for his hat and smile, his love of collaboration and team brainstorming, and his "no panic" attitude, we'd like to recognize his do-good nature.

www.designbuildadventure.com



BEST MOVABLE BEASTS Vintage Innovations

You'd probably be exiled from Austin if you didn't adore – like so many of us do – retro RVs, buses, and trailers. Seriously. Just turn in your hipster card now, detractors, and walk away. Local party people Vintage Innovations have a unique biz model that makes getting closer to your midcentury mobile-home-away-from-home easy – at least for a day or so at a time. VI specializes in finding these gems, buffing them up, and offering them as rentable party palaces. Throw a bash and have one of these renovated roadshows be the focal point. Highlights of their fleet include the on-the-road-again ex-tour-bus homes of John Denver and Willie Nelson, as well as a whopping 13,000-square-foot indoor event space of their own, colorfully decked out with gigantic works from local graffiti artists. So start making your Eventbrite list and gather up your party favors.

You decide: You go to the party, or they bring the party to you. 1409 W. Third, 512/524-1390, www.vintageinnovations.net

DAVID BRENDAN HALL



BEST DALÍ- OR GAUDÍ-INSPIRED BUS STOP Bus Stop at Manor & Rogge

Let's face it: Bus stops are generally hard, sleek, modern, and utilitarian. They may reflect a certain industrial aesthetic, but they are hardly media for artistic expression. A project of Green Doors and GRoWERS (Green Roofs: Working Expertise + Regional Solutions), the stop at the northeastern corner of Manor at Rogge bears a beautiful exception, surrealistic with a Southwestern touch. Picture some madman taking the same basic design as many of the more recent Capital Metro stops, such as the one in front of the Central Library branch Downtown, putting Silly Putty on it as if it were a Sunday comic strip, doing the requisite bending/warping/reshaping ... then planting a cactus garden on the roof. Subversive, yet functional – this is great.

Bus stop at Manor & Rogge, NE corner of Manor & Rogge; Green Doors, 512/469-9130, www.greendoors.org; GRoWERS, www.growersaustin.com

CONTINUED ON P.10

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Peter Bay, conductor
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Pre-concert talk with
Bob Buckalew at
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**ARCHITECTURE
& LODGING**
CONTINUED FROM P.8

BEST NEW B&B

The Fairview

The Ballards bought the property on Newning, four blocks from Congress Avenue, in 2000. Jimi was an executive for Oracle, Vivian a lawyer. They raised their kids while their mothers lived respectively in the carriage houses behind the main house. Last fall they had the brilliant idea to convert their home into an elegant bed & breakfast. The Fairview embodies the essence of historic mansion elegance on a hill. The beautiful gardens are becoming a favorite for weddings. The Fairview even offers dog-friendly rooms. 1304 Newning, 512/402-6214, www.fairviewaustin.com

BEST GREEN BUILDING STANDARDS

Modern Live Oak Residences

Sett Studio's modern residences at 900 and 902 West Live Oak, off of South Congress, were constructed to prove that green design should be the standard. The eco homes were built to be LEED certified, with airtight structural insulated panels and Sett's own charred wood, Shou-Sugi-Ban, from sustainably sourced pine-wood timbers that are weather-, rot-, and bug-resistant. Sett proves that energy-efficient can be hip modern design, with open floor plans and natural light pouring through the windows. 501 N. I-35 Ste. 209-A, 512/200-2755, www.settstudio.com

BEST BATHROOM GRAFFITI The Liberty's Women's Room

Since the dawn of the printed scroll, reading in the loo has been a sacred tradition, and the bathroom stalls at the Liberty take this self-indulgence to a whole new level. No matter your sobriety or squatting preference, this latrine graffiti will hit you harder than a shot of well whiskey. From saucy and sassy to political and brassy, these stalls offer a better collection of life lessons, good-time phone numbers, heart-break, and gender performance than a self-help book on a *Chicken Soup* bender – okay, maybe it is the well whiskey No matter. Go and have yourself a sit and sift through the brain trust of this think tank. Though frequently repainted, drunken proverbs are always on tap here. 1618½ E. Sixth, 512/600-4791, www.thelibertyaustin.com

SANDY CARSON



BEST NEW CRANE IN THE AUSTIN SKYLINE Crane #2 at 15th & Red River

15th & Red River



BEST SERIOUS MOONLIGHT Moonlight Towers

The ladies are ubiquitous, almost to the point of being taken for granted – but this town would be doomed forever if their lights grew dim. Only 17 of the original 31 built in the 1890s remain. We hate to start heartfelt kudos on such a negative note, but let's face it, Austin, we do have a way of losing the stuff we love best. Fortunately, Slater knew better. Yes, Slater, the lovable stoner from *Dazed and Confused* who climbed to the top of a moonlight tower to utter these prophetic words: "Imagine how many people out there right now are ... just goin' at it." He knew what was important – that moonlight brings out the beast. So do the folks at the essential moon tower info site, Austin Moonlight. They maintain one of the best and most easily accessible resources out there to shine a light on these treasures.

Austin PARD, 200 S. Lamar, 512/974-6700, www.austintexas.gov; Moonlight towers, map with locations on website, www.austinmoonlight.com

BEST PLACE TO FEEL LIKE MAD MEN NEVER ENDED Sawyer & Co.

Even though the series finale of our favorite period drama aired in May, it doesn't mean we can't reminisce about the swingin' Sixties in our own backyard. Designer Mickie Spencer (East Side Show Room, Swan Dive, Hillside Pharmacy) spared no details when creating the stunning midcentury mod Sawyer & Co. that resides in the renovated Arkie's Grill space. The future-retro diner features an atomic barkcloth-inspired mural hand-painted by Spencer, and restored bright turquoise Arkie's booths that sit atop a blanket of AstroTurf on the patio. If sipping on an Old Fashioned at the counter bar doesn't make you feel like you made partner at *Star Trek Cooper*, we don't know what will. 4827 E. Cesar Chavez, 512/531-9033, www.sawyerand.co

BEST WHAT'S-NEXT-IN-AUSTIN ARCHITECTURE The NexusHaus

A group of University of Texas architecture students together with Germany's Technische Universitaet Muenchen came up with a plan to address the ever-growing Austin population and affordability issues with the development of the NexusHaus. Crowdfunded at \$21,422, the NexusHaus is a one-story, 850-square-foot integration of solar and energy-efficient technology. Built with renewable and reusable materials, the house features solar panels on the flat roof providing enough electricity for AC, lighting, and appliances, and to charge an electric car. After heading to the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon in October, the NexusHaus will become an accessory dwelling unit in East Austin. www.nexushaus.com

BEST HOUSE RULES Rosewood Co-op

Painting, coloring, or creating murals on any wall; house battles with Nerf guns and samurai swords after Wednesday community dinners; and all of this can be done with or without clothes (except in the kitchen): These are the house rules at Rosewood Co-op. Founded in East Austin in 2011, Rosewood allows members to be their creative, diverse, and sustainable selves. 1165 San Bernard, www.rosewoodcoop.org



CELESTA DANGER

BEST HOMEY PORCH

Donn's Bar-B-Que on 969

There are plenty of reasons to go to Donn's: the generous plates of smoky Texas 'cue with many sides to choose from and the most extensive breakfast menu you'll find at a barbecue joint. And we love the location on FM 969 for its friendly staff and long planks of communal seating. Our favorite feature, however, is a sweet little porch, where you can sup or wolf down that breakfast taco in the fresh air, away from the crowds. Don't expect some trendy, deliberately distressed lanai – it's just your basic screened-in patio hearkening back to a time when you had time to appreciate such simple things. Go with an open mind and the urge to hang out in abuela's backyard.

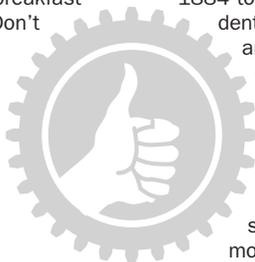
10003 FM 969, 512/928-0229,
www.donns-bbq.com

BEST SQUIRREL SPA VACATION

Berdoll Pecan's Ms. Pearl

We promise no jokes about big nuts or beaver-bashing (sorry, Buc-ee!), especially since this gargantuan bushy-tailed rodent is, bless her heart, a dainty lady. But road warriors who regularly pass her landmark spot on Highway 71 may have been shocked this past spring to see the ol' squirrel – originally made in 2011 by the nutty geniuses at Blue Genie Art Industries – missing from her pedestal. But hold on, the kind folks at her home turf Berdoll Pecan told us. She just went on a spa vacation to get a new paint job and came back to a bigger, better stump.

Berdoll Pecan Candy & Gift Company,
2626 Hwy. 71 W., Cedar Creek, 800/518-3870,
www.berdollpecanfarm.com



BEST MODEST MONUMENT

House of Elegance

The building and business at 1191 Navasota offers two legacies of Central East Austin in one. From 1952 through 1966, it was the headquarters of Teachers State Association of Texas, organized in 1884 to see to it that black students got quality educations and black educators good working conditions in segregated times. It's entered into the National Register of Historic Places as a "contemporary style" building, but it boasts some still-attractive Fifties-mod flair. It's a style that befits its current occupant, House of Elegance, which was opened by Ella Mae Pease in the Sixties and has served as a full-service salon and de facto neighborhood center for going on six decades now. It's a living monument, active and present at a personal scale that's becoming more and more scarce in the neighborhood. Which, come to think of it, makes it a trifecta of modest monumentality.

1191 Navasota, 512/476-9428

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ARTS & CULTURE

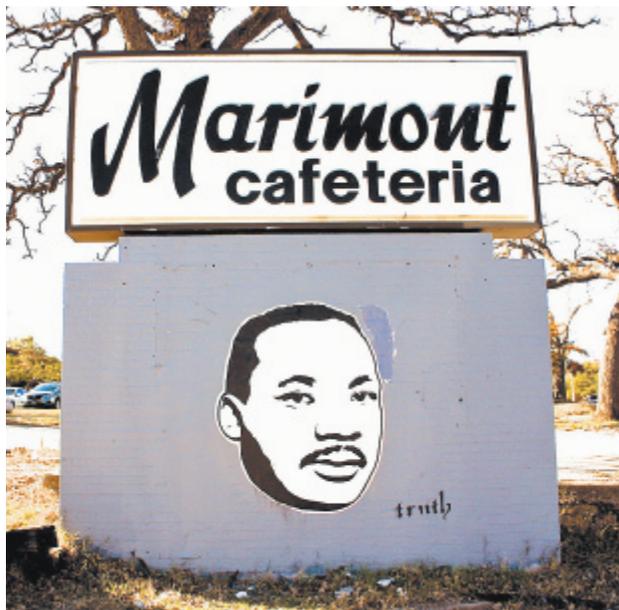


PHOTOS BY DEVAKI KNOWLES



Best Visual Artist TIE: JENN HASSIN; JENNIFER BALKAN

The two local artists who share the award for Best Visual Artist this year each have their own thing going in terms of media and subject matter: Jenn Hassin uses handmade paper that she meticulously rolls and piles onto surfaces until they roil with movement, reflecting on war and loss. Jennifer Balkan's painted portraits of women (often tatted and pierced) wearing animal noses and Groucho glasses are riffs on something surrealist/proto-feminist artist Claude Cahun said nearly 75 years ago: "Under this mask, another mask."
www.jennhassin.com; www.jenniferbalkan.net



MIKEJOHNSTONARTIST.COM

Best Museum
BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

The best part of being a student at UT is the free entry into one of the largest university art museums in the country. Before you even get to the featured artwork, a beautiful staircase surrounded by walls of gradient, sparkling blue tile greets you – itself a work of art, *Stacked Waters* by Teresita Fernandez – inspiring awe. The permanent collection of art is profound and unforgettable, but leaves art lovers yearning to come back for another look. Thoughtful and diverse, fancy and fun, the Blanton is a place to learn, to look, to love, and it just keeps on getting better.
 200 E. MLK, 512/471-7324, www.blantonmuseum.org

Best Street Artist
TIE: TRUTH; CHRIS ROGERS



Mike "Truth" Johnston's work is gleefully dweeby: a "Last Supper" featuring the characters of Nintendo's *Mario* franchise, the Notorious B.I.G. wearing a cartoon crown, and bulky creatures with massive overbites. On the other end of the street art spectrum is the graphic/expressionist paintwork of Chris Rogers. Mashing up a multitude of musical heroes (James Brown, Michael Jackson, and others) his almost brushy mural at 12th & Chicon is a good summation of this street artist's skill. Although, if we have to claim a favorite mural of this prolific painter, it's the one that graces the facade of the incomparable Nubian Queen Lola's.
www.mikejohnstonartist.com;
www.about.me/rogersc727

JANA BIRCHUM

Best Independent Art Gallery WOMEN & THEIR WORK

Establishing a space for the visual legacy of female artists isn't just a mission, it's a vision. For over 37 years (and still going strong), Women & Their Work has been an exhibition space for contemporary art that is innovative and original. Their yearly open calls ensure that their programming ranges in material and content, and their 1,700-square-foot gallery is perfect for site-responsive works, such as the dark and moody cityscape in Kira Lynn Harris' *Glittering Dystopias*.
 1710 Lavaca, 512/477-1064, www.womenandtheirwork.org

Best Arts Festival TIE: EAST; PECAN STREET FESTIVAL

Meandering: The human activity of meandering binds the two winners of this category. You'll need a map to navigate the entirety of East Austin Studio Tour (but if you hit the artist-dense Pump Project and Canopy, you'll have plenty to see), while the Pecan Street Festival is easy (as long as you remember that Sixth Street used to go by a different name). Either way, you'll be up-close and personal with the artists and craftsfolk whose wares you're perusing – the best way, by any stretch of the legs, to see and buy art.
East Austin Studio Tour, Big Medium, 916 Springdale, Bldg. 2, #101, 512/939-6665, www.eastaustinstudiotour.com;
Pecan Street Festival, Sixth Street from Brazos to I-35, 512/485-3190, www.pecanstreetfestival.org, www.fb.com/pecanstreetfest

Best Performance Space THE LONG CENTER

You got your majestic 2,442-seat Michael & Susan Dell Hall, your black box Debra & Kevin Rollins Studio Theatre that can seat 229, your City Terrace (our town's front porch), courtyard, and West Lawn: The Long isn't just Austin's best performance space, but it's our city's hallowed hall of performance spaces. Just ask residents Austin Symphony, Ballet Austin, Austin Lyric Opera, and recurring SXSW guest Jimmy Kimmel who brings his late-night antics to town – among others. No seat is a bad seat at the Long Center, even if you're standing. And the view of the Austin skyline from this iconic building is stunning – a performance on its own.
 701 W. Riverside, 512/457-5100, www.thelongcenter.org

CONTINUED ON P.14



LABOR DAY BALCONY BLOWOUT

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SEPTEMBER 13

Ballet Folklorico de México de Amalia Hernández



OCTOBER 21

Spirit of India: Bollywood Masala Orchestra & Dancers



JANUARY 30

I Am Big Bird



FEBRUARY 3

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Neil Gaiman

NOVEMBER 14
The Capitol Steps

NOVEMBER 27-29
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FEBRUARY 3
Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo

FEBRUARY 16-18
Riverdance

FEBRUARY 21
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ARTS & CULTURE

CONTINUED FROM P.12

Best Theatre Director **DAVE STEAKLEY**

What it is about Zach Theatre that grabs the attention of dramaphiles not just locally but across the country? Well, the sizzle's in the Steakley. For almost a quarter of a century, Dave Steakley has been staging plays that dazzle eyes and ears while engaging hearts and minds. Whether he's reimagining a classic, as with his contemporary pop-infused *A Christmas Carol*, mounting an epic look back at history, as with his regional premiere of the Tony Award-winning civil rights drama *All the Way*, or providing an intimate look at family, as in the domestic drama *Mothers and Sons*, Zach's producing artistic director makes theatre that's vibrant and vital. On the shores of Lady Bird Lake, he's built a powerhouse playhouse.

Zach Theatre, 1510 Toomey, 512/476-0541,
www.zachtheatre.org

Best Actor **MARTIN BURKE**

Did you have to see *Mothers and Sons* at Zach to realize what a consummate and serious actor Burke is? Because you were so used to his acerbically hilarious tour-de-force as Crumpet the Elf in the annual production of David Sedaris' *Santaland Diaries*? Well, now you know – it's not *all* in the timing, it's also in the skill and concentration and sheer, relentless talent that this popular performer brings to whatever role he's cast in.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Burke

Best Dancer or Dance Company **BALLET AUSTIN**

Artistic Director Stephen Mills exploded onto the Austin arts scene during the 1999-2000 season, eventually landing his current role, attracting attention across the country with his world-premiere production of *Hamlet*, featuring the music of Philip Glass. The show returned for the 2015 season. Mills' sinewy, sexy, (and not infrequently, sassy) work can be seen in the upcoming *Snow White* or in the perennially popular *Nutcracker*. The company doesn't just keep audiences on the edge of their seats, they also make Austin dance positively interactive. Visit them once and you will see, from baby ballerinas doing pliés and *tendus* to Pilates professionals doing twists and reaches. The studios are massive, as is the schedule of classes and workshops. Whether you are interested in ballet, hip-hop, hula, jazz, or simply just working out, Ballet Austin spreads the love of dance and invites the public in.

501 W. Third, 512/476-9151,
www.balletaustin.org



Best Actress **GRICELDA SILVA**

What's that thing about big dynamite in small packages? Gricelda Silva, long a prime actor in this town's theatre scene, pretty much exploded across stages everywhere this year. Whether working the papier-mâché creatures of Trouble Puppet or Glass Half Full, playing the wicked child in Reina Hardy's *Changelings* at the Vortex, dealing with her Cinderella stepfamily in Zach Theatre's *Cenicienta*, or helping modernly Mexicanize Chekhov in Teatro Vivo's *El Nogalar*, the vivacious performer's impact has left our city smiling and amazed.

www.fb.com/g33sil, www.twitter.com/gric3lda

Best Classical Performer(s) **CONSPIRARE**

We raise a chorus of hallelujahs to the vault of heaven when considering the vocal wonders this world-premiering, Grammy-winning, *Billboard*-charting choral group led by the ever-ebullient Craig Hella Johnson has done in and for our music-loving town. Whether working with outside composers (Nico Muhly) or guest vocalists (Ruthie Foster) or just doing their own glorious eclectic thing, Conspirare not only breathes but soars on wings of polyphonus song.

505 E. Huntland #155, 512/476-5775,
www.conspirare.org

Best Composer **GRAHAM REYNOLDS**

Austin's Teutonic-looking maestro with the long hair and snazzy suits, ah, is there a busier composer in the Western world? Writing scores for feature films, conjuring soundtracks for theatre and dance companies, journeying to Japan to provide music for Allison Orr's choreographing of a professional baseball team, partnering with Peter Stopschinski to raise the roof with their Golden Hornet Project, readying to wrap up the final part of his *Marfa Triptych*, holding down a monthlong residence with his Golden Arm Trio at Dive Bar in August – no wonder our readers give Reynolds the biggest ups here.

www.grahamreynolds.com

Best Live Comedy Show/Series **ESTHER'S FOLLIES**

Named after actress and swimmer Esther Williams, Esther's Follies revels in the range of high satire and lowbrow cheeky humor. Things have gone swimmingly for yuksters Shannon Sedwick, Ray Anderson, Michael Shelton, and the crew. The colorful cast of this modern-day vaudeville venue has incorporated improv, political satire, magic, alcohol, and juggling for more than 30 years: a combination for success. Anything and everything can (and has) happened here.

525 E. Sixth, 512/320-0553,
www.estersfollies.com

Best Local Author/Poet **OWEN EGERTON**

From the small stage to the big screen to the fine print, Owen Egerton has razed a long-running trail of hilarity through Austin. While best known for co-founding Master Pancake, his comedic skill shines through in his writing, *How Best to Avoid Dying* and *Everyone Says That at the End of the World*. Warner Brothers also has a fondness for Egerton, and is developing a TV series based on his novel *The Book of Harold*.

www.owenegerton.com

Best Comic Artist or Graphic Novelist **TIM DOYLE**

With a lean toward sci-fi and the surreal, Tim Doyle's work is delightfully out of this world. *Star Wars* and superhero fans alike will want a print (or five) of his fan art, and Doyle's concert posters would make stylish additions to any music lover's home. As a kid, Doyle only found joy "in comic books and television and video games." Thankfully for the rest of us, he's brought that joy to the Austin art scene.

Nakatomi, Inc., www.nakatomiinc.com

Best Clothing Designer **GAIL CHOVAN**

Walk into Gail Chovan's Blackmail Boutique on SoCo and you will immediately sense history on a hanger. There are the broad sweeping lines of Gothic architecture evinced in a lengthy dress – her inspiration, perhaps, coming from Notre Dame and the other buildings in Paris, where Chovan often summers. And then there's this meticulous maven's punky pomo deconstruction, a call-out to our contemporary moment. Regardless, Chovan is blessed with the broad sweep (of history).

1202 S. Congress, 512/804-5881,
www.blackmailboutique.com

Best None of the Above Show **BEDPOST CONFESSIONS**

This year's been a year of heady experimentation for the BedPost Confessions crew. The groundbreaking show is now held quarterly, making room for new ventures such as (un)Spoken, a venue for the topics rarely touched upon in polite conversation (mental illness, pregnancy, the loss of love). We sense a pupal metamorphosis ... a new becoming, and with it, even more opportunities to stun Austin audiences with the power of story.

www.bedpostconfessions.com



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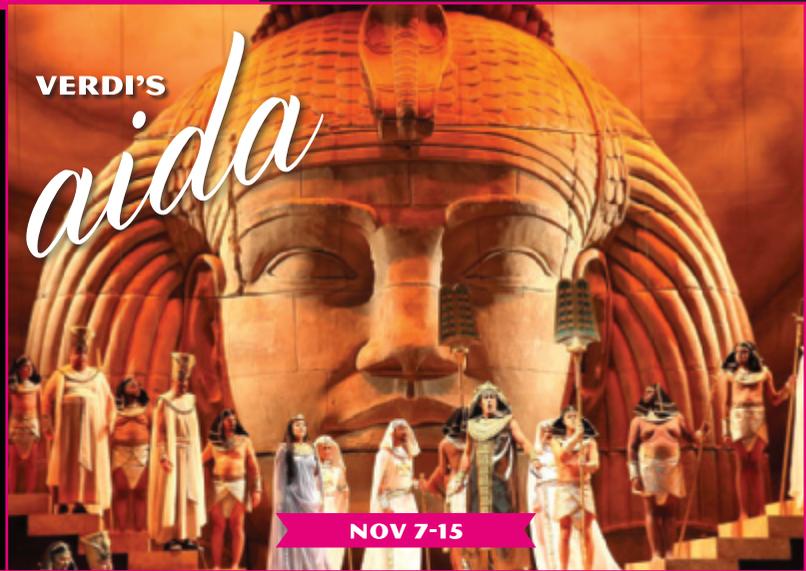


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ARTS & CULTURE



DEVAKI KNOWLES

BEST MUSICA IN MOTION

El Acordeonista Luis

East Austin is home to so many homegrown musical legends; there's definitely something in the water in the '02. Dressed in his classic caballero boots and hat, Luis travels the streets en route to the neighborhood restaurants and bars, with his squeezebox busting out traditional *canciones*. His music carries through the pecan trees, and for a magical moment, it's as if the timeless roots of the neighborhood are back in bloom.

Seen most frequently strolling the neighborhood between the intersections of Cesar Chavez & Robert T. Martinez and Seventh & Pleasant Valley

BEST OFF-THE-GRID ARTIST

Terry Tunes

Chances are you've never heard the name, but this pioneer of the Austin punk rock scene has been making amazing art, completely off the grid, for at least 20 years. After a serious illness left him unable to work, his fascination with toys, alongside uncanny carpentry skills and boundless imagination, led him to a new "career" path. Terry Tunes makes monumental sculptures from discarded plastic toys, some of which have been on display at the Georgetown Public Library. He also makes dioramas based on the life and music of Roky Erickson, all completely not for profit – a policy he should seriously reconsider.

208 San Gabriel, off RR 214, Liberty Hill, www.fb.com/terry.tunes.3



JOHN LEACH



BEST ARTISTIC EFFORT TO KEEP AFRICAN-AMERICANS AUSTINITES

Spectrum Theatre Company

There's little we Austinites like more than congratulating ourselves on our tolerant and liberal city, but a discomfiting contradiction to this freewheeling reputation is the marginalized and proportionately small African-American population that is dwindling just as the city's overall population expands at a brisk rate. The stellar artists at the helm of the newly formed Spectrum Theatre Company have taken a theatrical approach to help reverse this trend, and are "on a mission to provide the Austin area with professionally rendered productions representative of the many shades and nuances of the African-American experience." Super luminaries Billy Harden, Carla Nickerson, Jacqui Cross, and Janis Stinson have enriched all of Austin with their performances for years; their new company may just be the artistic tonic to enhance Austin for African-Americans and to bring us all closer to the city we fancy ourselves to be.

6001 Airport, 512/929-5503, www.spectrumatx.com, www.fb.com/spectrumatx

BEST RETURN OF A LITERARY ICON

Pat Littledog

Pat Littledog and now-ex-husband Chuck Taylor grew Paperbacks Plus into literary central for Eighties Austin. Then known as Pat Ellis Taylor, Littledog made waves when Atlantic Monthly Press published her semi-autobiographical and slyly feminist novel-in-stories, *Afoot in a Field of Men*. It follows a thirtysomething hippie named Pat in an era when hippies were feeling the sting of time and responsibility. Taylor's Slough Press just re-released the book and revealed again what a wise, funny, and refreshing writer Littledog is.

Slough Press Books, www.sloughpressbooks.com/books

BEST AUTHOR READING

Andrew Hilbert

Perhaps you've seen him but never knew his name? Andrew Hilbert has been touring the Austin circuit since moving from California to Texas in 2011. Whether it is emceeing events shirtless for *Foxing Quarterly*, doing recurring stints at Owen Egerton's One Page Salon, or clearing rooms at the Whip In with the extremely detailed scab-sorting scene in *Flesh House*, Hilbert commands an audience's attention and laughter in a medium where most people would rather rip their own limbs from their bodies than hear another bookworm read aloud. The release of his newest novella, *Death Thing*, will ensure many more to come.

www.hilbertheckler.blogspot.com



JEFF VAILLANCOURT

BEST STREET PHOTOGRAPHER ON SIXTH

Jeff Vaillancourt

For the uninitiated, street photography is, well, photos taken on the street – of life of people, of raw emotion. Street photographers are artists capturing moments in time, but they're often disguised as mild-mannered, middle-aged guys with cameras, like Jeff Vaillancourt. A California transplant, Vaillancourt doesn't make his living as a photog, but he enriches his life by haunting Sixth Street and capturing its poetry and grit – the lovers embracing in the rain, the drunk ejected from a bar and prone in the gutter, musicians plying their trade. Vaillancourt sees it through his lens and gladly shares it with us all.

www.vaillancourtphotography.com

CONTINUED ON P.18

The 7-Time Tony® Award-Winner Returns

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Photo: KirkTuck.com.

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ARTS & CULTURE

CONTINUED FROM P.16

BEST BOSSY BABES

#BossBabesATX

After discovering that women often avoid collaborating with each other, Jane Claire, Ashlee Jordan, and Leslie Lozano founded #BossBabesATX to give local creative women a space to learn, connect, and empower each other. Despite only having a handful of meets and workshops so far, the events are selling out fast, proving that the need for a paradigm shift is fierce. Their events will leave you feeling inspired, moved, and equipped to go out and create. They aim to “turn Austin into the kind of city a woman can call home – a take-off-her-bra-let-down-her-hair-brew-some-coffee-invite-the-crew-spin-some-vinyl-and-throw-herself-into-work kind of home.” Yes, bisssh!
www.bosbabes.org

BEST THROWBACK PHOTOGRAPHY

Lumiere Tintype

We stumbled upon Lumiere Tintype Photography's mobile booth during EAST and instantly fell in love. The 150-year-old photo process is a perfect marriage of science and art (and makes for a super rad Instagram: @lumiere_tintype). Owner and operator Adrian Whipp makes beautiful and haunting images from a small mobile booth that normally sits at Justine's Brasserie, but can be moved to other locations. Tintype reacts to colors differently than your standard black & white photos, so blues appear almost white while reds can come through as black. Bring in your friends, family, or pets for a photo session, or sit for a solo portrait and leave with a beautiful, unique metal print.
4710 E. Fifth, 512/800-0267,
www.lumieretintype.com



SHELLEY HIAM BY LUMIERE TINTYPE

BEST UNSUNG FILM SCENE FORCE

Gary Bond

Need a permit to shoot near the Capitol? Want stats on Austin film production? Don't phone a hipster; call the tall guy. Since 1985, a soft-spoken, smart, and funny pro named Gary Bond has been Austin film's savior. In July he quietly retired as the head of the Austin Film Commission and has left some big shoes to fill. The former radio newsman exits with more knowledge of the Austin film scene than just about anybody. All that, and he's a genuine nice guy who loves to eat (and cook) pie. He'll be missed.

111 Congress #700, 512/583-7230,
www.austintexas.org/film-commission

DAVID BRENDAN HALL



JOHN LEACH

BEST NEW PUBLIC SCULPTURE

Monochrome for Austin

At the corner of 24th & Speedway, steel cables hoist a messy (but deliberate) arrangement of 70 aluminum canoes and small boats above the heads of UT campus visitors. This new addition to the university's Landmarks installation series was designed by sculptor Nancy Rubins – internationally renowned for utilizing awe-inspiring excess and improbable delicacy to reveal the beauty of form in everyday heavy junk. Just don't lean on it.

512/495-4315, www.landmarks.utexas.edu, www.landmarks.utexas.edu/contact

BEST ZEN-INDUCING ART INSTALLATION

The Color Inside: A Skyspace by James Turrell

Artist James Turrell uses light and space as both his tools and materials, and the University of Texas is lucky to host one of his few public installations – an outdoor dream pod called the Skyspace. Reserve a spot at sunset to witness an hour of gradual sky changes, moody color transitions, and the chance to let your brain go wandering. Whether you want to feel like you're in outer space or choose to explore the deepest folds of your subconscious, the Skyspace will encourage the ultimate out-of-body experience right in the middle of campus.

University of Texas at Austin, 3 Student Activity Center, 2201 Speedway, 512/495-4315,
www.utexas.edu/cofa/turrell

MOST ANTICIPATED SHIPWRECK

La Belle

Earlier this year, about 11,000 square feet of the first floor of exhibition space at the Bullock Texas State History Museum was closed for renovations. Renovations is an understatement. The Bullock is preparing for the permanent resting place of La Belle, the ill-fated ship belonging to French colonialist Robert de La Salle. Artifacts of the 300-year-old vessel were found in Matagorda Bay along the Texas coast in the Nineties, leading to the discovery and excavation of the entire shipwreck, one of the most significant archaeological finds in Texas history. And it's all at the Bullock! In 2016, the museum space will reopen with the reconstructed ship for all to see.

Bullock Texas State History Museum, 1800 N. Congress, 512/936-4629, www.thestoryoftexas.com



BEST REASON TO RAISE YOUR VOICE

LOLA Austin

Whatever LOLA wants, LOLA gets. So it seems for the scrappy little classical-music company known as Local Opera, Local Artists. Founded by mezzo-soprano Liz Cass and director Rebecca Herman to mount the world's first version of *La Bohème* cast entirely with women, LOLA not only produced that show to sold-out houses and great praise (and a trio of Critics Table Awards), but also staged a three-character cabaret take on *Carmen*, scheduled a revival of *La Femme Bohème* for Valentine's Day 2016, and commissioned a new opera from Austin composer Peter Stoppschinski and playwright Kirk Lynn for fall 2017. We love how LOLA stages opera in a bar (the North Door), used proceeds from its crowdfunding campaigns to support SafePlace and the Veteran's Guitar Project, and turned its first birthday party into a celebration of all local opera. LOLA truly lives by its motto: “We all sing better together.”
512/516-7967, www.lolaaustin.org

BEST COMPOSER OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Steve Parker

Music in a traditional auditorium is well and good, but if we've learned one thing from Steve Parker, it's that all the world's a concert hall. This local composer, trombonist, and all-around musicmaking maverick has placed a dozen trombone players on the Lake Austin shoreline, invited the public to play recycled instruments in the City Hall parking garage, and, in his SoundSpace series at the Blanton Museum of Art, marched 100 tubas through the atrium and stuffed soloists in elevators. He'll make music anywhere and with virtually anything, as he proved with *Traffic Jam*, his recent concert of new music by local composers performed on the asphalt of the Blue Starlite Drive-In, with instruments ranging from pedicabs to wheels to car horns by the dozens. His boldness and fervor inspire us and carloads of other music lovers to go off-roading with him at every opportunity. Honk if you love Steve Parker!

www.steve-parker.net



BEST GUARDIANS & NURTURERS OF PRIDE
Paul Huddleston,
Nathan Garcia, and
the Austin Pride
Foundation

Let's lay this out plain and simple: These are thankless jobs. Nobody will ever admit to being happy about Pride. The current crew in charge (2011-present) of Austin's annual fest and parade sure takes a lot of guff. One school of thought complains that Prides by their nature are not proud, instead kowtowing to corporate overlords. Another says that they are way too permissive in allowing the representation of skin and kink. Or that they didn't order the correct weather for the comfort of attendees. Or that they charge admission. Or that they give to causes. Or, gee whiz, what about the lesbians? Or that they've booked some of the most innovative programming in the history of Austin Prides. Or that they work long, miserable hours for no pay, much to the detriment of their own personal lives, relationships, and bottom lines. Or that, for some reason, this wacky festival that everyone seems to have an opinion about (but precious few with these opinions will volunteer to work) has never had one year where they haven't completely diversified and expanded the variety of event offerings, not to mention totally obliterated the previous years' attendance records (over 200,000 at this year's parade alone, according to public safety estimates). Yeah, we can see what the problem is 512/468-8113, www.fb.com/austinpride, www.austinpride.org

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Emma S. Barrientos
 Mexican American Cultural Center

COSMIC VIDA

Chicana Activist: Diana Abrego, 2008.

Opening Reception September 12 at 7pm | Museum Day September 20

— IN THE SAM Z. CORONADO GALLERY —

Curated by Raul Valdez
 Gerry Garcia ♦ Ernesto Cuevas, Jr. ♦ Adriana Maria Garcia
 Cardee Garcia ♦ Alejandro Garcia ♦ Miguel Cortinas

Cosmic Vida presents passion, pain, and love as visual emotions. In these works, heritage is used as a means to express the social importance of art and culture.

AUSTIN HISTORY CENTER
Presents an exhibit on the beginnings of public education in Austin

Making the Grade
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✓
Opening Reception
September 16, 6:30 PM

Exhibit runs through March 13, 2016

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FIND OUT MORE AT AUSTINHISTORYCENTER.ORG

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Ravish Austin's 2015 Masquerade Ball will tempt you, flaunt you and entertain you. Lose your inhibitions in an exotic world of extravagant costumes, dinner, drinks, entertainment, games, dancing and more. Bring out your playful, sexy and mysterious side for this all-inclusive event of the year.

FRIDAY, OCT. 30TH - VINTAGE VILLAS EVENT CENTER
 For tickets and more information visit ravishatx.com



SANDY CARSON

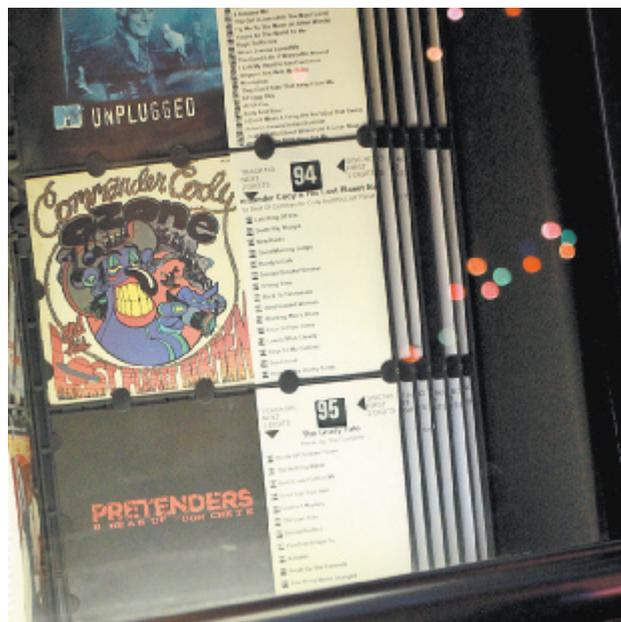


Best Outdoor Venue **STUBB'S**

Sometimes we take Stubb's for granted; so many places and events compete for our music-loving attention. But it takes just one show, even just one sight – say, Carrie Brownstein shredding atop Janet Weiss' bass drum – to remember the transcendent times Stubb's delivers on the regular. Readers brought the love this year to crown the magical spot that keeps Red River rockin' steady. 801 Red River, 512/480-8341, www.stubbsaustin.com

Best Jukebox **DEEP EDDY CABARET**

After a tie last year, Deep Eddy Cabaret has finally dethroned Casino el Camino with its jukebox jams (a first since 1995). Craft your perfect musical recipe at this dive bar with ingredients from locals Black Joe Lewis, Dale Watson, and Gary Clark Jr. Throw in some simmering vocals from Billie Holiday or Otis Redding. Spice it up with some Ramones, Bowie, or the Clash. Now we're cookin'! Bonus points for including tracks from the late, great Nick Curran. 2315 Lake Austin Blvd., 512/472-0961, www.deepeddybar.com



TODD V. WOLFSON

Best Party of the Year **SXSW**

Every year for nine days, Austin is taken over by a party as big as Texas. Every venue possible is filled with drinks and music, drinks and movies, or drinks and technology ... sometimes all in the same place. There are designated "parties" at the Festival, but there's pretty much one wherever and whenever you go. You can rub elbows with rock stars and movie stars all over town, and maybe get your demo heard or your script read. Just don't get too wild and embarrass yourself in front of all the important people. 400 Bowie, 512/467-7979, www.sxsw.com

Best Video Game Studio Developer **ROOSTER TEETH**

As the first to beat "BOA" front-runner BioWare in this category, Rooster Teeth deserves all the chatter. This tech-savvy company, started by Burnie Burns, Matt Hullum, Geoff Ramsey (né Fink), Gustavo Sorola, and Joel Heyman, has blossomed from the egg that hatched videos and game-related conversations into the full-grown cock of the walk it is today. From nostalgic nights watching *Red vs. Blue* to the annual RTX convention, this fanged fowl holds a place in Austinites' hearts, taking this prize two years in a row. 512/684-5980, www.roosterteeth.com



Best Karaoke **HIGHBALL**

What's karaoke without a themed room? The HighBall feels ya; they have seven karaoke rooms conceived by Zack Carlson and Laura Fleischauer that vary in funkiness and feature voice synthesizers, so we can all sound like our favorite pop-princess divas. And let's face it, who doesn't wanna have a karaoke party in the Black Lodge from *Twin Peaks*? 1120 S. Lamar, 512/383-8309, www.thehighball.com

Best Scenester/Mover and Shaker **MAGGIE LEA**

Summertime in Austin (or any season, really) wouldn't be the same without Maggie Lea. From producing the Cinema East movie series to throwing the best parties (typically featuring the coolest bands) at Cheer Up Charlies, Lea is a massive force about town. Austin's social scene may be rapidly expanding, but Lea stays ahead of it all, setting the standard by raising the bar, with her surefire mix of art, cinema, and music. Just don't call her a scenester. Or a mover-and-shaker. At least, not to her lovely face. 900 Red River, 512/431-2133, www.cheerupcharlies.com

Best Movie Theatre **ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE**

Long gone are the days when only Austinites had some of that sweet Alamo Draffthouse religion. Last year, the gospel spread globally when the Draffthouse stood up to North Korea to be one of the first movie theatres to book *The Interview*. That kind of feistiness is par for the course at the Alamo, which has built its stellar reputation on a superior watching experience (including a firm no-texting/no-talking rule – preach) and the founding principle that every movie tastes better with a cold beer and a burger. Yeah, America. Multiple locations, www.draffthouse.com/austin

Best Local Filmmaker **RICHARD LINKLATER**

There are no explosions, no chase scenes, or gun shoot-outs in a Richard Linklater film. Instead of all that Michael Bay nonsense, we get human connections and experiences. *Boyhood* was one of the most lauded films of 2014, and Linklater was finally given the recognition he so deserved by the rest of the world, including two Oscar nominations this year for *Boyhood*. But to us, he will always be good ol' Rick. www.detourfilm.com

Best Happy Hour **SALTY SOW**

It's not just because the shared plates average about \$5 a pop, or that there's a full array of margaritas. It's because every time we step into Salty Sow, we just have the best time. Oh, and those duck fat fries are now our new religion. 1917 Manor Rd., 512/391-2337, www.saltysow.com

Best Club Night/Theme Night **TUEZGAYZ AT BARBARELLA**

Honoring Tuezgayz's Best Club Night five years and counting, we can't stay away from this packed, sweaty Red River riot. Barbarella slings the liquid courage, and the Glitoris soundtracks our midweek make-out sesh. Heteros, homos, and everyone in between get their groove and grope on in the middle of our favorite drrrty dance floor. www.theglitoris.com, www.theglitoris.tumblr.com

Best Place to Dance
BARBARELLA

Shake your bits and get groovy at Thursday's Grits N Gravy. Dance yourself into a haze at Tuezgayz. Rock your Amadeus at Footloose Fridays. Perfect for dancing with friends or strangers any night of the week. Oh, Barbs! Thank you for all of those memorable nights (and the ones we can't quite recall).
615 Red River, 512/476-7766, www.fb.com/barbarella.austin.9

Best Live DJ
DJ MEL

Spinning records for the Democratic National Convention and President Obama's re-election party may be the milestones in the career of this Austin Music Hall of Famer. But here at home, he is well-known for genre-defining DJ sets spanning a massive music catalog. From his Eighties-centered series Rock the Casbah to sweaty dance parties at Nasty's, DJ Mel sure knows how to make you get your back up off that wall.
www.djmel.com

Best Non-Theatre Film Venue
CINEMA EAST AT THE FRENCH LEGATION

What is better than a warm summer night spent outside with some of the best independent films of the year? Add a delicious picnic and your furriest canine companions. You really can't beat it. Get there early to talk and drink with friends on the beautiful grounds of the French Legation Museum. The screen is huge and located perfectly at the bottom of the hill which means that you don't have to struggle to see over someone's head. Cinema East screens the latest works from rising indie stars such as Lawrence Michael Levine, Sophia Takal, Onur Tukel, and Amy Seimetz. The film starts when the sun goes down, and oh boy, is there nothing better than a movie under the big Texas sky?
802 San Marcos St., 512/472-8180, www.frenchlegationmuseum.org



TODD V. WOLFSON



Best Bar
Best LGBTQ Hangout CHEER UP CHARLIES

Cheer Ups continues to top "Best of Austin" each year. Maybe it's something to do with no cover for live music. Or the resident vegan food trailer and its cult following. Or the myriad film screenings, dance parties, and wet beard contests. Under attack again by Big Development, the partial demolition of their definitive limestone amphitheatre illustrates in irony how this beloved club is a cornerstone of the music/culture/queer community.
900 Red River, 512/431-2133, www.cheerupcharlies.com

CONTINUED ON P.22



CELESTA DANGER

The WHIRLING DERVISHES
LIVE PERFORMANCE OF THE WHIRLING DERVISHES FROM KONYA AND TURKISH SUFI MUSIC ENSEMBLE
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AFS AUSTIN FILM SOCIETY

UPCOMING FILMS

THE MEND (2014)
September 11 & 13
"Funny, rugged and raw... Director John Magary digs into his characters with fresh eyes and a sly sense of adventure."
- The New York Times

WE COME AS FRIENDS (2014)
September 16 & 20
"Hubert Sauper goes where other people don't go, sees what the crowd doesn't see and creates unsettling, provocative political documentaries that are unlike anyone else's."
- The New York Times

AUSTINFILM.ORG | AFS AT THE MARCHESA
6226 MIDDLE FISKVILLE RD



ENTERTAINMENT

CONTINUED FROM P.21

Best Cocktails EAST SIDE SHOW ROOM

It's no wonder readers selected this Eastside haunt. The dimly lit and artfully decorated bar offers up expertly crafted, pre-Prohibition inspired cocktails infused with fruit and floral flavors from a selection of almost 200 bottles of liquor. With a movie projector, quaint patio seating, and live music, it's the perfect spot for a romantic date or a classy night on the town with your best pals. 1100 E. Sixth, 512/467-4280, www.eastsideshowroom.com

Best Live Music Venue MOHAWK

This pillar of the cultural district knows how to keep it cool in the Texas heat. They're always tuned in to the best new alt rawk from around the country and around the street corner. Three stories of patios for the outdoor stage mean that everyone has a view, and for those wanting, the pit offers the kind of close-quarters action that any punk worth the name deserves. Aren't you glad you shelled out for that condo when you did? You've got the best seat in the house. 912 Red River, 512/666-0877, www.mohawkaustin.com

Best Burlesque/Cabaret Show JIGGLEWATTS

In true Austin style, the Jigglewatts began on the set of a low-budget zombie movie – a zombie movie with singing and dancing, natch. The world may have forgotten 2007's *Z: A Zombie Musical*, but we can forever thank it for bringing together the flashy and fun ladies of the Jigglewatts burlesque revue. Their performances are bawdy with a sly, empowered wink. www.thejigglewattsburlesque.com.



PHOTOS BY CELESTA DANGER

Best New Club TIE: STAY GOLD; HIGHLAND LOUNGE

New clubs are popping up in Austin like so many poppers. Two new venues remind us that saturation doesn't have to mean lack of innovation. With delicious drinks, an ample patio, and nightly music, Stay Gold is a haven for those looking for some substance on a night out. The vinyl-covered booths and red-velvet stage curtains set the ambience of a Seventies soul lounge, and the music doesn't disappoint on that front either. If you're looking for something a little more rambunctious, there's Highland Lounge. Everyone loves a good drag show, and you'll find the most fabulous of them here. Folks who prefer to be the center of attention can show up for an amateur strip night, or let their inner club kid shine on the dance floor. Stay Gold, 1910 E. Cesar Chavez, www.staygoldaustin.com; Highland Lounge, 404 Colorado, 512/649-1212, www.highlandlounge.com

Best Hotel Bar/Lounge HOTEL SAN JOSÉ

If Wes Anderson shot a movie in Austin, it would look just like Hotel San José. The quaint decor and minimalist aesthetic of this 40-room South Congress location has been a favorite among locals and visitors since Liz Lambert renovated and transformed it from an old motor court. And the wine-and-beer bar, open to all, has the best damn micheladas in town. Come for an unmistakably Texan feel, a Southern hospitality, and a European cultivation. 1316 S. Congress, 512/852-2360, www.sanjosehotel.com

Best Underground Event BIG RICK'S BLOUSE OF BIG RUBES

It's often dark. Almost always dank. We are honor-bound to not say what it is, only to tell you that once you go, you'll be forever changed – for better or worse. Hotly tuned olfactories know when it's in the air, and with a discreet email query, learn where it will pop up. Intimating what you'll uncover there (a sea of smells and sweaty bods, gyrating for green and glory) is already giving too much away. Even an award can't take away its cred (nor blow its cover).

Best Drag Show OILCAN HARRY'S

Oilcan Harry's proves the squeaky diva always gets the greasepaint. The weekday draw of this Austin mainstay? It's the Wednesday night Drag Show Roulette, which takes a different spin on the act with a monthly pageant. On the weekend? Two snaps go to the Super Sunday Divas Show, OCH's weekly "platform" for high-heeled hilarity featuring a different Ru queen from *RuPaul's Drag Race*. We pause, along with the entire staff and the usually ebullient hostess Kelly Kline, for a solemn moment of reflection in the great big beautiful mirror in the sky for the passing of co-hostess Jenny McCall. Soar to the stars, dear queen. 211 W. Fourth, 512/320-8823, www.oilcanharrys.com



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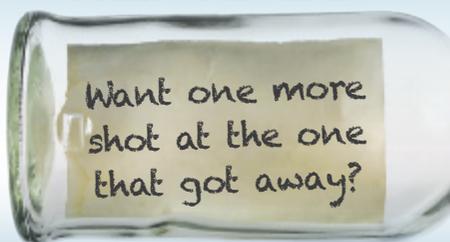
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The Poet Sings : Emily Dickinson

Sunday, September 13, 2015

4pm at Jessen Auditorium, The University of Texas

Conspirare will celebrate the expressive power and range of one of America's most beloved poets. This intimate recital will feature soprano Sonja DuToit Tengblad, tenor Eric Newville and pianist Michelle Schumann.

Student tickets

(with valid ID) \$10

General Admission \$30

purchase online at

www.conspirare.org

Don't miss this exclusive The Poet Sings event!

On Rats, Bombs & Volcanos :

The Power of Dickinson's Subversions

An enlightening talk with poet Wendy Barker.

9.11.15, 7pm

Malvern Books



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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH

- 12:30-1 DRAGON/LION DANCE TEAM
- 1:15-2:15 CHINESE TRADITIONAL MUSIC & DANCE
- 2:30-3:15 AUSTIN POLKA BAND
Music of Germany, Austria, Poland, and Czech Republic
- 3:30-4:15 LOS BOHEMIOS PERDIDOS
Music of Ecuador, Argentina, Cuba & Puerto Rico
- 4:30-5:15 ATASH
Music of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Syria
- 5:30-6:15 GUMBO CE SOIR
Cajun French Music



FLYING BALALAIKA BROTHERS



KUNITAN

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 13TH

- 12:30-1:15 USTAD AMZAD RAHMAN & COMPANY
Music of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh
- 1:30-2:15 BATUQUE RAIZ
Brazilian Percussion Ensemble
- 2:30-3:15 INDRAJIT BANERJEE & SRI GOURISANKAR
Indian Sitar & Tabla Music
- 3:30-4:15 KUNITAN
Andean Music
- 4:30-5:15 FLYING BALALAIKA BROTHERS
Music of Russia, Serbia, Ukraine, and the Balkans
- 5:30-6:15 NUEVA CANCION SOCIAL LATINO/AMERICANA
Music of Latin America



CHINESE TRADITIONAL MUSIC



TEXAS DRAGON/LION DANCE TEAM



USTAD AMZAD RAHMAN



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INDRAJIT BANERJEE



This project is supported in part by Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department



The George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center is a National Register Property and a Designated Local Landmark. The City of Austin is proud to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you require special assistance for participation in our program or the use of our facility, please call 512-974-4926.



BEST BODY SLAM Inspire Pro Wrestling

The French philosopher Roland Barthes described professional wrestling – or, as he called it, true wrestling – as the battle of good against evil. Inspire Pro Wrestling is winning a different battle. They're getting one of America's greatest, purest forms of physical spectacle and drama taken seriously. Creative Director Max Meehan has gathered the best grapplers, bruisers, and high-flyers from Texas and beyond, filling

ENTERTAINMENT

the Marchesa Hall with screaming crowds. After two years, Inspire has become a promotion that wrestlers from around the globe praise for its dedication to excellence. And that's inspirational. www.inspireprowrestling.com



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

BEST WAY TO LOSE YOUR VOICE Karaoke Underground

Sing us a song, you're the punk rock man/rebel girl! Kaleb Asplund and wife Hannah Ford have been building Karaoke Underground's song list since 2004. Currently at roughly 1,000 songs, there are plenty of choices to belt your heart out to: Nick Cave, Bikini Kill, Fugazi, Minutemen, etc. Don't be surprised if you get joined onstage by a member of the band whose song you're singing. John Darnielle of the Mountain Goats once went next door to Cheer Up Charlies after playing a show at the Mohawk to join a lucky fan onstage for "This Year." Sleater-Kinney also popped by for a Girls Rock Camp benefit to catch a glimpse of fans singing the entire "Dig Me Out" album. In addition to standing gigs at Nomad Bar and Drinks Lounge, KU has nights all over town, can come to your private event, and occasionally takes its show on the road.

www.karaokeunderground.com

BEST INTIMATE MUSIC MOMENTS Continental Club Gallery

While the Continental Club is world-famous, the Gallery is the coolest intimate venue in Austin and still a bit of a secret. Located over Southside Tattoo on South Congress, the Gallery goes from charming to eclectic with a 40-person limit. You never know what rock or movie star might show up and sit behind the scenes of the bar. The Gallery hosts a variety of jazz (Elias Haslanger, Ephraim Owens, Mike Flanigin, Robert Kraft), singer-songwriters (James McMurtry, Jon Dee Graham, Hilary York, Guitar Pull), and jam bands (Kalu James, Matt Hubbard) throughout the week, and is home to the quarterly Tertulia (an Iberian tradition of a mix of poetry, song, and performance).

1315 S. Congress, upstairs, 512/441-2444, www.continentalclub.com

BEST SPAGHETTI WESTERN SHOT IN AUSTIN *Red on Yella, Kill a Fella*

Austin auteurs Duane Graves and Justin Meeks know that making a movie is to worship at the altar of celluloid past while desperately creating something fresh. Their Western, *Red on Yella, Kill a Fella*, is a case in point. The guys created the Texas bigfoot tale *The Wild Man of the Navidad* and teamed with *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* co-scribe Kim Henkel on the bloody *Butcher Boys*. Now they've taken a genre leap forward with a spaghetti Western chock-full of grit and blood, mixed with an existential storyline that surprises. All we ask is for an Austin premiere. Pronto. www.greeksfilms.com

BEST TEXAS WINE AMBASSADOR Rae Wilson

Sommelier Rae Wilson started her company, Wine for the People, as a way to make wine approachable to all. As the concept grew and evolved, Wilson's role changed from educator to consultant, which fueled her passionate advocacy for Texas wines. Wilson works to connect up-and-coming Hill Country wineries with her growing list of clients, therefore giving us the opportunity to find excellent Texas wines at more local bars and restaurants. And as a winemaker, she sold out the first production of her 100% Texas-grown Dandy Rosé within two months. We look forward to any and all of her future endeavors. 512/672-9618, www.wineforthepeople.net



CELESTIA DANGER

BEST DIVE BAR **Barfly's**

Dark, decrepit, and oozing character, Barfly's epitomizes the ideal dive bar. Located on top of a Burger Tex on Airport Boulevard, this neighborhood bar draws all types of residents from Hyde Park, North Loop, and surrounding areas. Up the stairs and behind the steel door, you step into almost complete darkness. Dim lights illuminate worn pool tables. The cocktail tables are small and usually occupied by two or three very different people, Lone Stars in hand, usually laughing. A jukebox shines a colorful light through the opaque air. The bartenders are friendly and the people friendlier. Barfly's is the perfect spot to grab a few cold beers and shoot some pool. We also recommend a shot of whiskey to go along with that Lone Star. No lemon drops here, folks.

5420-B Airport, 512/452-6455, www.barflysaustin.com

CONTINUED ON P.25

**BEST LITTLE AUDACIOUS FILM
THAT COULD – AND DID!**

Boyhood

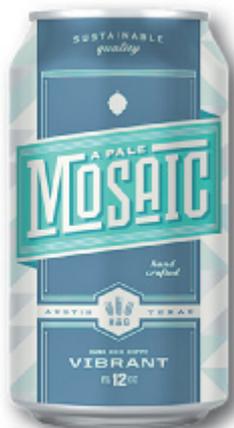
When Richard Linklater began the marathon of *Boyhood* in 2002, there was scant consideration of greatness but plenty of concern that the experiment could even be completed. Making a movie over 12 years with the same cast on a pittance budget? What could possibly go wrong? And yet ... hardly anything did go wrong, and so much went so right. The cast and crew met annually to create what is now considered cinematic genius. Sure, it was passed over for the Oscar (widely considered one of the most egregious errors in Academy history), so solace has to be taken in *Boyhood's* appearance on more critics' annual lists in 2014 than any other film. 3109 N. I-35, 512/322-0726, www.detourfilm.com

**BEST NEW
DRAUGHT BEER**

**Hops & Grain's
A Pale
Mosaic**

It's not surprising that Hops & Grain's first year-round draught is a delight. A Pale Mosaic has an aroma, flavor profile, and body that is appropriate for any occasion.

As nose inches closer to pint glass, nostrils tingle with the faint aroma of pine. The beer has a pale copper hue, a cloudy appearance, and medium body. The first cold sips are crisp, the Mosaic hop really shines with pine resin, and grapefruit pith flavors tingling the palate. These earthy and light fruity flavors are backed up with a moderate hoppiness, yet nothing near as bitter as your average IPA. Finally, there's nothing like a smooth finish. Its subtle character gives the beer its versatility when it comes to pairings, the season, and the person. Cheers! 507 Calles, 512/537-9756, www.hopsandgrain.com



CONTINUED ON P.26

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2-4 PM**

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SoundSpace is generously underwritten by Michael Chesser.

Blanton Museum of Art / 512.471.7324 / www.blantonmuseum.org

@blantonmuseum f t



ENTERTAINMENT

CONTINUED FROM P.25

BEST PSEUDO-HEALTHY COCKTAIL The Golden Ticket at Cheer Up Charlies

With kombucha for your gut, whiskey for your soul, and ginger for an overall health and flavor kick, the Golden Ticket at Austin's beloved "ambiguous everybody space" is refreshing, reasonably priced, and virtuous enough to drink on the regular (we think so, anyway). It pairs perfectly with a night of dance partying or parking garage protesting, making this cheerful and effervescent cocktail one of many reasons to visit this precious Red River hangout.

900 Red River, 512/431-2133,
www.cheerupcharlies.com

BEST MOVIE THEATRE YOU SHOULD GO TO MORE OFTEN

The Marchesa

As the home of Austin Film Society's impressive, ongoing lineup of archival screenings and special series (many are hand-picked by Richard Linklater himself), and also a satellite venue during festivals like SXSW and the Austin Film Festival, the humble Marchesa is the place to see the best independent, classic, new, and rare films showing around town. So why don't you go here more often? Don't squander the fact that you live in an excellent film town, y'all. Seriously.

6226 Middle Fiskville, 512/454-2000,
www.themarchesa.com



JANA BIRCHUM

BEST KARAOKE AT A BIKE SHOP Windmill Bicycles

Brother-and-sister team Aaron and Sarah Goeth are not only co-owners of this friendly full-service retail bicycle shop, but are also bandmates, movie-night curators, and karaoke hosts with the most. BYOB and BYO rendition of Queen's "Bicycle Race" – or just go with perpetual crowd-pleaser "Bohemian Rhapsody." Check their Facebook page to see when these open-to-the-public showdowns go down, and scope out their great selection of refurbished vintage bicycles while waiting for your turn to croon.

2209-B Manor Rd., 512/215-2395,
www.windmillbicycles.com,
www.fb.com/windmillbicycles

BEST COCKTAIL BAR The Driskill Bar

The Driskill Hotel is notorious to locals and visitors alike. The history and haunted nature of the hotel make it a unique establishment in its own right. The hotel's tasteful elegance extends to their bar. Located upstairs, past the portrait of Mr. Driskill himself, is the best cocktail bar in Austin. Sprawled across the carpet are a variety of comfortable leather couches and chairs. The walls display a variety of Texan and Southwestern artwork and antique firearms, giving you the feeling that you've traipsed into the past. Classic cocktails, a solid wine list, live music, and spectacular service put the Driskill Bar over the top. The atmosphere is perfect for either casual drinks or something more sophisticated for business or your girlfriend's parents. Just make sure you bill it to someone else's room.

604 Brazos, 512/439-1234,
www.driskillhotel.com



BEST VISIONS OF THE FUTURE Other Worlds Austin

Science fiction isn't just about space ships and lasers. It's about what it means to be a human in strange times. Austin's first-ever dedicated sci-fi film festival went to infinity and beyond in its inaugural year, with former Austin Film Festival booker Bears Fonté selecting the most bizarre, hilarious, and moving titles the genre has to offer. Before it returns this December, its year-round programming has kept highlighting beautiful and unearthly cinema. Keep watching the skies ... and the screens.

www.otherworldsaustin.com

BEST DANCE, DANCE, KARAOKE HighBall

The HighBall boasts seven very eclectic and whimsically themed karaoke rooms, but we are here to talk about another, different kind of party. Ever so often, the good folks at the HighBall will clear the tables and chairs to create one mega dance floor. Why do they do this, you ask? Because there ain't no party like a music-video dance party. We can jam out to everything from Britney to Backstreet Boys with glowsticks in hand. Nineties not your thing? Don't worry, they go through many different decades for your groovin' pleasure.

1120 S. Lamar, 512/383-8309, www.thehighball.com

BEST LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT APP TabbedOut

Ever wish you could use a flux capacitor to tip that hunky server? Ever dream about ditching out early to make that movie, but can't find your server? Want an easy way to avoid those embarrassing walks of shame to get your debit card from a bar where you left it the night before? Love free drinks as much as we do? Just download the TabbedOut app, check out their loyalty program, and enjoy the ease of playing and paying right from your phone.

1135 W. Sixth #130, 866/626-8045, www.tabbedout.com

BEST ROCK & ROLL HALL OF FAME CAMPAIGN

Doug Sahn

Now that Stevie Ray Vaughan's officially plaqued in Cleveland, attention turns to getting Doug Sahn inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Joe Nick Patoski's new feature documentary, *Sir Doug & the Genuine Texas Cosmic Groove*, serves as catalyst to the campaign, premiering at SXSW and raising more than \$90K on Kickstarter. Meanwhile, local stars have rallied in live tributes across Texas and in promoting the official petition. It's the rejuvenation of Sahn's legacy for a new generation 15 years after the musical polymath's passing to the ultimate Groover's Paradise.

www.dougsahmdoc.com

BEST INTERNATIONAL MUSIC AMBASSADORS ATX6

A conversation with Music Canada's VP of Public Affairs at South by Southwest last year sparked the Austin music and film promotional project ATX6. Three months later, songwriter Chris Brecht and six hardworking, prodigious songwriters were on a plane for Toronto to represent Austin music at NXNW. Brecht, who runs Austin Independent Radio online, and company then shuttled off to Germany's Reeperbahn Festival. This spring, he rounded up another sextet for NXNE, a crew bound for France this week to represent the live music capital. Brecht's likely already prepping next year's chosen ones.

www.projectatx6.com



SANDY CARSON

BEST MEZCAL SELECTION King Bee Lounge

One may not think of a divey lounge on East 12th as a haven for this *en vogue* Mexican spirit. But co-owner Billy Hankey is a fan of the smoky elixir, and he has made it his personal goal to have the most complete collection of mezcal available in any Austin bar. With 35 labels and counting in all styles and varieties, Hankey is always happy to share a unique cocktail or to pour a flight of some of his favorites. He has ample knowledge of the spirit and will enthusiastically share it with one and all.

1906 E. 12th, www.twitter.com/kingbeelounge

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PHOTOS BY JOHN ANDERSON



Best New Restaurant **LAUNDERETTE**

It used to be that deciding where to eat brunch was an arduous task requiring group texts, Facebook messages, and the occasional (gasp!) phone call. Now, thanks to Laura Sawicki and Rene Ortiz, that question only has one answer – Lauderette. Go for the Duck Hash (which, because of the brussels sprouts, cons you into thinking it's healthy) or the Pork & Grits. Even if the Eastside hot spot didn't have great plates (clearly, it does), we would still think it was the best. Finally, all our friends agree on something. 2115 Holly, 512/382-1599, www.lauderetteaustin.com

Best Food Delivery **FAVOR**

The world is your oyster! Or burger! Or tamale! Or ... you get the point. Unlike other food delivery services, you can order anything via Favor, from any restaurant or store in the delivery area. The app is super user-friendly and updates you as your runner places the order, reaches the store, and finally arrives at your location. With delivery until 3am, Favor is perfect for late-night munchies or those days you can't leave work or are already tucked in for the night. www.favordelivery.com

Best Tacos **TORCHY'S TACOS**

Everyone talks about the Dirty Sanchez taco (har har, boys), but we love the Jamaican jerk(iness) of the Brushfire taco. We're just gonna put that out there. Still, the story of Torchy's – up from humble beginnings (one of the early birds in the food cart phenomenon), this “damn good” taco chain now has franchises all over Texas, and one in Colorado. That horny little devil gets around! But “damn good” food doesn't mean design is thrown by the wayside. The new Mueller Torchy's (and several other locations) have been outfitted by Jamie Chioco of Chioco Design. So it may surprise no one that we've been thinking about moving in, but we'd likely wake up with diablo hot sauce in all the wrong places. Or all the right places, depending on who you ask. *Multiple locations, www.torchystacos.com*



Best Coffee **HOUNDSTOOTH**

Human cannot live on bread (muffin, scone) alone, so Houndstooth carries Tacodeli breakfast tacos. (Or, in the case of the North Lamar location, is situated right next to them.) But, truly, it's all about the coffee. And “Best of Austin”-winning good coffee at that. They've got all the regular artisan pours and then some: French press, Chemex, a cortado. The baristas are knowledgeable, the wooden decor pleasant, and the playlist on point (Nineties and Aughts classic hip-hop). You won't even care you're in a *Portlandia* sketch. Just be warned: The mornings are packed. 4200 N. Lamar #120, 512/531-9417; 401 Congress Ste. 100-C, 512/394-6051, www.houndstoothcoffee.com

Best Date Restaurant **TIE: UCHIKO; JUSTINE'S**

Austin offers so many ways to dine and date. For those looking to romance, Justine's delights all senses – from their steak tartare, Sazerac, and Side Car, to their enchanted garden patio, to their notoriously debauchorous galas and super-secret secret house. Offering more cheek than a French maid, this brasserie is sure to heat up any night out. Across town, Uchiko presents a more modern take on wooing, perfect for the heart set to impress. This more reserved (read: quieter) sibling of internationally recognized Uchi employs mood lighting warm enough to melt butter, and their shared plates tantalize taste buds and lovers alike. No matter the first date or the 99th, these spots will set the tone. *Uchiko, 4200 N. Lamar #140, 512/916-4808, www.uchiaustin.com/uchiko; Justine's Brasserie, 4710 E. Fifth, 512/385-2900, www.justines1937.com; 1303 E. Seventh, www.justinessecrethouse.com*



Best Outdoor Dining **CONTIGO**

Contigo's patio, which is to say the entire restaurant, is the Sam Elliott of Austin dining. It's a little bit rustic, looks great in a cowboy getup, and gets better and better with age. There's been some renovation, but not much has changed about the rancho deluxe setting, the easy-sipping cocktails, or the accessible menu. That kind of star power never needs fixing. 2027 Anchor, 512/614-2260, www.contigotexas.com/austin



Via 313



Home Slice

Best Pizza **TIE: VIA 313; HOME SLICE**

Home Slice's lock on Best Pizza lists has been hard-earned and well-deserved. There is no other place in Central Texas that's mastered the marriage of sauce and cheese into such a luscious blanket of East Coast POW!, a direct nonstop flight for the taste buds to NYC. Across town, the trajectory diverges – straight up the heartland to Detroit. It's an entirely different pizza planet at Via 313. Less pie than slab of pure stretchy, gooey, tomato-y, rectangular, caramelized bliss, this muscular representation of Via's homeland is the Dodge Challenger to Home Slice's hansom cab. In both cases, it's not so much the destination as the delicious journey itself. *Home Slice Pizza, 1415 S. Congress; 1421 S. Congress, 512/444-7437, www.homeslicepizza.com; Via 313, 1111 E. Sixth, 512/939-1927; 61 Rainey, 512/609-9405; 6705 Hwy. 290 #503, 512/584-8084, www.via313.com*

Best Prepared Grab-and Go **SNAP KITCHEN**

Gluten-free enchiladas, grass-fed lamb lasagna, chicken butternut squash macaroni? Do not fear the organic fusion foods of Snap Kitchen. If you need healthy food that respects an allergy or dietary lifestyle, Snap has it in a ready-to-go form of yum that won't make your wallet cry. There's a reason this isn't their first “Best of” rodeo. *Multiple locations, www.snapkitchen.com*

CONTINUED ON P.30

Ruth's Recipe:

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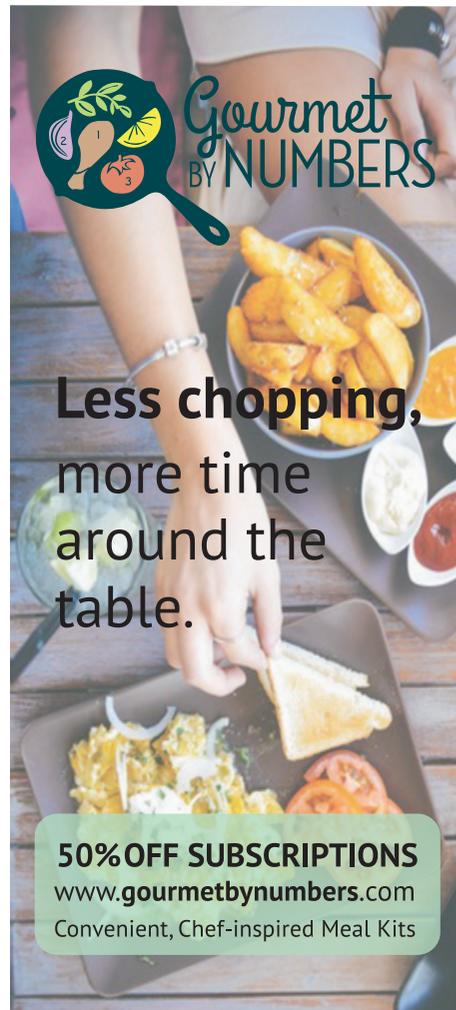



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FOOD

CONTINUED FROM P.28

Best Food Trailer EAST SIDE KING

Those wacky kids have done it again! Although they continue to grow into brick-and-mortar locations, the popularity of their late-night trailers has not waned a bit. At Liberty Bar you can still enjoy all the classics – brussels sprouts, beet fries, chicken karaage – while sister Thai-Kun at Whisler's dishes out some mighty fine Thai cuisine to pair with craft cocktails. With convenient locations planted across Austin's entertainment districts, there's no need to go home hungry after a night of revelry. *Multiple locations, www.eskaustin.com*

Best Late Night Dining KERBEY LANE CAFE

Open 24/7, Kerbey Lane is there when you need it. With options ranging from vegan to gluten-free, Kerbey ensures that everyone will find something to satisfy that dire 3am need for solid food. They've specialized in seasonal ingredients for ages: There's a time for tomatoes and a time for pumpkin spice pancakes. When craving something filling and delicious, try out the seasonal dessert. Sounds vague, but worth the ask. *Multiple locations, www.kerbeylanecafe.com*

Best Barbecue FRANKLIN BARBECUE

Austin proudly boasts the most famous barbecue joint in the country, hands down. It's a small place with a line so long and well-established it has its own video feed, lawn chair vendor, and rules of engagement. Brisket whisperer Aaron Franklin has his own cookbook, an eponymous PBS cooking show, and James Beard Foundation Award for "Best Chef Southwest 2015" – the first pitmaster to win one of those babies. Can the brisket really be that good, incredulous folks ask? Why, yes, it certainly can. *900 E. 11th, 512/653-1187, www.franklinbarbecue.com*

Best Burger HOPDODDY

We recognized homegrown Hopdoddy as the prototype for an upscale chain right off the bat in 2010, and that was fine with us. We're perfectly happy to share the fine Premium Gold Angus burgers (fresh-ground in-house, hormone- and antibiotic-free), luxurious shop-churned shakes, and innovative specials with folks in Round Rock, Dallas, Colorado, and Arizona. There are plenty of Llano Poblano burgers and cheese fries for everyone. *1400 S. Congress, 512/243-7505; 2438-A W. Anderson, 512/467-2337, www.hopdoddy.com*



Quality Seafood



Perla's

PHOTOS BY JOHN ANDERSON

Best Seafood TIE: QUALITY SEAFOOD; PERLA'S

A tie between these two highly regarded purveyors of expertly prepared seafood would seem to indicate that sometimes we're in the mood for the casual atmosphere of dining with one of our favorite local fishmongers, while other times, we prefer the beach-like ambience and shady deck of a more upscale eatery. It just depends on our budget and whether we're hungry for a dozen oysters and some Cajun-inspired dishes washed down with an ice cold beer (Quality Seafood), or a sophisticated seafood brunch of New Orleans-style barbecue shrimp and stone-ground organic grits, lobster mac & cheese, or breakfast bouillabaisse topped with a fried egg, paired with a custom cocktail (Perla's). Either way, the seafood will be first-rate, and we're always happy. *Perla's, 1400 S. Congress, 512/291-7300, www.perlasaustin.com; Quality Seafood Market, 5621 Airport, 512/452-3820, www.qualityseafood.wordpress.com*

Best Cure for the Munchies P. TERRY'S

The overwhelming consensus for the winner of the "Best Cure for the Munchies" award was actually some variation of "my fridge," but since we can't give out awards to all of your refrigerators, we went with the next popular vote, P Terry's. If only your fridge was stocked full of P Terry's, though. It's the perfect place to go when you've got the munchies because the cheeseburgers and fries are delicious, but also incredibly cheap; you can get a burger, fries, drink, and shake for under \$10. And if the munchies are still kickin' after all that, and you're too embarrassed to go back and order more, you can just visit a different P Terry's location and start all over again! *Multiple locations, www.pterrys.com*



Sue Davis

DEVAKI KNOWLES

Best Noodles/Ramen RAMEN TATSU-YA

It's no *slurprise* that Ramen Tatsu-Ya made "Best of Austin" for the third time. This noodle joint, which recently opened a second location on South Lamar, is well worth the wait. Plus, you can enjoy an array of beers or saké while in line, so it ain't so bad. The pork broth will have you drinking from your bowl with shameless abandon, and you'll definitely want to order an extra ajitama egg (or five). *8557 Research #126; 1234 S. Lamar, www.ramen-tatsuya.com*

Best Bakery UPPER CRUST

It's that little bakery around the corner you go to on your lunch break every Thursday with your best pal to chat about movies and your crush, and the weather, and plans for the weekend while you munch on scones, cookies, iced coffee, and cake. The place is cute and snuggly and brimming with nice, happy people who love bread, aka the best kind of people. It's basically paradise disguised as a bakery ... or maybe it's a bakery disguised as paradise? We don't know for sure, but we do know that their egg salad sandwich on sourdough bread with a side of cheddar soup is better than life itself. *4508 Burnet, 512/467-0102, www.theuppercrustbakery.com*

Best Ice Cream/Gelato AMY'S ICE CREAMS

You might think vanilla is a boring flavor, but when done right, it hits all the pleasure receptors without being too sweet. Amy's takes this baseline flavor one step further, offering Mexican vanilla. Precious and few ice cream shops venture so deeply into the territory of el bean. It's the vanilla you've never thought possible. Now multiply that times all the other amazing flavors that come and go from the menu: Celis Raspberry, Butter Brick, Boston Cream Pie ... If ice cream were a person, Amy's would get a hug. *Multiple locations, www.amysicecreams.com*

Best Restaurant Design/Interior SWAY

Let's face it. Some of the hottest dining spots in town look like Design Within Reach showrooms. That's fine, but even in a town as mid-century-modern obsessed as ours, the eye needs to come in from the cold. Michael Hsu's design for Sway is the opposite of that. There's a warmth and timelessness that matches the agelessness of the kitchen. Our readers keep voting for it precisely because it already feels like home. *1417 S. First, 512/326-1999, www.swayaustin.com*



Best Vegan/Vegetarian Cafe COUNTER CULTURE

In an ever-upscaling and -homogenizing Eastside, Counter Culture maintains a certain Austin charm. Did you know that CC founder/owner/chef Sue Davis is also a noted local vinyl DJ? DJ Sue Purr's curatorial expertise in sound – selecting, sorting, juxtaposing, blending, and contextualizing – is similar to what she brings to her restaurant menu's flavor palette. Apparently, that palette hits our readers' palates like music to the mouth. In song, she specializes in Sixties garage, Seventies power-pop, and Eighties punk. In food, she makes magic with elements like jackfruit, cashew cream, cashew cheeze, chickpea chorizo, beatballs, and (in the words of one band whose music we bet she's spun before): *Seitan! Seitan! Seitan!* *2337 E. Cesar Chavez, 512/524-1540, www.countercultureaustin.com*

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FOOD



TODD V. WOLFSON

BEST HUSBAND & WIFE BUSINESS OWNER DUO Gail & Fred Warren

Gail and Fred Warren of Southern Hospitality, a restaurant that serves up the most straightforwardly delicious and affordable home cooking made from scratch, is the pair that does not stop. Gail greets you at the door, gets you a drink, seats you, and tells you what's on the menu. She checks up on you consistently, all while running the front of the house almost entirely by herself. It seems that Fred's domain is in the kitchen, and he can be found restocking the buffet with delicious black-eyed peas, mac and cheese, catfish, etc. It's obvious that Gail and Fred Warren have got a lot on their plate, but that doesn't stop them from putting hot, delicious food on ours. Always with smiles on their faces, the Warrens leave you feeling full, happy, and a part of the family. What a duo!

*Southern Hospitality Catering & Dining,
6700 Middle Fiskville #405, 512/458-4679,
www.sohosfoods.us*

BEST VEGAN DESSERT WORLD DOMINATION Skull & Cakebones

Skull & Cakebones started out practically on a whim a few years back, when Sascha Biesi and her partner, Yauss Berenji, decided to go pro with Biesi's vegan cupcake skills. First, they pitched Whole Foods. Then came Wheatsville, Royal Blue, Violet Crown Cinema, and most recently, Central Market. You can't swing a blood glucose meter in this town without hitting one of these cruelty-free treats. The secret to their success, apart from consistently delicious desserts? A growing stable of partnerships with other locally grown purveyors, from Cuvée Coffee to Buddha's Brew Kombucha to Treaty Oak Distilling and beyond.

*www.skullandcakebones.com,
www.fb.com/skullandcakebones*



CELESTIA DANGER

BEST HANGOVER CURE El Chilito

It's the day after that crazy party and you need ... help. Where can you run that's fast, fresh, delicious, and open early for business? How about starting off with that Cherrywood Plate ready to order at your neighborhood El Chilito, where you are greeted wholeheartedly by a friendly face at the window, in which they kindly ask your name. Don't forget to order that Ojo Rojo – you're going to need it; you're going to love it. El Chilito, FTC (for the cure).

*2219 Manor Rd., 512/382-3797; 1623 E. Seventh,
512/334-9660, www.elchilito.com*

BEST BIG PANCAKE DARE Perla's

Perla's Big Blue Banana & Bacon (served for Saturday and Sunday brunch) is a pancake so big that Perla supposedly will give you an award if you actually finish it. Waiters say they've never seen anyone do it. While it digs into your wallet at 20 bucks a pop, it is, hands down, the best pancake in town. The buttermilk mixture is a secret. It's not too sweet and has real chunks of fresh bananas in it, topped with warmed wild blueberries, whipped cream, crème fraîche, and maple syrup. It also comes with a hefty side of house bacon.

*1400 S. Congress, 512/291-7300,
www.perlasaustin.com*

BEST WINGS, FRINGS, AND THINGS Hill-Bert's

The musical chairs shuffle of this cherished Austin chain – the home of Hilbert Maldonado's famous burgers since 1973 – has left some of us hangry. How could they get us so hooked on their fries, onion rings, and tangy, perfectly dressed Dallas Wings (their name for what Yankees call Buffalo wings), then up and close their Capital Plaza location for renovations – that took years? You can't imagine the bright-orange tears of hot, spicy joy that streamed down our cheeks when we saw them near completion of the project. The sad news was that their 35th Street and Burnet Road locations would close forever. The great news, on the other hand, was that the Capital Plaza location is now open. Welcome back, Hill-Bert's. Get in our belly, Dallas Wings. We have no doubt it will have been worth the wait.

*5340 Cameron, 512/371-3717,
www.hillbertsburgers.com*

JOHN ANDERSON





JOHN ANDERSON

BEST WHIMSICAL JAPANESE COFFEE SHOP Sa-Tén

Unassumingly perched amongst the studios of Canopy, this peaceful little coffee shop offers a charming, unique menu of Japanese-fusion dishes. Light entrées and sides like the Nori Tama toast, kale salad, and the curry rice plates (you can choose chicken katsu or grilled vegetables) reveal deep flavors and tidy elegance. The ambience is playful but serene (check out the squirrel-patterned wallpaper and pile of board games in the corner), the staff is friendly, and the Casa Brasil coffee is spot-on. Stylish, warm, and comfortable, Sa-Tén's creative spirit brings an extra lift to this artsy corner of Austin. 916 Springdale, Bldg. 3, #101, in Canopy, 512/524-1544, www.sa-ten.com

BEST REUNITED AND IT TASTES SO GOOD Tacos at La Peña

Cynthia and Lidia (Libby) Pérez, sister-proprietresses of three-decade community hub and art gallery La Peña and the late, lamented Las Manitas Cafe, sell tacos. La Peña sells tacos. We did not know this. Las Manitas, a shotgun shack of a cafe, where you had to walk through the kitchen to get to the restrooms, where Austin's high- and lowbrows congregated over steaming plates of Migas Especial con Hongos, was very special. It closed in 2008 due to Austin's ongoing one-sided love affair with developers. (Has anyone pulled Austin aside and told her: "Hey, honey: *They just aren't that into you ...*"?) Matters not. The Pérez sisters sell tacos! For \$1.40! That buck and change is a very real symbol of the sisters' fierce insistence that food = community and that as a community, we don't have to lose everything we love. 227 Congress, 512/477-6007, www.lapena-austin.org

BEST SAMPLING ROOM Cornucopia Popcorn



TODD V. WOLFSON

With over 30 different flavors of popcorn to taste for free, all we can say is that happy vibes permeate from this clean, spacious room. The friendly staff member here greets each patron with, "Feel free to sample as much as you like!" We sure will. No judging glares from the employees as they stay behind the small counter while we fill our little cups with the seasoned, candied, and chocolate-flavored popcorn. The pops of color from their merchandise coupled with stools and a water station makes this a popping paradise! 1914-B Guadalupe, 512/477-2676, www.austincornucopia.com

CONTINUED ON P.34

BEST DESSERT FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T LIKE DESSERT

Tres Leches at Licha's Cantina

Some folks have a salt tooth instead of a sweet tooth – they don't really do dessert. To end a meal, instead of a slice of pie, they might choose a wedge of aged cheddar. But every now and then, the last course arrives at the table for sharing family-style, and the server has brought a spoon for everyone, including the diner who eschews sugar. To be polite, they try a small bite. Then another. And another. Licha's Cantina's take on tres leches cake – denser than the traditional style and bathing in a pool of sweet cream – is decadent. And just savory enough to convert even the staunchest sweet-treat skeptic. 1306 E. Sixth, 512/480-5960, www.lichascantina.com

BEST AUSTIN-AREA KOLACHE Kolache Shoppe

You don't have to drive to La Grange or West for an authentic kolache. Instead, take a short jaunt to the Kolache Shoppe in Taylor. The purple house in a residential neighborhood has been open for more than 90 years. Irene Bucanek bought the joint 20-plus years ago after working there for two more decades. Kolaches are prepared in a huge, century-old Master-Baker oven using Bucanek's Czech grandmother's recipes. The resulting kolaches are sweet and slightly buttery and topped with cherry, cottage cheese, or peach, or filled with poppy seeds. And if those hunks of sweet yum are not enough, Bucanek loves the King and has filled the place with hunks of Elvis memorabilia love. 919 W. Fourth, Taylor, 512/352-5364

BEST CHEAP (AND FRESH) EATS Baguette House & Cafe

Nestled in Chinatown Center in North Austin, Baguette House is the holy amalgamation of cheap, fresh, and delicious. What really shines here is their bánh mì, made with bread that's baked fresh daily. With many sandwiches priced at under five bucks, Baguette House is the perfect place for the thrifty and hungry. And lest you miss out on the "French" portion of this French-Vietnamese restaurant, be sure to nab a fresh pastry on your way out the door. 10901 N. Lamar, 512/837-9100, www.pho.com/austin-tx/baguette-house

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FOOD

CONTINUED FROM P.33

BEST BREAKFAST DISH FOR THE VEGETARIAN OUTLIER

Dai Due Breakfast, Dai Due

Veg-centric folks can be foodies, too, and even though Dai Due is a butcher shop as well as a restaurant, it doesn't turn a cold shoulder to meat abstainers – especially from 10am to 3pm. The hearty Dai Due Breakfast layers brown rice, kimchi, a fried egg, and greens to form a satisfying meal that far exceeds other restaurants' perfunctory meat-free offerings. No matter how you identify when it comes to food habits, you won't be sorry to see this go-to dish appear before you first thing in the morning.

2406 Manor Rd., 512/524-0688,
www.daidue.com

BEST INDIAN FARE FROM A DOUGHNUT SHOP

Samosas at Ken's Donuts

Behind the counter at Ken's lies a sprawling array of sugary sweets, but our favorite treats at this family-owned doughnut shop are the spicy vegetarian samosas in the small display case next to the register. Flaky fried pastry envelops perfectly spiced curried potatoes and peas – don't forget the mint chutney. Open 24 hours, seven days a week, Ken's has crafted a winning combo of sweet and savory to satisfy morning, afternoon, and late-night cravings alike.

2820 Guadalupe, 512/320-8484,
www.kensdonutsaustin.com



SHELLEY HAM



TODD V. WOLFSON

BEST NEW DIGS

The Omelettry on Airport

The Omelettry has long added to Austin's celebrated diner-culture, with standards Kerbey Lane and Magnolia. Unlike the others' expansion to locations all over the city, the Omelettry stayed put in its small shack on Burnet. But this year, the owners picked up and moved to a bright and shiny new spot on Airport. The Seussian murals reflect the whimsy the owners have always brought, and the restaurant seems set to fill Austin tummies for decades yet.

4631 Airport, 512/453-5062, www.theomelettry.com

BEST TEXAS-SIZED BURGER

Roaring Fork

Roaring Fork chef Adrian Giovanelli is upholding the world-famous Texas-sized tradition of the Big Ass Burger. Not only is it fun to say "Big Ass Burger," it is served with delicious kettle french fries. The one-pound patty is stacked with poblano peppers, cheddar, smoked pepper bacon, lettuce, onions, tomatoes, and pickles. The fact that you can make a reservation to eat one makes it all the more appealing. The Big Ass Burger is served at both the Downtown and Stonelake locations, and is on the happy hour menu for the budget-conscious.

701 Congress, 512/583-0000; 10850 Stonelake,
512/342-2700, www.roaringfork.com

BEST WHO CAN TURN THE WALL ON WITH A SMILE?

Mary's Pop Shop

Smiles come easy at Mary's, opened this year by Philly transplant Ken Gambone. The unique menu – Liège waffles embedded with tiny caramelized chunks of sugar, fried-egg sandwiches, grilled paninis, and of course, the "pop" in the pop shop, handmade gelato 'sicles – can turn any frown upside down. Gambone's dedication to sourcing local with Third Coast coffee and Texas French Bread certainly earns grins. But the biggest smiles of all are reserved for Mary, Gambone's mom for whom the shop is named, and the entire wall of famous women who share the moniker: Mary J. Blige, Mary Kay Place, Mary Hart, Peter, Paul & Mary, Mary Steenburgen, Run-DMC's "Mary, Mary," la Virgen, and of course, Mary Tyler Moore.

3209 Red River, 512/334-9460,
www.maryspopshop.com

BEST FANCY FRIDAY FEAST

Perry's Famous Pork Chop Friday Lunch

Weekends tend to start on Thursday nights around this town, and come Friday, we need fuel to keep us going. Soak up the fun from the night before with the mouthwatering pork chop lunch special at Perry's Steakhouse. The huge hand-selected, roasted, slow-smoked, caramelized prime cut is a recipe three decades old. Your slab features eyelash, loin, and ribs, and it is served with whipped potatoes and homemade applesauce. Save your leftovers for good eatin' and refueling through the rest of your party-party weekend.

114 W. Seventh, 512/474-6300,
www.perryssteakhouse.com

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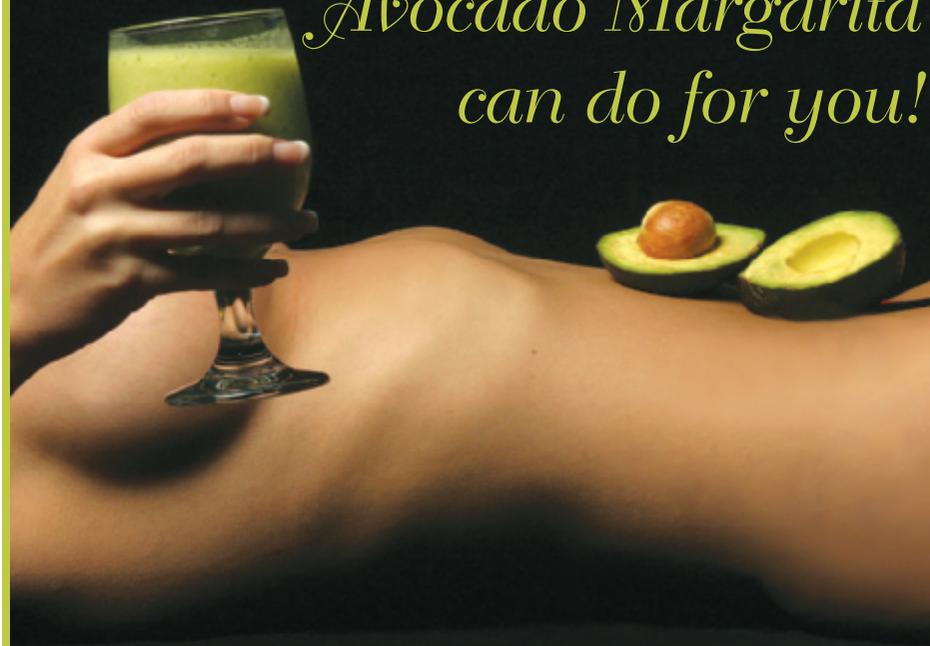
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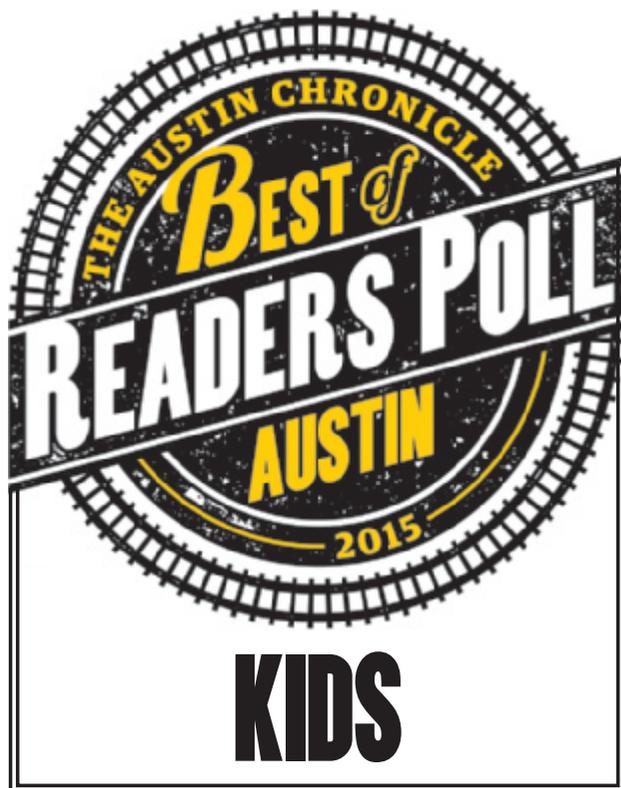
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Best Bookstore for Kids BOOKPEOPLE

BookPeople has long been Austin's premier bookstore, with a homegrown atmosphere to match the selection. Their kids' section is just as welcoming and eclectic. But it doesn't end there. BookPeople also goes deep into the YA genre and has an entire Teen Press Corps at the ready with great recommendations on the website. With engaging storytime programming, a thorough selection of toys and books, author visits and signings geared toward the young, and the tot-sized cave with reading nooks, little readers and their tween and teen counterparts are spoiled for choice.

603 N. Lamar, 512/472-5050, www.bookpeople.com

Best Texas Amusement Park SCHLITTERBAHN

We've all been to the knockoffs. You might as well be one of the kids sitting in the kiddie pool from the old commercial, scraping for an inch in substandard wave pools. And why even bother when there's a quartet of Schlitterbahn parks to explore right here in the great state of Texas? Padre holds the beachside luxury title, your kids won't get lost in Galveston's family-friendly free-for-all, and Corpus has that new-car smell. But nothing holds a candle to the original, sprawling Schlitterbahn New Braunfels, which has served Central Texas since 1979. Come play? Multiple locations, www.schlitterbahn.com



Best Fandom/Nerd Supply Store DRAGON'S LAIR COMICS & FANTASY

Pop into Dragon's Lair on any given night and you'll see dozens of tables populated by men and women engaged in fantasy role-playing games, *Magic the Gathering* tournaments, and other esoteric card and board games. Look again and you'll see kids in their midst, too, playing along while also receiving gentle gaming mentorship from their companions and competitors. Hard proof that geeks are far from anti-social. Add to that the deep collection of anime and comic books and a friendly, helpful staff, and you've got fertile ground for the next generation of Comic Con attendees.

2438 W. Anderson, 512/454-2399, www.dlair.net

Best Shoes SANDY'S SHOES

For kids, it's about the festive sea of neon sneakers. For parents, it's about exact foot measurements, shoes lined up by size and outside of the box so youngsters can quickly judge what they like. For everyone, it's about kind employees who look you in the eye. Sandy's Shoes, tucked away next to the Northcross Mall, is a regular Readers Poll winner for a reason: The shoe-shopping experience is all gain and no pain.

2525 W. Anderson, Bldg. 1, #150, 512/452-8697, www.fb.com/sandysshoes

Best Toys TERRA TOYS

Terra Toys offers up the best curated selection of playthings from all over the world. Gifts and gadgets geared for educational, imaginative play – puppets, Brio trains, games, kiddo-sized musical instruments, Haba toys, and an unbelievably large selection of Playmobil. Bonus: Their brand-new, in-house cafe offers up a caffeine fix, something all parents can attest is a toy-store adventure necessity.

2438 W. Anderson Ste. 1-C, 512/445-4489, www.terratoys.com

Best Afterschool Activity LIONS KRAV MAGA

Krav Maga may have been developed for the Israeli military, but Lions Krav Maga's afterschool program offers comprehensive self-defense and anti-bullying techniques to four age groups (kids, youth, juniors, and teens – ages 4-18). The program imparts everyday life skills such as self-confidence, socialization, teamwork, and respect. Not to mention the classes are an excellent outlet if your child is one with boundless energy.

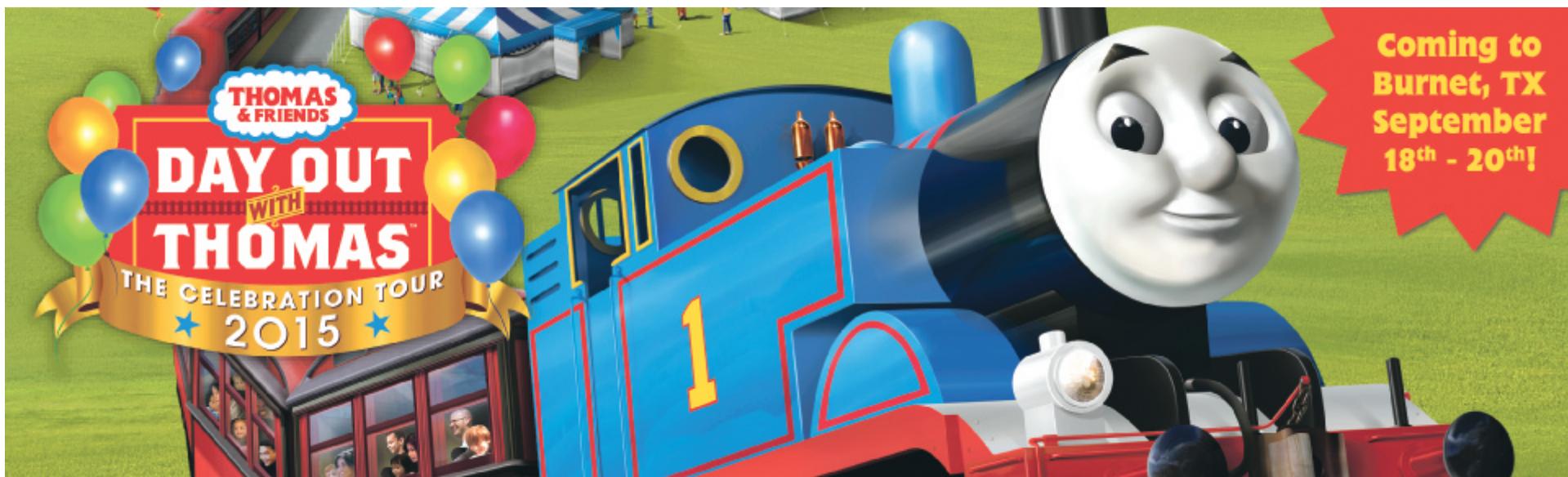
911 W. Anderson #121, 512/524-0746, www.lionskravmaga.com



Best Party Place PLAYLAND SKATE CENTER

We know the battle to get the family away from the mind-numbing allure of the (TV, cell phone, tablet, video game) screen. We recommend a skate party. Playland's got all sorts of affordable packages and the biggest, baddest, recently installed wooden floor in Central Texas. And if the party crew needs a little practice before the big night, Playland accepts Kids Skate Free passes on Mondays and Wednesdays during the summer months.

8822 McCann, 512/452-1901, www.playlandskatecenter.net, www.kidsskatefree.com



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KIDS

CONTINUED FROM P.36

Best Sports/Rec Program
SOCCER SHOTS

This program meets once a week at day care centers, schools, and parks throughout the greater Austin area to introduce kiddos ages 2-8 to the most popular sport in the world. They not only learn the skills to play, but also develop balance, coordination, and agility while learning concepts such as teamwork, sharing, and respect. Get them started early – you may just be raising a future World Cup star. 5555 N. Lamar Ste. 121-L, 512/420-9450, www.soccershots.org/austin

Best Teen Hangout
Best Gaming Hangout
PINBALLZ ARCADE

Welp, you've gone and raised yourself an indoor child with a proclivity toward avatars and power-ups and pixel-based entertainment. What's a parent of a video-game-loving yet still socially competent child to do come dog days/snow days/general "I'm bored" days that you just can't even right now? Hail, Pinballz! Give that kid \$25-30 (factoring in snacks) and s/he will be out of your hair for a good hour, at least. With rooms and rooms full of pinball, arcade, and skeeball at their flipper fingers, any kid, teen, or kid at heart can party like it's 1979 with games like Pac-Man while also enjoying the high-tech wonders of a giant, interactive Fruit Ninja and our personal favorite, Harpoon Lagoon. Kids can hang until 10pm Fridays & Saturdays, after which time it's 18+ only. 8940 Research #100, 512/420-8458, www.pinballzarcade.com

Best Restaurant
PHIL'S ICEHOUSE

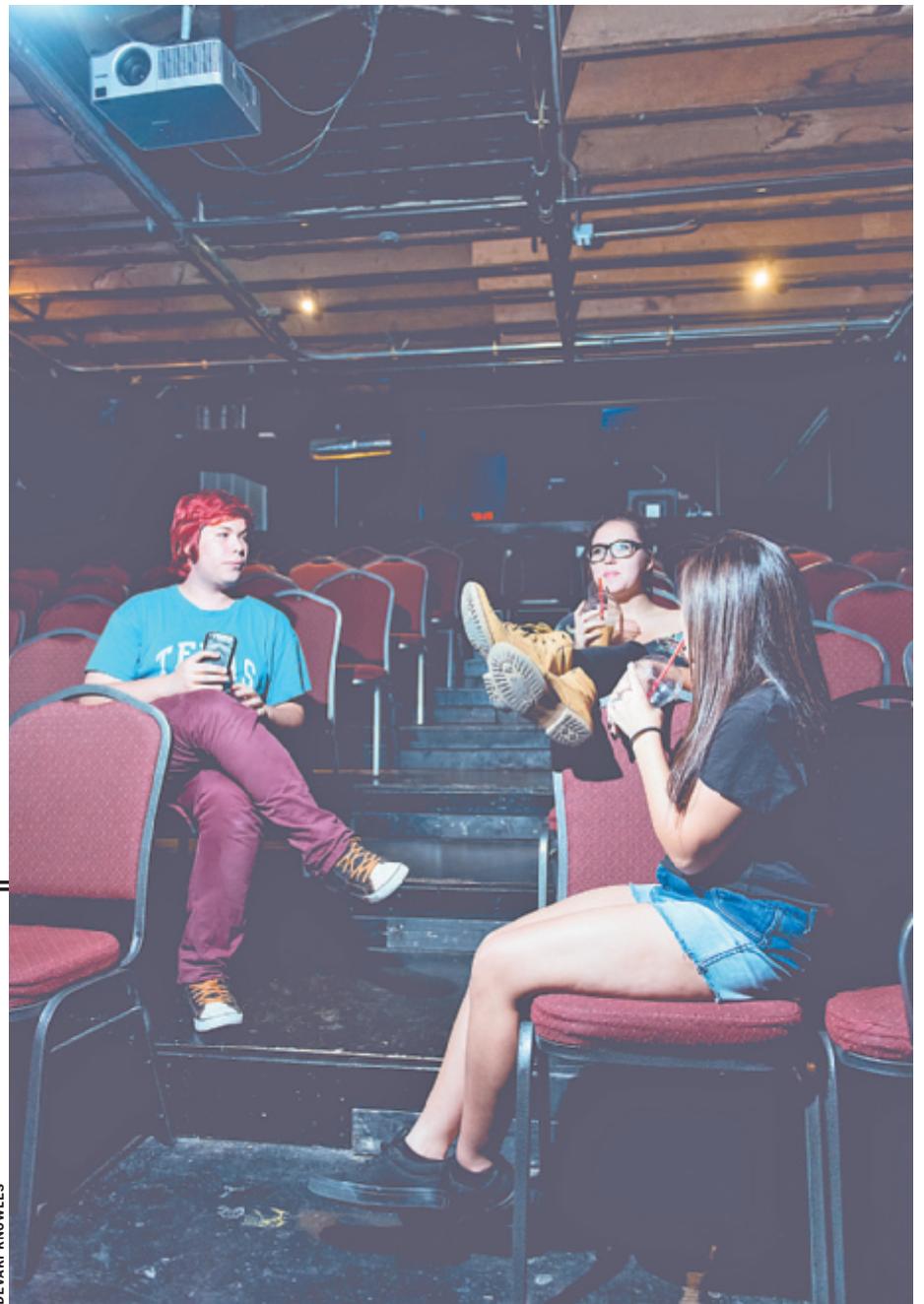
Examine the burger menu at Phil's Icehouse, and you'll start to wonder what the correlation is between the geographically specific nom-de-patty and the ingredients contained therein. Why, for example, is the "78704" Burger made with jalapeños, chipotle mayo, and a jalapeño/cheese bun while the Allandale Burger is the most basic burger on the menu? What are you trying to say, Phil's Icehouse? Eh. It doesn't matter, because this is the one place where "Parent's Recess" is a thing – a very happy hour thing. Multiple locations, www.phillsicehouse.com

Best Birthday Cakes
TIE: CAPITAL CITY BAKERY;
SUGAR MAMA'S

You get a cake, and you get a cake, and you! Birthday cakes for all, no matter what the dietary restriction! All of Capital City Bakery's sweet stuffs are vegan with some gluten-free treats as well. But if you are looking for the traditional end of things, look no further than Sugar Mama's; their sheet cake is the bomb.com. Capital City Bakery, 2211 E. Cesar Chavez, 512/666-7437, www.capitalcitybakery.com; Sugar Mama's Bakeshop, 1905-A S. First, 512/448-3727; 2406-B Manor Rd., 512/912-6628, www.sugarmamasbakeshop.com

Best Club for Teen Performers
THE HIDEOUT

Perfectly suited for, how you say, leveraging the spontaneity of youth, and led by the indefatigable Jessica Arjet, the Hideout Theatre's program of improv classes for teens provides a sort of high-octane bonding time during which the performers hone improv skills that will not only suit them well onstage but in all aspects of their burgeoning lives. Just the sort of thing – laughter, creative self-expression, physical movement – to make adolescence almost tolerable. 617 Congress, 512/443-3688, www.hideouttheatre.com



DEVAKI KNOWLES

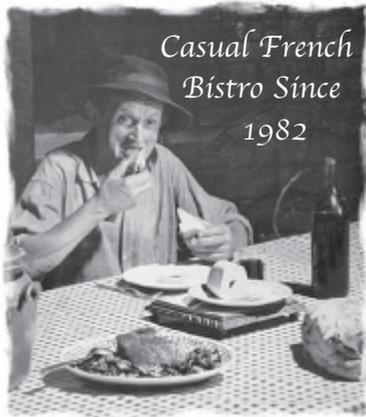
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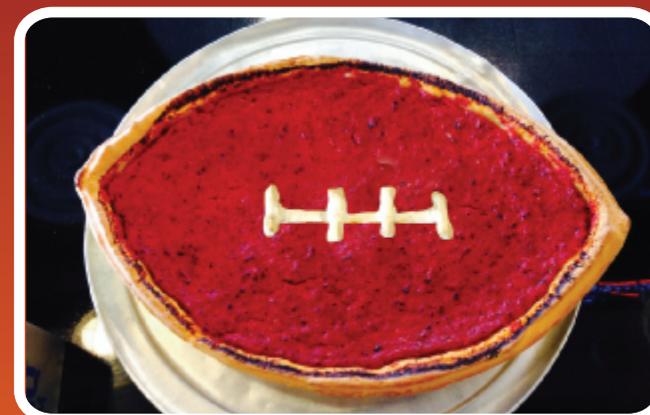
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KIDS



JANA BIRCHUM

BEST PLACE TO HEAR AUSTIN BANDS WITH YOUR KIDS

Yellow Jacket Social Club

The Yellow Jacket is known as a hipster-filled bar with great food and a dog-friendly patio. But if you're a parent who loves music, it's also a great place to bring your kids to begin their indoctrination into the Austin music scene. Their weekend afternoon shows on the patio don't happen all the time, but when they do, they are perfect for the younger set to bop to bands like Sweet Talk and the Gospel Truth. 1704 E. Fifth, 512/480-9572, www.yellowjacketsocialclub.com

BEST FREE INDOOR AMUSEMENT PARK

Cabela's

Some kids refer to Cabela's as a "museum" full of guns and tons of stuffed critters. Deer? Check. Moose? Yep. Elephant? Most definitely. And did we mention guns? Drop your quarters in the slot and enjoy "target practice" (no real bullets involved) that beats anything at an actual amusement park. Then wander over to the in-house restaurant to chomp down on your choice of a smoked elk or bison sandwich. Oh, and they have some tasty candy, too. 15570 S. I-35, Buda, 512/295-1100, www.cabelas.com

BEST BEVO BENEVOLENCE Neighborhood Longhorns Program

This University of Texas partnership with AISD and UT Athletics reaches out to community kids in grades 2 through 8 that have the hardest time with academics, attendance, and performance. These Neighborhood Longhorns keep at-risk kids in school through tutoring, mentoring, and incentives, ensuring that the kiddos in their own backyard will one day join them as alumni. 2100 San Jacinto #312, 512/232-4650, www.neighborhoodlonghorns.org



BEST KID-FRIENDLY THEATRE

Flying Theater Machine

Let the little ones explore their creative side with interactive improv art at the Hideout on Sunday afternoons. The actors guide the imaginary bus, but the audience decides what color it is and where it goes. It's an hour of creativity and participation just for the fun of it that gets everyone out of their seats. 617 Congress, 512/443-3688, www.hideouttheatre.com

BEST PLACE FOR KIDS TO GET ARTY

Cafe Monet

This paint-your-own-pottery studio offers a wide variety of products to let the creative juices flow. As adults paint beer mugs or dinner plates, the kids can paint their own ice cream bowls, cereal bowls, coin banks, or ornaments with popular characters that include Tinkerbell and Roary the Lion. With an extensive range of paint colors, cute stamps, and fun stencils, kids can let their artistic side take control and express their individuality. 4477 S. Lamar #560, 512/892-3200; 4700 W. Guadalupe #11, 512/906-2200; 145 E. Hopkins, San Marcos, 512/805-2800, www.cafemonet.org



JOHN ANDERSON



LARRY D. MOORE/CC BY-SA 3.0

BEST KIDUCATIONAL DAY TRIP

Waco Mammoth Site

At some point, the age of dinosaurs makes an impression in most kids' lives. What better way to excite the junior paleontologists than to let them see real dinosaur bones where they have laid for 65,000 years? Discovered in the bank of Waco's Bosque River in 1978 by two young men, the bones of 23 Columbian mammoths, a camel, and a saber-tooth tiger were uncovered and added to the National Park System as a National Monument in July, 2015. 6220 Steinbeck Bend, Waco, 254/750-7946, www.wacomammoth.com

BEST CREATIVE OUTLET ACCESS E4Youth

Founded by Carl Settles Jr., this visionary nonprofit works hand-in-hand with creative industries to introduce commercial art career paths to young people who otherwise might not have access to such options. E4Youth offers programs such as College Mentors in the Classroom to keep students on course, the Youth Media Bootcamp (in collaboration with the Black Media Council, Movement 50, and SXSW) and in-agency opportunities to shadow creative professionals. With these resources and mentors, promising youths are not only empowered with the vision to see themselves as leaders in creative fields, but bring their own special gifts and perspectives to traditionally under-diversified industries. 4302 Airport, www.e4youth.org



BEST MULTICULTURAL CENTER Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos

If music is food for the brain, Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos has been keeping San Marcans' mental bellies full since September 2009. Housed in the former Bonham Elementary School, the center offers free art, cultural, and academic camp sessions with names like Camp Olé and Mis Pequeños Ingenieros (My Little Engineers). Their curriculum includes piano, accordion, mariachi, ballet, and visual art, as well as science and math tutoring for local youth. Olé, indeed!
211 Lee, San Marcos, 512/878-0640,
www.sanmarcoscentro.org

DAVID BRENNAN FALL

BEST CUSTOM KIDS' ROOMS MURALS Andrea McArdle Art

The inexhaustible creativity of local artist Andrea McArdle makes rooms come to life via large-scale murals. Though she has bedecked walls of all kinds – garage doors, studio spaces – this mother of two young'uns has a natural knack for working with children and their parents to create a one-of-a-kind bedroom that inspires the imaginations of all who inhabit it.
www.andreamcardleart.com

BEST PLACE TO SEEK OUT A FRIEND FOR THE END OF THE WORLD

Post-Apocalyptic Writing Summer Camp

Austin Bat Cave, a kids' writing nonprofit, operates under the novel idea that young people learn best when they're allowed to use their imaginations. For the past two years, perhaps ABC's most popular program has been its post-apocalyptic fiction summer camp, where budding Katniss Everdeens (and Suzanne Collinses) are encouraged to create their own literary dystopias. This summer, activities included a post-flood tour of Waller Creek, a class visit from an expert on insect-based food products, and a presentation from a local expert on Austin's power grid.
PO Box 4762, Austin, 78765, 512/524-1489,
www.austinbatcave.org

BEST BACK TO COOL TIE: Fierce & Fab Sunday Funday; Dream Big/Kutz 4 Kidz

Back to school: a time of excitement ... or dread?! Everybody wants to make a cute first impression, but not all kids have the time or means to invest when they can barely afford school supplies. This year, Out Youth's Sunday Funday brought together salon stylists, skin care experts, and fashionistas to offer mini makeovers to sexual- and gender-minority youth desiring a bit of a refresh. Up north, brothers Kevin Banks, CEO of Albuquerque nonprofit Dream Big/Kutz 4 Kidz, and Round Rock Police Department Chief Allen Banks banded with local stylists to offer kids free haircuts in a fun fiesta setting (balloon artists, sno-cones, face painting) to ease the challenge of first-day jitters. Kudos to these two groups who understand how "back to cool" can make all the difference when headed back to school.
Round Rock Police, 2701 N. Mays, Round Rock, 512/218-5500, www.roundrocktexas.gov/departments/police/;
Dream Big, Albuquerque, 505/328-6954, www.kutz4kidz.org;
Out Youth, 909 E. 49½, 512/419-1233, www.outyouth.org



BEST WAY TO TURN GAMERS INTO GAME MAKERS Game Worlds

Those recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics that kids only have 45 seconds of screen time per day, preferably viewed through a crack in one's fingers, fall by the wayside when you pick up your video-game-loving kid from a long day of learning to code, designing a video game, and engaging in communal play with like-minded gamers at the end of a pleasantly long day. Game Worlds is the perfect storm of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) education, and – bonus – it's one of the most affordable.

13166 Humphrey, 512/609-0052,
www.gameworldscamp.com

BEST EVOLUTION OF TEEN EMPOWERMENT Off Center Teens

The internationally acclaimed hometown heroes, the Rude Mechs, were early in their evolution when they walked the community outreach walk and founded the summer camp Grrl Action in 1999. The bold and beloved writing and performance program for teen girls to creatively express themselves and develop that expression into artistic presentation has evolved into Off Center Teens. Teens of all genders are now welcome to participate in the camp that is proudly feminist, comprised of uncensored created content, and focused on experimental theatre. The Rudes' walk has evolved, and Austin's youth are the winners.
The Off Center, 2211-A Hidalgo, 512/476-7833, www.rudemechs.com

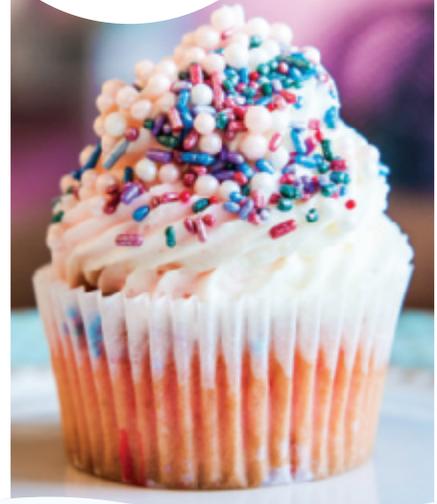


BRET BROOKSHIRE

BEST CHILDREN'S FREE STORYTIME Fifth Dimension Books at In.gredients

We admit: It's pretty bold to say one children's storytime is better than another, as all are wonderful, but there is something magical about a functioning bookmobile these days. Even more so, a bookmobile that specializes in science fiction and fantasy. Storytime is hosted by the wonderful Sukyi McMahon, a mother to a young child herself, and one-half of the owner-operated Fifth Dimension Books. Every Monday morning you can find Sukyi parked at In.gredients on Manor Road, ready to dazzle the little ones with fun, interactive stories. Bring the kids, and don't forget the refillable coffee mug.
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Korey Coleman (l) and Martin Thomas



Best Podcast **DOUBLE TOASTED**

Ah, the arch and pop culture-saturated commentary of Korey Coleman and Martin Thomas! Rising phoenix-like from the ashes of cable TV's *The Reel Deal* and then from the even ashier ashes of *Spill.com*, these two guys have got things covered now, podcastwise, when it comes to reviewing everything Hollywood and other moviemakers can throw onto a big screen. Smarts? Check. Humor? Check. Taste? Hell, they're the seasoned arbiters here – and they've got the ravening fan base to back it up, too.
www.doubletoasted.com

Best Food Writer **ADDIE BROYLES**

Austin American-Statesman columnist and blogger (and quilter, photographer, and mom ...) Addie Broyles keeps the streak alive with her thoughtful writing, winningly striking a perfect balance between social observation, historical perspective, and astute trend-spotting. An endless fount of imaginative approaches and energy, Broyles frequently writes about women and food from a feminist perspective – the cherry on top.
Austin American-Statesman, 305 S. Congress, 512/445-3500,
www.statesman.com



Lauren Modery

Best TV Anchor Best TV Reporter **QUITA CULPEPPER, KVUE-TV**

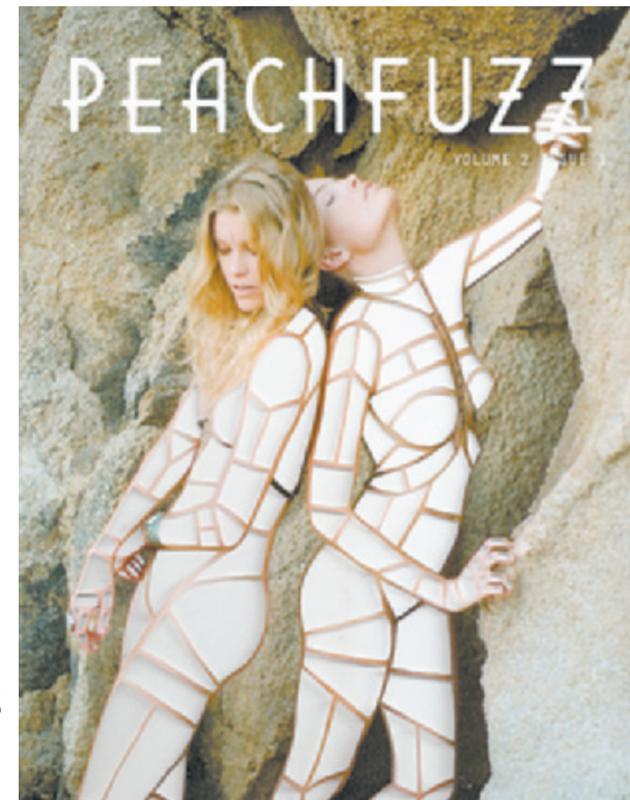
Seems like only yesterday we were watching Quita Culpepper, new kid on the block, making the leap from radio to KVUE-TV. Culpepper's "Does It Work Wednesday," a consumer product-testing segment, was her calling card, but it was soon clear that she had the goods to tell a variety of stories, from human interest to breaking news, with clarity and ease. Her personable, palpable intelligence and sense of humor make her a perfect fit for Austin – so much so that she dominated the Best TV Reporter category here for years and recently appeared in the Best Anchor top spot, as she does this year, as well. All hail the Quita; long may she reign.
 KVUE, 3201 Steck, 512/459-6521, www.kvue.com



Best Local Blog **HIPSTERCRITE**

When it comes to lampooning hipster excesses, leave it to blogger Lauren Modery to hit the tiny nail on the tiny head. Modery, aka Hipstercrite, specializes in documenting a certain kind of Austin lifestyle (y'all know what we mean), and her observational humor is somehow both self-conscious and ultimately nonjudgmental. Her "Dear People Who Live in Tiny Fancy Houses" found her in perfect form, building a list of innocent-seeming questions into the argument that the tiny houses so currently en vogue were destined to end up as overly precious "hot boxes" of, um, flatulence, lacking even basic comforts. ("Even that dog is like, 'Where the fuck is the bed, guys?'" She confessed to some envy at the end, Mashable picked it up, responses were penned, and everyone ended up all warm and fuzzy-feeling – in other words, at home.
www.hipstercrite.com

TODD V. WOLFSON



Best Local Non-Chronicle Publication **PEACH FUZZ**

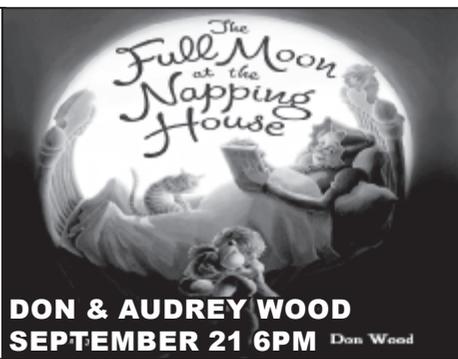
The recipe for THC-infused homemade lube, which appeared in *Peach Fuzz's* January 2015 issue, succinctly sums up the ethos of (and thus what we and our readers love about) the darling, spritely mag. More than mere spankbank, and more approachable than high-concept hipsterporn, *Peach Fuzz* walks the narrow line betwixt the two and succeeds wildly. 3-D glasses! The McNasty column! X by X (lovers photographing each other)! And so we anxiously await the next issue
www.peachfuzzmag.com, www.fb.com/peachfuzzmag

CONTINUED ON P.44

★ BOOKPEOPLE BOOKSIGNINGS ★



DREW DAYWALT
SEPTEMBER 13 2PM



DON & AUDREY WOOD
SEPTEMBER 21 6PM Don Wood

- ★ MARK MENJIVAR - THE LUCK ARCHIVE
THURS 9/10 7PM
- ★ T. GERONIMO JOHNSON - WELCOME TO BRAGGSVILLE
FRI 9/11 7PM
- ★ BOWER YOUSSE & THOMAS J. CRYAN - FREDDIE STEINMARK
MON 9/14 7PM
- ★ THOMAS MALLON - FINALE
TUES 9/15 7PM
- ★ MARI MANCUSI - SMOKED
WED 9/16 7PM
- ★ MARY KARR - THE ART OF MEMOIR
FRI 9/18 7PM
- ★ JONATHAN FRANZEN - PURITY
SAT 9/19 7PM
- ★ BUZZ BISSINGER - FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS
SUN 9/20 2PM
- ★ JENNY LAWSON - FURIOUSLY HAPPY
WED 9/23 7PM
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MEDIA

CONTINUED FROM P.42

Best Journalist RICHARD WHITTAKER

There's prolific and then there's prolific. And then there's this Brittaker, so-called, this tall gingersy journo from across the pond who reports relentlessly and intelligently on local politics and AISD shenanigans, but especially trips the media light fantastic when it comes to all things gory and/or geeky – pro wrestling, indie horror films, cryptozoology, comics, sci-fi and fantasy miscellanea of all forms – and is responsible for, really, an unwieldy percentage of *Chronicle* content every week of the year.

The Austin Chronicle, 4000 N. I-35, 512/454-5766, austinchronicle.com

Best Film Critic MARC SAVLOV

A working film critic at *The Austin Chronicle* for 25 years, Marc Savlov's longevity is equaled by his versatility. Whether it's an action film or a horror hackathon, a gushy romance or a loopy kids' picture, Savlov can be counted on to tell it like it is – and tell it with linguistic style and gusto that's anchored in his broad breadth of knowledge. Like those dogs in that famous experiment, we greet each review with a Savlovian response.

The Austin Chronicle, 4000 N. I-35, 512/454-5766, austinchronicle.com



TODD V. WOLFSON



Best Locally Produced TV Show AUSTIN CITY LIMITS

Whoever said you can't be a prophet in your own town clearly wasn't thinking about the *longest-running music series in American television history!* An evangelical force bringing local and regional musicians to the attention of a larger national audience, as well as a generator of city pride, *Austin City Limits* can do no wrong in, with, or for this city. It's a legacy built brick-by-brick over the years, sure to withstand any end-of-days scenario.

KLRU, 2504-B Whitis, 512/471-4811, www.acltv.com

Best Web Series #ATOWN

Aiming to create a short film inspired by *About a Boy*, creators of #ATown, Elena Weinberg and Mallory Larson found something so much better: a series about living in one of the coolest cities around. The show's leads Ivy Koehler and Ash Nunley were added to the writers' room to add even more female empowerment to the show. Season 1 is online, and season 2 is set to release October 2015.

www.atowntheseries.com,

www.vimeo.com/channels/atownseason1

Best Photographer ANNIE RAY

The advent of the smartphone has unleashed a wave of amateur photographers upon the world. But no amount of pretty filters can measure up to the work that Annie Ray does. From silly photo booths to classic editorials, Ray is a rare talent who knows how to make the most of her medium. Her vivid, charming shots capture the spirit of any party, and usually feature lots of shiny streamers, fake mustaches, and giant smiles.

www.annieray.net

Best Local TV News KXAN

KXAN's local perspective on national issues, like Texas' abortion debate, and their commitment to long-term local stories, like the Memorial Day weekend floods to which they dedicated a one-hour news special, have gained the station loyal viewers who aren't bashful about expressing their love. So, it's no surprise that KXAN returns victorious – for the fifth year in a row. And that's the way it is.

908 W. MLK, 512/476-3636, www.kxan.com



TODD V. WOLFSON

Best Spanish-Language Radio LATINO 102.7FM

Austin has had a fair amount of Spanish-language radio stations over the years – unfortunately, with little variety. No disrespect to Norteño or *musica regional*, but it came time to give the Spanish-listening audience some pop music. Debuting in Austin in summer 2013, the format of Emmis' Latino 102.7FM not only crosses over but bounces back and forth from contemporary Latino artists in Spanish and English across decades of hits, with artists like Gloria Trevi, Pitbull, and Elvis Crespo sharing spots on the playlist. The coined "Latin crossover" is what several artists from Spanish-language countries aspire toward. Remember, Juanes taped an *Austin City Limits* segment in Spanish, after all. Even if you don't speak Español, take a listen, you may learn a phrase or two; and even if you don't, they'll pop something in and forget it's Inglés. 8309 N. I-35, www.latino1027.com

Best Sportscaster MIKE BARNES, KVUE-TV

Mike Barnes interned at KVUE while attending the University of Texas in the Eighties. Save for a six-month stint on the air in Aggieland (blasphemy!), he's been the Austin TV station's sports guru. He's a gentle, enthusiastic guy who's willing to share the spotlight while serving as maestro for longtime features *Friday Football Fever* and *Texas Tailgaters*. Austin can't get enough of 13-year "Best of Austin" winner Mike Barnes, *KVUUUUUUUUUE* sports! *KVUE*, 3201 Steck, 512/459-6521, www.kvue.com

Best Weatherperson JIM SPENCER, KXAN-TV

"Maybe we got a cow flying in the air that a radar beam is bouncing off of. That's what we're hoping right now." That was the Spencerism that pricked up our ears during the Memorial Day flood, 2015 version. The KXAN weather anchor's expertise, bedside manner, and descriptive talents make Spencer our go-to whenever bad weather strikes, but this spring he put on a clinic – overseeing a couple of junior weather peeps and stepping up when events called for the big guns, rhetorically speaking. As more than one fan put it, "We love it when Jim tells us to go to our safe places."

KXAN, 908 W. MLK, 512/476-3636,

www.kxan.com

Best Local Tweeter TIE: @ANDREAGRIMES; @AUSTIN_COBRA

One's a feminist, the other's a slitherist. One describes the scene, one fits the description. One writes headlines, the other makes 'em. Both Andrea Grimes – "ranch dip apologist" for the *Texas Observer* and senior political reporter for RH Reality Check, tittering and tweeting in astute, Austin-centric political quips – and the Austin Cobra – an anthropomorphized hipster-reptile created to breathe levity into a tragic event while reflecting on the obsessive nature of our blinkered news feeds – mastered the 140 and maybe even a few 15 minutesssssss along the way. @andreagrimes, www.twitter.com/andreagrimes, www.andreagrimes.com; @austin_cobra, www.twitter.com/austin_cobra



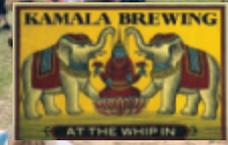
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MEDIA

SWEETEST R&B DJ

Suga Rae, RnB 96.3FM

If you're the music czar for your workplace (or if you can bribe the music czar with candy or half-used gift cards), there's no reason you shouldn't be tuning in to 96.3FM to bring your people what they need: R&B! Music, however, is not enough. The people need a voice to turn to for solace and companionship, for sultriness and sass, to move them through the day. They need the incomparable talents of Suga Rae. They need 90's at Noon. Suga Rae's been a DJ in Detroit and Dallas, and now calls Austin home. And in a town that could stand to nurture more female – not to mention people of color – air-talent, we are damn lucky to have her. There are rumors that she was a B-girl back in the day, with crew and all, and we'll believe it when she windmills at our next party. There's one thing Suga doesn't have to prove, it's innate and true, namely, that she's the "sweetest chick on the radio." RnB 96.3FM, 4301 Westbank, Escalade B, Third Floor, 512/327-9595, www.963rnb.com

TODD V. WOLFSON



BEST CELEBRITY PET

Sid @myregalbeagle

If there's a dog that truly captures Austin's pet-friendly vibe, it's Sid. This "Regal Beagle," who is actually a basset/beagle/corgi/lab mix, has garnered over 53,000 followers on Instagram, 30 million loops on Vine, has his own book, *Sidventures*, and has even landed a guest slot on Domino's Pizza's emoji commercial with *Modern Family's* Sarah Hyland. Over the past three and a half years, photographer, dog lover, and best-pal-to-Sid Alex Hopes has brightened people's feeds by sharing content of the chill pup holding food in his mouth (the posts for which he's most famous), sightseeing, and daily life from a dog's-eye view. Here's to Sid, Austin's best friend. 402/672-2359, www.myregalbeagle.com, www.instagram.com/myregalbeagle, www.twitter.com/myregalbeagle, [snapchat: Capt_Sid](https://www.snapchat.com/Capt_Sid)



BEST ANSWER FOR DROUGHT-PARCHED AUSTINITES

Isthelakefullyet.com

Picking up steam during the great pre-summer deluge in May, many Austinites whiled away the rainy days refreshing this site. Simple, succinct, and paired with the tiniest bit of home-grown snark from the ATX Built Slack community, the site has seen the lake move a deficit of approximately 22 feet until full, to most recently, a mere 13.4 feet to go. Sadly, the answer to the burning question is still the same: NOPE. www.atxbuilt.com, www.isthelakefullyet.com

BEST ONLINE ESTATE SALE WINDOW SHOPPING

EstateSales.net

Maybe you've got a rental property to furnish, or you're a collector of vintage Pyrex, or just need some reasonably priced tools. Estate sales are a great resource for all of these, but how do you find them? Enter EstateSales.net. To find all the estate sales near you, just punch in your ZIP code, and a listing of all upcoming local sales – complete with pictures to help you decide just how early you need to go get in line – magically appears. Sign up to get weekly email alerts so you can plan your shopping days in advance. www.estatesales.net

BEST SWEAT-FREE WAY TO CATCH THE BUS

CapMetro App

Over the past year, most local buzz about transportation apps has focused on Uber and Lyft. For our money, however, Austin's most indispensable app for getting around is the surprisingly elegant CapMetro. Gone are the days of digging around your room frantically for spare change or waiting half an hour in direct August sunlight for an unpredictable bus. CapMetro helps you plan your trip, buy your ticket, and time your departure with real-time feedback from the fleet. Sometimes a technological revolution can look as familiar and old-fashioned as a city bus. 2910 E. Fifth, 512/474-1200, www.capmetro.org

JOHN ANDERSON

BEST TEXAS PORTAL TO THE PAST

Texas Archive of the Moving Image

Have you ever seen that retro commercial for San Antonio chain Church's Chicken with the kids in the dune buggy? Or footage from the successful 1962 campaign of he-who-would-become Governor John Connally? How about those late-Eighties PSAs for the El Paso Chicano AIDS Coalition? There is so much to glean when you let history in. Texas 20th century history leaps from the screen courtesy of the Texas Archive of the Moving Image, an online-accessible treasure trove of Lone Star film and video. Founded and curated by UT professor Dr. Caroline Frick, the nonprofit collects and digitizes, via the Texas Film Round-Up program, from vaults across the state: local TV reels, industrial productions, home movies, as well as big-budget Hollywood moving images of Texas. It's an important reminder of who we were. Grab some popcorn, cowboy ... and you can take off that 10-gallon hat. 501 N. I-35 #204, 512/485-3073, www.texasarchive.org



BEST DISASTER RECOVERY INFO SOURCE

City of San Marcos Communications & Intergovernmental Relations

There are so many people to acknowledge after times of great tragedy. Among the Central Texans we'd love to thank, who came together during the Memorial Day weekend floods to assist and disseminate vital info, the San Marcos Communications crew ranks high. From our perch, furiously trying to make sense of it all from Austin, anytime we'd see an incoming email from either Kristi Wyatt, director of Communications & Intergovernmental Relations, or George "Trey" Hatt, communications specialist from the city of San Marcos, we knew we'd better pay attention. Their professionalism, promptness, and patience under such trying, emotional circumstances did not go unnoticed. And journalistically speaking, their online resources were unparalleled. We hope for them a lovely year full of time to focus on things in their town that are a tad less ... urgent. 630 E. Hopkins, San Marcos, 512/393-8242, www.sanmarcostx.gov

CONTINUED ON P.48

BEST ANSWER TO WHAT WE WONDER WHEN WE HEAR IT

#whatthehelicopter

Is it a bird? A plane? A really loud drone? *What the hell is going on outside?* Austin's blue line has you covered. Hashtag #whatthehelicopter is the key to finding out exactly why that chopper is circling your neighborhood. Rescue? A situation? Rest easy knowing the answer is 140 characters away. #whatthehelicopter: Austin Police Department, 715 E. Eighth, 512/974-5000, www.cityofaustin.org/police



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SEPTEMBER 12 **Never Let Me Go: How to Grab the Attention of Readers, Editors, and Agents in Your Opening Pages** with Michael Noll. Make a powerful first impression. 9 am-noon. WLT members \$49, nonmembers \$109 **SOLD OUT!**

SEPTEMBER 17 **Third Thursday Free Panel Discussion—The Look of the Book: How Design and Layout Influences the Reading Experience** with Tamara Dever, Sheila Parr, Kathy Sargent, & DJ Stout. 7-9 pm, Book People, 603 N Lamar Blvd, third floor

SEPTEMBER 19 **Be Your Own Best Editor** with Jodi Egerton. Learn how to revise your manuscript without cutting out its heart. 9 am-3 pm. WLT members \$99, nonmembers \$159

SEPTEMBER 26 **Playing with Time: Planning Your Story from Past to Future** with Greg Garrett. Explore ways to use time in your storytelling. 9 am-3 pm. WLT members \$99, nonmembers \$159

OCTOBER 3 **How to Workshop Your Writing** with John Pipkin. Learn how to give and receive feedback on your draft. 9 am-noon. WLT members \$49, nonmembers \$109

OCTOBER 10 **Historical Fiction Boot Camp** with James L Haley. Learn how to recreate a bygone world. 9 am-noon. WLT members \$49, nonmembers \$109

OCTOBER 15 **Third Thursday Free Panel Discussion—Write Fright Night: Dealing with Spine-Tingling Writerly Anxieties** with Anne Bustard, Greg Levin, and Jason Neulander. 7-9 pm, BookPeople, 603 N Lamar Blvd, third floor

OCTOBER 24 **How to Write a Hollywood Screenplay** with Owen Egerton. The essential ingredients of writing for the screen. 10 am-4 pm. WLT members \$99, nonmembers \$159

Visit **WRITERSLEAGUE.ORG** for more details, registration and membership information or call (512) 499-8914.



This project is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department.



MEDIA

CONTINUED FROM P.46

BEST USE OF LOCAL DWEEDS GEEKS **Austin Public Library's "Geek the Library" campaign**

Sure, it could be startling to walk into the library and run into a near-life-sized poster of someone you know – maybe someone you have known forever, maybe even your ex-roommate or an old college friend – looking uncannily like themselves and in their element. But that's what was cool about it. As part of a national program, the Austin Public Library turned out a series of posters on which Austinites appeared in a variety of colorful forms to testify that they "geek" (feel passionate about) everything from breastfeeding to dubstep and to encourage you to "Get Your Geek On" as well – a moving reminder that, as much as we expand, we stay connected and creatively knit.

library.austintexas.gov/geek



BRET BROOKSHIRE

BEST TECH WRITER WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR **Omar L. Gallaga, *Austin American-Statesman***

Omar Gallaga is the rarest of tech nerds: He's funny in a thinking-geek's way. As in founder of the Latino Comedy Project funny. As in writer for the late, great *Television Without Pity* funny. Follow him on Twitter where he ponders questions like, "Worse fictional Southern gentleman reboot: Atticus Finch or Colonel Sanders?" Gallaga truly knows tech and remains fresh in mind and style despite being at the *Austin American-Statesman* an amazing 18 years. His latest coup is birthing video blog *Statesman Shots*. His work percolates elsewhere including *All Things Considered* and *Kirkus Reviews* and is always worth seeking out.
305 S. Congress, 512/445-3500,
www.statesman.com

BEST METAL AIR RAID ***No Control Radio, 101X***

Blast beats, shearing distortion, and death growls – on your radio? If you're listening to 101X Fridays, 10pm-1am, you've entered the domain of Chuck Loesch, a metal connoisseur whose sophisticated appreciation for brutal music rivals the Encyclopaedia Metallum. Weekly, the prodigiously bearded Loesch spins a spectrum-spanning metal mix with emphasis on new releases, while simultaneously fielding requests from home headbangers. Converts also enjoy Loesch's lucrative ticket giveaways and educational "101 Seconds of Metal News."
8309 N. I-35, 512/832-4000, www.101x.com

BEST CLASSIEST, SASSIEST ENTERTAINMENT WEBSITE **The Salonniere**

Uber-full of super style and cheeky sass, the Salonniere is the brainchild of chic hostess Carla McDonald, who imparts her Golden Age of Hollywood sensibility to the hostess/entertainment website via seldom-seen vintage photos of classic doyennes. A tipsy, cocktail lifestyle vibe infuses the fabulousness with tips and tidbits about the swells combined with a welcoming attitude that invites readers to "grab a gimlet and join us, doll!"
www.thesalonnriere.com

BEST LOCAL PODCAST ***Solidarity Circuit***

As wonderful as Austin is, there's no escaping the fact that gentrification is rampant, the black community is disappearing, and the Austin region is the No. 1 most economically segregated metro area in the country. Amidst the flood of whitewashed media that exists, Austin-based *Solidarity Circuit*, a series of podcast shows that prioritize marginalized voices, stands out from the rest. *Solidarity Circuit* acts simply as the platform for storytelling but lets people of Austin tell the stories that we so desperately need to hear. Hooray for representation!
www.solidaritycircuit.com, www.soundcloud.com/solidarity-circuit,
www.fb.com/pages/Solidarity-Circuit/1401684463482643

BEST "I LOVE YOU SO MUCH" SEQUEL **"teen fags run this hood"**

We imagine punkily-shaved haircuts, cocky attitudes, and a penchant for making out in the middle of crowds. We imagine these teen fags, because, well, we once were those teen fags – male, female, trans, it matters not. Even as some may round into middle-age, there will always be teen fags: That elusive energy, devil-may-care attitude, and screw-you aesthetic will always survive, no matter how entrenched the growing acceptance and normalization of LGBTQ lives. (To wit: There is no F in QUILT-BAG.) Spray-painted on the heinous plywood boards (of yet another development) which now cover the glorious rock-wall behind Cheer Up Charlies, this tag gives us hope for the teen fags of the future. They know what's up.
900 Red River, 512/431-2133,
www.cheerupcharlies.com



CELESTA DANGER

BEST BOOK DISCUSSION

Writing on the Air with François Pointeau, KOOP 91.7FM

Since way back in another century, KOOP radio show *Writing on the Air* has let writers talk craft while readers listen in. Originally a Writers' League of Texas joint, in recent years the show's success can be attributed to François Pointeau, a wine seller by day and daydreaming poet at heart. He keeps the literary train chugging by recruiting guest scribes of all stripes. In October, longtime engineer Erin Cornett and newish crew members Lisa Onland, Joe Brundidge, and Martha Louise Hunter will ably take charge of WOTA as Pointeau heads off in a small RV to explore the nation. *Writing on the Road*, perhaps?

3823-B Airport, 512/472-1369, www.koop.org



BEST ADULTS IN THE ROOM

Austin High's KAHS-TV and The Maroon News

The first day back from winter break, the students at Austin High were given a motivational speech by former tech-worker and founder of #besomebody, The World's Platform for Passion®, Kash Shaikh. His message? To encourage the students to "call themselves out" and become "passionaries," or "Don't make a Plan B when Plan A is your passion." A nice thought, but one that seemed off-the-mark to those struggling with economic disparity, dreams deferred, and the realities of American class structure. Students at the school's media outlets, KAHS (unrelated to Kash and pronounced "chaos") and *The Maroon News*, voiced dissent to Shaikh's message. The dissent caught the attention of the BBC, *Texas Monthly*, and others. Shaikh threw a tech-bro tantrum via Twitter. Austin High students took the high road, doing what journalists worth their mettle have done for years – analyzing vacuous speech and calling out privilege.

1715 W. Cesar Chavez, Rm. 334,

www.sfamaroon.org, www.ahsmedia.org/kahs,

www.fb.com/KAHSTV, ahsmediaarts.wordpress.com

BEST NON-MEME MEME

#peeonsomebody

Exemplary of the deep connect between Austin's mass-psychological fugue state and its material culture, the #peeonsomebody campaign (ironic/counter/totally-literal) was a rip on a certain motivational speaker's #besomebody campaign. You know, the one that rung hollow with students and teachers at Austin High this year, proving that kids retain the ability to see through slick-gloss self-helpisms? The lewd new hashtag was turned into bumper stickers and T-shirts by one Alison Kilts. Kilts' timing could not have been more perfect: #peeonsomebody became an unofficial rallying cry for SXSW 2015. And here's where the hashtag takes a glorious pinback turn into literalism, because, as far as we can tell, #peeonsomebody only confirms what we all know happens at the end of a raucous night of SXSW partying. That said, we still think #peeonsomebody can #besomebody by marketing their wares to Austin's kink community. *The Circle of Life!*

www.twitter.com/hashtag/peeonsomebody,

www.twitter.com/alisonkilts

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 2700 Esperanza Crossing, 512/222-5950, www.topgolf.com

**Best Day Trip/Best Romantic Escape
 FREDERICKSBURG**

Fallen into a *weltschmerz* because you and your *schnucki* just cannot take one more person telling you that “you just *have* to try this new place on East Cesar Chavez”? *Wir verstehen*. Abscond to Fredericksburg, where even the oddest couple can find things to do: World War II buff? Visit the Admiral Nimitz State Historic Site and the National Museum of the Pacific War. Shopaholic? *Spazieren* Main Street to browse local crafts and kitchen wares. Foodie? Repeat after us: “*Wurst, schnitzel, und streusel!*” Venture outside the center of town, and you’re bound to run into a tasting room or two of some of Texas’ finest wineries, leaving you each with one helluva *honigkuchenpferd grinsen*.
 Fredericksburg Visitor Information Center, 302 E. Austin St., 888/997-3600, www.visitfredericksburgtx.com



CHRIS LITHELAND/CC BY SA 3.0

Best Place to Tube SAN MARCOS

The San Marcos River brings a steady stream of people to San Marcos to tube down its 72-degree waters year-round. Let your troubles float away past Rio Vista Park, where the Lions Club tube rental shuttle picks people up or a quick visit to the Korner Stop can set you afloat. This part of the river has deep pools that flow into three chutes known as Rio Vista Falls. About 14 minutes east of San Marcos in Martindale, Don’s Fish Camp and Texas State Tubes offer shuttles to and from the river and all the tubes and gear you’ll need for your day in the sun.
 170 Charles Austin, San Marcos, 512/396-5466, www.tubesanmarcos.com

Best Scenic Drive LOOP 360

Few other cities as big as Austin can boast our green-to-concrete ratio, but Loop 360 offers the best of both. It curves through rock cut-throughs, steep fills, and several parks and rivers, offering a wide survey of the Capitol, the UT Tower, and most of Downtown. And the early-rising bicyclist can take advantage of the wide shoulders to catch several beautiful sunrise vistas – the most breathtaking on Pennybacker Bridge, overlooking Lake Austin.
 From U.S. 290/Hwy. 71 to N. MoPac (Loop 1),
www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/projects/studies/austin/loop-360.html

**Best Cheap Thrill/Best Swimming
 BARTON SPRINGS**

When you first move to Austin it seems like all people talk about is Barton Springs. It’s like, “Okay, okay, we get it: Austin is home to a three-acre spring-fed pool that maintains an average temperature of 68-70 degrees, ideal for year-round swimming. Cool.” And then you go there (for only \$3, mind you) and suddenly you’re a mermaid swimming amongst the most interesting breeds of people, fish, and turtles. If you’re really lucky, you’ll bump into a Barton Springs salamander. The water is freezing, and there is a man doing yoga in his Speedo on the edge of the pool, but it all just adds to the experience. You’ve lost count of all the different types of tattoos you’ve seen, and a single tear runs down your face when you realize that you’ll have to leave when it closes. Everything everyone told you about this place is true. You tuck yourself into bed that night still warm from the Texas sun and the feeling of finally knowing what it means to be a lover of Barton Springs – cozy in the truth that you are now a true Austinite.
 2201 Barton Springs Rd., 512/867-3080,
www.austintexas.gov/department/barton-springs-pool

**Best Outdoor Festival
 AUSTIN CITY LIMITS**



Every year, that impeccable vista of our city skyline competes with the spectacle of sight and sound on each of the eight stages at the Austin City Limits Music Festival, as crowds pack Zilker Park for the annual trip to music mecca. The ever-popular fest grew out of its traditional one weekend two years ago. This year they continue with that expanded calendar format: Music lovers can see, hear, and feel the psychedelic vibes of Tame Impala and strum their air guitars to the Foo Fighters as they soak in unlimited views of Austin, two weekends long.
 C3 Presents, 512/478-7211, www.aclfestival.com

**Best Place to Skate
 PLAYLAND SKATE CENTER**

If the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the words scissoring, dipping, bouncing, toe dragging, trucking, or rexing has to do with Wiccans out in the woods, it’s been way too long since you’ve been to Playland. Their long-running adults-only sessions still light up Tuesday nights. And while they’ve invested a lot to keep the old girl up to snuff, she still emits that sweet Seventies/Eighties vibe that’s kept her rolling for over 40 years. Everyone knows and loves the looming glitter skate-ball centerpiece. But c’mon, can we hear it for the array of red neon thunderbolts? Or the neon clouds and stars? Nothin’ beats how they glow in the fog, except, perhaps, the smooth whoosh of quads against that glorious new wood floor.
 8822 McCann, 512/452-1901, www.playlandskatecenter.net,
www.kidsskatefree.com

CONTINUED ON P.52

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OUTDOORS & RECREATION

CONTINUED FROM P.50

Best Not-So-Cheap Thrill IFLY

Wouldn't it be nice, if before every cockama-mie idea – say changing careers after the age of 40 – you could try it out in a safe and supportive environment? Are you thrilled at the prospect of skydiving but terrified of heights? This worldwide indoor skydiving facility lets you poke that internal adrenaline junkie at a comfortable altitude. You'll receive pre-flight training and a special suit before entering a vertical wind tunnel that creates true free-fall conditions, with a personal instructor guiding you through the entire experience. Fly alone or with a buddy – there are no age restrictions. 13265-A Hwy. 183 N., 512/774-4359, austin.iflyworld.com

Best Place to Camp KRAUSE SPRINGS

No Austin summer would be complete without a get-to-know-your-Hill-Country trip to Krause Springs. With ample space to swim and play, it lacks the typical claustrophobia of most area campgrounds. Whether you're soaring through the air on a rope swing, climbing over the roots of magnificent Cypress trees, or just sipping a cold one in the crystal clear water, Krause is the perfect place to pitch a tent for the weekend. 404 Krause Spring Rd., Spicewood, 830/693-4181, www.krausesprings.net

Best Gear/Sporting Goods ACADEMY

A definitive choice for Austin's outdoor needs, Academy has everything from tubes for river floating, boots for hiking, kids' bathing suits, and sleeping bags, to basketball hoops and baseball bats. If they don't have it, you might be leaving the planet. When you head out to enjoy the amazing parks and camping spots in Texas or simply a day at the park, if you've forgotten anything, there's likely an Academy nearby. Multiple locations, www.academy.com



PHOTOS BY SANDY CARSON

Best Social Bike Ride THURSDAY NIGHT SOCIAL RIDE

For as much of a bike town as Austin wishes itself to be, the amount of car traffic on city streets is harrowing. Social cycling (in general, and Social Cycling, the group) is a safety-in-numbers scheme designed to increase bike riders' comfort-levels and chance of survival on the sometimes mean streets. Visibility is key. The more riders there are, the more riders are seen. And the more riders are seen, the safer and more politically supported they're likely to be, come time for funding allocations. Plus, there is no better place in this town to get such an eyeful of God-bless-American booty: every size, shape, and hue. www.fb.com/groups/socialcyclingaustin, www.fb.com/socialcyclingaustin

Best Yoga/Pilates BLACK SWAN YOGA

Looking to work up a sweat, but can't handle another gym session? Black Swan Yoga is the answer to your calorie-burning prayers. With four levels of perspiration persuasion (class options), everyone from the newbs to the yogis can find a practice that fits the flow. After a couple of classes you'll be tree-posing with the best and bendier than the typical pretzel, not to mention more Zenned out. 4534 West Gate Blvd., 512/630-2332; 12636 Research, 512/630-2332; 403 Orchard, 512/710-5131, www.blackswanyoga.com

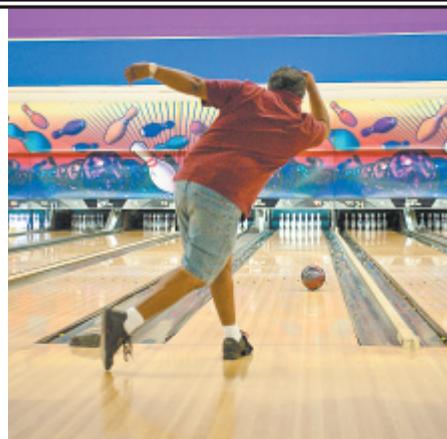
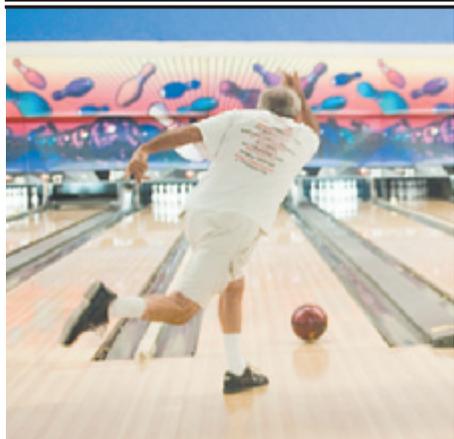
Best Pool/Billiards THE GRAND

What do you do when you're craving some fun, but the hubbub of Dirty Sixth or Rainey has become too much of an exhausting and expensive endeavor? How about some billiards and beer? Our readers appreciate cheap beer deals, and the Grand's got 'em, plus a floor of 20 pool tables to keep the hustlers hustlin'. So leave your uncomfortable going-out attire behind, and slap on who-cares-what. The only concerns on a night of billiards and beer should be, well, the billiards and beer, and the Grand takes home win No. 7 to prove it. 4631 Airport #121, 512/454-1986

Best Sports Venue DELL DIAMOND



The house that Nolan Ryan and family built is home to Round Rock Express baseball. But people visit Dell Diamond for the experience: the kiss cam, kids doing stunts for free pizza, a rock wall, loud cheesy old rock & roll, and deliciously overpriced vittles like the James Dean hot dog with bleu cheese and the Elvis deep-fried peanut butter banana. Catch a foul ball and grin while the kids pose with Spike, the Express mascot. 'Merica! 3400 E. Palm Valley Blvd., Round Rock, 512/255-2255, roundrock.express.mlb.com/index.jsp?sid=t102



Best Bowling Alley DART BOWL

Can one possibly have more fun putting fingers in holes than playing a few strings at this Austin institution? Possibly by mashing one's face into a plate of their decadent truck-stop enchiladas and inhaling those suckers like they are the last food on Earth. Possibly by people-watching life's rich middle-class pageant as they twinkle-toes it to the line and heave balls with total Fred Flintstone abandon. Possibly by studying the Dart Bowl's museum-quality homage to the sport in the large lobby cases brimming with bowling tchotchkes. And definitely by making a promise to your date, your mate, your kids, your besties, and yourself to come back again, again, again, and again. 5700 Grover, 512/452-2518, www.dartbowl.com



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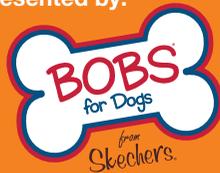
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- Friends of Arlington Animal Services
- Georgetown Animal Outreach
- Greyhound Adoption League of Texas, Inc. (GALT)
- Helping Hands Basset Rescue
- Lifelong Friends Pet Adoptions
- Love-A-Bull
- More Paws 2 Love
- PAWS Shelter & Humane Society
- Pflugerville Pets Alive
- Pug Rescue of Austin
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OUTDOORS & RECREATION

BEST WEEKDAY SECRET Bull Creek District Park

These 11 miles of limestone waters mark the best-kept secret weekday getaway. There are dozens of trails, boulders, cliffs, seeps, springs, and waterways to satisfy your inner Yogi Bear, and little to no crowds if you go on a Monday or Tuesday. Have the kids (or very skinny adults) slide down the small channeled waterfalls, and check out the “secret area” – just look for the concrete stairs. Use the park entrance by Xiang Yun Temple on Loop 360. 6701 Lakewood, www.austinparks.org, www.austintexas.gov/page/park-directory

JOHN LEACH

BEST DATE SPOT FOR YOU AND YOUR PUP Yard Bar

No more feeling guilty when going out for drinks, leaving Pickles alone at home. You can both meet your friends or make new ones at this wonderful new spot, featuring playgrounds with agility equipment and clean water bowls, where dogs of all sizes can play to their hearts' content. Trained “Bark Rangers” take care of scooping duties and watching the pups while you relax with a cold local brew, a glass of wine, or a signature cocktail paired with tasty backyard fare. You can sign up for an annual membership or pay as you go. Two paws up for Yard Bar! 6700 Burnet Rd., www.yardbar.com

BEST CHOO CHOO CH'BOOGIE Austin Steam Train Association

America's romance with rail can sometimes seem an odd and fickle fling, as old modes give way to new. Here in Central Texas, however, the Austin Steam Train Association keeps the trains running on time in a living history museum of real-life rail cars and engines restored to their former glory: a fully operational leisure rail system to afford glimpses into the past along routes of the present, featuring regular treks like the Hill Country Flyer and Bertram Flyer and special event excursions celebrating various themes and holidays. Volunteers here are not mere docents, they are conductors, engineers, and tradespeople restoring decades- and centuries-old rigs, and their love of history is as deep as the roots they honor. Their passion is 100% can-do and their only wish is to share it all with everyone. All aboard!
401 E. Whitestone Blvd., Ste. 100-C, Cedar Park, 512/477-8468, www.austinsteamtrain.org



TODD V. WOLFSON

BEST POOL WITH A VIEW The High Road

The High Road on Dawson resides in the old Elks Lodge. One of the main attractions is the pool that overlooks Downtown. If the pool could talk, it could tell the history of Austin's skyline. The club has hosted a Fourth of July pool party since the pool was built in the late Fifties. This year's pool party was packed with young and old, neighbors and the famous, hipsters and conservatives alike, as the crowd ooooh'd and ahhhh'd as the city of Austin displayed fireworks over Lady Bird Lake. Open year-round, the pool is maintained by member volunteers. 700 Dawson, 512/442-8535, www.thehighroadondawson.com

TODD V. WOLFSON

MOST FORMIDABLE FOOTPATH Roberta Crenshaw Pedestrian Walkway

She may not be as vaunted or glamorous as her younger sibling to the east (the James D. Pfluger), but the Crenshaw's got it going on! This veritable runners' runway – a trail suitable for casual stroller, dog trotter, power walker, and marathon maniac alike – that runs under MoPac near Zilker Park, is named for environmental activist and visionary Roberta Crenshaw, whose efforts to stave off showy circus-like initiatives and encroaching development introduced the notion that Lady Bird Lake (Town Lake in her day) could be a peaceful, in-town respite. Though Ms. Crenshaw passed in 2005, when she was here, she walked with giants like Lady Bird Johnson and made sure we all had a place to enjoy the bounty that's right under our feet. Austin PARD, 200 S. Lamar, 512/974-6700, www.cityofaustin.org/parks



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

BEST TRAP AND SKEET RANGE **Capitol City Trap & Skeet Club**

Located minutes east off of 290, Capitol City Trap & Skeet Club is the most convenient place to take out your everyday frustrations on some bright orange clay birds. Trap and skeet shooting is an American and Texas tradition, and Capitol City offers a friendly, fun, and welcoming place to participate in a sport centuries old. Capitol City has multiple traditional trap and skeet towers as well as a unique course that wraps around the property. The towers are good for beginners because they offer consistent targets. The course is a fun step up for intermediate and expert shooters, with each station launching targets in different directions, traveling at varying speeds. You're sure to catch "the fever" after shooting at Capitol City. 8707 Lindell, 512/272-4707, www.capitolclays.com

BEST VACATION FLOOD RELIEF **Take a Central Texas Staycation**

Need a break? Why not funnel vacation dollars into our own backyard to aid neighbors affected by the Memorial Day weekend floods? A list of recommendations could easily take pages; for this award, we'll name-check a few resources to get you started:

MARTINDALE: When the wild hustle and bustle of San Marcos and Gruene are too much, but you still wish to be a stone's throw, consider going east for a float down the San Marcos River.

TAYLOR: Home of the legendary Louie Mueller Barbecue. Need we say more?

BASTROP: Yes, wildfire-recovering Bastrop was hit by the floods as well, especially Bastrop State Park, which is open for business.

BLANCO: The Austin Steam Train goes to Blanco, and there's plenty to do, including the town square and Blanco River State Park.

SAN MARCOS: The last few weeks of good tubing and Texas State Bobcat sports top the fall. Plus, this mini-Austin is as live-music loving as we are.

WIMBERLEY: One of the sweetest collections of bed & breakfasts and non-chain accommodations in Texas and our area artists' colony always offers a magical getaway.

City of Martindale, 409 Main St., Martindale, 512/357-2639, www.martindaletexas.org; Taylor Chamber of Commerce, 1519 N. Main St., Taylor, 512/352-6364, www.taylorchamber.org; Explore Bastrop County, 804 Pecan St., Bastrop, 512/581-4011, www.explorebastropcounty.com; Bastrop State Park, 100 Park Rd. 1A, Bastrop, 512/321-2101, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/bastrop; Blanco Chamber of Commerce, 312 Pecan St., Blanco, 830/833-5101, www.blancotex.com; Tour San Marcos, San Marcos Tourist Information Center, 617 I-35 N., San Marcos, 512/393-5930; Wimberley Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center, 14100 RR 12, Wimberley, 512/847-2201

BEST WAY TO GROW A GARDEN IN A DROUGHT **Dripping Springs Ollas**

Ancient indigenous agricultural cultures used to make a practice of burying unglazed, porous clay pots called ollas (pronounced "oyas") to water their vegetable gardens. Fast-forward several centuries: Two military wives have brought back the idea to drought-stricken Texas. Instead of watering by sprinkler or hose, gardeners plant the ollas, fill them with water once or twice a week, and let the plant roots draw the moisture from the vessels. Available at finer gardening and hardware stores.

512/227-4048, www.drippingspringsollas.com

BEST COLONY OF FLYING CREATURES, NON-BAT **Swift Fest and the Jonestown Cistern**

Behind a Jonestown realty office stands a structure altogether unremarkable in its utility. The 16-foot tall and 10-foot in diameter concrete cylinder looks like what it was built to be – a cistern. Arrive at dusk in the late summer months, however, and you'll see it transform, as hundreds of chimney swifts nosedive into the freestanding structure after a long day hunting insects. They're not here to stay, only on their migratory way to the Amazon Basin. But Jonestown residents are so smitten with their swift friends that in 2012 the city began Swift Fest (say that 10 times fast) in their honor. A cautionary note for swift friends heading up from Austin: Beware of that speed trap. 18649 FM 1431, Jonestown, 512/339-9432, www.swiftfest-jonestown.com

BEST SQUEEZE **Texas Folklife's Big Squeeze Accordion Contest Finals**

Lone Star living teaches us that accordions rock as hard as guitars. Texas Folklife's ninth annual Big Squeeze Accordion Contest Finals at the Bullock Texas State History Museum in June summoned the next generation of native firestarters. Finalists plucked from around the state by Austin's nonprofit roots preservationists, button-pushers 21 and younger pumped their wheezy squeezes for top honors in polka, zydeco, and conjunto categories. The sea of family, friends, and headlining genre queen Eva Ybarra did the rest, raising such a joyful community clatter that local history was made. 1708 Houston St., 512/441-9255, www.texasfolklife.org

BEST VENTURE POINT IN POINT VENTURE **The Gnarly Gar**

Floating right atop Lake Travis is a waystation for wayward Austinites. Steer your ship into one of many boatslips between mile markers 16 and 17 (across from the Lakeway Resort and Spa), or drive 'n' walk, it don't matter! What awaits is a dockful of food, music, and a roiling, tumbling, mess o' catfish. Speaking of ... what is their precise geometry as they fight for your food and attention? A knot? A ball? A hypercube? We don't rightly know the answer to that, but they'll keep you and any kids you might bring entertained for a solid hour. And remember to keep a close eye on your young'uns while you sit 'n' sip, as the proprietors promise to give unattended minors "a double espresso and a free puppy to take home." 18200 Lakepoint Cove, Point Venture, 512/267-1845, www.gnarlygar.com

BEST HIDDEN HIKE (IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY)



SANDY CARSON

Blunn Creek Nature Preserve

Most of Austin knows our green space is pretty great, which is why it can be a difficult place to hike in solitude. The Blunn Creek Nature Preserve is the perfect alternative for adventurers who want to be one – and not one of many – with the outdoors. Tucked between Travis Heights and St. Edward's University, it's an in-town hike that nonetheless feels like a Hill Country retreat. With fields of wildflowers, gurgling streams, and picturesque bluffs, Blunn Creek is the perfect place to not really get away. 1200 St. Edward's Drive, 512/480-3060

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Best News Story **MARRIAGE EQUALITY**

What a year of grabby headlines: Central Texas floods, the 10-1 election, the Austin Cobra, Jumpolin, the list goes on. But overwhelmingly, our readers – like so many local revelers on that day – chose the news of Friday, June 26, 2015, the day that the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged that LGBTQ people wishing to marry had the same constitutional rights as everyone else. There were many ways to articulate this, and many of our readers voted with the very same message that President Obama tweeted on that historic day: #lovewins. It is so ordered.

Equality Texas, 512/474-5475, www.equalitytexas.org

Best Civil Rights Activist

Best Political Gadfly **GLEN MAXEY**

Maxey has been both a Democratic official and a progressive instigator for so long his two roles have largely merged – apparently the reason that readers anointed him with both of these awards. The former state rep has fought for working people and basic human rights for decades, but most recently he entered the battles for same-sex marital rights by supporting Texas plaintiffs and outing county clerks all over the state – that is, clerks who refused to abide by the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that gays and lesbians have the same constitutional right to marriage as their straight neighbors. This double award is as much a community celebration as a well-deserved honor for a longtime leader and political pioneer. Glen, keep on fighting! (We know you will!) www.fb.com/glen.maxey



DEVAKI KNOWLES

Best Elected State Official **KIRK WATSON**

Sen. Kirk Watson, D-Austin, fought for basics like equitable education and health care in the face of an increasingly hostile, conservative Lege that from the outset nixed their two-thirds rule, lending the GOP even more unchecked power. Delivering passionate rallies on the floor, Watson stood up for the fates of disabled state-supported living center residents in his district; abused, pregnant minors seeking safe abortion; and university students wary of guns on college campuses, making the former Austin mayor a true people's champ.

512/463-0114, www.kirkwatson.org

Best Lege Silver Lining **TIE: ANTI-LGBT BILLS BLOCKED; IT'S OVER**

In January it seemed like the slew of anti-LGBTQ legislation would ruin any progress made in the name of equality, including bills to protect “religious freedom”; the dreaded Pastor Protection Act; Rep. Cecil Bell’s discriminatory HB 4105; and bathroom-panic bills. Amazingly, and for a variety of reasons, they all derailed. The voters (at least of our poll!) took notice, recognizing this wholesale discrimination fail to be the silver lining of a crazy session – matched only in votes by the notion that the session finally came to an end: It’s over! Yes, friends, it is, so spike up your hair, put on some shiny pants, and wave “bye, bye, bye!” *Equality Texas, 512/474-5475, www.equalitytexas.org*

BRET BROOKSHIRE



Best Elected City Official **GREG CASAR**

The former community organizer promised to represent all of his constituents, not just those who could or did vote for him, and thus far, District 4 Council Member Greg Casar has kept that promise, including making sure that

the undocumented immigrants in his district are treated with the same respect by his office as U.S. citizens, and advocating for greater job opportunities for people with criminal records. All this while dealing with the sorest loser this town’s seen in a while.

301 W. Second, 512/978-2104, www.austintexas.gov/department/district-4

Best Local Politics Blog **BURNT ORANGE REPORT**

Calling themselves the Democrats’ biggest supporters and harshest critics, these political hounds know how to report hard facts and push hard opinions. Policymakers in the Capitol pay attention, too. The site boasts 60-100,000 daily views and regularly receives contributing articles from institutional leaders, political consultants, elected officials, lobbyists, and concerned Texans. Orange for UT. Blue for Texas. And burnt for the torch they carry among progressives across the city and state. www.burntorangereport.com

CONTINUED ON P.58

Austin Energy Presents:

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



GETTING YOU PLUGGED INTO CITY RESOURCES
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Webb Middle School

601 East St. Johns Avenue • 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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Austin Energy will have more than 50 local vendors providing information about social services in our community along with on-site health screenings. In addition, you can bring your resume and learn about local job opportunities. Also, discover ways to lower your monthly utility bill through the Customer Assistance Program offered by the City of Austin. Free food, prizes and activities for the kids will be available. Hope to see you there!



The City of Austin is proud to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you require assistance for participation in this event or would like more information about this event, please contact us at 512-972-7929, CommunityConnections@austinenergy.com or go to austinenergy.com/go/communityconnections.

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POLITICS & PERSONALITIES

CONTINUED FROM P.56

Best Political Scandal TIE: INDICTMENT OF RICK PERRY; INVESTIGATION OF KEN PAXTON

Former governor and future two-time failed presidential nomination seeker Rick Perry had two pieces of good news this year: One, that he only faces one felony charge for trying to force Travis County D.A. Rosemary Lehmborg to quit, after the Court of Appeals threw one lesser charge out. Two, that Attorney General Ken Paxton distracted the media with three charges related to securities fraud.

To misquote Oscar Wilde: To have one Texas politician under indictment may be regarded as a misfortune; to have two facing jail time looks like carelessness. Our ballot happened to be running during the Paxton fracas, and some readers jumped the gun voting for an indictment that had not yet happened. But combined with votes for "Paxton investigation," "Paxton securities fraud," and "Anything Paxton," we had a handy tie.

www.rickperry.org; 300 W. 15th, 512/463-2100, www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/agency/about-texas-attorney-general-ken-paxton



Best Grassroots Group
AURA

Everyone knows Austin's aura is huge. Now its AURA – formerly Austinites for Urban Rail Action, now just an evocative acronym – wants to make sure our civic vision, creativity, and public spirit stay focused on the core of that violet crown. AURA originally took up the cause of urban rail planning; it has since expanded to organizing around various urbanist issues, from helping rewrite our land development code in connection with CodeNEXT to encouraging affordable urban density via such techniques as limiting historic preservation, making it easier to live car-free, and limiting sprawl by keeping overzealous environmental regulations in check for the urban core. AURA also specializes in public outreach, encouraging Austinites to jump on the planning train as it rolls on. www.aura-atx.org



JANA BIRCHUM

Best Event on the Capitol Steps **BIG GAY WEDDING ON JULY FOURTH**

Folks have been holding symbolic gay weddings all around the capital city for years, but this was a big mass wedding, a big *gay* mass wedding, held eight days after the U.S. Supreme Court "so ordered" the recognition of same-sex marriages. Austin's Big Gay Wedding event was held on the south steps of the Texas State Capitol on the Fourth of July. Over 40 couples exchanged vows and waved legal marriage certificates for all to see. Many folks deserve kudos for pulling the event off, but the chugging dynamo at its heart was local attorney Lenore Shefman, whose social justice work in this town goes way back to the Nineties (before she left Texas to earn that law degree) when she was involved in a bit of activism in front of the Governor's Mansion – a protest in the form of, you guessed it: a big gay wedding. 1002 West Ave. #301, 512/386-8117, www.shefmanlaw.net



Best Local Controversy **ANYTHING DON ZIMMERMAN**

When District 6 elected the guy famous for blowing a rape whistle on local news to protest an affordable housing bond, well, amazing things had to be in the works. Since then, Don Zimmerman has sued a teeny online publication, suggested the city strike rules about wheelchair accessibility, compared gay marriage to pedophilia, and sued the city to get rid of campaign finance rules. Invader Zim doesn't disappoint. 301 W. Second, www.austintexas.gov/department/district-6

Best March or Rally **QUEERBOMB**

Each June, in memory of the Stonewall Riots, Queerbomb hosts a march and rally, inviting every member of the LGBTQIA community to come together and embrace diversity, sexuality, art, music, and individuality. If you've ever been to a Queerbomb march, it's likely you woke up the next morning covered in glitter, dressed in only your rainbow underwear, with sore muscles (a lady does not tell which), no voice, and the taste of vodka and/or Red Bull still in your mouth ... oh, and a smile that won't quit. www.queerbomb.org

Best Neighborhood Activist **TERESA GRIFFIN, FRIENDS OF HYDE PARK**

What kind of message does a school named after Robert E. Lee send to incoming residents? The wrong kind, says Teresa Griffin. She's the leading voice in the charge by the Friends of Hyde Park, a free online neighborhood association, to change a local school's name. A resident since 1969, Griffin has fought for benefits and wages of UT staff, higher living standards, and more inclusive representation of neighborhoods. Can we get an "Amen"? www.friendsofhydepark.com

Best Environmental Activist **DAVE CORTEZ, SIERRA CLUB**

This staunch environmental activist and Occupy Austin regular is currently the heart and soul of the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign in Central Texas. After successfully coordinating the Texas BlueGreen Alliance, he is now focused on shutting down the coal-fired Fayette Power Project and pushing for the adoption of strong renewable energy policies in Austin, while seeking to incorporate anti-poverty and anti-racist principles and strategies into Austin's environmental activist community. *Órale!* 1202 San Antonio St., 512/477-1729, www.texas2.sierraclub.org



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

Best Nonprofit
AUSTIN PETS ALIVE!

What's better than doggies and kitties? Not much, except maybe people who save doggies and kitties. Austin Pets Alive! – a crucial link in Austin's No-Kill City chain – is a nonprofit organization made up of these kind of wonderfully selfless humans who commit volunteer energy and time to making sure Austin's animals stay alive, well, and matched with loving families to call home (over 25,000 adoptions since mid-2008). If everyone was as kind and philanthropic as the people at APA!, the world would be a better place.

1156 W. Cesar Chavez, 512/961-6519,
www.austinpetsalive.org

Best Disaster Response
TEXAS CONSERVATION CORPS

This brand-new category encouraged readers to recognize the many folks who came to aid after the Memorial Day weekend floods. Ballots were cast for the Red Cross, Austin Disaster Relief Network, and even the brave Austin emergency workers who rescued the guy stuck on a pole at House Park. The group that earned the most votes was Texas Conservation Corps, a program of American YouthWorks and supported by AmeriCorps volunteers. TxCC set up VRCs, or Volunteer Reception Centers – as they have done for many recent Texas disaster recovery events. The Wimberley, Bastrop, and San Marcos centers served as HQ for funneling resources and muscle to the folks who needed it most, and offered opportunities and guidance for volunteers who wished to serve out in the field.

Texas Conservation Corps, 1901 E. Ben White, 512/744-1916, www.texasconservationcorps.org,
www.fb.com/texasconservationcorps;
 American YouthWorks South Campus, 1901 E. Ben White, 512/744-1900,
www.americanyouthworks.org



Best Use of Tax Dollars
CITY PARKS

Remember that last scene in *Slacker*, where everyone hops in the hooptie to the tune of South African drinking song "Skokiaan," and they drive out of town, camera in hand, land at Mount Bonnell, climb up to the top, and toss the camera over the edge? That pretty much sums up the wild abandon and adoration we Austinites feel for our green spaces. There are a lot of priorities our readers would love for city dollars to fund: education initiatives, sidewalks, transportation options – but the majority of votes in this category went to items that fall under the purview of Austin Parks and Rec, or have benefited greatly from the hard work and dedication of the Austin Parks Foundation. From Eeyore's Birthday to Philosophers' Rock, dang, we like to lie around and think about how great our city is. Long may she slack!
 Austin PARD, 200 S. Lamar, 512/974-6700,
www.austintexas.gov/department/parks-and-recreation; Austin Parks Foundation, 816 Congress #1680, 512/477-1566,
www.austinparks.org

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POLITICS & PERSONALITIES



BEST GRASSROOTS JUSTICE SEEKERS People's Task Force

With the goal of spotlighting injustice, PTF brings together the people of Austin. Coming out of the Black Lives Matter movement and the increased visibility of police shootings, this organization provides a space for people to improve the safety of Austin's communities and work to maintain accountability of government agencies. Their four "Points of Unity" – perhaps a grandchild of the Black Panthers' Ten-Point Program – is laser-focused on the criminal justice system's "sharpest edge," the police.
www.taskforceatx.org,
[www.fb.com/peoplestaskforce](https://www.facebook.com/peoplestaskforce)

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD COMFORT Florence Ponziano

The nonprofit Florence's Comfort House is just what it sounds like: a place where unmoored children (and occasionally adults) in Ponziano's Montopolis neighborhood can find friends, assistance, learning, playmates and playscape, a kindly ear – *comfort* – when life turns tough. It is also a magical living repository of Ponziano's extraordinary artwork, which she also sells, barter, or just gives away to help children and neighbors. Like her home, she's a hidden Austin gem, who avoids recognition she greatly deserves. Consider this a token of appreciation.
515 Kemp, 512/385-8672, www.florencescomforthouse.org

BEST FIRST-TERMER Celia Israel

The freshman representative from Austin's 50th district wasted no time digging in during her first legislative session. She took up issues as wide-ranging as the care of pregnant people in jails to congestion on I-35, and even managed to gather the support of none other than Jonathan Stickland for the bills (HB 1140 and 1141, although, unfortunately, only 1140 passed) dealing with the former. Her enthusiasm, intelligence, and practicality are a welcome deviation from the Texas legislative norm.
Office of Celia Israel, Rm. E1.406, PO Box 2910, Austin, 78768, www.house.state.tx.us

BEST-DRESSED COUNCIL MEMBER Don Zimmerman

Grouse about his politics (we do!), fine, but any talk show host off the street can throw out bombastic analogies. Where District 6 Council Member Don Zimmerman really sets himself apart is in his slick fedora-suspender combos, forbidding aviator frames, and mildly distracting ties. And the engineer's attention to detail extends beyond city contracts to his shelter dog, Shelby, whose outfits frequently eclipse her master's. What's a pit bull without a floral raincoat?
301 W. Second, www.austintexas.gov/department/district-6

BEST DISPLAY OF HOPE Memorial Day Weekend Crisis Pet Adopters

When Austin Pets Alive! staff realized that all animals had to be evacuated from the Town Lake Animal Center due to imminent flooding, they sent out a plea to the community. Within a couple of hours, 200-plus people had formed a line in the waterlogged parking lot, offering to temporarily house a dog or cat and bringing supplies. Photos of the event quickly went viral, earning kudos from national and international media. This act proved what Austinites are made of, and cemented their commitment to keeping the city's no-kill status alive and well. Compassion wins!
Austin Pets Alive!, 1156 W. Cesar Chavez, 512/961-6519, www.austinpetsalive.org

BEST STANDING ACTIVIST Sadie Hernandez

Standing outside the Governor's Mansion day after day for over a month, Sadie Hernandez braved the sweltering Texas summer heat to protest the Legislature's politically motivated move to kick Planned Parenthood out of the state's lifesaving Breast and Cervical Cancer Services program. What started as a one-woman rally ballooned into a movement garnering national media attention and a surprise visit from women's health champion and former state Senator Wendy Davis. The tenacious young activist hoped Gov. Abbott would veto the measure; while the anti-choice gov failed to do so, the power of the "People's Veto" reminded us all the fight to block ideological-led attacks on basic reproductive health care ain't over yet.
www.twitter.com/hashtag/standwithsadie

BEST BURR UNDER THE SADDLE JD Gins

Remember that old saying that politics in Texas is a full-contact sport? Seems sometimes that progressives have been beaten so long that they've forgotten they can punch back. Let's just say that JD Gins knows not to bring a knife to a gun fight. The Travis County Democratic Party executive director and beer connoisseur is less concerned about making friends than winning the argument, but with his perennial grin, he keeps managing to do both.
1311 E. Sixth, 512/477-7500,
www.traviscountymocrats.org



BEST NEIGHBORHOOD REVIVAL Restore Rundberg

No part of town gets a worse rap than Rundberg Lane. So when critics write it off as an insoluble problem, they're writing off the 5% of Austin's population that lives and works around that one street. The Restore Rundberg initiative brings together city, law enforcement, schools, colleges, and the neighborhood itself to redeem this often-slandered area. They're not just trying to sweep away all the issues that have plagued the area for years, but solve the underlying issues, to make the area vital and healthy for the community that's there already, and that wants to be there.
512/974-8199, www.austintexas.gov/department/restorerundberg

SEXIEST CULTURE SHIFT

UT Voices Against Violence

The UT Gets Consent project uses glitter tattoos, groundbreaking ideas, bold theatre performances, and dazzling graphics to prevent sexual assault and relationship violence on the Forty Acres, making consent the hottest concept around. With so many college-aged people experiencing sexual violence, the skills to get and give consent are way more important than any required course. The VAV program makes it sexy, fun, and irresistible to know if someone *really* wants your hands on their booty or not. Hey, don't call us tardy to the party, but yes, *The New York Times*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Marie Claire* have also taken notice. *University of Texas at Austin, Student Services Building, 100 W. Dean Keeton St., 512/471-2255, www.cmhc.utexas.edu/vav*

BEST IMMIGRATION ADVOCATES

Grassroots Leadership

While every attempt at immigration reform is stymied by the anti-immigrant portion of the right, Grassroots Leadership has made sure that the people caught in the crossfire aren't forgotten, organizing protests at detention centers, publishing research, and consistently refuting misinformation. Progress might be slow, but Grassroots and other immigration activists have managed to keep the conversation going, and positive changes, such as a judge's recent order to release undocumented immigrants in three facilities, have had a real impact on people's lives. *2301 E. Cesar Chavez, 512/499-8111, www.grassrootsleadership.org*

BEST POLITICAL SIDESHOW

Pressley vs. Casar

The District 4 City Council election contest – defeated candidate Laura Pressley vs. Council Member Greg Casar (as proxy for electronic voting) – was dismissed at state district court, earning hefty “frivolous lawsuit” sanctions for Pressley and her lawyer. Yet bolstered by anti-computer-voting truthers less interested in their plaintiff's loss by 30 points than in grandiose conspiracy claims, Pressley vows to appeal. Except for the cost to Travis County taxpayers – and unmerited attacks on dedicated public officials, particularly Travis County clerk and vote maven Dana DeBeauvoir – it's a laugh-a-minute affair, more suitable to reality TV than a courtroom. If only Flip Wilson were alive to preside

BEST WORKING-CLASS HERO

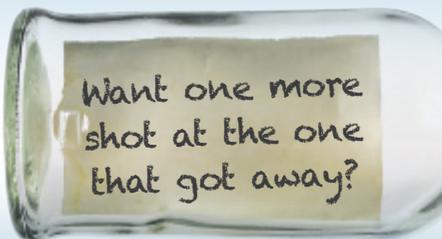
Cristina Tzintzún, Workers Defense Project

It might seem like Workers Defense Project (founded in 2002) has been around forever. That's because executive director Cristina Tzintzún and deputy director Emily Timm began at full speed in their mission to defend the lives and living standards of low-wage workers in Austin. They began by fighting for unpaid wages, and have since built a Texas beachhead that has won crucial victories for safety standards, education, the dignity of work – and has set a progressive agenda for city government. Tzintzún will soon be stepping down from WDP but promises she won't be a stranger – Austin needs her! *5604 Manor Rd., 512/391-2305, www.workersdefense.org*

CONTINUED ON P.62

Shot in the Dark

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POLITICS & PERSONALITIES

CONTINUED FROM P.61



BEST RADICAL PERSONALITY scott crow

Amidst the surge of an activist renaissance in Austin, scott crow (intentionally uncapitalized) takes the cake. But not literally, because he's a good anarchist and wants bread, not cake, for the people. Equally amicable as his political counterpoint Alex Jones is loud, he's been characterized by NPR as a "living legend among anarchists" for helping found the Common Ground Collective — an anarchist-inspired relief group that delivered crucial aid in the chaotic aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. His recent book, *Emergency Hearts, Molotov Dreams: A scott crow Reader*, surveys conversations and essays from a lifetime of organizing and grassroots strategy. www.scottcrow.org

BEST JUSTICE FOR MAMAS BEHIND BARS Texas Jail Project, ACLU of Texas, and Mama Sana

For the first time ever, Texas county jails will be required to report on how they care for pregnant inmates — to 'fess up about food, bedding, and medical care. That's thanks to hard work by the Texas Jail Project, the ACLU of Texas, and Mama Sana/Vibrant Woman. The three groups joined forces to protect pregnant mothers in county jails this legislative session by helping get HB 1140 passed. The law requires accountability, transparency, and solid data to improve the lives of mamas behind bars. *Texas Jail Project*, 1712 E. Riverside, Box 190, 512/597-8746, www.texasjailproject.org; *ACLU of Texas Inc.*, PO Box 12905, Austin, 78745, 512/478-7309, www.aclutx.org; *Mama Sana*, www.mamasanaclinic.wordpress.com, www.fb.com/mamasanaclinic

MOST GRACIOUS Reji Thomas

The visual artist who played an essential role in the mid-Nineties restoration of the Texas State Capitol building — no one else possessed the skills to perform the particular antiquated process to replicate all of the mammoth structure's glass — was unceremoniously forced out of her working studio that she'd built up, from nothing, on the plot of a crumbling old railroad depot, over two decades ago. Welcome to Austin gratitude, 2015. The historic site also served as Pine Street Station, a local artist and community hub. We're not going to dwell on the bad faith clumsily ramrodded by disingenuous real estate and PR hacks involved in what resulted in her eviction (karma is a bitch, after all). We know an award can't right a wrong, but we offer hats off to the lady who has moved on and is focusing on her visual art. We look forward to her rising from the dust. www.rejithomasart.com, www.pinestreetstation.com

BEST NEW HISTORICAL MARKER Austin's Twin Railroad Depots

Back in the days of the great railroad barons, the International & Great Northern Railroad had its handsome yellow-brick depot at the southwest corner of Third and Congress, and they owned the lines heading out of town to the west. The Houston & Texas Central's newer, more ornate red-brick depot sat on the northeast corner, servicing the H&TC tracks heading out of town to the east. In time, the I&GN merged into the Missouri Pacific (MoPac), and in 1949 they moved operations over to what is now the Amtrak station. The H&TC became the Southern Pacific, and though they stopped running in 1964, that line coming in from the east is what became Capital Metro's Red Line, terminating at Downtown Station. And that's where we are today: the Amtrak station on the west end of Downtown, and the Cap Metro station on the east end of Downtown. But once, they met in the middle. *Corner of Third & Congress*

MOST MOVING SILENCES AND POWERFUL PROTESTS Vigil for Charleston

The Austin Vigil for Charleston and the Texas Vigil for Sandra Bland were moving, vital community events that spoke volumes with the silence of grief. They also lifted the voices of resistance and refusal to accept our nation's constant killing of black people. Both vigils were organized by a small group of friends working from a shared vision of change: Fatima Mann, Ayana Flewelling, Courtney Arnold, and X'ene Sky Taylor brought people, silence, song, poetry, chants, and testimony together to make two of the most meaningful vigils Austin has ever seen. Participants arrived stricken with grief and left fortified, connected to others, and more dedicated to change. www.austinjustice.org, www.fb.com/austinjusticecoalition



PHOTOS BY CELESTA DANGER

BEST WAY HOME Community First!

Had Mobile Loaves & Fishes only delivered meals of nourishment for area homeless out of the back of their trucks, that would have been enough. Had they only developed Genesis Gardens, supplying both food and jobs, that would have been enough. Now, they near completion for Community First! Village (truly deserving of that exclamation point), a holistic facility luxuriously spread out over 27 acres. Homes, yes, but also medical facilities, wi-fi, walking trails, on-site employment initiatives with Bunkhouse and Alamo Drafthouse, and gardens with chickens and bees for Austin's disabled and chronically homeless population. The site also includes a columbarium, insisting on an ineluctable dignity that extends far beyond our plane. We hope that Community First! Village is only a prototype of what communities can do when homelessness is finally recognized as a multifaceted issue that demands significant resources, innovation, and most of all, heart. We would say that this might very well be enough, but given what we know about Mobile Loaves & Fishes and their tireless CEO, Alan Graham, there's always something higher than "enough." 903 Capital of TX Hwy. S., 512/328-7299, www.mlf.org

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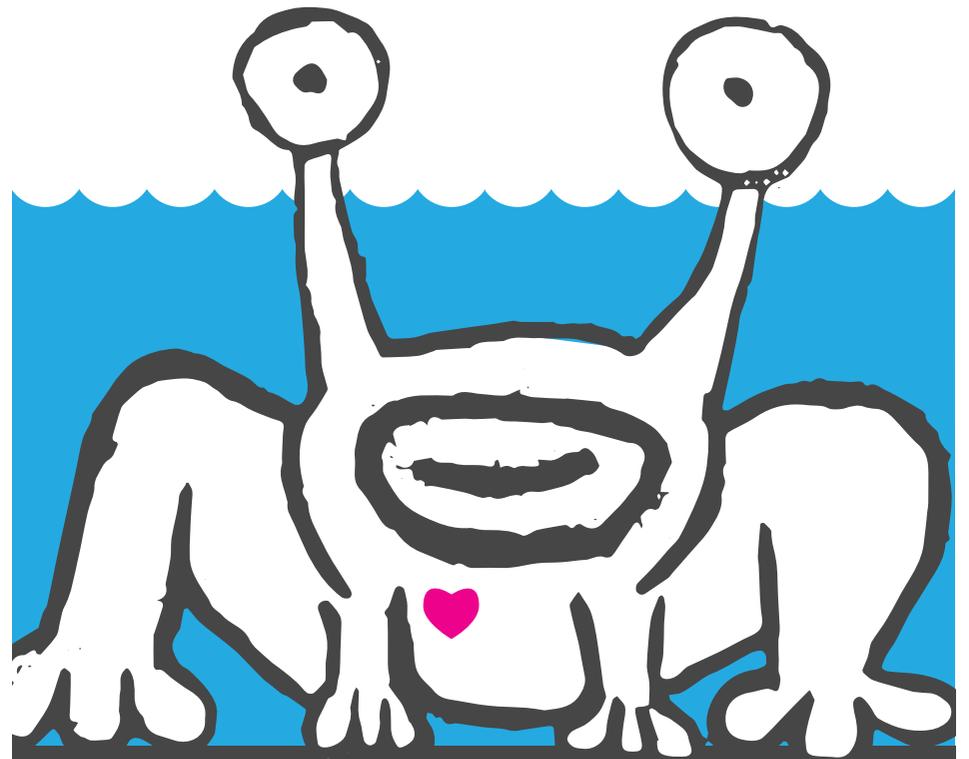
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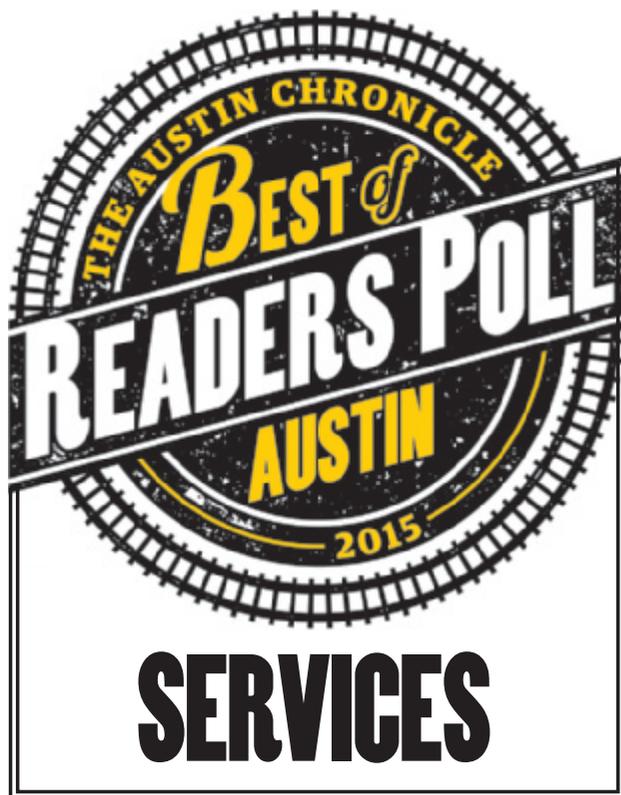


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TODD V. WOLFSON

Best Laundromat WASH DAY LAUNDRY

In the immediate aftermath of the Memorial Day weekend floods, social media began to light up with calls for help. It also lit up with calls offering help. We watched in awe as neighbor after neighbor put their own needs aside to help someone in more dire straits. Tears definitely flowed as we read about the folks at the Wimberley Wash Day Laundry (along with some other local business owners) in their struggles to keep washers going and flowing with free laundry services to those affected. Our readers may have voted this small chain as the 2015 winner anyway, but it's stories like this that make working on "Best of Austin" a joy. Wash Day, thank you for making the sorrows of late May April-fresh.

7626 Hwy. 71 W., 512/906-2760; 8213 Brodie, 512/614-6760; 14306 RR 12, Wimberley, 512/847-0292, www.washdaylaundry.com



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

Best Florist FREYTAG'S

Want to up your Austin native street cred? Order your dear heart some flowers from seven-time "Best of Austin" winner Freytag's. A tradition on Mesa Drive since 1974, they done busted loose in 2002 into a 13,000-square-foot flower megastore (previously the site of a Steak & Ale restaurant). Freytag's remains a family affair, with founder Ken Freytag's son Chad hatching online plots to rule the digital flower world and Casey Freytag Chitsey assuring designs are top-notch.

2211 W. Anderson, 512/371-5640, www.freytagsflorist.com



Best Haircut/Style BIRDS BARBERSHOP

Pompadour. Taper fade. Undercut. Asymmetrical. Pixie. Whatever style you're looking for, the talented crews at Birds can do it for ya. So whether it's a girl cut, a guy cut, or a girl-who-wants-a-guy-cut cut, you're in good hands at Birds.

Multiple locations, www.birdsbarbershop.com

Best Tattoo Shop TRUE BLUE

The body is a temple, right? So paint them walls! True Blue, around since '92, has a knack for creating Austin's favorite "temple" decorations. Their team of 15 artists are well-versed and well-inked themselves. And with two locations to serve every inky inclination, you can book well in advance (advisable), or simply walk in. Just brace yourself for the ritual ... Bzzzzt! Ye gods!

607 Red River, 512/472-2783; 4507-B Airport, 512/363-5511, www.truebluetattoo.com

Best Spa MILK + HONEY

Escape the hustle and bustle of our fast-growing city and treat yourself to a spa day. With seasonal treatments and products like Mosquito Spray, Milk + Honey gets rid of whatever is bugging you. Stick it to your stress with acupuncture. Add a scrub to your treatment (we love the mint ...), and end your visit with a steam shower in the locker room. Ahhhhh, that's better!

Multiple locations, www.milkandhoneyspa.com

Best Dry Cleaners ECOCLEAN

When you take your clothes off, think of EcoClean. This laundromat uses a gentle wet cleaning process and biodegradable detergents that'll help rub-a-dub-dub away that strange stain on your dress (and conscience).

Multiple locations, www.ecocleanaustin.com

Best Bicycle Repair BICYCLE SPORT SHOP

It seems like a niche bike shop opens up every week in Austin, Texas, but when it comes to one-stop shopping for your two-wheeled friend, you can count on Bicycle Sport Shop's three decades of Austin experience and three convenient locations to have what you need.

517 S. Lamar, 512/477-3472; 10947 Research, 512/345-7460; 9900 W. Parmer, 512/637-6890, www.bicyclesportshop.com

Best Shoe Repair AUSTIN SHOE HOSPITAL

Austin is great for walking, but the side-walks ain't so grand. So, when our sandal straps rip, or our soles wear thin, there is only one solution to solve the problem. ASH has 11 locations scattered around the city, and no matter which one we go to, we are guaranteed great service, work, and prices.

Multiple locations, www.austinshoehospital.com

Best Pest Control
**Best Appliance/
 TV Repair**
**ABC HOME &
 COMMERCIAL SERVICES**

ABC had us at their adorably weird aardvark logo, but turns out they have the goods to boot. They've served Central Texas for more than six decades and are deeply involved in our community. Pest services are just the beginning: Services from lawn maintenance to air-conditioning installation and appliance repair are all part of their range of expertise. And our readers say they make getting rid of pesky varmints and home service problems big and small as easy as 1-2-3. Let 'em show you what it's all about.

Multiple locations, www.abchomeandcommercial.com



Best Auto Service/Repair
YOST

Among the sea of Austin auto repair shops, Yost Automotive truly stands out. As a "Best of Austin" regular, Yost Automotive is no stranger to the kind words of Austinites. Yost offers all of the basics for your vehicle, such as state inspections and maintenance checks, as well as more intricate service for any other car trouble. Next time your engine light illuminates, check your gas cap and then cruise over to Yost: Not Sucking Since 1993. 5415 N. Lamar, 512/374-9678; 6517 N. Lamar, 512/452-9678, www.yostauto.com

Best Computer Repair
DISCOUNT ELECTRONICS

They boast 24-hour or less diagnostic turnaround, repair all brands – Apple and PC – and even offer flat-rate iPad and iPhone fixes. The staff members are friendly and diligent problem solvers. If the issue with your baby is small, you can shop for all sorts of gadgets, like gaming components, cords, headphones, and drones, at this 2015 Best Computer Store winner (see the Shopping section, p.72) while you wait.

Multiple locations, www.discountelectronics.com

CONTINUED ON P.66

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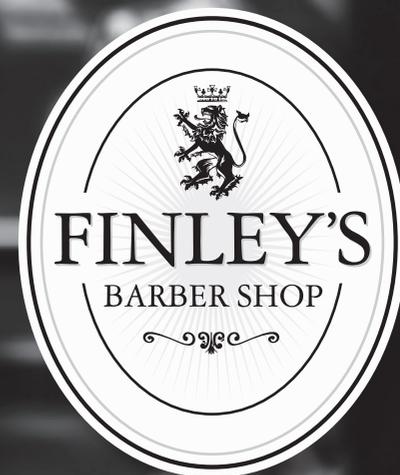
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LAKEWAY: 900 RR 620 S. | (512) 394-8684

VILLAGE OF WESTLAKE: 701 S. Capital Of Texas Hwy. | (512) 520-8326

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Image courtesy Imperial Barber Products



SERVICES

CONTINUED FROM P.65

Best Psychic/Tarot Reader SISTER TEMPERANCE TAROT

Empathic, intuitive, and a mighty good guiding voice: It's everything we could ask for in a therapist, psychologist, and healer – and way more than we could ask for in a tarot reader. There's a reason why renaissance Austinite Angeliska is booked from here to Sunday; she homes in on what it is you truly came to learn, whether it's healing a hurt, clearing the brush from the messy yards of life, or indulging in an intellectually stimulating conversation about the forces of our world.

Contact for address, 512/466-5124,
www.sistertemperance.com

JOHN LEACH

Best Movers TIE: BLUE WHALE; UNICORN

Majestic: That's how you *should* feel when crashing at the end of a long moving day. The fact that burly guys and gals in moving trucks bearing the most magical creatures of the sea (the blue whale, duh) and sylvan glen (*unicorns are real!*) ferry your clutter to and fro is only confirmation that you made the right choice. Go, you. Now get some sleep; tomorrow you start to unpack your collection of troll dolls.

Blue Whale Moving & Storage, 8291 Springdale #100,
512/328-6688, www.bluewhale.com;

Unicorn Moving & Storage, 102 Victor, 512/339-9922,
www.unicornmoving.com



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Best Music Services
STRAIT MUSIC COMPANY

A dream, circa 1981: The flood waters rage into Strait Music on North Lamar. Stevie Ray Vaughan is on guitar. Junior-high kids from O. Henry play along on flute, oboe, and bassoon. A skinny redneck from Anderson High pounds on the snare drum. A tall Latina from Crockett smashes cymbals together. Strait moved away from the flood waters, but echoes of their rental instruments fill the hallways of Austin schools forever. Two locations, endless memories.
 2428 W. Ben White, 512/476-6927;
 13945 Hwy 183 N., 512/918-3743,
www.straitmusic.com

Best Landscape Services
FERTILE GROUND

Pretty much every religion and faith practice mentions tending the land, sowing seeds, and taking care of the Earth and her crops. We'll spare the preaching, but will remind you that gardening and lawn maintenance are not just about keeping up with the Joneses or showing up neighbors – they're about being good stewards. For years, our readers have recognized the folks at Fertile Ground as responsible and reliable stewards, keeping Austin green (or as green as can be under drought restrictions). Sustainability, after all, is not just a buzzword; it's a core belief.
 3303 Breedlove, 512/340-0432,
www.fertilegroundgardens.com

Best Tailor/Alterations
ACE CUSTOM TAILORS

Whether hemlines need lifting or lowering, dresses need taking in or letting out, or alterations just need alteratin', Ace Custom Tailors can do sew much. For stitching, fixing, fastening, and binding, Austinites have long relied upon these master textile talents – for 48 years and counting.
Multiple locations, www.acetailors.com

Best Pet Services
MUD PUPPIES

From professional grooming to DIY wash stations, boarding facilities, and training classes, these friendly folks offer the ultimate in doggy convenience. Drop off your pup for a fun day of playcare and grooming while you work, then fetch him and a bag of his favorite food on your way home. It's a win-win (or woof-woof) for you both. In the end, the *real* winners here are Austin's dog lovers.
 12233 FM 620 N. Ste. 110-A, 512/249-2498;
 2015 E. Riverside Bldg. 9, 512/912-0200,
www.mud-puppies.com



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SERVICES

PHOTOS BY TODD V. WOLFSON



BEST NO. 1 MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE Monica at Wheatsville

Like little rays of sunshine, the front desk folks (don't call 'em "greeters") at Wheatsville Co-op are bright, warm, and ready to help you find your way. All day they answer questions that range from deep ("Where do you keep the ox bile?") to desperate ("What's on today's hot bar???"), always on point and always with a smile. We're sure all of these Helpful Hannahs (and Henrys) on staff are as amazing as the one we seem to encounter the most: Monica, at the original location on Guad. You can count on this shining beacon of brilliance to be exactly what that award title says – likely due to the fact that she's really smart and enthusiastic, but definitely because there is a sign hanging over her head that says so.
Wheatsville Food Co-op, 3101 Guadalupe, 512/478-2667; 4001 S. Lamar, 512/814-2888, www.wheatsville.coop

BEST PHARMACY EXPANSION NEWS Vina Pharmacy and East Austin Medicine Shop

The rumors are true. A real-life, fully functioning pharmacy is finally moving back into the space left vacant by Hospital Pharmacy on MLK in East Austin. A huge vacancy was left in the hearts of neighbors at the passing of longtime owner and pharmacist O.C. Houston. After the shop closed, a certain chain drugstore finagled a deal to keep competing pharms out for two years. Well, two years is up. Bye, blockade. Vina Pharmacy, a totally independent local shop owned by pharmacist Debbie Huynh, whose flagship is located near the mammoth Chinatown shopping center on North Lamar, is going to bring their great, personalized service, medication compounding and flavoring, and (get this) free delivery to some folks who need it very much. 11207-A N. Lamar, 512/977-8844, www.fb.com/vinapharmacy

BEST DIY CONSTRUCTION & DESIGN Krista Ernst, One Handy Mutha'

Krista Ernst is a petite person, a single mom who can wield a saw as easily as Julia Child with a spatula. Her DIY attitude developed into a business called One Handy Mutha'. Her popularity started with projects in Travis Heights and is now spreading throughout the city. She's an expert cabinetmaker, landscaper, house painter, and plumber. Want to learn from her while she works on your project? No problem, she's got you covered. From your yard to your home, little projects to huge ones, Ernst is your gal. 512/585-2107, www.onehandymutha.com

BEST POOCH PROFESSORS The Canine Center for Training & Behavior

After the untimely passing of renowned dog behaviorist Lee Mannix in 2010, his former staff picked up the torch to continue helping dogs and people find inner peace. From basic obedience to behavior consultations, canine sports, and even camping trips, these experts will help you build a stronger bond with your canine buddy. A recent move means the team has 14 acres of space to accomplish their plans for growth and expansion, and offer more classes and seminars to give you the tools and training you need, as they say, to be more fun than dirt. 11400 Hwy. 290 W., 512/721-8496, www.morefunthandirt.com



Not to get political – people's lives are at stake after all – but independent health care is about as rare as a certain political party supporting the affordable variety. Dr. Cheryl Clark-Brown is the rare independent, and her practice is expanding. Her clinic includes and collaborates with acupuncturist Anne Cusick; patients here get the benefit of both Western and Eastern medical philosophies as well as the warm and genuine bedside manners of both practitioners. This year, they've expanded into the next-door offices and added necessary staff to meet growing needs. With neighboring pharmacy East Austin Medicine Shop opening this fall, the area's options for independent health care are looking good. 2113 E. MLK #101, 512/391-9700, www.clarkbrownmd.com, www.austinfamilycareacupuncture.com

BEST ARTSY DENTIST'S OFFICE Alpine Dental, Dr. Merrill & Linda Russell

The waiting room of Alpine Dental near the University of Texas is full to the rafters with paintings and jewelry designed by Linda Russell. Peruse it while you wait for dental hygienist Linda to clean your teeth. Then her husband, Dr. Merrill Russell, will be ready to advise you on the future of your chompers. Did we mention that he doesn't have perfect teeth? Somehow that's reassuring, as is the ever-friendly atmosphere. At least once a year the office turns into an official art show with wine, cheese, and laughter. Ask to be put on the invite list. 2915 Medical Arts, 512/477-9282, www.austinalpinedental.com

BEST BROWS TO MAX THROWING SHADE Brow Bird Austin

Without the right brow line, you've got nothing in the art of throwing shade. Our Lady of Brow Game, Jax, has been waxing, plucking, and tweezing the masters of Austin's shade team for years. Bring to her your overplucked, your drawn-on, your filled-in, your mono, and your bushy, and walk out with a look that can be thrown across a room with panache ... and the most subtle arch. 1107 E. 11th, www.browbird.com



CONTINUED ON P.70

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3810 GATTIS SCHOOL R.D. (NEXT TO GATTI'S PIZZA) 244-3733

CEDAR PARK & GEORGETOWN

920 B. N. AUSTIN AVE (NEXT TO DAYLIGHT DONUT'S) 930-0666
850 N. BELL #304 (NEXT TO OFFICE DEPOT) 258-4990

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4005 W. PARMER LN., UNIT C (NEXT TO IT'S A GRIND COFFEE) 339-0401
13492 RESEARCH BLVD. (183 & ANDERSON MILL RD.) 258-8181
12218 FM 620 N. #101 (620/LAKE CREEK PKWY) 257-0057
11126 JOLLYVILLE RD. (AT BALCONES WOODS DR.) 346-8845

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8400 BRODIE LN. #101 (ACROSS STREET FROM SHIPLEY'S) 291-1588
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SERVICES

CONTINUED FROM P.68

**BEST PUBLIC SERVANTS WHO
MADE SURE LOVE WON**

**Dana DeBeauvoir
and the Travis
County Clerks**

When the SCOTUS decision on same-sex marriage came down on Friday, June 26, euphoric couples with stars and tears in their eyes were eager to exercise their new legal right and tie the knot. But love couldn't win without the Herculean efforts of the Travis County clerks who participated in the jubilation by extending hours to accommodate the 300-plus couples who swarmed the clerks' office that day. Dana DeBeauvoir extended the 5pm closing time and promised that people in line by 6:30pm would have their official paperwork completed, which meant many a clerk didn't clock out until well after 10pm. The office served citizens during the Fourth of July weekend as well, thereby ensuring that love and freedom indeed won in Travis County. 5501 Airport, 512/854-9188, www.traviscountyclerk.org/eclerk



JOHN ANDERSON



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

BEST TRAINING TO KEEP FIDO SAFE IN THE WOODS Winter Kennels

Whether your four-legged best friend is an occasional hiker or ready for field trials, no one wants their first encounter with a venomous snake to be their last. Dogs are naturally curious about snakes and not always naturally fearful. With a little training, a dog can learn real quick that snakes are bad. Different kinds of snakes emit a different odor to dogs; the training can cover the three most common poisonous snakes. It's an inexpensive clinic that can save you and your pet a lot of grief. 2509 DeSoto, 512/263-2416, www.winterkennels.com

**BEST GUITAR TEACHER TO THE STARS
David Pulkingham**

Robert Plant, Patty Griffin, Alejandro Escovedo: The common thread is David Pulkingham. He's become Austin's favorite guitar teacher – if you can get him. When he's not on the road, he's a warm, patient, and inspiring guitar teacher to students of all ages. From Flamenco to rock & roll, the Continental Club to Carnegie Hall, Pulkingham's what famed producer Tony Visconti calls "the complete guitarist." Griffin says, "He scares me, he amazes me, he moves me to tears. Doesn't get better [than Pulkingham] in my book." 512/913-4262, www.davidpulkingham.com

BEST HAIRCUT & BARBER R Salon

When Roxana Wise was growing up in Mexico, she would sneak into her dad's car to go to the barbershop with her brothers. Now, many consider Wise Austin's best-kept secret barber/stylist. R Salon offers fantastic hair services in a quiet, intimate, and chic atmosphere in a small historic house off of South Lamar and Mary. Wise's business partner and sweetheart, Kristina Baker, is the house colorist. Part-time stylist Monika Bohm flies in every few weeks from England to take care of customers. The trio can wrangle your tangles and make you the best-coiffed in town. 1706 Evergreen, 512/447-7467, www.rsalonatx.com



JANA BIRCHUM

**BEST WAY HOME AFTER
A NATURAL DISASTER**

**Paul Kleypas,
Mr. House in a Box**

Paul Kleypas is the dapper manager of the St. Vincent de Paul thrift store on South Congress, but when natural disaster strikes, Kleypas transforms into "Mr. House in a Box." He coordinates delivery of complete, brand-new (not used) sets of furniture and household goods to disaster survivors in Central Texas – sofas, tables, beds, dishes, linens, and everything in between – so they can focus on rebuilding their lives. Kleypas' legendary kindness keeps the program going and the donations flowing. Between the Bastrop County fires of 2011, the Halloween floods of 2013, and Memorial Day weekend floods of 2015, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul will have provided over 1,000 "Houses in a Box" across Central Texas by 2016. St. Vincent de Paul, 1327 S. Congress, 512/442-5652, www.svdpusa.org

**MOST WONDERFUL WORDSMITH
TO WOW YOUR VOWS**

Spike Gillespie

The woman is a wonder of wit and words, so let's lift a few right off her website to share what makes her different from other wedding officiants out there: "The most important thing for you to know about me, and why couples like working with me, is that I never forget *it's not my wedding.*" Spike Gillespie is known for many things, for her Office of Good Deeds Kick Ass Awards, her no-b.s. blog about Austin real estate, her books, and her writings at this very paper in the Nineties, including penning many a "Best of Austin" back in the day. Despite the amount of respect we already have for her, seeing her in action at the Spider Hitched mass gay wedding event, after SCOTUS declared gay marriage the law of the land, slapped us upside the head with renewed adoration. And that's how you'll feel when she reads your vows aloud. You may now kiss the wedding officiant.

www.spikegillespie.com/austin-wedding-officiant



JOHN LEAGH

**BEST THREADING
Chez Shiraz**

The idea of having hot wax around one's eyes can send even the toughest fashionista into convulsions. But, after an unfortunate over-plucking episode that left a set of brows looking like a penciled-on hot mess, we knew we had to find an alternative. A friend suggested threading. (Insert confused look here.) After some research, we were sold! Threading is an ancient method of facial hair control involving, yes, threads. Chez Shiraz is home to Shiraz, a master esthetician – friendly and warm, quick yet precise. Her own goddess beauty is her best billboard. Been going to her ever since; even tossed our tweezers (she insisted). Do your eyebrows relate to this story? Call Shiraz. She'll coach them back to life in no time.

858/922-8500, www.vagaro.com/chezshiraz

**BEST PLACE TO KEEP AN EYE OUT
Blue Moon Optical**

Blue Moon Optical provides a clear path to style and, well, whatever's in front of you with eye exams and a mixture of refurbished and never-before-worn eyeglasses; most frames in the small shop are unworn deadstock from the Forties, Fifties, and Sixties that was never sold by retailers. The shop's owner, Patrick, also repairs, restores, and adjusts eyewear.

121 W. San Antonio St., San Marcos, 512/982-9242, www.blumoonoptical.com

**BEST EYE GYM
The Optometry Center
for Vision Therapy**

Looking at computer screens and reading tiny type strains our eyes and can lead to fatigue and headaches. In children especially, learning problems can be the result of undetected vision problems. That's where the team at the Optometry Center for Vision Therapy offers a real eye opener. Go in for a complimentary consultation and see what trouble your eyes could be causing you. The doctors oversee an individualized in-office program with a vision therapist who sends you home with exercises to help with lazy eye, dyslexia, autism spectrum disorders, and much more. Their program vastly improved the quality of life for one of our visual artists who was unknowingly suffering from eight different eye disorders. Bonus: The staff is incredibly attentive and friendly. Here's (to) looking at you, Austin!

10601 Pecan Park #201, 512/401-0400;
6836 Bee Caves Rd. #100, 512/614-1640,
www.ocvt.info

**BEST SOUTHPOP PRESERVATIONISTS
South Austin Pop
Culture Center**

Preservationists of Austin's ruggedly eclectic heritage, "SouthPop" serves as the pre-eminent museum of our city's music culture. Chief among collections of exalted ephemera are works of poster artists, from Jim Franklin's Vulcan-ic psychedelia and Armadillo Art Squad sketches to colorful prints by Kozik and Kuhn. Concert photography and musical artifacts are also safeguarded at the Planet K annex, outside of which a memorial wall honors departed local heroes. "Open by appointment or by chance," SouthPop is operated by veteran culture guardians Leea Mechling and Henry Gonzalez. Ask about the three numbers that unlock the universe: 709.

1516-B S. Lamar, 512/440-8318,
www.southpop.org

**BEST HYDROFROLIC
Organic Spa**

The poet/philosopher Lao Tzu may have put it best: "Nothing is softer or more flexible than water, yet nothing can resist it." If you'd like for your skin to be as soft, flexible, and irresistible, may we recommend putting your face in the good hands of the folks at Organic Spa for one of their relaxing and reviving Hydrafacials? The treatment involves hydradermabrasion: a tiny scrubby at the end of a long, vacuum cleaner-like apparatus that utilizes water and potions and is run all over the face, back and forth, to gently clean the skin – and oh, dear lord, does it feel sooooo good! In addition, this full-service spa offers a variety of skin-care, hair-removal, and massage options to round out a full day of pampering.

12850 Research, 512/627-7243,
www.organicpsamassage.com

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Best Hats/Boots ALLEN'S BOOTS

The folks at Allen's became purveyors of boots, hats, and other fine Western haberdashery on South Congress long before anyone ever thought to call it SoCo. Now, the store is one of the definite retail attractions in a nationally known shopping destination. Visitors from all over stop in to shop at the South Austin flagship and at the sister store in Round Rock for a distinctive, wearable memory of Austin, Texas. 1522 S. Congress, 512/447-1413; 1051 I-35, Round Rock, 512/310-7600, www.allensboots.com

Best Shoe Selection NORDSTROM

Shoobies worth their salt know that Nordstrom's shoe selection is second to none: dependably on-trend and high-quality, featuring classics and unexpected twists on classics, as well as hot seasonal designs. Mentioned less often is that Nordy's well-trained shoe pros know how to make a shopping experience fun, informative, and personal. Stunning product and stellar service make a great pair.

Multiple locations, www.nordstrom.com

Best Thrift Store GOODWILL

Goodwill is always a pretty accurate reflection of what people in the area are/were/will soon be wearing. That's why you can go to almost any Goodwill in Austin and find vintage dresses, cowboy boots, band T-shirts, and quirky costume jewels galore. While you're at it, you can grab a few books, some dishes, and a couch – though you may want a friend to help you with that.

Multiple locations, www.austingoodwill.org

Best Vintage ROOM SERVICE VINTAGE

With the retro revival that's been in full swing for the past few decades, you'd think that Austin's supply of midcentury treasures would have already run dry. This is far from true at Room Service Vintage, where you can find everything from an ugly-cute Seventies couch and nudie girls glassware to the perfect Forties dress that's totally gonna get you some action at your friend's wedding this weekend. Every visit to Room Service is more of an experience than a shopping trip, and it's a place that's always difficult to leave empty-handed.

107 E. North Loop, 512/451-1057, www.roomservicevintage.com

Best Furnishings/Home Best Costume Shop LUCY IN DISGUISE

Come as you are, leave who you want to be. This staple in the heart of SoCo is where you turn for those most outlandish bets you lost, "ironic" themed parties, and stalking your ex. There's racks-upon-racks-upon-racks of costumes you can rent or purchase from every genre/hallucination/vortex imaginable. Slutty shark, anyone? 1506 S. Congress, 512/444-2002, www.lucyindisguise.com

Best New Local Business RABBIT FOOD GROCERY

The term may be used to belittle folks who eat healthy, but there's no shame in Rabbit Food's cruelty-free product game, and this little new grocery nook on South First specializes in food that won't make you barf once you find out where it came from. Nobody got skinned, murdered, or had poison poured into their eyes for what you are about to consume. The way we eat says a lot about us. Sure, it's tough learning new ways to see the world and take in nourishment, but it sure helps when places like Rabbit Food Grocery are conscious and convenient. 2210 S. First, 512/666-8638, www.rabbitfoodgrocery.com



Best Bookstore BOOKPEOPLE

Two score and five years ago our Grokkers brought forth on this continent a new BookPeople Nation, conceived in Literacy, and dedicated to the proposition that all readers are created equal...ly jazzed about the latest hardback in print. There's no greater testament to the enduring allure of books than the vibrant culture around the written word nourished here. To wit: Their recent Carnival of Books offered everything under the Big Book Top this side of gap-toothed carnies: Book Pong, Predicting Your Literary Future, a Fall Author Scavenger Hunt, and so much more. By the way, this year's fall author list of visiting book signers includes Carrie Brownstein and Chelsea Clinton. The state of the nation is strong 603 N. Lamar, 512/472-5050, www.bookpeople.com



Best Naughty Business FORBIDDEN FRUIT

The grande dame – or better, grande dom – of adult boutiques has been keeping our city kinky since 1981, and continues to be a favorite thanks to its safe environment and friendly staff. People of all sexual orientations and gender identities rely on this Austin institution for the best in adult toys and intimacy-enhancing workshops, and you won't find a better place to stock up on bachelorette party favors and props. 108 E. North Loop, 512/453-8090, www.forbiddenfruit.com

Best Hardware Store BREED & CO.

You may see the familiar denizens of Breed & Co. donning new red vests, marking the transition to a new "family of retailers," but fret not! The things we love about Breed & Co. are still there, indicating that perhaps new umbrella corp. Ace Hardware is open to taking some pointers from the true local pros. Human-scaled and humble is how we like our hardware stores, and Breed & Co. still has that in spades. 718 W. 29th, 512/474-6679; 3663 Bee Caves Rd., 512/328-3960, www.breedandco.com

Best Garden Supply Store NATURAL GARDENER

Voted "Best of Austin" over 10 times and a three-time winner of *Today's Garden Center's* "Revolutionary 100 Garden Centers" in the nation, Natural Gardener is an eight-acre paradise tucked away on Old Bee Caves Road. From soil to plants, and everything organic, these folks know it all. Be sure to ask about John Dromgoole's famous Lady Bug line of products. 8648 Old Bee Caves Rd., 512/288-6113, www.naturalgardeneraustin.com

Best Neighborhood Grocery/Convenience TIE: WHEATSVILLE; FRESH PLUS

Though it boasts upward of 17,000 members, Wheatsville still retains its "quaint local co-op" feel. And with a selection of local produce and goods for every diet type, it's the perfect place to shop whether you're on a juice cleanse or looking for some vegan dessert. Fresh Plus has roots in Austin dating back to 1927. With health food nestled alongside bigger brands, it's the human-scaled grocery for Austinites who like some balance in their pantry. As their site says, Fresh Plus is the place where "you can get your Frosted Flakes and gluten-free snacks in the same place." Fresh Plus, multiple locations, www.freshplusaustin.com; Wheatsville Food Co-op, 3101 Guadalupe, 512/478-2667; 4001 S. Lamar, 512/814-2888, www.wheatsville.coop

Best Grocery Store H-E-B

It's like H-E-B can read our minds (and wallets) with those Meal Deals. Primo Picks turn us on to food and products we've never heard of, like Jalapino White Wine. Short on time? Grab a rotisserie chicken or some sushi made fresh daily. The bakery has individual to-die-for tres leches cakes with fruit on top and seasonal touches like pumpkin in the fall. Need some lawn ornaments? You're gonna need a second cart. Multiple locations, www.heb.com

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CONTINUED ON P.74

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SHOPPING

CONTINUED FROM P.73

Best Farmers' Market TEXAS FARMERS MARKET AT MUELLER

Sunday morning shopping under the historic Browning Hangar is the see-and-be-seen scene for the young families of the Mueller development and surrounding neighborhoods. The stroller brigade is out in force with kids and dogs, browsing the impressive array of fine quality produce, meats, and cheeses from local farmers, ranchers, and food artisans and then some. It's the most convenient place in town to be a locavore.

Browning Hangar, 4550 Mueller Blvd., 512/363-5700, www.texasfarmersmarket.org

Best Antiques/Collectibles UNCOMMON OBJECTS

Our first impulse was to liken Uncommon Objects to our grandma's attic, but on further reflection, no single grandma would have a collection of trinkets, costume jewelry, cabinet cards, midcentury furniture, glassware, Victorian hair art, etc., etc., this varied. Our readers know Uncommon Objects offers the perfect range for sprucing up your Austin abode, or rummaging for unique props for more ... artistic endeavors. 1512 S. Congress, 512/442-4000, www.uncommonobjects.com

Best Pet Store TOMLINSON'S

Not only does Tomlinson's have an array of food, toys, and other pet accoutrements, but they host events every weekend, including adoptions, low-cost vaccination clinics, painless anesthesia-free teeth cleanings, and trainings. Their customer rewards program featuring their Pet Picks special offers and a 10% discount with no tricks or strings attached is pretty nice, too.

Multiple locations, www.tomlinsons.com

Best DVD Rental/Purchase VULCAN VIDEO

Whether you're feeling independent and looking for an Andrew Bujalski film, brushing up on your French with a reel of Rohmer, poking the funny bone with Jerry Lewis, or just wanting to rent *The Wedding Singer* for the 1,000th time, Vulcan Video has it all and then some. Everything from the rarest of the rare to the newest of the new is at your fingertips. Vulcan is every movie lover's dream, and Austin is lucky enough to have two fabulous locations: North Loop and South Congress. Get to rentin'! 100-A North Loop, 512/478-5325; 112 W. Elizabeth, 512/326-2629, www.vulcanvideo.com



Best Clothing/Accessories SOLA

Now in its lucky 13th year, SoLa is an Austin fashionista's go-to dream. And if you can't dream it, they offer a free personal stylist service and their "frequent flyer" SoLanista Club to help you manifest it. Owner Coral Smith houses a variety of styles for every girl from classic to boho to sleek. SoLa is all about the right mix of fun, feminine, and chic.

2005 S. Lamar, 512/441-7370, www.solastyle.com



Best Music Gear STRAIT MUSIC

Whether you're looking for new guitar strings or want to try your hand at banjo, Strait Music has all the gear to launch your rock star rocket. Friendly staff immediately greets customers as they walk into this toy store for musicians (or those of us who think we are musicians). The employees are helpful but don't breathe high-pressure sales tactics down your neck. Their ability to be informative without being overbearing allows one to pluck away at "Stairway to Heaven" without missing a note. Whether a beginner or Stevie Ray reincarnate, your ability to shred will be well-equipped at Strait.

2428 W. Ben White, 512/476-6927; 13945 Hwy. 183 N., 512/918-3743, www.straitmusic.com

Best Record/CD Store WATERLOO RECORDS

Our world is full of change: Albums no longer drop on Tuesday, vinyl has made more than a hipster-ite comeback, and musicians are reinvesting in their cover art. And while we feel all our feels about such inevitable entropic flow, we can't help but be calmed walking into Waterloo. Here's a place that gets it, that holds space for us to just wander, explore, discover, and reconnect to the music.

600-A N. Lamar, 512/474-2500, www.waterloorecords.com

Best Video Game Rental/ Purchase GAME OVER VIDEOGAMES

In a world where products increasingly live in the cloud, there's something to be said for a physical artifact, and Game Over Videogames knows it. It's found success over the last decade and grown from one store and one employee to a dozen locations. The community built around Game Over is evident at the store's annual Classic Game Fest.

Multiple locations, www.gameovervideogames.com

Best Comic Book Store AUSTIN BOOKS & COMICS

When you need a massive scale model of the Hulk watching you shop for your favorite comic, graphic novel, or other nerd-tastic memorabilia, Austin Books & Comics is a good place to go. Not only do they have aisle after shining aisle of DC and Marvel classics, but local authors and publishers are also given the space to catch a wandering eye. Who knows, there might even be a coloring book or a new favorite Batman storyline to Ooooff! Pow! Bip! or strike a fancy. 5002 N. Lamar, 512/454-4197, www.austinbooks.com

Best Computer Store DISCOUNT ELECTRONICS

Much more than just a computer store, this emporium of affordable electronics is a one-stop shop for your techiest plug-and-play needs. From anti-virus software and smart watches to gaming accessories and even drones, you will find them here. If you need something repaired, look no further than our Services section to see the 2015 Best Computer Repair winner, too – their technicians are honest and can make most any repair, plus you'll get a diagnostic within 24 hours. Multiple locations, www.discountelectronics.com



Best Vape Shop ALL ABOUT VAPOR

C'mon, make the switch. All About Vapor has starter kits for new converts, binders full of flavors, and a steeping room in the back with leather couches and enough upscale e-juice to fill a Jacuzzi. And their friendly neighborhood "nicologists" will brew a special e-juice with your name on it. Seriously, when was Marlboro ever that attentive?

4631 Airport #122, 512/452-8273; 2000 N. Mays #115, 512/671-8273, www.allaboutvapor.com

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SHOPPING

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www.hollandphoto.com

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BEST SUGAR NOSTALGIA Central Market South

There's not much you can do with that fiver your grandma gives you on your 30th birthday. Sweet as her note is ("Don't spend it all in one place!"), these days, that Abe Lincoln don't buy much. But at Central Market South, some smart buyer has nudged nostalgic nuggets of old-school candy next to the hifalutin (and costly) chocolates and caramels. Two paces away from the \$7 Vosges bar: The Cow Tales are 2/\$1, and the Slo Pokes, Sky Bars, and Sugar Daddies are all under two bucks. Necco Wafers (original, assorted, or chocolate – your choice) are the same price as a Clark Bar (\$1.59) and the Haribo Gold-Bears and Roulettes are at least a dollar less than that. So tweet at your grandma (she has Twitter, right?) #thanks and #blessed with a photo of your stash.
4477 S. Lamar, 512/899-4300,
www.centralmarket.com

BEST OVERLOOKED WHOLE FOODS PARKING SPACE Downtown, Level 2, right by the escalator doors

You've circled and circled the steamy, barbecue-scented netherworld under the Downtown Whole Foods. You finally find a parking spot in the hinterlands of Level 2. You grab your reusable bags and follow a winding route through the hulking SUV hybrids. You're almost to the sliding glass door and that first frigid blast of grocery store AC when you notice, out of the corner of your eye, a suspiciously empty space. Less than 15 feet from the door. It is neither a disabled parking spot nor specially designated in any way. *D'oh!* Despite the infernal circling, you – and usually lots of other shoppers – missed it. Next time
525 N. Lamar, 512/476-1206,
www.wholefoodsmarket.com

BEST TOWER OF HYDRATION Texas Rain & H₂Orange

Despite the clear downside of landfill overload, bottled water has become seemingly synonymous with certain events where hydrating is a must: sports events, road trips, outdoor festivals, and long, protracted meetings. Why not mitigate the impact? Texas Rain's triple-filtered, fresh, real Texas rainwater – some of the best-tasting bottled water available, we think – comes in 100% biodegradable bottles. As an added bit of Bevo bonus, the company is also behind the renowned and elegant UT tower water bottles modeled after that fixture of our city skyline. H₂Orange is a pretty darned fine souvenir to put in that care package you are mailing to Aunt Mae or any Texas Ex expats.
125 Kellar Rd. Ste. 1-B, Smithville, 512/772-1981, www.texas-rain.net

BEST VAPE SHOP NAME PUN Come & Vape It

Counter to what one might assume about crusty journalists, some of us in the office are completely naive about this vape thing. Some of us were never even smokers. But others puff around this place like the little engine that could, sneaking an inhale here, creating mountains of butts there. Now that there is a non-burning alternative to cigarettes, some staffers are *all* about that vapor. We even added a vape category in the Readers Poll this year. Also compelling: As with the noble food truck, vape shops name themselves with great puns. And for our Texas currency, nothing gets us more misty than the name of that little shop on E. Seventh: Come and Vape It. As if answering the call of those rugged Texians with that cannon: Do you dare?
2200 E. Seventh, 512/840-0609, www.fb.com/comeandvapeitaustin

TODD V. WOLFSON

BEST BEER ADVISER Sam Rozani of Sunrise Mini Mart

In this craft ale boom, it's easy to have a good beer selection in stock. But knowing them all? Knowing what seasonals are coming, what rare brews are hidden gems? That's hard. Tougher still is knowing not just your market, but each and every regular who comes through the door, what they like, what they love, what you should hold in the back for that one customer who will really appreciate it. That's what makes Sam Rozani the genius of the growler and the professor of the pint, the best friend an Austin beer aficionado ever had.
7401 Burnet Rd., 512/459-0746





TODD V. WOLFSON

BEST NEST EGG

Bower Bird Antiques & Curiosities

Named after a fowl that creates its nest to attract a mate, Bower Bird transforms trash into treasure. Owner Katinka Pinka can be found most days on her workbench inside the store, stringing a chain through a hole in an animal's tooth or wrapping wire around a quartz crystal. Bower Bird is a living *I Spy* book: "I spy, with my little eye, something ... vintage!" You'll have to be more specific than that. Shelves and hangers are lined with vintage clothing and home decor. There are enough knickknacks to keep a person guessing for hours. 215 N. Comanche St., San Marcos, www.curiousbowerbird.wix.com/bower

BEST GLUTEN-FREE MIXES

Bona Dea

In this day and age of food sensitivities, the list of food choices and labeling can overwhelm: gluten-free, organic, non-GMO Thankfully, Bona Dea makes it simple. St. Edward's University alumnae Melissa Robinson, Ashley Blake, Joanie Cahill, and Jenni Ferguson make up this team of entrepreneurial women with not only health in mind, but social consciousness as well. Their locally owned enterprise offers delicious bagged mixes for bread, pancakes, muffins, even scones (soooooooooooooooooones!). If you're not the type to go to H-E-B and pick up a baking mix and whip it up yourself, then next time you're at Hopdoddy or Kerbey Lane Cafe, try their gluten-free bread made with Bona Dea grains. 512/580-9964, www.bonadeaglutentfree.com

BEST "HEY, ARE WE IN HOUSTON?"

Chinatown Center

It's not Bellaire Boulevard, it's North Lamar. Perhaps quaint in comparison to the Chinatowns of other burgs, North Austin's Chinatown Center ably reps Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, and now (Why, hello there, Fit, Japanese two-dollar store!) Japanese businesses. Anchored by the MT Supermarket – where herbs and seafood are cut-rate, and in our not-so-humble opinion, the only place in town to shop, really shop, for a rice cooker – and filled out by a bevy of other restaurants, bakeries, foot therapy spas, bubble tea shops, video and music stores, jewelry stores, and nail and hair salons. You could eat and shop and pamper all day. And we do. We do. 10901 N. Lamar, 512/502-8887, www.chinatownaustin.com

BEST YOO-HOO ALTERNATIVE

JuiceLand's Chocolate Hemp Milk

We're happy to report that JuiceLand finally came up with a solution for all that hemp we had lying around. They've gone and concocted some of the best-tasting 14 grams of protein-blasting chocolate milk we've ever guzzled – and it's made out of hemp! More importantly, it's just the right combo of smooth and grit, sweet and snap to satisfy when only chocolate milk will do: right before work, after lunch, post-workout, and during prom. Plus, as a grab & go, it's available in local retail outlets as part of their new line of fresh bottled juices. The best thing? It's missing exactly that ingredient that made many of us give up chocolate milk in the first place: That cow don't moo. JuiceLand offices, 415 E. St. Elmo, 512/363-5760, www.juicelandaustin.com

CONTINUED ON P.78



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SHOPPING

CONTINUED FROM P.77

BEST CHOCOLATE BAR MADE IN AUSTIN SRSLY Chocolate's Oaxacan Espresso

For those who find pleasure in food that is not only delicious, but ethical, SRSLY Chocolate should top lists of local favorites. Married business partners Bob Williamson and Robin Simoneaux-Williamson make their chocolate with Fair Trade cocoa beans sourced from a cooperative of Dominican farmers. Plus, SRSLY Chocolate is vegan, and Bob and Robin are two of the most delightful chocolatiers in town. The Oaxacan Espresso is a must-try. You can find small bars of this local delicacy in the checkout line at Wheatsville Co-op and other stores. 850/270-8572, www.srslychocolate.com



BEST PLUMING THRIFT

Thrifty Chicks Vintage and the Thrifty Peacock

We stumbled upon Thrifty Chicks Vintage last year, when it was on Burnet Road, and were smitten by the curatorial sensibilities of the two women who opened the place. When we saw the prices, we were all wallets-open and stone-cold in love. Midcentury end tables bumped up against preppy armchairs and original paintings of sad clowns and *The Angel of Leslie* (Cochran, we think). Since then, the Chicks have moved and opened an, um, sister store that features vintage women's clothing in – be still, our hearts – sizes 0-32, as well as a nice batch of men's apparel. Their collective good eye is apparent in the selection – top-notch throwback clothing, Coach and Louis Vuitton bags, collectible figures, toys for kids – and the prices range from bargainistic to quite-reasonable-for-mint-designer-vintage. Lovers of the high-low want to shake a tail feather to both stores.

Thrifty Chicks Vintage, 6701 N. Lamar, 512/467-7575; *the Thrifty Peacock*, 1736 W. Anderson, 512/467-4784, www.thriftychicksvintage.com



BEST ANNUAL SALE

Oat Willie's Indian Bedspread Sale

For generations, Oat Willie's has been outfitting new apartments, guest rooms, and dorms with Eastern-influenced color. The small chain, mostly known for "smoking accessories," is the likely answer to any word-association game when folks are asked what's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the phrase "Indian bedspreads." It's *the* place in town to get them. And what variety! The palette of colors and array of designs have expanded greatly through the years, and everyone knows they also make great wall, doorway, and table coverings as well. The annual sale knocks anywhere from 20-50% off the regular price and always happens at the beginning of the school year. If you are reading this the week this issue comes out, you have a few days left! (Sale ends Sept. 15.)

617 W. 29th, 512/482-0630; 1931 E. Oltorf, 512/448-3313; 9505 Burnet Rd., 512/836-6287, www.oatwillies.com

BEST INSIDER HOOCH

Wiggy's Liquor Store

This gem of a liquor store has been an insider secret for decades, nestled in Clarksville on West Sixth Street inside a building over 100 years old. Wiggy's has an entire room devoted to wine, and not one, but two walk-in humidors. Big deal? Well, considering that Wiggy's is an independent business (owned by a former manager of 25 years) that effortlessly straddles the fence between extremely knowledgeable and friendly (read: unpretentious) service, it's easy to see why Wiggy's is a beloved Austin institution. A real neighborhood joint for both the snob and novice. 1104 N. Lamar, 512/479-0045, www.wiggysliquor.com

BEST LITTLE (HUGE) GUN STORE IN TEXAS

McBride's Guns

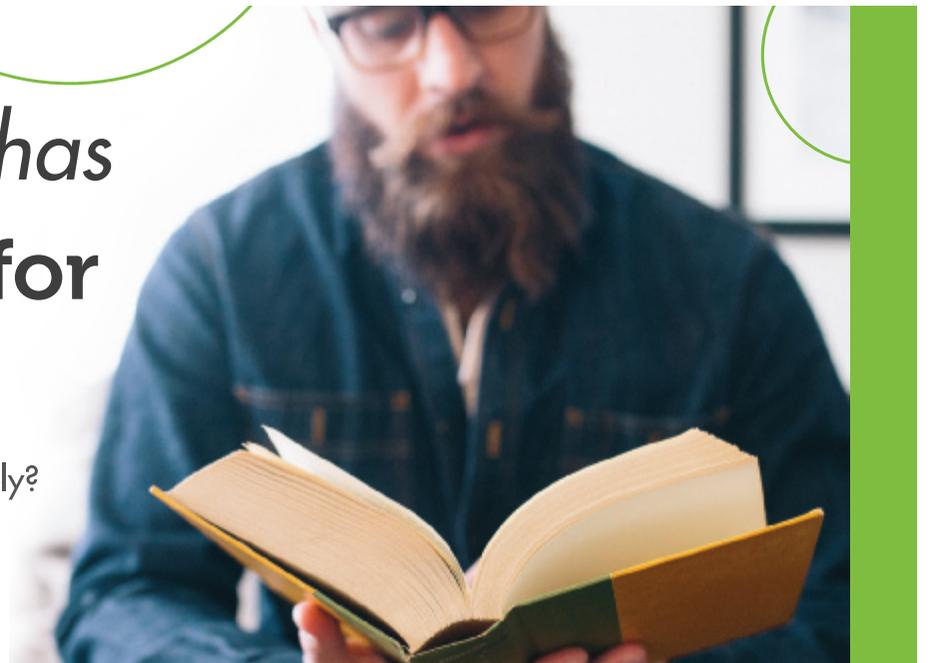
The problem with trying to buy a gun in a big box is that you *feel* like you're in a big box, a vast space, surrounded by products without any guidance, often in far-away places like Buda. Look no further than McBride's Guns just off Lamar & 29th Street, a local landmark in business for over 50 years, boasting "one of the largest firearms inventories in the nation." Friendly and helpful employees promptly greet customers and are happy to offer advice or fulfill specific requests. Plus they employ diligent and knowledgeable gunsmiths on-staff and on-duty during all business hours to maintain those firearms. McBride's offers reasonable prices, and they buy and trade. No need to get stuck in traffic every time you need bullets. 2915 San Gabriel, 512/472-3532, www.mcbridesguns.com

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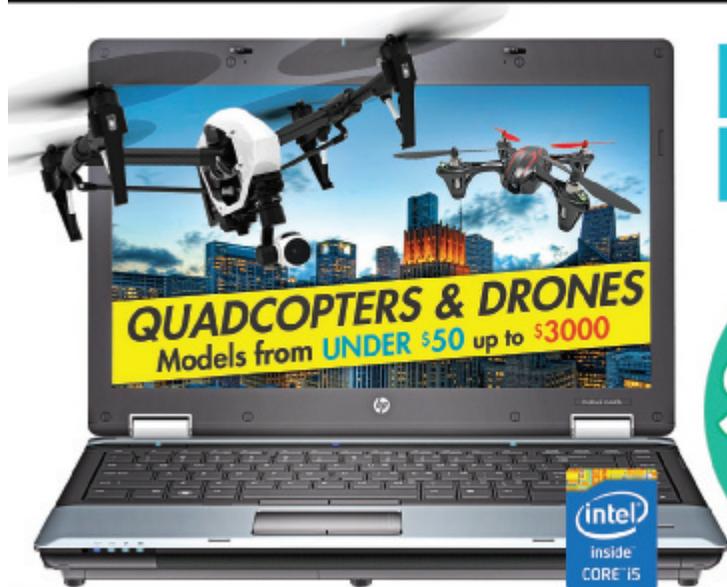
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south austin 512.637.7037

round rock 512.637.7051

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