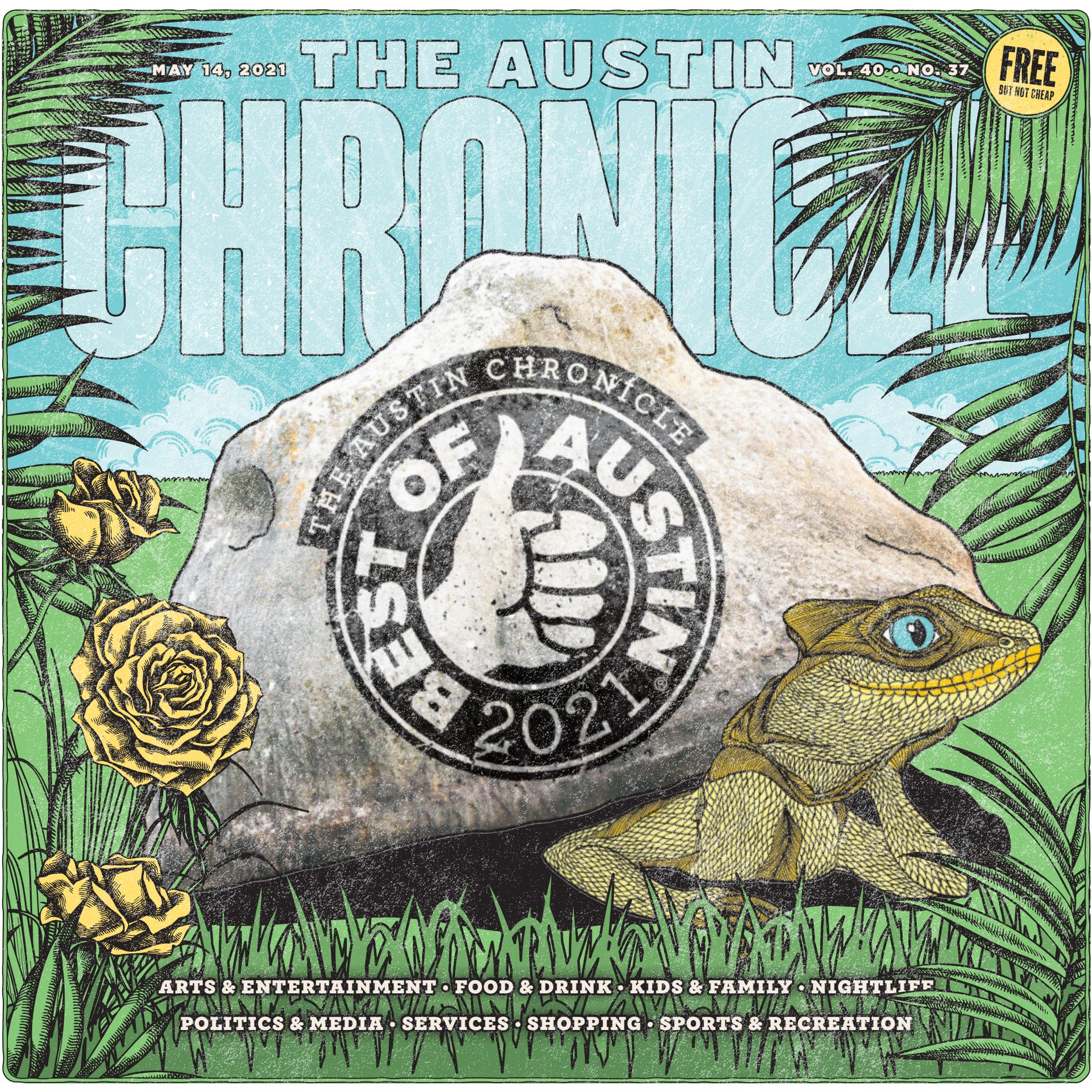


MAY 14, 2021

THE AUSTIN

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COVER BY ZEKE BARBARO / GETTY IMAGES

The 31st Annual "Best of Austin" Awards

A note from the editor **BY KIMBERLEY JONES**

Weird year, huh? Technically, it's been 16 months since our last annual (ahem) "Best of Austin" issue. We celebrated this issue's 30th anniversary back in November 2019. I don't have to tell you why we skipped 2020 altogether.

Even with the long break, I wondered if it was too soon to revive our "Best of Austin" awards, while we're still in the midst of a global pandemic, still grappling with so much loss and trauma. How do you begin to talk about "best" when we've just been through the worst year of our lives?

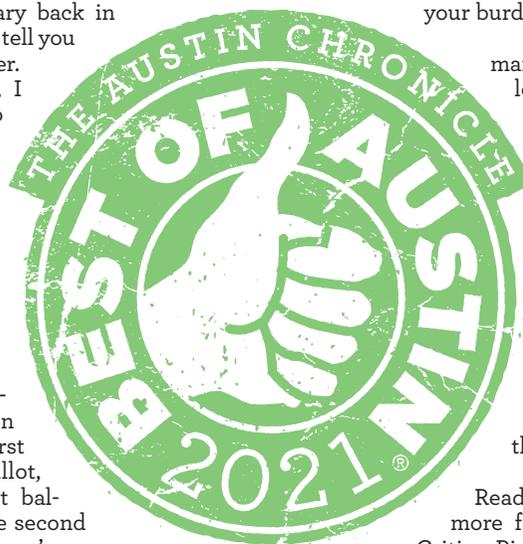
It was our readers, in fact, that convinced me the timing was right. You voted in our Readers Poll in droves: first the write-in, nominating ballot, and then the second, finalist ballot. 39,200 people voted in the second round – the most engagement we've ever had by a long shot. When I read the comments left in this round, explaining why you were casting particular votes, I truly got it: that you are so grateful.

That every ballot cast was a thank-you – to an artist, a restaurant, a nonprofit, a plumber, and so many other people and places that lifted your spirits, made your burdens a little lighter.

35,000 comments. That's how many comments you left. That is a lot of gratitude, y'all.

"Makes me feel less alone and feel like part of a community." A reader left that comment about the *Chronicle*, and it moved me in ways I can hardly describe. A sense of community hasn't always been so easy to come by during these many months of social isolation and upheaval. But it's what we're always striving for here at the paper, and what I think you'll find in these pages.

This year we celebrate 206 Readers Poll winners, almost 700 more finalists, and an additional 102 Critics Picks awarded by *Chronicle* staff and contributors. Whether you've lived in Austin for one day or 50 years, I guarantee you'll find something in here that speaks to you. ■



Want to
discover more?

Search our archives for 30 years
of "Best of Austin" awards at
austinchronicle.com/best-of-austin.

AUSTINCHRONICLE.COM/BEST-OF-AUSTIN

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Readers Poll

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



JANA BIRCHUM

ART GALLERY

Ao5 Gallery

FINALISTS: Martha's Contemporary, Prizer Arts and Letters, SAGE Studio, West Chelsea Contemporary

"Cool spot, cool art." — VICTORIA RODRIGUEZ

3005 S. LAMAR, WWW.A05GALLERY.COM

MUSEUM

The Blanton Museum of Art

FINALISTS: Bullock Texas State History Museum, The Contemporary Austin, LBJ Presidential Library, Mexic-Arte Museum

"The Blanton shows diverse collections of art that open minds and eyes."

— SALLY VAN SICKLE

200 E. MLK, WWW.BLANTONMUSEUM.ORG

VISUAL ARTIST

Mila Sketch

FINALISTS: Gabe Langholtz, Curtis Ramstedt

"Mila is an amazing artist who shares her talents with underserved communities. She deserves this!" — QUANA SMITH

WWW.MILASKETCH.COM

PERFORMANCE SPACE/ THEATRE

Paramount Theatre

FINALISTS: The Vortex, Zach Theatre

"It's Austin's most historic and most beautiful performance space, and the programming is wonderfully eclectic."

— MARK WEISS

713 CONGRESS, WWW.AUSTINTHEATRE.ORG

THEATRE DIRECTOR

Lisa Scheps

FINALISTS: Rudy Ramirez, Dave Steakley

"Hardest working person in the theatre world." — TED BRANSON

GROUND FLOOR THEATRE, 979 SPRINGDALE #122,
WWW.GROUNDFOORTHEATRE.ORG

ACTRESS

Liz Beckham

FINALISTS: Lee Eddy, Savannah Welch

"Her work is always so centered in truth. I've never been disappointed."

— VALONEECIA TOLBERT

WWW.LIZBECKHAM.COM

ACTOR

Matthew McConaughey

FINALISTS: Judd Farris, Jared Padalecki, Marc Pouhé

"A Texas-sized personality that's plenty weird enough for Austin." — BRADFORD FULTS

WWW.TWITTER.COM/MCCONAUGHEY

CLASSICAL MUSICIAN

Graham Reynolds

FINALISTS: Javier Jara, Anton Nel, Ammon Taylor

"Graham is excellent across disciplines and is a giver." — LISA SCHEPS

WWW.GRAHAMREYNOLDS.COM

DANCER/CHOREOGRAPHER

Allison Orr

FINALISTS: Serese Brown, Stephen Mills, Kelsey Oliver

"Allison is an inventor. She is creating art that has never been done before." — LIZ FERGUSON

FORKLIFT DANCEWORKS, 2023 E. CESAR CHAVEZ,
WWW.FORKLIFTDANCEWORKS.ORG

COMEDY TROUPE

Esther's Follies

FINALISTS: The Latino Comedy Project, Master Pancake, Victrola

"Esther's Follies will go down in history as one of the most iconic things about Austin."

— LOIS RODRIGUEZ

525 E. SIXTH, WWW.ESTHERSFOLLIES.COM

STAND-UP COMIC

Matt Bearden

FINALISTS: Mac Blake, Chris Cubas, Ralphie Hardesty

"Matt Bearden slays when he's on stage and off. Class act with a heart of gold and a mouth of not gold." — MATT MARTINO

WWW.MATTBEARDEN.COM

COMEDY CLUB/VENUE

Cap City Comedy Club

FINALISTS: ColdTowne Theater, Esther's Follies, The Hideout Theatre, The Velveeta Room

"Cap City was home for a lot of people for many years. Here's to hoping the new Cap can walk the walk."

— RAE WARD

COMEDY/STORYTELLING SHOWCASE

Moontower Comedy Festival

FINALISTS: BedPost Confessions, ColdTowne ThrowDowne, Campfire Queer Storytime, Mortified Austin

"They bring in big name talent and it's always a great time." — EVA METEYE

WWW.AUSTINTHEATRE.ORG/MOONTOWER-COMEDY

FICTION WRITER

Sarah Bird

FINALISTS: Owen Egerton, Amy Gentry, Loria Mendoza

"Prolific and wonderful storyteller. An Austin treasure." — LIBBY DOGGETT

WWW.SARAHBIRDBOOKS.COM

NONFICTION WRITER

Kathy Valentine

FINALISTS: Simone DeAngelis, Brad Rockwell, Lawrence Wright

"She has shared her life openly and with such powerful grace."

— BILLIE DEVINE

WWW.KATHYVALENTINE.COM

GRAPHIC ARTIST

Dear Ninja

FINALISTS: Billie Buck, Dan Grissom, Cayce Matteoli, Mike Mitchell

"Matthew Rodriguez's (Dear Ninja) art is by turns funny, profound, and subversive."

— MARSHALL LEE

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/DEARNINJA

COMIC CREATOR/GRAPHIC NOVELIST

Ben Sargent

FINALISTS: Chloe Brailsford, Donny Cates, Drew Edwards

"Ben Sargent deserves a Presidential Medal for his decades of brilliance."

— SUSAN FARRELL

WWW.TEXASOBSERVER.ORG/AUTHOR/BEN-SARGENT

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JANA BIRCHUM

MURALIST

Zuzu Perkal

FINALISTS: Kimie Flores, Chris Rogers

"Zuzu has filled this city with color, light, and positivity. It's great seeing her work scattered through the streets of Austin."

— RUBEN ESQUIVEL

WWW.IHAVEPINKHAIR.COM

NEW BOOK BY AN AUSTIN WRITER

Greenlights by Matthew McConaughey

FINALISTS: *Shades of the Deep Blue Sea* by Jack Woodville London, *The Life and Times of Alberto G. Garcia* by Brad Rockwell, *All I Ever Wanted* by Kathy Valentine

"I loved listening to McConaughey read his story. From the heart, honest, funny, and a great self-reflection." — ALEX FURLONG

BURLESQUE PERFORMER

Ginger Snaps

FINALISTS: Serese Brown, Zenyth Gale, Chola Magnolia

"Amazing. Every. Time. Every costume, every performance is incredible and unique! Diverse performances and an incredible talent and person." — KEI HOFFMANN

WWW.GINGERSNAPSBURLESQUE.COM

DRAG PERFORMER

Louisiana Purchase

FINALISTS: Alexander Danger, Miss Kitty Litter ATX

"Everything about Louisiana is fire. Her pivot to online performance and video during the pandemic was brilliant and a great distraction from 2020, and she's an actual goddess."

— SARAH MARLOFF

WWW.LOUISIANAPURCHASE.COM

DRAG SHOWCASE

Drag Brunch at Irene's

FINALISTS: Austin International Drag Festival, Boiz of Austin, Die Felicia!, Poo Poo Platter

"Rhonda puts on a show like no other! Watching her perform to a sold out crowd is always a treat."

— JULIET ROSSO

506 WEST AVE., WWW.IRENEAUSTIN.COM

LOCAL VIDEO GAME DEVELOPER

Blizzard

FINALISTS: Bioware, Chicken Waffle, Retro Studios

"Diablo is the bestest game ever. FACT!"

— BRYAN SLOANE

WWW.BLIZZARD.COM

MOVIE THEATRE

Alamo Drafthouse

FINALISTS: AFS Cinema, Blue Starlite Mini Urban Drive-In, Violet Crown Cinema

"Austin had a cathedral to film and fun and all that's fantastic. It was the Ritz and I so often worshipped there."

— OWEN EGERTON

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.DRAFTHOUSE.COM/AUSTIN

2020-21 AUSTIN MUSIC AWARDS MERCH AVAILABLE NOW.
AUSTINCHRONICLE.COM/STORE

THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

FILM FESTIVAL/SERIES

SXSW Film Festival

FINALISTS: aGLIFF, Austin Film Festival, Fantastic Fest, Paramount Summer Classic Film Series

"This year's virtual festival was amazing!"
— SHANNON SEDWICK

WWW.SXSW.COM/FESTIVALS/FILM

FILMMAKER

Richard Linklater

FINALISTS: Owen Egerton, Chinwe Okorie, Robert Rodriguez, Ya'Ke Smith

"Always thinking outside the box. Always coming up with something new."

— CHRIS HUMPHREY

WWW.DETOURFILM.COM

OUTDOOR FESTIVAL

ACL Festival

FINALISTS: Austin Trail of Lights, Pecan Street Festival

"No contest. ACL always brings their A game, and there are choices for everyone."

— MARY FORMA

ZILKER PARK, WWW.ACLFESTIVAL.COM

MOST INNOVATIVE PIVOT

Austin Film Society's Sundance Film Festival drive-in series

FINALISTS: ColdTowne Theater's ColdTowne TV, Master Pancake moves to Twitch, Midnight Menagerie Zoom burlesque shows, Mobley's Curbside Tour, The Vortex Theatre's drive-through performances

"I got to go to Sundance finally ... in a historic farm with longhorn cattle?!"

— ANDREA MELLARD

6406 N. I-35 #3100, WWW.AUSTINFILM.ORG/CINEMA

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT WILD CARD

Front Porch Sessions (monthly music livestream)

FINALISTS: The Cathedral ATX (gallery & co-working space), San Antonio Review (Austin-based literary/arts/ideas journal)

"Love how they've pivoted the live performances to virtual and gotten local breweries/distilleries involved with each new show." — ERIN ASHWORTH

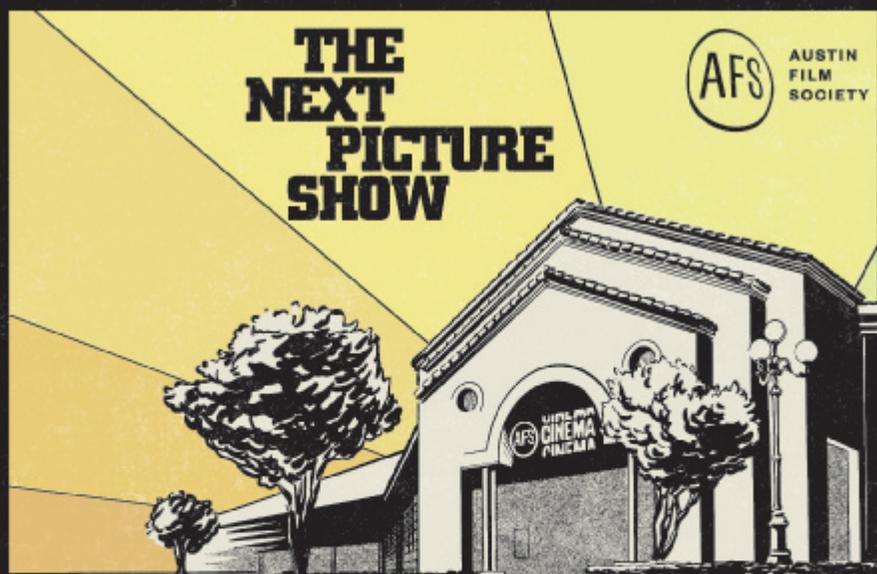
WWW.FB.COM/AUSTINMONTHLY/EVENTS



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Critics Picks

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

BEST PANDEMIC BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT

HOPE Campaign

With South by Southwest canceled and virtually all businesses closed due to COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders, Downtown Austin had never looked so desolate. Boarded up buildings along Dirty Sixth made the normally bustling corridor feel particularly haunting. True to their moniker, the HOPE (Helping Other People Everywhere) Campaign rallied local street artists to paint inspirational murals – touting messages of unity, perseverance, and public safety – over the plywood, transforming a grim scene into a gallery of (what else?) hope when we needed it most.

WWW.HOPECAMPAIGN.ORG

BEST PANDEMIC POLYMATH

Mobley

Mobley demonstrated his multi-instrumental musical prowess during a year ravaged by unprecedented uncertainty. The Austin dweller brought together a stacked roster of 30-plus local artists for a raw, collaborative visual album (*A Home Unfamiliar*) last July, then followed up with a one-man/one-van curbside tour to promote his “James Crow” single. Its sponsoring EP, February’s *Young & Dying in the Occident Supreme*, tackles a growing list of unjust practices common here stateside across 19 blistering minutes. He even went viral on Twitter after sharing a story about reconnecting a homeless woman with her sister. The ever outspoken independent artist only used the moment to promote empathy.

WWW.MOBLEYWHO.COM

BEST VIDEO GAME ADAPTATION OF A CHEKHOV PLAY

The Cherry Orchard

Manuela Malasaña’s gently interactive digital adaptation of the Russian playwright’s final work leans heavily into the “theatre of mood” concept. Its vaporwave palate and visual balance of comedy and tragedy helps the critique of aristocracy go down a bit easier without losing its farcical bite. Best of all, you move the action and dialogue along at your own pace, so you can enjoy the symbolic story. Is it a video game? Kinda. But is it art? Definitely.

WWW.TEAMDOGPIE.COM/TCO

BEST PRESCRIPTION FOR COMMUNITY

Raasin in the Sun

Still suffering a case of quarantine blues? We advise a slow drive-by of the underpass on Lamar at W. Fifth, where the walls are covered with art aimed at curing what ails you. Muralists Samara Barks, Kimie Flores, Niz G, Rex Hamilton, Carmen Rangel, and Uloang address health and self-care with the messages “Reconnect Yourself,” “Rest Is Necessary,” and “Be Well” alongside peaceful images of people floating, sleeping, and holding flowers (or having flowers for heads). This pandemic project was curated by Raasin in the Sun, the namesake nonprofit of former UT track star and Olympian Raasin McIntosh, and is right in line with its other good works such as cleaning up East Austin neighborhoods, planting gardens at schools, and partnering in murals about Eastside history. In action and images, this organization is making our community better.

WWW.RAASININTHESUN.ORG

BEST KITCHEN SINK COMPILATION

Slack Capital 3

The perfect starter pack for scene novices, the third compilation from Big Bill's Eric Braden, Austin Town Hall's Nathan Lankford, and promotion company Howdy Gals crams unreleased tracks from 41 Austin artists in one delightfully dense package. Indie rock heavyweights (Spoon) mingle with French psychedelia (Lou Rebecca), rolling hip-hop (the Teeta), and country glam (Pelvis Wrestley). Released on Juneteenth, the album's Bandcamp proceeds went to the Austin Justice Coalition. The city is changing, but this comp reminded us of what really makes Austin great.

SLACKCAPITAL.BANDCAMP.COM/ALBUM/
SLACK-CAPITAL-3

BEST VISUAL ARCHIVE OF EVERYTHING GOING ON RIGHT NOW

Marshall Tidrick's "Front Porch-rait Series"

When the inevitable National Coronavirus Museum opens in 20-odd years, they'd do well to acquire Marshall Tidrick's entire COVID body of work. The local photographer has spent the pandemic shooting Austinites in front of their homes and pairing the images with offbeat details: "When I arrived, they rolled me a beer from a safe social distance," reads one Instagram caption. Some folks stand alone, some with roommates; some cradle new pets while others carry clear Zoom fatigue in their eyes. It's a striking collection of our different experiences throughout this ordeal, and each photo is drenched with empathy from the artist behind the lens.

WWW.MARSHALLTIDRICKPHOTO.COM

BEST BOBBLEHEAD

Allen Danziger

Allen Danziger - aka Jerry the van driver in the original *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* - laughs when he gets called famous. He once joked that a famous guy would be immortalized with a bobblehead. So he had them made. The former social worker and Three Ring Service owner hasn't acted since *Chain Saw*, but is happy to autograph your bobblehead, which speaks a line from the film. Which one? He's not saying, but we're betting he's "goofing" on us.

WWW.CHAINSAWJERRY.COM



JANA BIRCHUM

BEST NEW PLACE TO SEE MUSIC

KMFA 89.5FM

For its first 53 years, KMFA was all about the audio: sending classical music out to the world, being heard but not seen. That's changed with the opening of the radio station's new 18,000-square-foot facility; it was designed for the world to come into and see classical music being played and made. Visitors can watch on-air hosts spin Bach and Bartok through large studio windows, make sounds and rhythms with a junkyard of instruments in the art gallery's "Sound Garden" installation, and enjoy musicians performing live in the intimacy of the 135-seat Draylen Mason Music Studio. Seeing music is so integral to KMFA's new home that sheet music and sound waves decorate the walls.

41 NAVASOTA ST., WWW.KMFA.ORG

BEST ART CAMPS IN AUSTIN



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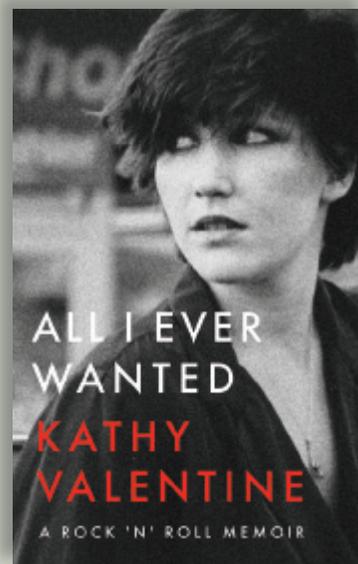
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—JOHN DOE



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BEST VIRTUAL LISTENING ROOM

Monks Jazz Club

Due to the pandemic, there's been a change of venue: Hard bop has gone virtual. Monks Jazz is known for its DIY pop-ups in some unlikely Austin spots (bike shops, off-hours art galleries), but their latest listening room turns out to be your own living room. Monks founder Collin Shook has been livestreaming performances from his East Austin Piano Shop featuring some of the finest jazz players (including Shook himself) in Central Texas. There's no cover charge, but donations are welcome, and Tuesday nights are in partnership with the Austin Jazz Society to help raise money for out-of-work musicians.

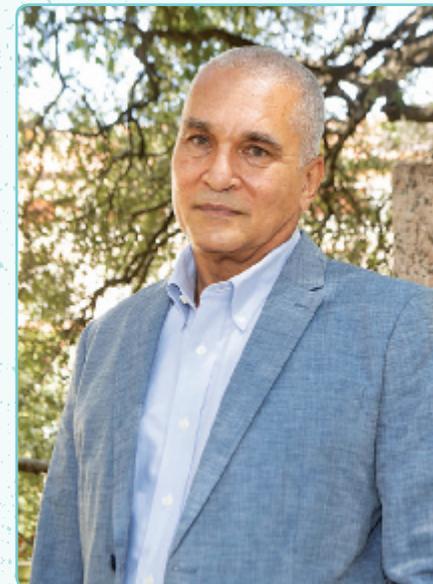
WWW.MONKSJAZZ.COM

BEST WAY TO SEE - REALLY SEE - THE UT CAMPUS

Racial Geography Tour

Just because you've seen the Tower and the football stadium, don't think you've seen UT. Seeing buildings isn't the same as seeing the history behind those buildings or the institution that placed them there. The Racial Geography Tour, created by the university's Vice Provost for Diversity Dr. Edmund T. Gordon, visits campus landmarks from the Littlefield Home to the Etter-Harbin Alumni Center to reveal how the Confederacy, Jim Crow, segregation, racial and sexual discrimination, and authoritarianism influenced what got built and who got honored on the Forty Acres. Originally given live, the tour is now available online, giving every Longhorn an invaluable way to understand UT's past and truly open the eyes of Texas.

WWW.RACIALGEOGRAPHYTOUR.ORG



JANA BIRCHUM



JOHN ANDERSON

BEST GUIDE TO EASTSIDE HISTORY

Harrison Eppright

Austin changes so rapidly that it feels like every time you blink, a piece of its history slips away - nowhere more so than in East Austin, where waves of condos and hipster bars are sinking the past. Fortunately, we have Harrison Eppright. He's been soaking up Eastside history for six decades - the time he's lived through, but earlier times as well - and he's always eager to share it. The Victory Grill, Downs Field and the Negro Leagues, the city's "1928 Master Plan," Juneteenth in Austin, Evergreen Cemetery - he knows all about them and more. As Visit Austin's manager of visitor services and tour ambassador, and tour docent for Six Square: Austin's Black Cultural District, Eppright is well-positioned to ensure we remember the East Austin that was.

WWW.VISITAUSTRIN.ORG

BEST QUIET GIANT

Keeled Scales

Over the past seven years, local indie imprint Keeled Scales has quietly built up a stacked roster and tastemaking reputation for a certain songwriter niche. Label head Tony Presley presents as unassuming as his artists, but services an incomparable ear for underrecognized and deeply sincere songcraft, waxing local standouts (the Deer, Sun June, Jordan Moser, Will Johnson) and nationally acclaimed alt-folkers (Buck Meek, Twain, Erin Durant, Katy Kirby). Presley's picks are building a community among the hushed house show contingent and launching them to bigger but no less enthralled stages.

WWW.KEELEDSCALES.COM

MOST DIFFICULT WAY TO BEAT A DIFFICULT GAME

LobosJr Using a Guitar to Beat Dark Souls

Mike Villalobos, known to his viewers as LobosJr, is no slouch with a guitar, having spent time in local bands. He's also beaten the notoriously difficult *Dark Souls* series enough times to laugh in the face of the games' most enormous and deformed enemies. Finding ways to make the games more difficult takes up much of the streamer's time. Picking up his Ernie Ball Music Man JP7, mapping notes to controller buttons, and beating the original *Dark Souls* was next level showmanship. The "song" he made in the process was even catchy at times!

WWW.TWITCH.TV/LOBOSJR



JOHN ANDERSON

BEST GALLERY WITHOUT WALLS

Northern-Southern

What do you do when it's unsafe for people to come see art *inside* your gallery? Just put the art *outside*. That's what Northern-Southern Director Phillip Niemeyer has been doing during the pandemic. Office building parking lots, neighborhood cul-de-sacs, creek beds, golf courses, greenbelt trails, vacant lots, utility poles, parks ... all these and more have been showplaces for art in the gallery's recent exhibits. The move has not only encouraged artists to be inventive and playful in creating works for the great outdoors, but since the only way to find them is to follow maps provided by Northern-Southern, it's turned going to see art into a true hunt for treasure.

1902 E. 12TH, WWW.NORTHERN-SOUTHERN.COM

BEST MUSIC HISTORIAN

Joe Nick Patoski

The fat tomes about Willie, Selena, and Stevie Ray ought to be enough to rate this long-overdue award, but the former *Texas Monthly* scribe digs deeper in 2019's *Austin to ATX: The Hippies, Pickers, Slackers, and Geeks Who Transformed the Capital of Texas* and 2020's *The Ballad of Robert Ealey and His Five Careless Lovers*. Need more proof? Listen in Saturday nights at 7pm for his Marfa Public Radio show *Texas Music Hour of Power* for the stone-cold truth about the groove.

WWW.JOENICKP.COM

BEST NEVER-ENDING APOCALYPSE

Fear the Walking Dead

Who's that shambling down your street? That would be the zombies of AMC's zombie megafanchise. For the last three seasons, *Fear the Walking Dead* has filmed in and around Austin, hiring local talent, keeping local vendors busy, making honorary Austinites of its stars – and this year, they've done it all as a pandemic raged. A zombie plague that has helped keep Austin's film crews safe and working? Sign us up to get bit.

WWW.AMC.COM/TWDU/FEAR-THE-WALKING-DEAD

MOST WELL-EARNED SCREEN BREAK

Burnie Burns

No Burnie Burns, no Rooster Teeth. That's how it always felt – that it was impossible to imagine the Austin studio that did so much to pioneer streaming video and modern online fandom without its co-founder, creative force, and public face. Yet last June, Burns left the company to which he was so pivotal and synonymous, as it enters a new era. He exited with a simple tweet, a short message, and moved with his wife and kids into his own next chapter.

WWW.BURNIE.COM

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Readers Poll

FOOD & DRINK



PASTRY CHEF

Jessica Forkner Tomberlin (Crema)

FINALISTS: Tavel Bristol-Joseph (Emmer & Rye), Chloe Henry (Chloe's Bakehouse, Oakmont Food Company), Kendall Melton (Vivian's Boulangerie), Julie Myrtille (Julie Myrtille Bakery)

"Because it's just so nice when talent and compassion combine." — TRICIA EDGEL

9001 BRODIE STE. B-3, WWW.CREMABAKERYCAFE.COM

BAKERY

Easy Tiger

FINALISTS: Crema Bakery, Quack's, Scull House Sweets, Upper Crust Bakery

"David Norman is a baus." — KEN SEPETI

EASY TIGER, THE LINC, 6406 N. I-35 #1100; 3508 S. LAMAR BLVD; 1501 E. SEVENTH STREET; WWW.EASYTIGERUSA.COM

PATIO

Easy Tiger

FINALISTS: Cosmic Coffee + Beer Garden, Devil May Care, El Alma, Hula Hut

"Safest outdoor space we've been to during the pandemic." — KERRY SIEFF

EASY TIGER, THE LINC, 6406 N. I-35 #1100; 3508 S. LAMAR BLVD; 1501 E. SEVENTH STREET; WWW.EASYTIGERUSA.COM

RESTAURANT/BEVERAGE DELIVERY

Easy Tiger

FINALISTS: 1618 Asian Fusion, Chi'lantro, TSO Chinese Delivery

"Sourdough bread and pretzels straight to my door." — ANDREA HILKOVITZ

EASY TIGER, THE LINC, 6406 N. I-35 #1100; 3508 S. LAMAR BLVD; 1501 E. SEVENTH STREET; WWW.EASYTIGERUSA.COM

DRIVE-THROUGH

P. Terry's

FINALISTS: El Tacorrido, Flyrite Chicken, Sandy's, Top Notch

"If you haven't been saved by some midnight P. Terry's, are you really an Austinite?" — TREY HOLLINGSWORTH

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, PTERRYS.COM

BREWERY

Pinthouse Pizza

FINALISTS: Austin Beerworks, Austin Eastciders, Jester King, St. Elmo Brewing Co.

"Electric Jellyfish is the best beer in Austin." — TRISTAN SMITH

4729 BURNET RD.; 4236 S. LAMAR; 2800 HOPPE TRL., ROUND ROCK; WWW.PINTHOUSEPIZZA.COM



JewBoy Burgers owner Mo Pittle

JOHN ANDERSON

NEW RESTAURANT

JewBoy Burgers

FINALISTS: Aba, Smokin Beauty, Vic and Al's, The Well

"Love it when a food truck is well-loved and supported enough to graduate to a brick & mortar. Go Mo!" — DAVIDE DICKSON

5111 AIRPORT, WWW.JEWBOYBURGERS.COM

ESTABLISHED RESTAURANT

Bouldin Creek Cafe

FINALISTS: Chuy's, El Chile, Matt's El Rancho, Uchi

"Their food speaks for itself, but the way they treat employees (especially when the pandemic exploded the restaurant industry) is really admirable." — CELESTE CASWELL

1900 S. FIRST, WWW.BOULDINCREEKCAFE.COM

LATE-NIGHT DINING

Kerbey Lane Cafe

FINALISTS: Devil May Care, Justine's Brasserie, Magnolia Cafe, 24 Diner

"Obviously, the best queso in town. And who doesn't want queso at 2am?"

— KINSEY VALLIER

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, KERBEYLANECAFE.COM

CHEF

Tyson Cole (Uchi)

FINALISTS: Alma Alcocer (El Alma), Thai Changthong (Thai Kun), Jon Oh (Nova Hospitality), Philip Speer (Comedor)

"I've eaten sushi on all coasts from Manhattan to San Fran, and Uchi is the best." — MIKE JONES

UCHI, 801 S. LAMAR, WWW.UCHIAUSTIN.COM; UCHIKO, 4200 N. LAMAR, WWW.UCHIKOAUUSTIN.COM; LORO, 2115 S. LAMAR, WWW.LOROAUUSTIN.COM



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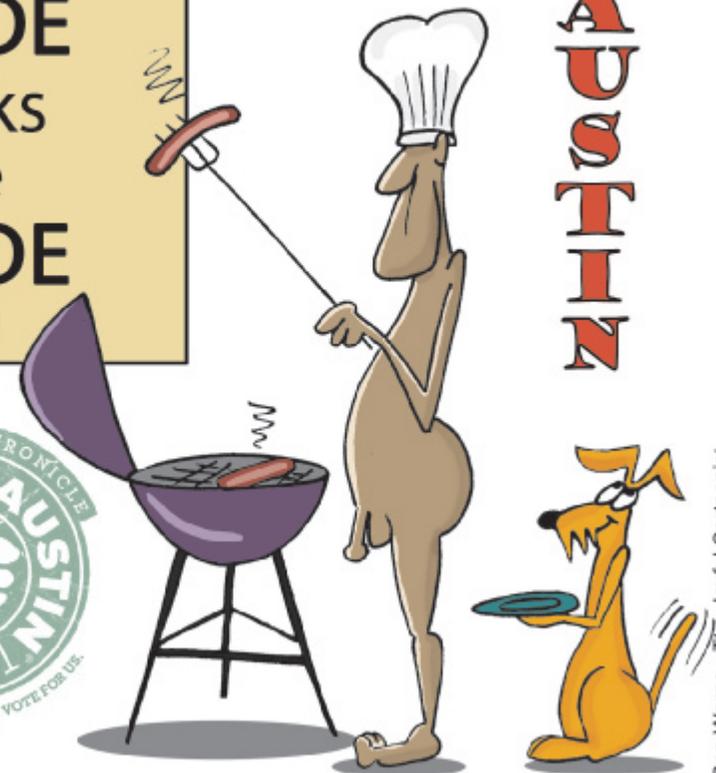


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.com

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Ron Warne - The Joyful Cartoonist



JOHN ANDERSON

PIZZA

Via 313

FINALISTS: East Side Pies, Home Slice Pizza, Little Deli & Pizzeria, Pinthouse Pizza

“Detroit pizza reigns supreme.” – EL STEARNS

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.VIA313.COM

WINERY

Austin Winery

FINALISTS: Infinite Monkey Theorem, Wine for the People

“Amazing wine and great staff. Makes you feel at home in their cute space.”

– JEREMY HERRERA

440 E. ST. ELMO STE. A-1, WWW.THEAUSTINWINERY.COM

DISTILLERY

Deep Eddy Vodka

FINALISTS: Desert Door, Still Austin, Tito's Vodka, Treaty Oak Distilling

“God Bless Deep Eddy and all they did for Austinites and Austin restaurants during the winter storm. Not to mention their sweet tea vodka is ambrosia.”

– MARTHA FRANCISCO

2250 HWY. 290 E., DRIPPING SPRINGS, WWW.DEEPEDDYVODKA.COM

STEAK

Salt & Time

FINALISTS: Austin Land and Cattle, Justine's Brasserie, Perry's Steakhouse, Red Ash Italia

“Perfect little Bavette steak. Never disappoints.” – SUE LITTLEFIELD

422 W. FIFTH, WWW.SALTANDTIMECAFE.COM

COFFEE SHOP

Radio Coffee & Beer

FINALISTS: Epoch Coffee, Cosmic Coffee + Beer Garden, Summer Moon Coffee, Texas Coffee Traders

“Amazing vibe, great coffee, always a good time.” – SHAUN BARRETT

4204 MENCHACA RD., WWW.RADIOCOFFEEANDBEER.COM

BREAKFAST

Bird Bird Biscuit

FINALISTS: Bouldin Creek Cafe, Kerbey Lane Cafe, Magnolia Cafe, The Well

“The Queen Beak beats all other breakfasts sandies without trying.”

– JAHCARDI GRANT

2701 MANOR RD., WWW.BIRDBIRDBISCUIT.COM

WEEKEND BRUNCH

Jack Allen's Kitchen

FINALISTS: Better Half Coffee & Cocktails, Bouldin Creek Cafe, Devil May Care, Smokin Beauty

“Enough calories in one meal to last all weekend.” – ERIN GEISLER

3010-D W. ANDERSON; 2500 HOPPE TRL., ROUND ROCK; WWW.JACKALKENSKITCHEN.COM

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VEGAN/VEGETARIAN

Bouldin Creek Cafe

FINALISTS: Beer Plant, Counter Culture, Mr. Natural, Rebel Cheese, The Vegan Nom

"I love their chipotle pecan pesto, Tarzen's Big Salad, and vegan brownie with ice cream." – *SHRADDHA IYER*

1900 S. FIRST, WWW.BOULDINCREEKCAFE.COM

JUICE/SMOOTHIE

JuiceLand

FINALISTS: Daily Juice, Soup Peddler, Vida Pura Juicery, The Well

"Consistently good, healthy, and all over town. The Wild Child rules."

– *GREER KOFOED*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.JUICELAND.COM

BURGER

P. Terry's

FINALISTS: Dan's Hamburgers, JewBoy Burgers, Hopdoddy, Plow Burger

"Truly the burger of the people."

– *RUSSELL TAYLOR*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, PTERRYS.COM

FOOD TRUCK

Veracruz All Natural

FINALISTS: Patrizi's, SXSE Food Co., Valentina's Tex Mex BBQ, The Vegan Nom

"Veracruz has the best tacos in Austin. Austin has the best tacos in the world. Therefore, Veracruz has the best tacos in the world." – *AMANDA LIPSTEIN*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.VERACRUZALLNATURAL.COM

TACOS

Veracruz All Natural

FINALISTS: El Chilito, Tacodeli, Torchy's Tacos, The Vegan Nom

"The migas tacos are life changing."

– *AMY HOLLAND*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

MARGARITA

Chuy's

FINALISTS: Baby Acapulco, El Alma, El Chile, Matt's El Rancho

"I mean that's some good margarita."

– *MERRICK TIEN*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, CHUYS.COM

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JOHN ANDERSON

FINE DINING

Justine's Brasserie

FINALISTS: Barley Swine, Jeffrey's, Uchi, Uchiko

"The food is fabulous, the price point is beyond reasonable, the staff is beautiful, and the atmosphere/ambiance is everyyythingggg." - ANDREA DANE

4710 E. FIFTH; 1303 E. SEVENTH; WWW.JUSTINES1937.COM, WWW.JUSTINESSECRETHOUSE.COM

BARBECUE

Valentina's Tex Mex BBQ

FINALISTS: Franklin Barbecue, la Barbecue, Micklethwait Craft Meats, Stiles Switch, Terry Black's Barbecue

"If I have to tell you why, you haven't had it yet." - CELINA MARTINEZ

11500 MENCHACA RD., WWW.VALENTINASTEXMEXBBQ.COM

NOODLES/RAMEN

Ramen Tatsu-ya

FINALISTS: Julie's Noodles, Michi Ramen, Sazan Ramen

"I dream about their broth."

- NICOLE HARRISON

8557 RESEARCH #126; 1234 S. LAMAR; 1600 E. SIXTH; RAMEN-TATSUYA.COM

SUSHI

Uchi

FINALISTS: DK Sushi, Komé, TenTen, Uchiko

"Best meal I've ever had."

- DANIEL SCHOLL

801 S. LAMAR, WWW.UCHIAUSTIN.COM

ITALIAN

Mandola's Italian Kitchen

FINALISTS: Juliet Italian Kitchen, Patrizi's, Red Ash Italia, Vespaio

"Best focaccia in town. Their tiramisu is to die for. Sitting outside on the patio is my idea of a perfect date."

- SOPHIA ORTIZ VARIOUS LOCATIONS, MANDOLAS.COM

ICE CREAM/FROZEN TREATS

Amy's Ice Creams

FINALISTS: Lick Honest Ice Creams, Luv Fats Ice Cream, NadaMoo, Sweet Ritual

"Still so much whimsical personality + so much delicious."

- GREGORY MATTHEWS

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, AMYSICECREAMS.COM

DESSERTS

Amy's Ice Creams

FINALISTS: Quack's, Sugar Mama's Bakeshop, Sweet Ritual, Tiny Pies, Upper Crust Bakery

"The finest ice cream and such a fun spot to take visitors!" - PAMELA E FERGUSON

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, AMYSICECREAMS.COM

SERVICE

Uchiko

FINALISTS: Garbo's, Hestia, Nervous Charlie's, TenTen

"They provide real hospitality which provides a singularly unique experience to each guest. Ate there last night :)" - LILY COLEMAN

4200 N. LAMAR, WWW.UCHIKOAUUSTIN.COM

CHEAP DATE

Torchy's Tacos

FINALISTS: Enchiladas y Mas, El Chilito, Patrizi's, Smokin Beauty

"You had me at queso." - LINDA HENDERSON

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, TORCHYSTACOS.COM

MOST INNOVATIVE PIVOT

Antonelli's online cheese tastings

FINALISTS: Bad Larry Burger Club's socially distanced burger chute, Kemuri Tatsu-ya's Omakase Club, Little Ola's Biscuits, L'Oca d'Oro subscription boxes, Rosewood's Rosebud meal kits

"The most fun I've had virtually throughout the pandemic - so educational and so much fun."

- KATY GLADHILL

4220 DUVAL ST.; 4220 DUVAL ST.; WWW.ANTONELLISCHEESE.COM

FOOD & DRINK WILD CARD

Nixta Taqueria's and ATX Free Fridge Project

FINALISTS: Austin Restaurant Weeks' Feed It Forward program, Gossip Shack's wings and waffles, The Rolling Rooster, Taco Fuego's riff on discontinued Taco Bell menu items

"Because mutual aid rocks!" - LORI SCARMADO

2512 E. 12TH, WWW.NIXTATAQUERIA.COM, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/ATXFREEFRIDGE

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Critics Picks

FOOD & DRINK



JOHN ANDERSON

BEST FOOD TRUCK MILKSHAKE

Cold Cookie Company

A wondrous refuge for anyone with the dangerous combo of a sweet tooth and a penchant for indulgence, Cold Cookie Company whips up a variety of delectable ice cream staples. You'll find your reliable scoops and waffle cones, as well as cookie sandwiches and floats. But the pièce de résistance lies in their shake, which you can get blended normally or deconstructed in what's known as an "UnShake." Best yet: Every single item comes with a fresh-baked cookie. Stop by and give your heart what it wants.

2512 RIO GRANDE, WWW.COLDCOOKIECOMPANY.COM

TASTIEST NEW OFFSPRING FROM A SUGAR MAMA

Lola's Donuts

Are donuts the new cupcakes? Sugar Mama's Bakeshop owner Olivia Guerra O'Neal, at least, is setting her cap at these holey wonders with a walk-up window on Manor. Her cute (natch) hand-crafted brioche and cake donuts come in inventive flavors like Dr. Pepper, strawberry horchata, and peanut butter cookie dough cereal milk, but be warned: Lola's Donuts is only open Friday through Sunday, and you better believe these heavenly babies sell out fast. Make preordering your friend.

2406-B MANOR RD., WWW.LOLASDONUTSATX.COM

BEST BRISKET NACHOS

Cabo Bob's

Qdoba over-salts, and Chipotle isn't selling: As far as quick Tex-Mex goes, get your beef from Cabo Bob's, the local chain that promises chill surfer vibes from its Subway-style ordering system. Huge portions for 10 bucks? We're there. Throw in some homemade tortillas and sugar cane sodas while you're at it. And with four locations throughout the city, you're never far from a hearty meal. Now we see how the punch cards come in handy.

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.CABOBOBS.COM

BEST WAY TO "GIVE A CHUTE"

Bad Larry Burger Club

In a year full of hardship, nothing soothes the soul quite like smashed double-meat double-cheese burgers. Throw in ridiculous internet antics and a burger chute fashioned from a rain gutter and electrical tape, and you're all but guaranteed an insane following in Austin. Matthew Bolick, co-owner of Better Half, created this recipe for success after transitioning wild backyard burger parties with his wife and friends into a full-fledged pandemic business. If you want to get your panda paws on one of these greasy delights, you'll have to tap into those late Nineties/early Aughts concert ticket acquisition skills – the pre-ordered "bad Larrys" sell out online in minutes, or less.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/BADLARRYBURGERCLUB



COURTESY OF BAD LARRY BURGER CLUB

**BEST FILIPINO
VIETNAMESE FUSION**

Fil N' Viet

You can taste all the love that goes into the menu at married couple Kevin Truong and Rosie Mina-Truong's new Eastside food truck. Take, for example, the sinigang wings: a mash-up of tamarind from the signature soup stew of the Philippines, fresh scallions, and super crispy fried chicken with a garlic ranch dip. Or maybe it's the sisig fried rice, ube Vietnamese iced coffee, or wild mushroom tofu adobo for you. Just like the owners' love story, the food's special combinations are just meant to be.

1720 E. 12TH ST., WWW.FILNVIET.COM

BEST PANDEMIC PIZZA

Jeff Klein

Austinites ate a lot of pizza during the pandemic, but few started their own fake pizzeria. Jeff Klein, of the band My Jerusalem, offered free doughy vaccination doses to eligible pals ("Friend Group 1A and Friend Group 1B"), served in hilariously designed boxes featuring a spiky coronavirus blob with pepperonis on it and several amusing slogans, including "Cheesus Crust! Pizza by a Jew?" The unpublicized, un-capitalistic, extensive home-cooking effort demonstrated admirable follow-through on a joke, but also brought much "kneaded" levity and a seriously delicious distraction to maddening times.



ZEKE BARBARO

BEST CAN'T-BELIEVE-IT'S-VEGAN COMFORT FOOD

Project Pollo

Praise to San Antonio for the blessing of import Project Pollo, a 100% vegan enterprise that recently set up shop here. Vegans will appreciate the legit mac & cheese and freedom to choose from the entire menu, instead of just finding the items marked with green leaves and asking follow-up questions. The star is the "chicken," with its spicy, crunchy batter, which in nugget form is addictive when paired with any one of their mysteriously rich vegan sauces. The fried pickles stand out as well due to that killer batter and sauce. The only follow-up question here is, "How can this be vegan?!"

1401 ROSEWOOD AVE., WWW.PROJECTPOLLO.COM



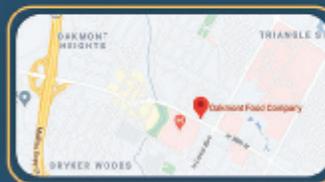
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JOHN ANDERSON

BEST CHINESE HAMBURGER

Chef Hong Food Trailer

Tucked away in a small lot off West 24th Street, Chef Hong, brother of Julie of Julie's Noodles, is serving authentic hand-pulled noodles and handmade dumplings out of his unassuming orange trailer. For \$4, you can't beat his Chinese hamburger (roujiamo) as a grab-and-go comfort food. Get it with a side of liangpi or cold skin noodles for a perfect outdoor lunch. Text Chef with your order and he'll whip it up in 15 minutes.

907 W. 24TH ST

BEST BÁNH MÌ TO COMFORT ON A BAD DAY

Le Bleu

There is nothing more consoling than the perfect sandwich, and at Le Bleu their O.G. bánh mì has the ability to turn around a downer day. From the crunch of the toasted French bread to the fatty, luxurious paté that perfectly complements the pickled veggies, cold cuts, and pork belly, there is no other comfort like it. Le Bleu offers more deluxe spins on the Vietnamese sandwich (the one with garlic butter prawns is so decadent), but you can't go wrong with a classic paired with a Cà Phê Sũa Đá – what non-native speakers know (and love) as Vietnamese iced coffee.

9070 RESEARCH #303, WWW.LEBLEUATX.COM

BEST PEPPERY POPOVER FOR PICKUP

Foreign & Domestic

The gruyere & black pepper popover at Foreign & Domestic will put an abrupt end to whatever conversation you might be having over dinner. It will become the sole object of your attention, as if the world were reduced to a pastry that's lighter than a croissant, more golden than a brioche, and perfuming a savory steam that will make your eyes roll to the back of your head. You may think you've merely dreamed of this carbohydrate creation, but for another \$8, you can confirm that, yes, this popover is real, and even better, you can get it to-go.

306 E. 53RD, WWW.FNDAUSTIN.COM

BEST JIGGLY JAPANESE CHEESECAKES

OMG Squee

Home to a variety of eclectic Asian-inspired beverages, treats, and street food, OMG Squee relishes cuteness. Its menu boasts character-designed macarons, taiyaki, a Japanese fish-shaped cake stuffed with fillings savory or sweet, and lately, kawaii mochi donuts. The pop-up-shop-turned-brick-and-mortar's most iconic mainstays, however, are the Japanese cheesecakes, available in both traditional and ube flavors. Unlike any other you'd find in Austin, these subtly sweet cakes are the closest we'll get to eating clouds. Take a chance on the elevated, airy texture of Squee's jiggly Japanese delights; the Cheesecake Factory doesn't even begin to compare.

4607 BOLM RD., WWW.SQUEECLUB.COM

BEST FINE DINING PANDEMIC PERSIAN POP-UP

Roya

Amir Hajimalecki is undeniably one of the best chefs around, and dishes at every single one of the restaurants he owns with his business partner/brother Ali deserve awards. But here we're spotlighting Roya, their upcoming Iranian restaurant slated for 2022. The highly anticipated Nowruz celebration pop-up in early March boasted family-style meals with comforting but elevated Persian fare delicious enough to convince anyone of this underrepresented-in-Austin cuisine. We're talking wonderful kuku sabzi with barberry and pomegranate caviar and garlic labneh; perfectly cooked and saffron-fragrant sabzi polo; ash reshteh (Persian noodle soup) with fall-apart braised lamb neck and masterful caramelized onions; and from pastry chef Dennis Van, a delightful nāranj panna cotta. Jealous you missed the pop-up? While you're waiting for Roya (and their upcoming seafood spot, Keepers) to open, indulge at their other spots all over town: Oasthouse, District Kitchen, and the pandemic-born New England pizzeria and grinder shop, Shortie's.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/ROYAUSTIN

BEST HOMEMADE POP-TARTS

Lucky Lab Coffee Co.

Kellogg's coined a junk food staple, but this West Campus coffee shop elevates the hand pie with fresh ingredients and a personal touch. Bring your laptop and your pup (the joint's "Puppies & Coffee" mantra insists) to the flagship's Space 24 Twenty patio, order a banana Nutella, spinach feta, or our favorite, blueberry lemon hand pie with your coffee (a lavender blueberry latte if you're feeling fancy), and marvel at what you can achieve on a warm afternoon.

2421 SAN ANTONIO ST., WWW.LUCKYLABCOFFEE.COM



JOHN ANDERSON

BEST NEW BREWERY

Hold Out Brewing

It is odd acknowledging Hold Out as a new brewery, given the gigantic profile they debuted with just last May and an overwhelming work rate that has them improving an already spectacular beer lineup as if veteran beer makers. But it's the absolute truth. This time last year, Austin didn't know anything of Last Light porter or Suavemente pale ale or personal lottery numbers, Ol' Gil Euro Pilsner. We are delighted to see how deeply Hold Out will mature, particularly when unhindered by the constraints of launching during a lockdown pandemic.

1208 W. FOURTH, WWW.HOLDOUTBREWING.COM



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PLAYSCAPES ☆ PATIOS ☆ BIG SCREENS

Readers Poll

KIDS & FAMILY



TOY STORE

Terra Toys

FINALISTS: Anna's Toy Depot, Monkey See Monkey Do, Toybrary Austin, Toy Joy

"Fairy tea party, Christmas in July, and did you see their COVID response? SO respectful of the health and safety of their customers and employees." — JESSICA TESSLER

2438 W. ANDERSON STE. 1-C, WWW.TERRATOYS.COM

SUMMER CAMP

Bake Austin

FINALISTS: Austin Youth Fitness, Camp Paramount, kidsActing Studio

"Thanks to Chef Pascal, my kids can now cook us dinner!" — KAREN FLIGGER

1706 E. 38th, WWW.BAKEAUSTIN.COM

YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAM

YMCA

FINALISTS: Austin Youth Fitness, Life Ki-do Martial Arts, Lonestar Soccer Club, Soccer Shots

"Supports many different activities in a safe environment for all kids." — VICKI DIMOCK

WWW.AUSTINYMCA.ORG

YOUTH ARTS PROGRAM

Creative Action

FINALISTS: Austin Creative Art Center, Figment Creative Labs

"Their counselors are great with the kids."

— JENNY CARROLL

1023 SPRINGDALE, BLDG. 3, WWW.CREATIVEACTION.ORG



FAMILY FESTIVAL

Austin Trail of Lights

FINALISTS: ABC Kite Fest, Classic Game Fest

"Brilliantly staged, full of magic, totally safe. I've never loved Austin more." — ELI CASTRO

WWW.AUSTINTRILOFLIGHTS.ORG

KIDS' CLOTHING

SparkleKids

FINALISTS: Alexa James Baby, Austin Baby Collection, Lovely Little Things, Kid to Kid

"The owner is the best! Their brands are awesome and quality is good. My go-to to find new items for growing kids." — ABBY ALWAN

4800 BURNET RD., WWW.SPARKLEKIDSRSALE.COM

PARTY PLACE

Pinballz Arcade

FINALISTS: High 5, Main Event, Thinkery

"We love the nostalgia of the arcade games and always have a good time."

— DEBORAH VASQUEZ

8940 RESEARCH #100; 15201 S. I-35, BUDA; 13729 RESEARCH; WWW.PINBALLZARCADE.COM



PHOTOS BY DAVID BRENDAN HALL

ALL-AGES VENUE

Thinkery

FINALISTS: Central Market, High 5, Pioneer Farms

"Everybody is a kid at the Thinkery." — RACHEL HELDEN

1830 SIMOND, WWW.THINKERYAUSTIN.ORG



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THEAUSTINSHAKER.COM



JOHN ANDERSON

KIDS & FAMILY WILD CARD

Fortlandia at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

FINALISTS: Ashley's Playhouse drop-in childcare, Boost Babies at-home physical therapy, Jungle Movement gym, Out Youth support for LGBTQIA youth

"My kids can play at Fortlandia for hours and look forward to seeing and exploring all the new creative and innovative structures and designs." — *ALLYSON PARMA*

4801 LA CROSSE, WWW.WILDFLOWER.ORG

YOUTH STEM PROGRAM

Girlstart

FINALISTS: Austin Tinkering School, Latinitas, Snapology Austin

"The young women who run this program are outstanding role models who have become mentors to my daughter. I can't say enough about how valuable the Girlstart experience has been." — *TIFFANY GARZA*

1400 W. ANDERSON, WWW.GIRLSTART.ORG

ONLINE TUTORING / CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Mariposas Spanish School for Kids

FINALISTS: Love the SAT, Mi Casa Es Tu Casa

"Great school!" — *EMILY HONG*

3501 RED RIVER, WWW.MARIPOSASSPANHISH.COM

BIRTHDAY CAKES

Upper Crust Bakery

FINALISTS: Capital City Bakery, HayleyCakes & Cookies, Kitchen ELF

"Upper Crust has the best Italian cream cake and carrot cake." — *SU LIM*

4508 BURNET RD., WWW.THEUPPERCRUSTBAKERY.COM

FAMILY RESTAURANT

Waterloo Ice House

FINALISTS: Chuy's, Kerbey Lane Cafe, Hat Creek Burger Company, Mandola's Italian Kitchen, Maudie's

"Love the little extras the Waterloo does for kids (like the drive-in movie during COVID) and kids and adults have great selections on their awesome menu. Loving the healthier items I'm seeing more lately too." — *SHELBY BARNES*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.WATERLOOICEHOUSE.COM

PLAYGROUND

Zilker Park

FINALISTS: Brentwood Park, Mueller Lake Park, Pikopye's Town, Play for All Abilities Park

"It's huge and you can go hiking, splashing, dog petting, and people watching, too."

— *JENNY CARROLL*

2100 BARTON SPRINGS RD., WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/ZILKER-METROPOLITAN-PARK

MOST INNOVATIVE PIVOT

The Austin Chronicle Hot Sauce Festival at-home tasting kits

FINALISTS: Bake Austin classes with chef Pascal go virtual, Austin Allies' #HelpingFromHome program

"Fun & yummy." — *SUSAN FARIAS*

4000 N. I-35, AUSTINCHRONICLE.COM/HOT-SAUCE



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Critics Picks

KIDS & FAMILY



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

BEST NEW YOUNG AUTHOR

Ellison Blakes

Austin fourth grader Ellison Blakes isn't even a full-time author, but he demonstrates the professionalism of a seasoned scribe. *El's Mirror* – the 9-year-old's debut book, written in tandem with local luminary father, Bavu – describes the challenges of El's kindergarten year as a marginalized student facing the unexpected challenges of his learning environment. *El's Mirror* reflects a style of writing aimed toward younger people, but carries substantive moral weight to influence parents, mentors, and educators as well.

WWW.FB.COM/ELSMIRROR

BEST EDUTAINMENT FOR LI'L TEXANS

The Bullock Museum Online

The Bullock has always been an excellent source of high-quality educational entertainment essential for building youngsters' Texas pride, and shifting to all-virtual programming during the pandemic can't have been easy. But they consistently add new content and activities and produce an online wealth of information that's truly as big as Texas. Notable rabbit holes include the Texas Story Project, a crowdsourced collection of personal tales from across the state, and Campfire Stories, an interactive mosaic users click through to learn about the key groups that made Texas what it is today.

WWW.THESTORYOFTEXAS.COM

SWEETEST RELIEF

Sweet Eats Fruit Farm

Miles and miles of Texas equals acres and acres of farmland. East of Georgetown on Highway 29, this sanctuary to "nutrient dense fruit" grows (to quote Jon Dee Graham) a big sweet life seven days a week, 9am-6pm. Strawberry plucking in the spring, corn maze in the fall, plus farm animals, a petting zoo, pig races, tricycles, pedal carts, zip lines, two huge jumpolines, the tractor tire mountain, and loads more – coming soon, the apple slingshot upgrades to the apple cannon – all come with the price of admission to this "adventure farm," which your kids will repay like an afternoon at the fair, only not one so designed to part you from your billfold. And should the sno-cone machine freeze up at this legit mom-and-pop business, that's probably the owner fixing it.

14400 HWY. 29 E., GEORGETOWN, WWW.SWEETEATS.COM

BEST WAY TO COMBINE SCIENCE AND SNACKS

Kate the Chemist: The Awesome Book of Edible Experiments for Kids

Ice cream is science! Hollandaise is science! Chocolate-covered pretzels? Yep, that's science, too. Kate the Chemist, also known as Dr. Kate Biberdorf, is a chemistry professor at UT-Austin and self-described "science entertainer" who broke out at the beginning of the pandemic with a book of at-home chemistry experiments. Follow-up *The Awesome Book of Edible Experiments for Kids* is a cookbook geared toward children and their parents, featuring 25 recipes/experiments that provide a lively way to learn while creating an edible treat. And with so many kids attending virtual classes for now three semesters, and summer break fast approaching, it's a no-brainer to put a STEM-friendly kitchen project into your witching hour rotation.

WWW.KATETHECHEMIST.COM



RAOUL HERNANDEZ

BEST FREE-RANGE BREWERY

Jester King

Moseying up to the Jester King front lawn feels like walking onto a field of dreams. Carved out of 165 acres, the South Texas machine shop that became a homebrewers' HQ opens onto an expanse as distanced from urban (sur)realities as a W.P. Kinsella novel. Some 17 drafts and nearly as many wines and ciders wash down the breakfast casserole, pizzas (including vegan and build-your-own), Bavarian pretzels, rye sourdough chocolate chip cookies, and more amongst the fruit trees (fig, persimmon, pomegranate, plum, apricot), a dog-friendly 2-mile hike loop, and the main attraction for the kiddies: goats and goat feeding. Turn the clan loose.

13187 FITZHUGH RD., WWW.JESTERKINGBREWERY.COM

BEST PIRATICAL ESCAPE FOR YOUR POD

Brentwood Social House

Avast, mateys – who yearns for adventures on the high seas? Well, the pandemic may have put paid to dreams of an ocean life, but this neighborhood coffeehouse is offering something to tide you over. While it's only been open for curbside pickup for the past year, Brentwood Social House kept up with its plan to turn its back patio into a kid-friendly play area, complete with a climbable galleon. It's open now for rentals for you and your pod. So, until the waves break on our bows again, landlubbers can at least set sail in the realm of imagination.

1601 W. KOENIG, WWW.BRENTWOODSOCIAL.COM

BEST "DINNER FOR THE KIDS TOO" BREWERY

The Brewtorium

A stellar location in a densely populated drinks desert put the Brewtorium on the map, but its exceptionally creative and approachable beer program kept the yoga moms and lager dads coming back. And with the breeders come the brood, which has to be placated by a celebratory vibe and a thoughtfully curated menu that they can be choosy over. The Brewtorium's German-forward biergarten theme provides both. Personal hits: the soft baked pretzel with beer cheese and the ground bratwurst dumplings. Plenty of leftover bites for Mom and Dad!

6015-A DILLARD CIR., WWW.THEBREWTORIUM.COM

MOST FORWARD-THINKING TRIP BACK IN TIME

Pioneer Farms

Preserving the history of 19th century Texas, Pioneer Farms is a step back in time to the days of spinning your own yarn, blacksmithing, candlemaking, basket-weaving ... and, facing the disasters of the last year, traditional skills are having a bit of a moment. They offer classes in all the aforementioned and dozens more, and their general store was a unique source for farm-fresh eggs, handmade soaps, and various staples when grocery shelves were bare. But it's more than an enriching educational experience for the family – it's also a venue for more modern entertainment. They hosted Griffon Ramsey's chainsaw pumpkin-carving demo for Halloween and have screened drive-in movies such as Austin Film Society's imported Sundance Film Festival selections, proving they're rooted in the past but very much in the now.

10621 PIONEER FARMS DR., WWW.PIONEERFARMS.ORG

BEST STEAL FROM THE CITY AND GIVE TO THE ARTISANS, PERFORMERS, AND PEOPLE

Sherwood Forest Faire

April at Sherwood Forest Faire counteracts T.S. Eliot annually, especially in "The Waste Land" of global pandemic ("April is the cruellest month," reasoned the poet in 1922). Enchanted from the moment SFF players open the gates to the McDade Shangri-la some 35 miles east of Austin, proclaiming fealty to Robin Hood, a vast array of wonders for the young and old sprawl the shaded woods. Jousting, archery, axe throwing, swordmaking, Nottingham Castle, puppetry, musicals, live bands, a medieval arcade and roller coaster, and a crowning hawk walk and multiple bird-of-prey demonstrations daily populate with families in costume – masked and distanced still, but teeming, thriving. Seldom does Austin's freak flag fly such a standard worth a bit o' taxation from King Richard.

1883 OLD HWY. 20, MCDADE, WWW.SHERWOODFORESTFAIRE.COM

BEST ARTIFICIAL GRASS SURROUNDED BY LATE CAPITALISM

The Lawn at Domain NORTHSIDE

Early iterations of the Domain got the high-end shopping right but didn't provide much for families and kids. The Domain NORTHSIDE fixed this. Not only are there multiple options for sweet eats and kids' clothing, but there's a big turf lawn right in the middle of everything. Is it surreal seeing children run and play surrounded by the all-glass Apple Store and an Amazon Books store? Yes. Yes, it is. Welcome to 21st century Austin!

11821 ROCK ROSE AVE., WWW.DOMAINNORTHSIDE.COM



COURTESY OF MOUNTAINS OF THREAD

BEST WAY TO PLAY WITH NEEDLES

Mountains of Thread

Sure, normally sharp pointy objects and small humans are not a smart combination. But when it's a structured art project that requires just a few bucks and some patience? Sign us up. Sarah Patterson of Mountains of Thread, a local embroiderist and mom of three young'uns, offers original patterns in her lovely and approachable embroidery kits via Etsy and Instagram. While they're not specifically designed for kids, the kits – complete with hoops, thread, needle, and printed patterns on fabric – make a uniquely appropriate art project for older kids and teens. From cacti to abstract desert landscape, empowering messages to minimalist linework, there's art project potential for everyone.

WWW.ETSY.COM/SHOP/MOUNTAINSOFTHREAD

Readers Poll

NIGHTLIFE



SHELLEY HIAM

BARTENDER

Sarah Espinosa (EastSide Tavern)

FINALISTS: Michelle Beebe Nabours (Donn's Depot), Holly Coleman (The Tigress)

"Sarah is a top notch mixologist and an overall wonderful person! If you don't know what you want, just tell her what you like and her magic skills never disappoint."

— MONICA MOLINA

1510 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, WWW.EASTSIDETAVERN.AUSTIN.COM

DANCE CLUB

Barbarella

FINALISTS: Coconut Club, Elysium

"THE GOAT." — JACOB POTTER

615 RED RIVER, WWW.FB.COM/BARBARELLA.AUSTIN.9

LARGE LIVE MUSIC VENUE

ACL Live at the Moody Theater

FINALISTS: Mohawk, Stubb's

"Great view no matter where you are seated and easy access to bars and restrooms."

— JEN COLEGROVE

310 W. WILLIE NELSON BLVD., WWW.ACL-LIVE.COM

INTIMATE LIVE MUSIC VENUE

Continental Club

FINALISTS: Cactus Cafe, One-2-One Bar, Saxon Pub

"Great booking, sight lines, and staff."

— CHRISTINA RUDOFKY

1315 S. CONGRESS, WWW.CONTINENTALCLUB.COM

OUTDOOR VENUE

Stubb's

FINALISTS: Far Out Lounge, Mohawk

"Smells like armpits, sounds like heaven."

— REED TECKENBROCK

801 RED RIVER, WWW.STUBBSAUSTIN.COM

DJ

DJ Mel

FINALISTS: Chorizo Funk, DJ CRG, DJ Nyce

"Nasty's, UT Basketball, Obama's DJ, Living Room Dance Party, DJ MEL does it all and does it the BEST!!"

— MADISEN DAVIS

WWW.DJMEL.COM

COCKTAIL BAR

Whisler's

FINALISTS: Garage, Midnight Cowboy, Roosevelt Room, The Tigress

"Best cocktails & lounge music. Authentic, rustic & chill environment."

— FABIAN ROCHA

1816 E. SIXTH, WWW.WHISLERSATX.COM

DIVE BAR

Sahara Lounge

FINALISTS: Deep Eddy Cabaret, Dirty Bills, The Liberty, The Lost Well

"Sahara Lounge makes room for everyone. It's full of diversity and good vibes."

— LETICIA RODRIGUEZ

1413 WEBBERVILLE RD., WWW.SAHARALOUNGE.COM

SPORTS BAR

Pluckers Wing Bar

FINALISTS: Black Sheep Lodge, FlipSide, Haymaker, Little Woodrow's

"Best wings in Austin and best atmosphere to watch games."

— MARK ANZALDUA

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.PLUCKERS.COM

HAPPY HOUR

Loro

FINALISTS: Kinda Tropical, The Tigress, Uchi

"Their frozen drinks are the bomb.com!!"

— AMANDA BLANCHARD

2115 S. LAMAR, WWW.LORO.AUSTIN.COM

PLACE FOR SOBER SOCIALIZING

Zilker Park

FINALISTS: Central Library, Sans Bar, Zilker Botanical Garden

"It's wide open spaces! What better place to be. I am not sure which is better — the people watching or the dog show."

— ALEX FURLONG

2100 BARTON SPRINGS RD., WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/ZILKER-METROPOLITAN-PARK

JUKEBOX

Casino El Camino

FINALISTS: Barfly's, Casino Southside Lounge, Deep Eddy Cabaret, The Golden Goose

"Casino is a legend and an Austin cultural treasure."

— JOHN HOOD

517 E. SIXTH, WWW.CASINOELCAMINO.NET

TRIVIA NIGHT

Pluckers Wing Bar

FINALISTS: Austin Eastciders, The Butterfly Bar, Gibson Street Bar, The Highball

"Long game, hard questions, great prizes."

— VALERIE O'NEILL

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.PLUCKERS.COM

QUEER PARTY

QueerBomb

FINALISTS: aGLIFF, Splash

"So welcoming and freeing! Marching down Sixth Street is awesome."

— AMMON TAYLOR

WWW.FB.COM/QUEERBOMB



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BAR FOR SINGLES

Cheer Up Charlies

FINALISTS: Devil May Care, Dirty Bills, Radio Coffee & Beer

“Reliably one of the most diverse crowds in this not-so-diverse city.”

— ANGELA EPLEY

900 RED RIVER, WWW.CHEERUPCHARLIES.COM

LGBTQIA CLUB

Cheer Up Charlies

FINALISTS: Coconut Club, Oilcan Harry's, Rain on 4th

“Cheer Ups is building a bigger table for all kinds of queer folks to sit at.”

— JOSHUA COLLIER

900 RED RIVER, WWW.CHEERUPCHARLIES.COM

POOL HALL

The Grand

FINALISTS: Slick Willie's, Warehouse Billiard Bar

“OG Austin.”

— ANGELICA ERAZO

4631 AIRPORT, WWW.THEGRANDAUSTIN.COM

ESCAPE ROOM

The Escape Game Austin

FINALISTS: Lockout Austin, Maze Rooms Austin, Novel Escape

“The best escape room ever.”

— PAULINA TORRES

405 RED RIVER, WWW.THEESCAPEGAME.COM/AUSTIN

ADULT CLUB

Yellow Rose

FINALISTS: Palazzo, Perfect 10

“Best service, best vibes, and a local staple!”

— HANNAH MILLER-JONES

6528 N. LAMAR, WWW.YELLOWROSE.COM



JANA BIRCHUM

KARAOKE

Ego's

FINALISTS: Common Interest, Highball

“Old Austin favorite.”

— KRIS DUDLEY
510 S. CONGRESS, WWW.FB.COM/EGOS, EGOS-KARAOKE-BAR.BUSINESS.SITE

MOST INNOVATIVE PIVOT

DJ Mel's Living Room Dance Party

FINALISTS: ACL Live at the Moody Theater as a wedding venue, Hotel Vegas' Hotel Free TV, Sagebrush converting parking into an outdoor venue

“DJ Mel has kept my family sane for ONE WHOLE YEAR during this mess. We look forward to Saturday night safe at home jamming together. #Priceless”

— VANESSA NG
WWW.DJMEL.COM

NIGHTLIFE WILD CARD

Jimmy Eat Wednesday emo night at Barbarella

FINALISTS: Austin Public Library's Craft Crawl, Sahara Lounge's Africa Nights

“The best emo night in the whole state of Texas.”

— TRISTINE LAND
615 RED RIVER, WWW.FB.COM/BARBARELLA.AUSTIN.9



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Image credit: Ulises Garcia, ESB-IMACC

Favier Fara

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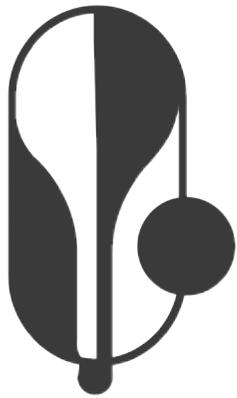
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Critics Picks



NIGHTLIFE

BEST BIERGARTEN FOR THE MASSES

Central Machine Works

Something reassuring after social distancing has become habitual is seeing a sea of tables spread out over a large outdoor space. CMW's enormous biergarten offers such a space, with plenty of room for kiddos and doggos too. Its converted warehouse has become a massive beer hall as well, from which taps aplenty pour out tasty craft brews and innovative handmade seltzers with flavors like peach-basil and pineapple-jalapeño. An outdoor stage hosts live music pumped out from a top-notch sound system, and with shows, DJs, movie nights, tiki nights, and Austin FC game airings, there's plenty of entertainment to choose from. But it's also just a perfect place to relax, catch up with friends, and share a pizza.

WWW.CMWBREWERY.COM



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

BEST LAWN CARE

Long Center & Luck Presents Long Live Music Series

After a year of drive-in shows and virtual streams, the Long Live Music outdoor series heralded the first real return to some semblance of normalcy for the live music capital. Hosted on the lawn of the Long Center and produced by Luck Presents, the spacious grounds allowed for responsible open-air social distancing beneath the Austin skyline while wrangling a diverse roster of A-list talent (Patty Griffin, Billy Strings, the Blind Boys of Alabama, Tank & the Bangas). The events additionally benefited Musically Fed, a nonprofit supporting out-of-work music industry professionals.

LONG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, 701 W. RIVERSIDE,
WWW.THELONGCENTER.ORG

BEST AAPI SOUNDTRACK

Tones – Sounds of Asian America

Typically host to thousands of annual guests across community events, the Asian American Resource Center creatively expanded online programming this past year while its North Austin building remained closed. Musical series *Tones* debuted in December, rounding up the serious wealth of local Asian American Pacific Islander talent on the second Thursday of every month. The debut episode's pairing of hip-hop producer Flobama and dreamy indie rocker Emily No Good made way for genre exploration, cross-generational booking, and creative at-home recording setups in the ongoing concert series. Tune in on the AACRC's Facebook and City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department YouTube.

WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.ORG/AARC

BEST LIVESTREAM PERFORMANCE TO BRING THE HOUSE DOWN, HENNY

Girls Like Us

During the lockdown, we watched a lot of high-profile productions that looked like a lame Zoom call. *Girls Like Us* was different. Directed and produced by p1nkstar and Y2K and streamed via Hotel Free TV, this colorful and stylishly put-together feature-length showcase felt like a private performance in your living room by p1nkstar, Babiboi, Lorelei K, and other queer and trans artists. Entertainment industry professionals – we hope you took notes. Gaga who? *tongue pop*

WWW.HOTELFREEV.COM/GIRLSLIKEUS

BEST NEW CRAFT COCKTAIL PROGRAM

Honey Moon Spirit Lounge

In a city overflowing with booze, curating a cocktail menu to stun Austin's thirsty patrons is no small feat. Honey Moon – named for the pandemic-delayed nuptial celebrations of owners Adrienne Wiggins and Reed Calhoun – is highly stylized with *This Old House* original wood floors, funky art walls, gilded mirrors, and lush fabrics. Even better, the details of Mallory Valentine's craft cocktail program put it light-years ahead of its peers with original recipes for ingredients like grapefruit-cardamom shrub, almond orgeat, pomegranate molasses, and – in our favorite, the Wet Your Beak in the Stream martini – pickled haricot vert. There's even a drink featuring Tubi 60, the citrusy Israeli liqueur you've never tasted but should. Throw on a city witch hat and a fancy shirt to spotlight those quarantine stick-and-poke tats, and make a reservation. If you're really nice, they'll even mail a postcard for you because tipsy handwritten notes never go out of style.

624 W. 34TH ST., HONEYMOONSPIRITLOUNGE.COM

BEST POTENTIALLY HAUNTED DOWNTOWN BASEMENT BAR

DuMont's Down Low

Nestled in the middle of the Downtown warehouse district, this cozy underground speakeasy offers a uniquely sultry ambience. With virtuoso bartenders serving a staggering drink selection, DuMont's finds a delicate balance between sophistication and easygoing warmth. Drop in for their incredible happy hour for \$7 (or less!) cocktails, and you may also run into the ghost of Blanche DuMont – a brothel owner during the 19th century who staff and patrons alike claim to have encountered still roaming among the barrel-lined walls.

214 W. FOURTH, STE. B, DUMONTSAUSTIN.COM

BEST MUSIC TELEVISION

Hotel Free TV

Unveiled last October, Hotel Vegas' Hotel Free TV kickstarted an ongoing virtual series of local music residencies awash with classic public access accoutrements. Whether it's a grouping of Sweet Spirit with Jackie Venson and Fat Tony, an advice call-in hour with Lord Friday the 13th, p1nkstar's absolutely stacked *Girls Like Us* showcase, or the countless raffles and telethons that took place in between, HFTV fulfills a need in today's Austin music community and has a hell of a time doing so. The rest of the world got a taste of Vegas charm in March as the crew were responsible for the production behind this year's six-artist SXSW Online bill.

WWW.HOTELFREEV.COM

BEST JAM-DEMIC

Purple Bee Live

Of all the “bubbles” formed during the pandemic, one of the most thoroughly entertaining ones to peer into was a music studio in rural Wyldwood. Weekly or more since last February, the Purple Bee Crew – usually consisting of brothers Dustin and Evan Bozarth, “Grego,” and Big Mic Pereida – welcomed bands and collaborators into their laboratory-like domain for lengthy performances under violet lights. Amid a livestreaming boom, few productions matched the consistency, quality, and feel-good vibes of PBL, which skews groove-centric. Performances brought real-time donations to artists as well as significant relief fundraising after the freeze.

PURPLEBEE.ORG

BEST INDOOR SUNSET

Sagebrush

A breathtaking view to witness: The sun plunging down, swallowed up behind the towering Chisos Mountains, orange glow emanating before a purple twilight ushers in the nighttime stars. Spare yourself the nine-hour drive to Big Bend for this essential West Texas scene; you can enjoy a delightful approximation while drinking whiskey inside a South Austin bar. The Sagebrush, a three-stage Austin honky-tonk that opened last June, dedicates an entire to wall to that desert sunset. The charming installation, created by Austin’s Intelligent Lighting Services, features a mountain range facade, backlit with lights that gleam on a starry backdrop that gradually changes from orange, around happy hour, to a purple-blue nightfall. We hear that, while rare, lightning storms are possible.

5500 S. CONGRESS, WWW.FB.COM/SAGEBRUSHTEXAS



JANA BIRCHUM

BEST BEERS, BURGERS, AND BEARS, OH MY!

The Iron Bear

After The Iron Bear’s move last year, walking into the new Downtown den of Austin’s only bear bar still feels like one big bear hug. Thanks to an on-site kitchen, you can now have your big daddy and eat ‘em, too – check out their burgers if you don’t bear-lieve us – plus other tasty bites. All that meat leaving you a l’il thirsty? Sip on the bar’s signature bear punch. The Iron Bear’s always open to everyone, but their long history of supporting the LGBTQIA (and leather!) community makes us extra thankful that these bears, co-owners Roger Rozell and Bengie Beshear, call Austin their home.

301 W. SIXTH, WWW.THEIRONBEAR.COM

RADIO

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 / RainOn4th

Readers Poll

POLITICS & MEDIA



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

ACTIVIST

Julie Oliver

FINALISTS: Greg Anderson, Emily LeBlanc, Tandra Louie, Chas Moore, Pooja Sethi

“Julie works tirelessly for voting rights, public health, and justice.” — EMILY WALKER

WWW.JULIEOLIVER.ORG

PRINT PUBLICATION

The Austin Chronicle

FINALISTS: Austin American-Statesman, Community Impact, Texas Monthly, Texas Observer

“Like a visit with a small group of best friends every week.” — MARTIN JONES

4000 N. I-35, WWW.AUSTINCHRONICLE.COM

ONLINE MEDIA OUTLET

Texas Tribune

FINALISTS: Austin.com, Austin Monitor, Do512, Texas Lifestyle & Travel Magazine

“Always have their fingers on the political pulse.” — DEBJEET SARKAR

919 CONGRESS, SIXTH FLOOR, WWW.TEXASTRIBUNE.ORG

RADIO STATION

KUT

FINALISTS: KLBJ, KOOP Radio, KUTX, Sun Radio

“This past year, it seemed like we needed KUT day and night.”

— LAURA COTTAM SAJBEL

300 W. DEAN KEETON, WWW.KUT.ORG

RADIO PROGRAM

Texas Standard (KUT)

FINALISTS: The Breaks (KUTX), Dudley and Bob With Matt (KLBJ), Stronger Than Dirt (KOOP), Sunday Morning Jazz (KUTX)

“Always hear something new. Their coverage on the Texas electric grid during the winter storm was very enlightening.”

— ANITA FRIJHOFF

KUT 90.5FM, 300 W. DEAN KEETON, WWW.KUT.ORG

SPANISH-LANGUAGE RADIO STATION

Latino 102.7

FINALISTS: KOKE 1600AM Puro Norteño, 107.1 La Z

“Latino has the new songs that Millennials and Gen Z are listening to.”

— GABRIELA AGUIRRE

8309 N. I-35, WWW.LATINO1027.COM

RADIO HOST

Dale Dudley (KLBJ)

FINALISTS: Jody Denberg (KUTX), Laurie Gallardo (KUTX), Nadia Hamdan (KUT), Taylor Wallace (KUTX)

“Afternoon or morning, got us through the pandemic. Appreciate the honesty, pursuit of truth, and humble approach that’s in serious need these days.” — JULIAN REYES

WWW.TWITTER.COM/DALEDUDLEY

PODCAST

The Night Owl

FINALISTS: Concert Queen Connect, The Kingcast, The Orange Tree, Pause/Play

“Love the spooky stories and the high production value.” — ROB ALMAGUER

WWW.THENIGHTOWLPODCAST.COM

TV NEWS STATION

KXAN

FINALISTS: CBS Austin, FOX 7, KVUE, Spectrum News Austin

“I appreciate their viewpoints, and the diversity among the reporters. I also appreciate that they spend a bit more time on some important stories.” — MARK STOREY

908 W. MLK, WWW.KXAN.COM

TV ANCHOR/REPORTER

Quita Culpepper (KVUE)

FINALISTS: Sydney Benter (KXAN), Sally Hernandez (KXAN), Tony Plohetski (KVUE), Regina Rodriguez (Univision 62), Trevor Scott (CBS Austin)

“Always Quita Culpepper. She’s a legend.”

— NATALIE CARROLL

KVUE, 3201 STECK, WWW.TWITTER.COM/QUITAC_KVUE

SPORTSCASTER

Craig Way (voice of the Texas Longhorns, The Horn)

FINALISTS: Ed Clements (KLBJ), Dennis de la Peña (FOX 7), Jake García (KVUE), Roger Wallace (KXAN)

“Best play by play, the voice of UT, and his in-play/end of game calls often bring goosebumps of elation. Light the Tower and say goodnight to this one!”

– TYLER DAVIS

WWW.TWITTER.COM/CRAIGWAY1

WEATHERPERSON

Jim Spencer (KXAN)

FINALISTS: James Greenhaw (Pflugerville Weatherguy), Erika Lopez (KVUE), Chikage Windler (CBS Austin), David Yeomans (KXAN)

“LEGEND. 100% chance of awesomeness.” – OWEN EGERTON

KXAN, 908 W. MLK, WWW.TWITTER.COM/JIMSPENCERKXAN



JOHN ANDERSON

JOURNALIST

Ashley Lopez (KUT News)

FINALISTS: Michael Barnes (Austin American-Statesman), Jack Craver (The Austin Politics Newsletter), Ken Herman (Austin American-Statesman), Tony Plohetski (KVUE, Austin American-Statesman), Austin Sanders (The Austin Chronicle)

“Ashley kept us informed through a pandemic, an election year, and a once-in-a-generation storm and kept the focus on our vulnerable, under-represented, and under-served neighbors.” – MOLLY MCCLURG

WWW.TWITTER.COM/ASHLOPEZRADIO



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TRIAL LAWYERS



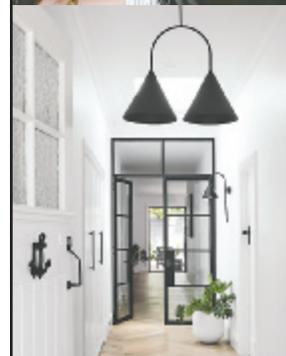
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annette@seedpropertygroup.com
www.annettepatterson.com

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Manthurs O.

APPLY FOR SUMMER & FALL CLASSES TODAY austincc.edu

LOCAL CONTROVERSY

Ted Cruz goes to Cancun

FINALISTS: Steve Adler goes to Cabo, APD response to BLM protests, "Eyes of Texas" as UT's alma mater, Ongoing battle over whether to reinstate the camping ban

"Dear lord, he's a hot mess."

- MEL BRATTON



JOHN ANDERSON

MOST INNOVATIVE PIVOT

Beto O'Rourke doing more than some elected officials during the winter storms

FINALISTS: Greg Abbott granting waivers for restaurants and bars to sell alcohol to-go during the pandemic, Travis County Clerk's Office expanding number and size of polling places and allowing mail-in and hand-delivered ballots

"Ahem Ted Cruz."

- CAROLINE BHARGAVA

WWW.BETOFORTEXAS.COM

FILM CRITIC

Richard Whittaker (The Austin Chronicle)

FINALISTS: Sean Chandler (Sean Chandler Talks About), Robert Sims (Lights Camera Austin), Eric Webb (Austin American-Statesman)

"Witty, insightful, always brings context and receipts." - SAM CHANG

TWITTER.COM/YORKSHIRETX

FOOD WRITER

Nadia Chaudhury (Eater Austin)

FINALISTS: Addie Broyles (Austin American-Statesman), Jessi Cape (The Austin Chronicle), Jane Ko (A Taste of Koko), Matthew Odam (Austin American-Statesman)

"Well-rounded and extremely knowledgeable." - MEAGAN NAVARRO

NADIACHAUDHURY.COM

ONLINE PERSONALITY

Adriene Mishler (Yoga With Adriene)

FINALISTS: Clarissa Cardenas (ATX Concert Queen), Sean Chandler (Sean Chandler Talks About), Evil MoPac (@EvilMoPacATX), Jane Ko (A Taste of Koko)

"Adriene Mishler has helped many feel better about themselves and especially overcome the stresses of quarantine with her free yoga tutorials." - IMMIDEX AKINYI

WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/YOGAWITHADRIENE, WWW.YOGAWITHADRIENE.COM

ELECTED OFFICIAL: CITY

Greg Casar

FINALISTS: Steve Adler, Andy Brown, Natasha Harper-Madison, Ann Kitchen

"Because Greg is out there every day trying to make life better in Austin for everyone."

- BILLY WEAVER

CITY HALL, 301 W. SECOND, WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DISTRICT-4

ELECTED OFFICIAL: STATE

Lloyd Doggett

FINALISTS: Sarah Eckhardt, Gina Hinojosa, Donna Howard, Eddie Rodriguez

"A man of integrity."

- VERONICA JORDAN-MATLOCK

WWW.DOGGETT.HOUSE.GOV

NONPROFIT/GRASSROOTS ORG

Central Texas Food Bank

FINALISTS: Austin Justice Coalition, Austin Mutual Aid, Austin Pets Alive!, IssueVoter

"The services CTFB have provided during the past year (through COVID, the winter storms) has literally kept many Austinites fed and alive. We are lucky to have such a wonderful organization in our community."

- JANET JANSEN

6500 METROPOLIS DR., WWW.CENTRALTEXASFOODBANK.ORG

POLITICS & MEDIA WILD CARD

r/Austin (Austin subreddit)

FINALISTS: Matt Largey's tweets, This Dude Cooks in the Nude (web series)

"The r/Austin subreddit has been the true hero of this year: giving us updates on toilet paper stock, information during the winter storm, and helping people find vaccines."

- SAMANTHA BULL

WWW.REDDIT.COM/R/AUSTIN



ZEKE BARBARO



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

PHOTOGRAPHER

David Brendan Hall

FINALISTS: Heather Leah Kennedy, Ismael Quintanilla III, Sarah Wilson, Todd V. Wolfson

"His eye for what captures the moment/climate is incredible. He also knows how to depict both tragic and beautiful images the way they should." - CLIFF CHONG

WWW.DAVIDHALLPHOTOG.COM, WWW.FB.COM/DBRENDANHALL

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Critics Picks

POLITICS & MEDIA



BEST-CASE OUTCOME FOR A WORST-CASE MEDIA LAUNCH

The 19th*

When Texas Tribune alums Emily Ramshaw and Amanda Zamora first decided to start a brand-new media organization dedicated to reporting on gender, politics, and policy, they surely didn't factor a worldwide pandemic into their pitch deck. But despite the unique challenges of launching during COVID, their nonprofit digital newsroom has not only jumped every hurdle – remote hiring, a virtual media summit, a late summer site launch – it's *flourished*. With topics including racial justice, child care, trans rights, and women's cratering numbers in the labor force, the 19th's probing, fact-based reporting centers women and their experiences, always. Note to MSM: Talking to 51% of the population is not niche journalism.

WWW.19THNEWS.ORG

BEST BAND STAND

LHBlacks

George Floyd died May 25, 2020. On June 12, more than two dozen UT athletes demanded racial reckoning at an institution with Black representation hovering around the mid-single digits. One week later, Longhorn Band saxophonist Judson Hayden founded LHBlacks, who represent an even lower percentage among 400 student musicians. Protesting alma mater "The Eyes of Texas" – a title adapted from a Robert E. Lee aphorism and set to the openly racist tune of the "Levee Song" ("I've been working on the railroad"), then performed in blackface circa 1903 at UT – the tiny group stood up to the University of Texas. The school didn't change its tune, but neither did LHBlacks turn a blind eye, since they no longer perform it.

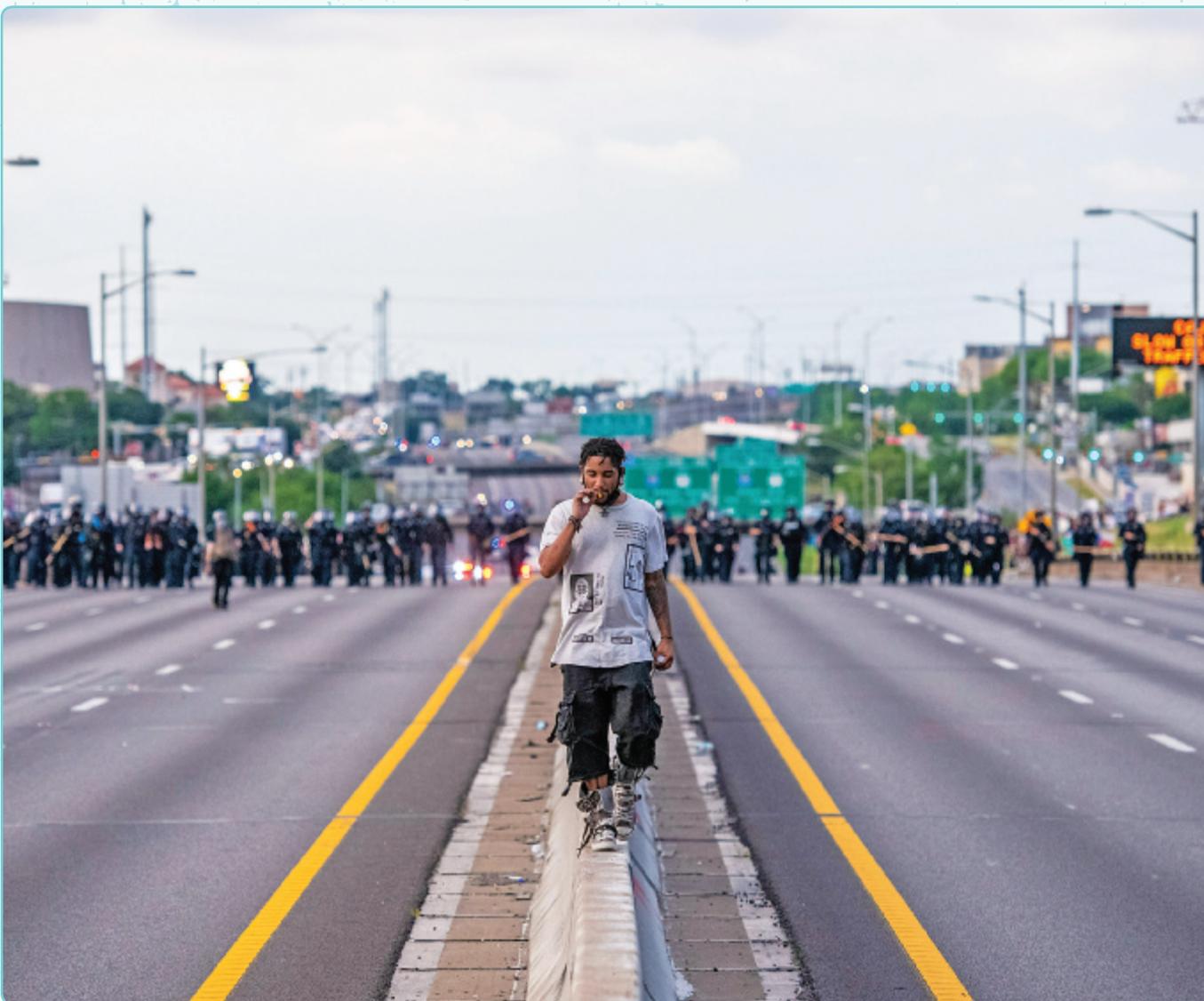
WWW.TWITTER.COM/LHBLACKS

BEST MUSIC COMMUNITY STORM RESPONSE

Texas Music Workforce Coalition and Amplified Sound Coalition

Days into Winter Storm Uri's aftershock, the need for a citizen-led initiative of hot food and bottled water distribution could not have been more dire. Within hours of putting out the alert for volunteers, the TMWC and Amplified Sound Coalition's call was heeded and then some, resulting in a human chain comprising the music industry and public at large. Extending for much of the length of the Millennium Youth Entertainment Complex parking lot, more than 100 Austinites helped to distribute essentials to families in need, showing once and for all there will always be strength in numbers.

WWW.TMWC.LIVE
WWW.THEAMPLIFIEDSOUNDCOALITION.ORG



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

MOST PRODUCTIVE SYMBOLIC MOMENT

The Taking of I-35

The protesters last year at Austin's police headquarters didn't have to go far to occupy the interstate that's symbolized the city's racial and social divides for more than 50 years. In APD leaders' mind, blocking the highway was a self-evident threat to the community's safety, and thus justified the traumatizing police response that followed, which in turn justified Austinites' rapid and robust demand for *de*-policing that's still making an impact a year later. And as a side benefit, it focused the eyes of many on everything wrong with I-35 itself, helping to change that conversation as well.

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Mentally



Emotionally



Intellectually



Holistically



Creatively



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Now participating with Texas Medicaid



JANA BIRCHUM

BEST ACTION IN THE FACE OF DEPLORABLE STATE FAILURE

Austin Mutual Aid

Mutual aid is a timeless concept, but in a year of constant crisis and state abandonment, the need for community care grows more glaring. When the pandemic began, Bobby Cooper and his fellow anarchist volunteers began delivering home-cooked meals, masks, tents, and other essentials to houseless people, and more recently raised funds to secure them hotel rooms when the city froze. What have our elected leaders done, besides flee to Mexico and ignore CDC guidelines? All the more reason to get to know your neighbors.

WWW.FB.COM/AUSTINMUTUALAID

BEST INSIDER LISTEN

Texas Take

As editor of the iconic Quorum Report, Scott Braddock knows everything that's happening under the pink dome, and once a week he tells you all about it on this podcast, co-hosted with the *Houston Chronicle's* Jeremy Wallace. Texas state government, and especially the Legislature in session, manufactures scads of storylines and generates a blizzard of clips and press releases and talking points, but many of the decisions and machinations that dictate actual outcomes happen out of view, and Braddock and Wallace do a stellar job of helping listeners follow the true narrative.

WWW.HOUSTONCHRONICLE.COM/POLITICS/TEXAS-TAKE/TEXAS-TAKE-PODCAST

BEST PROOF THE NEWS DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ALL BAD

The Austin Common

"Be informed. Make a difference." So goes the motto of this nonpartisan news organization (formerly Austin EcoNetwork). Be it through their newsletter, their KOOP Radio show *The Austin Common Radio Hour*, or their illustrated guides on Instagram that make sense of tangly stuff like ERCOT and the special election, the folks at Austin Common know that their one-two punch – educating readers and nudging them toward civic engagement – is for the common good.

WWW.THEAUSTINCOMMON.COM

BEST COVERAGE OF A NEVER-ENDING STORY

Paul Thompson

The curious adventures of Paxton and Paul – Ken, our state's brash and battered attorney general, and his friend Nate, the whiz-kid mogul of an Austin property empire – may never be explained to our satisfaction. But much of what we do know stems from the messy unraveling in bankruptcy of Paul's convoluted World Class Holdings, and Paul Thompson of the *Austin Business Journal* has been the indispensable reporter-of-record of all that's entailed.

WWW.TWITTER.COM/PTHOMPSONATX

BEST VIRTUAL POLITICAL SOCIAL CLUB

"Policy Pints" with Sen. Sarah Eckhardt

Throughout her career in elected office, at Travis County and now the Texas Capitol, Sarah Eckhardt has held regular "Coffee Jolt" and "Policy Pints" sessions with friends, supporters, and constituents. During the pandemic, what's been lost in actual hangin'-out intimacy has been offset by a much wider reach, allowing hundreds of Austinites at a time, particularly for the "Policy Pints" virtual happy hours, to visit with Eckhardt and her many smart friends trying to steer a progressive course on issues from voting rights to Medicaid expansion to justice reform.

WWW.FB.COM/SARAHECKHARDTAUSTIN

BEST GUARDIAN OF THE BALLOT BOX

Travis County Clerk Dana DeBeauvoir

When something's amiss in Texas' election process, who you gonna call? Dana DeBeauvoir, that's who. In a year where some state officials wanted to make voting more difficult, DeBeauvoir's 34-years-long dedication to protecting our right to vote remained steadfast against a barrage of executive orders and court orders modifying most facets of the voting process every other week: ballot drop-off locations, mask requirements, and election schedules, to name a few. Throughout it all, the Travis County clerk did everything within her power to protect and ensure a fair, safe, and transparent election process, and for that, we thank her.

COUNTYCLERK.TRAVISCOUNTYTX.GOV

BEST COOPERATIVE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Red River Cultural District's "Safe in Sound"

When Gov. Greg Abbott pulled mask requirements and hastily declared Texas "open and free" in March, Austin music venues proved they answer to a higher power. The Red River Cultural District rallied music entities under its "Safe in Sound" pledge, calling for 6 feet between groups, required face coverings, sanitization, and more upheld CDC guidelines. Best practices continued self-imposed considerations taken throughout the pandemic by music establishments. Rounding up 50 signees across entertainment, dining, and more, the show of solidarity includes major music names like ACL Live at the Moody, Antone's, Stubb's, Mohawk, Paramount Theatre, Empire Control Room, and Luck Reunion.

WWW.REDRIVERCULTURALDISTRICT.ORG/SAFE-IN-SOUND

BEST VENUE CHAMPION

Music Venue Alliance Austin's Rebecca Reynolds

Technically, club owners get info about the Live Music Venue Preservation Fund from the City of Austin. And in theory, they're handed Shuttered Venue Operators Grant rules from the Small Business Association. But if you ask any local club-runner where they're getting updates, they say Rebecca Reynolds. Head of one establishment may have casually argued for a golden statue of the attorney in our Downtown area. Founder of the Music Venue Alliance Austin, Reynolds keeps up with the nuts, bolts, problematic loopholes, bureaucratic jargon, and broken civic promises of music policy like no other – an effort more essential than ever in 2021.

WWW.MUSICVENUEALLIANCEAUSTIN.COM



JANA BIRCHUM

BEST MUSICIAN ON DAIS

Jonathan "Chaka" Mahone

Jonathan "Chaka" Mahone of hip-hop duo Riders Against the Storm powerfully leads in an era polluted by performative activism. The current chair of the Austin Music Commission successfully advocated for 50% of the Austin Live Music Fund to go toward a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) creatives fund. He also created his own Black Live Music Fund with the goal of awarding \$2,500 grants to Black members of Austin's music scene. And as politicians pointed fingers while Texas froze over, the Brown University alum says he sent out \$32,000 in direct cash assistance via his DAWA Fund.

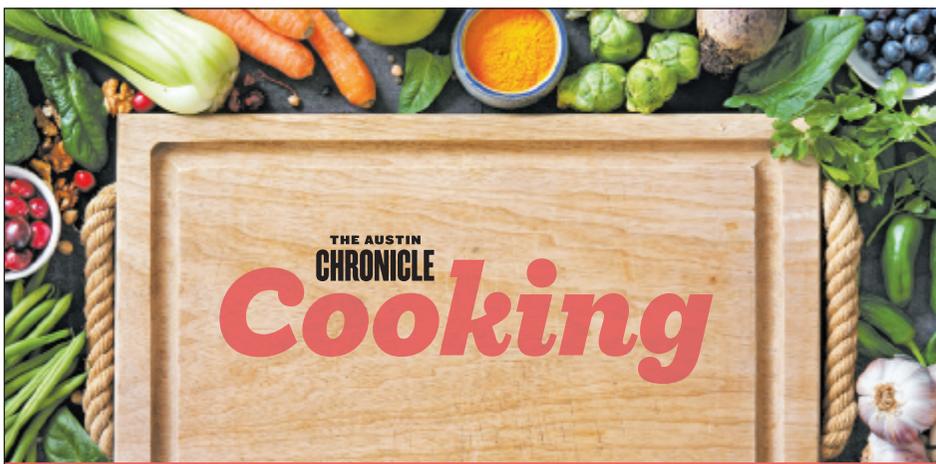
WWW.RASHIPHOR.COM



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austinchronicle.com/cooking

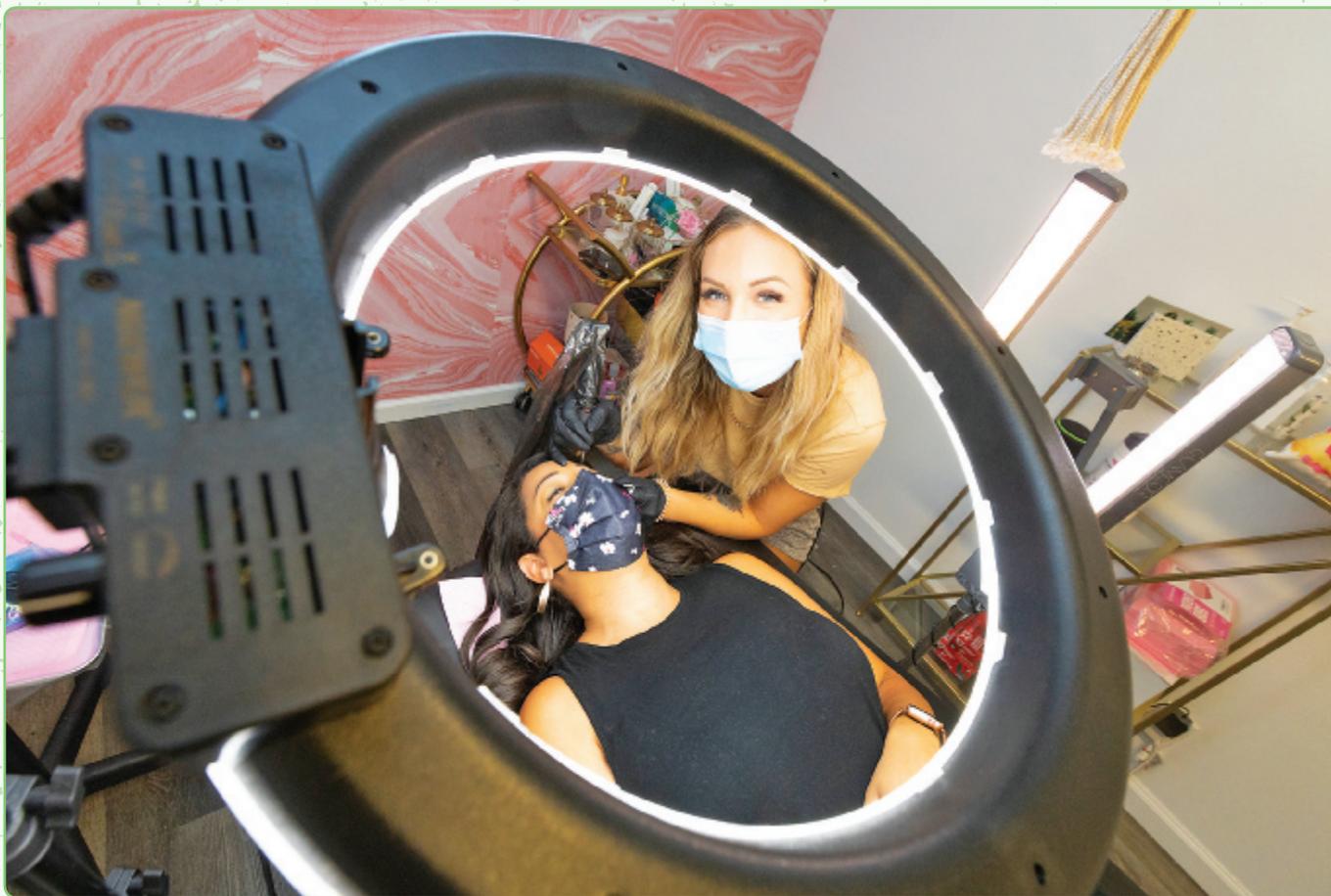


211 W 4th

Austin's Home for RuPaul's Drag Race Queens

Readers Poll

SERVICES



JANA BIRCHUM

LASHES/BROWS

June's Brow Co. FINALISTS: Kenzie Fresh Brows, Lash Genie, The Lash Lounge, Pink Lady Lash

"Her work is incredible, she is so friendly, and I can't believe I get to live with brows like THESE on my face!" - ALISON ARNEBERG

510 E. ST. ELMO, BLDG. 510-A, JUNESBROWCO.COM

BARBERSHOP

Birds Barbershop

FINALISTS: Barbon's Barbershop, Kings Barber Studio, Olde Soul Barbershop, Reunion Barbershop

"They made getting haircuts during COVID at least thinkable, and they're real good folks too." - HOLT LACKEY

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, BIRDSBARBERSHOP.COM

SALON

Method Hair

FINALISTS: 29Eleven The Salon, Headspace Salon and Co-op, Spoletti Salon, VINYL Beauty Bar

"Excellent stylists, amazing color wizards. They're fun, funky, and professional. All the best things rolled into one spot!"

- VALERIE SADORRA

1800 E. FOURTH #103, WWW.METHODHAIR.COM

SPA

Milk + Honey

FINALISTS: Divine Luxury Spa Studio, Spa Sway, VINYL Beauty Bar, Viva Day Spa

"Talented and kind staff make the best spa experiences." - TERESA SOKOLOW

100-A GUADALUPE: 12901 HILL COUNTRY BLVD. STE. D1-110;
9722 GREAT HILLS TRAIL #210, WWW.MILKANDHONEYSPA.COM

MASSAGE

Viva Day Spa

FINALISTS: Hiatus Spa + Retreat, Mantis Massage, Mantra Massage, Spa Sway

"Incredible treatments every time. Doesn't matter who you book with - you're going to receive the best massage every visit."

- LAUREN SPIERS

215 S. LAMAR; 1811 W. 35TH; 11601 ROCK ROSE AVE.;
WWW.VIVADAYSPA.COM

WAX/SKINCARE

Viva Day Spa

FINALISTS: Cute Nail Studio, Hey Gorgeous Waxing and Skin Studio, June's Brow Co., Vixen Esthetics ATX

"I only trust the women at Viva with my skin and hair removal needs. They know how to help you achieve inner and outer beauty." - LAUREN ALANA

215 S. LAMAR; 1811 W. 35TH; 11601 ROCK ROSE AVE.;
WWW.VIVADAYSPA.COM

MANI/PEDI

Cute Nail Studio

FINALISTS: Diamond Nails, Hiatus Spa + Retreat, VINYL Beauty Bar, Viva Day Spa

"Best nail salon around! Talented artists, LGBTQ+ safe space, inclusive, and adorable. Amazing nail art." - KATHERINE RIORDAN

1211 E. SEVENTH, WWW.CUTENAILSTUDIO.COM

HOTEL/MOTEL

Hotel San José

FINALISTS: Austin Motel, Carpenter Hotel, Commodore Perry Estate, Inn Cahoots

"It's beautiful and lovely and the staff is perfect. Run by a bunch of strong women. Great location!" - SYDNEE FARR

1316 S. CONGRESS, WWW.SANJOSEHOTEL.COM

BIKE SHOP/REPAIR

Bicycle Sport Shop

FINALISTS: Austin Tri Cyclist, East Side Pedal Pushers, Mellow Johnny's, The Peddler

"R.I.P. Bicycle Sport Shop. You'll always be in my heart for the Real Ale Ride and the Poker Ride, not to mention great staff and attitude. Miss you so much!" - TEX OBIE

PSYCHIC/TAROT

Sister Temperance Tarot

FINALISTS: Ace of Cups, Austin Tarot Reader, Mak Jagger Tarot, Sister Palm

"Angel is an amazing reader. A rare and true visionary and healer." - KAIA IVRY

CONTACT FOR ADDRESS, WWW.SISTERTEMPERANCE.COM





JANA BIRCHUM

DOGGIE DAY CARE

Taurus Academy

FINALISTS: Barkin' Creek Dog Kitchen and Bath, Fossil Ridge Doggie Playcare, Jackie's Play & Stay, Mud Puppies

"Lots of locations. Employees are passionate about dogs. Love that I can add puppy snuggles/couch time to my dogs' stay." - ERIN GEISLER VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.TAURUSACADEMY.COM

TATTOO

Atomic Tattoo

FINALISTS: Austin Tattoo Company, No Good Tattoo, Studio Ink, True Blue Tattoo

"Very clean and professional. Artists really work to understand what you want."

- STEPHANIE HARRISON VARIOUS LOCATIONS

AUTO REPAIR/SERVICE

Groovy Automotive

FINALISTS: B&B Muffler & Automotive, Dave's Ultimate Automotive, Juke Auto, Yost Automotive

"Best customer service and always peace of mind that the work is done correctly."

- RUTH WHEELER 4011 RED RIVER; 3511 GUADALUPE; WWW.GROOVYAUTOMOTIVE.COM

COMPUTER REPAIR

Discount Electronics

FINALISTS: Frankenstein Computers and Networking, Happy Mac, MacTronics

"Best prices, best service, best selection." - KYLE NATIONS

1011 W. ANDERSON; 9711 MENCHACA RD.; 1001 S. I-35, ROUND ROCK; WWW.DISCOUNTELECTRONICS.COM

MUSIC SERVICES/EQUIPMENT

Strait Music Co.

FINALISTS: Rock N Roll Rentals, South Austin Music, The Werd Company, Westbank String Shop

"Strait Music has been rockin' this town for 60 years!" - RICK INGRAHAM

2428 W. BEN WHITE; 13945 HWY. 183 N.; WWW.STRAITMUSIC.COM

HOME MAINTENANCE/SERVICES

ABC Home & Commercial

FINALISTS: Blue Diamond Remodeling, iHaul Austin, Wedo Home Improvement

"Down-to-earth, awesome service. They really care!" - JANA ORTIZ

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.ABCHOMEANDCOMMERCIAL.COM

LAWN CARE/LANDSCAPING

Real Green Pest and Lawn

FINALISTS: Fertile Ground, Seedlings Gardening, Transformed Landscaping Co.

"Great service, awesome pricing. Once I started using Real Green, my lawn looked amazing. Very happy customer."

- EDUARDO RAMOS 15527 RR 620 N., WWW.REALGREENLAWNS.COM

FENCING

Viking Fence

FINALISTS: AusTex Fence and Deck, Campuzano Landscaping, Gary Burton Fence Replacement/Repair

"Does quality installation with quality material." - DAVID HOGAN

9602 GRAY BLVD.; 11701 VON QUINTUS RD., WWW.VIKINGFENCE.COM

A/C REPAIR/INSTALLATION

Radiant Plumbing & Air Conditioning

FINALISTS: ABC Home and Commercial Services, Altruistic AC & Heating, Stan's Heating and Air Conditioning

"These are the guys you want working on your problem." - CHARLES GRICE

901 REINLI, WWW.RADIANTPLUMBING.COM

ELECTRICIAN

Salt Light & Electric

FINALISTS: Arbuckle Electrical, Grayzer Electric, Texas Electrical Services

"Very helpful and quick to respond."

- JEAN HAYES 1715-A ROWE LN., PFLUGERVILLE, SALTLE.COM

PLUMBER

Radiant Plumbing & Air Conditioning

FINALISTS: ET Plumbing, Reliant Plumbing

"Cute commercials on the radio. The married couple owners are relationship goals."

- JAIME YOUNG 901 REINLI, WWW.RADIANTPLUMBING.COM

LOCKSMITH

Cothron's

FINALISTS: Chastity Lock & Key, Sharp Brothers Locksmith

"I've used them for years. Very satisfied with their work. Good staff."

- BOB RUBEL 8225 BURNET RD.; 2119 N. MAYS, ROUND ROCK; 1315 W. BEN WHITE, WWW.COTHRONS.COM

CLEANING SERVICE

MoreHands

FINALISTS: Maids and Moore, Peace Frog Specialty Cleaning, Penny's Personal Touch Services, Texas Green Clean

"They are very reliable and do a great job, including periodic inspections of their own cleaning teams, ease of recheduling, extra services, etc." - MANUELA GUTT

8000 ANDERSON SQUARE #107; 1208-W N. I-35, ROUND ROCK, WWW.MOREHANDS.COM

LAUNDROMAT

SpinZone

FINALISTS: EcoClean, Laundry Day Wash

"Always open and clean machines."

- AMY ROMERO VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.SPINZONELAUNDRY.COM

DRY CLEANER

Rick's Cleaners

FINALISTS: EcoClean, Jack Brown Cleaners, Reid's Cleaners and Laundry, ZIPS Dry Cleaners

"Exceptional customer service, great prices, quick turnaround." - CASSANDRA RICKS

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, RICKSCLEANERS.COM

TAILOR/ALTERATION

Ace Custom Tailors

FINALISTS: Gassane Tailors, J&B Alterations and Cleaners, Triana Tailors

"I won't go anywhere else. The work is just WOW." - TINA PONDER

724-A N. LAMAR; 11909 DOMAIN DR. #154; 2707 WALSH TARTLTON, WWW.ACETAILOERS.COM

MOVERS

Einstein Moving Company

FINALISTS: Army Ant Moving Company, Kim Manthey & Company, MASH Movers

"Best movers and have a great sense of humor to boot." - JAMES TRACY

9200-A BROWN; 3904-B WAREHOUSE ROW, WWW.EINSTEINMOVING.COM

REAL ESTATE AGENT

Blanca Garcia

FINALISTS: Don Harvey, Lilly Rockwell

"She is the best and helped this first-time homeowner buy her home!"

- JOVITA PARDO

APARTMENT LOCATOR

Smart City Apartment Locating

FINALISTS: A+ Apartment Locators, Apartment Experts, Austin Apartment Specialists, Austin Apartments NOW

"These guys worked hard for us when we decided to move Downtown."

- ANA ZUNIGA 506 E. ST. ELMO STE. A-1, SMARTCITYLOCATING.COM/AUSTIN-APARTMENTS

LAWYER

Cofer & Connelly

FINALISTS: Batrice Law Firm, DC Law, FVF Law

"Great advocates and great Austin citizens." - TED SIFF

1002 WEST AVE., WWW.COFERCONNELLY.COM

VETERINARIAN

Emancipet

FINALISTS: AM/PM Animal Hospital, Bluebonnet Animal Hospital, PAZ Veterinary, Star of Texas Veterinary Hospital

"Emancipet has helped me raise four fur babies at an affordable price. I really appreciate what they do for the community."

— ANNA STROTHER

1030 NORWOOD PARK BLVD. #316; 15803 WINDERMERE DR. #420, PFLUGERVILLE; 7201 LEVANDER LOOP, BLDGS. I & K; WWW.EMANCIPET.ORG

PET GROOMING

Dirty Dog Grooming

FINALISTS: Barkin' Creek Dog Kitchen and Bath, Bravado Dog Grooming, Clean Critters, Mud Puppies

"I didn't recognize my dog when they finished."

— WORDY THOMPSON VARIOUS LOCATIONS, DIRTY-DOG.COM

WEDDING VENUE

Mercury Hall

FINALISTS: Barr Mansion, Camp Lucy, Chapel Dulcinea, House on the Hill

"Beautiful setting, perfect in every way."

— MARY PRIDDY 615 CARDINAL, WWW.MERCURYHALL.COM

ONLINE ADULT EDUCATION

Austin Community College

FINALISTS: Champions School of Real Estate, Femme Rock, Girl Guitar Austin, UT's English Language Center

"ACC is the best bargain in education in Austin." — TERESA WALTERS

AUSTINCC.EDU

MOST INNOVATIVE PIVOT

Runner City, gig cooperative shifting to aid efforts during the winter storms

FINALISTS: Extragrams, performing telegram company founded during the pandemic to keep entertainers employed, SpaDash mobile haircuts

"Helped a bunch of people keep income coming in when jobs were lost and helped people in the process. After the winter storm efforts to help our unsheltered citizens, they have a new special place in my heart." — AMANDA HODGES

2119 S. LAMAR #114, RUNNER-CITY.COM



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

SERVICES WILD CARD

Earth Commons (apothecary and wellness center)

FINALISTS: Eye Candy Boudoir (portrait studio), Light Family Acupuncture (acupuncture clinic), Saving Face Austin (dermal fillers lounge), Torrid Boudoir (portrait studio)

"These badass ladies opened at the very beginning of the pandemic and have not only survived, but thrived. They are generous and inclusive and truly creating a sustainable wellness center for community." — JESSICA ZAROWITZ

813 SPRINGDALE, WWW.EARTH-COMMONS.COM



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Critics Picks



SERVICES

BEST PET STORE WATERCOOLER TALK

Prime Pet

Anyone else been caught talking to a tree, stop sign, or the pesky squirrel eating your plants? Yeah, us neither For the past year, social interactions have been few and far between. From stories about maskless encounters around town to surviving a near electric grid failure, Prime Pet owner Burton Cleveland and the rest of his family always make the time to talk. Not to mention the shop packs in all the furry friend necessities and is conveniently located in the same building as Paz Veterinary East. As they say, come for the pet stuff and stay for the conversation.

2400 E. CESAR CHAVEZ #102,
WWW.PRIMEPETAUSTIN.COM



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

BEST HEROES FIGHTING HUNGER

Central Texas Food Bank

As the COVID-19 crisis worsens food insecurity for thousands of our neighbors, Central Texas' largest hunger-relief organization has continually stepped up to meet the community's unprecedented need – and the numbers show it. In fiscal year 2020, CTFB distributed a record 64.5 million pounds of food, averaging serving nearly 300,000 individuals per month. Safety precautions and skyrocketing demand called for the agency's shift to drive-through mass distributions. Of course, such efforts wouldn't be possible without the tens of thousands of volunteers who risked illness and donated more than 100,000 hours last year to help families get food on their tables.

6500 METROPOLIS DR., WWW.CENTRALTEXASFOODBANK.ORG

BEST HOUSEKEEPING ADVICE

Vanesa Amaro

Vanesa Amaro wants you to love the home you live in, and not just because it's good business. When the pandemic made life messier, Amaro began sharing secrets on TikTok (toilet bowl cleaner erases hard water stains!), drawing in over 3.5 million followers and a steady social media income. She's now left most of her clients to offer free services to people in need. Amaro rejects that cleaning is "common sense," constantly going to bat for folks whose mental health, disabilities, or busy lives complicate their cleaning routines. Her funny, kindhearted videos make the COVID era brighter – and better sanitized.

WWW.TIKTOK.COM/@VANEAMAR091

BEST RADIO PAYOLA

Sun Radio's Recharge Program

Hometown solar-powered frequency Sun Radio brought their own alternative energy to support the community over the past year. Their Recharge Program launched last spring to help cover electricity bills of Central Texas musicians and even other community radio stations, donating about \$100,000 to help over 1,000 neighbors. The program found purpose during the winter storm as well, paying out \$50,000 in direct checks to aid the community. With more than a quarter-million dollars raised, Sun Radio is still ensuring Texas artists can keep the lights on and amps plugged in.

SUN RADIO, 4020 MENCHACA RD., SUNRADIO.COM

BEST PET PORTRAITS

Austin Taylor, All Saints Tattoo

A cherub, a sneaker, a mockingbird: Scroll through Austin Taylor's Instagram, and it's instantly clear that he's a master of hyperrealistic tattoos. Yet nothing inspires more oohs and ahhs than his pet portraits, a few inches of black and gray shading that immortalize our beloved best friends. Taylor works quick, and like his colleagues at All Saints, is friendly and professional – there are no exclusive vibes at this Sixth Street shop. First-timers and full-sleevers alike have something to gain from his precision.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/AUSTINTAYLORTATTOO

BEST CONVERSATION STARTER

Big & Mini

In the heady early days of the pandemic, Big & Mini's big idea was first hatched: to ease the social isolation by connecting seniors (the Bigs) and teens (the Minis) for free, teleconferenced chats. Melding a philanthropic spirit with startup hustle, the founders – UT classmates Aditi Merchant and Allen Zhou and Zhou's younger brother Anthony – have expanded their nonprofit operation, garnering national headlines and innovation grants, and matching more than 1,000 young and young-at-heart new friends across 25 countries. Big-ups, y'all.

BIGANDMINI.ORG

BEST NO WASTE, COVID-SAFE GROCERY DELIVERY

Trashless

When COVID-19 made delivered groceries all the rage this past year, that meant sustainability often went out the window with triple bagged items, a plastic bag specifically for a roll of paper towels, and freezer bags galore. Enter Trashless. The zero-waste startup delivers the freshest sustainable ingredients and makes you feel great about it. They recently expanded their selection to include a wide variety of produce, meats, cheeses, and more. It's never a bad thing when Planet Earth smiles upon your grocery order.

WWW.TRASHLESS.COM

BEST ONE-STOP BEAUTY COLLECTIVE

Gallery of Salons

The old Northcross Mall was a cruising spot for Eighties Austin teens on the make. Now it's likely where those former teens and their children get bangs shaped, eyebrows plucked, and tired muscles massaged at Gallery of Salons, a labyrinth of independent beauty contractors. True to its name, owner Dana Funicelli keeps the walls of the Gallery covered with local art for sale.

2525 W. ANDERSON #610



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DAVID BRENDAN HALL

BEST GRASSROOTS PPE POP-UP

Masks for Docs Austin

Within the first two weeks of pandemic lockdown, personal protective equipment had already become scarce. To offset shortages, Austinites sprang into action and formed Masks for Docs Austin, one of 100 chapters spread across the globe dedicated to delivering PPE to undersupplied medical professionals by any means available. Headquartered at Native Hostel, our local division devised a team of volunteer 3D printers to produce more than 5,000 face shields for 100 Central Texas health care facilities in a matter of weeks. Doubtless, this heroic grassroots effort helped slow the spread of COVID-19 in Austin and quite possibly saved lives.

LOCAL.MASKSFORDOCS.COM/US-TX-AUSTIN

BEST FURNITURE FLIPPER GONE VIRAL

MW Home Goods

Ever spent hours trying to find the perfect piece of furniture, but it's just a little (read: hundreds of dollars) outside of your price range? Austin's furniture-flipping TikTok extraordinaire, MW Home Goods, is trying to empower shoppers to DIY those luxury items. Meghan Wheeler's time-lapsed videos walk users through the steps to transform old, worn out furniture into high-end pieces. In one video, she even turns a \$25 piece of furniture into a replica of a \$2,825 credenza.

WWW.TIKTOK.COM/@MWHOMEGOODS

MOST SUSTAINED SUPPORT OF AUSTIN'S REFUGEE COMMUNITY

Multicultural Refugee Coalition

The Multicultural Refugee Coalition offers far-reaching opportunities for refugees living in Austin to earn livable wages, foster meaningful friendships, and develop marketable skills to support themselves and their families. MRC employs individuals at the Open Arms sewing studio and the New Leaf Agriculture regenerative farm, and they offer additional support through their ESL teaching program. Want to support this venerated support network? Spend a Saturday morning getting your hands in the soil at their 20-acre farm in Elgin.

WWW.MRCAUSTIN.ORG

BEST SELF-CARE FOR YOUR IMAGINATION

Austin Public Library's Curbside Service

By the time you read this, your favorite library branch may be reopened to the public once more. Yet for much of the pandemic, a select handful have offered curbside delivery of choice materials directly to the trunk of your vehicle, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. In the heartbreaking absence of our beloved video rental institutions, APL remains consistent in adding to their vast and seemingly endless network of physical media, a collection which should serve the needs of nearly any bibliophile or cinephile. Your friendly neighborhood librarian is standing by.

LIBRARY.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV

BEST VIRTUAL FACIAL

Neu Skin's Contactless Skin Care

Not quite an online facial, though Neu Skin's "contactless skin care" will give you a glowing complexion nonetheless. Owner Elizabeth Bentley offers several different holistic services from the comfort of your screen, including skin health consults and virtual Gua Sha (face massage) tutorials for existing clients, or a one-hour session for those who are brand-new to Neu Skin's e-spa. Expect a Zoom recording of your call afterward, as well as a follow-up email addressing your personal skin care needs. Or just skip the Skype and head straight to her online store for an awesome selection of organic products.

2211-A E. 18TH, WWW.NEUSKINAUSTIN.COM

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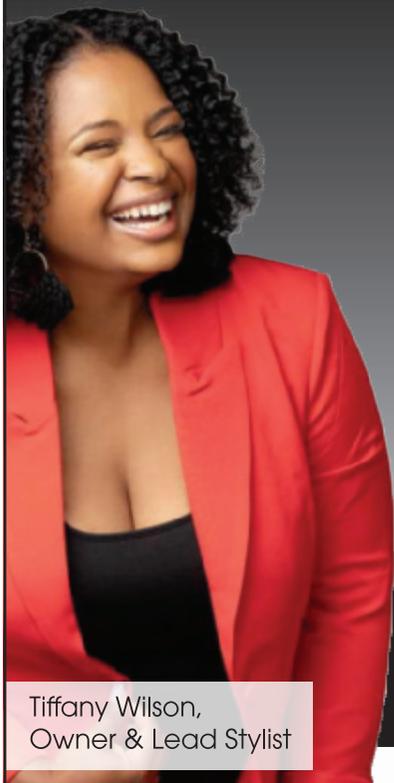
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Tiffany Wilson,
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Readers Poll

SHOPPING



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

FARMERS' MARKET/FARMSTAND

Texas Farmers' Market at Mueller

FINALISTS: Boggy Creek Farm, Johnson's Backyard Garden, SFC Farmers' Market at Sunset Valley, Texas Farmers' Market at Lakeline

"Best way to spend a Sunday. It's a real treat to be able to pick up fresh local produce and talk to the farmers who grew it."

— *BLAIRE BABYAK*

4209 AIRPORT, TEXASFARMERSMARKET.ORG/MUELLER

MEN'S CLOTHING

Stag

FINALISTS: Que Rico T-Shirt Co., Sir Rat Leather and Gear, Service Menswear, Uptown Cheapskate

"Very cool threads." — *ERIN FINNEY*

1423 S. CONGRESS, WWW.STAGPROVISIONS.COM

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

Uptown Cheapskate

FINALISTS: Adelante, Bloody Rose Boutique, Feathers Boutique, Outdoor Voices, Wear Art Thou

"Literally where I get ALL of my clothes."

— *KRISTYN WICKHAM*

3005 S. LAMAR STE. 110-A, WWW.UPTOWNCHEAPSKATEAUSTIN.COM

JEWELRY

Nina Berenato

FINALISTS: Benold's Jewelers, Eliza Page, Limbo, Lisa Crowder

"Affordable, stylish, meaningful jewelry made by hand — and she's keeping it green!! Checks off all the boxes." — *NINA GACONA*

3200 PALM WAY #152, WWW.NINABERENATO.COM

BRIDAL SHOP

Unbridaled

FINALISTS: Alexia Gavela, Blue Bridal Boutique, Blush Bridal Lounge

"They have a large selection of less traditional gowns and were very helpful with making everything accessible to me. My disability makes it hard to dress myself and the owner helped me find and try on the gowns that would both look and work the best in my wheelchair." — *JENNIFER HENEGAN*

701 S. LAMAR, WWW.UNBRIDALED.COM

FURNITURE/ACCESSORIES

Room Service Vintage

FINALISTS: Uptown Modern, Far Out Home Fittings, Four Hands, Hearth & Soul, Revival Vintage

"Love this long-lived local shop!"

— *MARTHA KING*

117 E. NORTH LOOP, WWW.ROOMSERVICEVINTAGE.COM

USED FURNITURE/ANTIQUES

Uncommon Objects

FINALISTS: Far Out Home Fittings, Out of the Past, Room Service Vintage, Uptown Modern

"Coolest place to browse around."

— *BARBARA WILLIAMS*

1602 FORTVIEW, WWW.UNCOMMONOBJECTS.COM

GARDEN STORE/NURSERY

The Natural Gardener

FINALISTS: Carnivero, The Great Outdoors, Shoal Creek Nursery, Tillery Street Plant Co.

"This business goes out of its way to provide plants, education, and a very cool and inspiring environment. LOVE IT!"

— *PAT DEVINCENT*

8648 OLD BEE CAVES RD., WWW.TNGAUSTIN.COM

FLORIST

Austin Flower Co.

FINALISTS: Ben White Florist, Enchanted Florist, Freytag's Florist, Mercedes Flowers

"Best flower selection in town! Love that they support local growers. Amazing staff."

— *VERONICA HAIG*

1612 W. 35TH, AUSTINFLOWERS.COM

NEIGHBORHOOD GROCERY

Wheatsville Co-op

FINALISTS: Dia's Market, Fresh Plus, Rabbit Food Grocery, Royal Blue

"All around great selection, delicious deli, best staff. And I appreciate their strict social distancing enforcement."

— *RACHEL RISKIND*

3101 GUADALUP; 4001 S. LAMAR, WWW.WHEATSVILLE.COOP



COURTESY OF BLUE VELVET

**VINTAGE/
CONSIGNMENT
CLOTHING**

Blue Velvet

FINALISTS: New Bohemia, Pavement, Room Service Vintage, Uptown Cheapskate

"Absolutely adore this affordable, unique, and impeccably curated spot."

- GREER KOFOED

217 W. NORTH LOOP
WWW.BLUEVELVETAUSTIN.COM

LIQUOR STORE

Spec's

FINALISTS: The Austin Shaker, Old School Liquor & Market, Twin Liquors

"It's where tequila comes from, right?" - MITCH LONDON

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.SPECSONLINE.COM

ADULT STORE

Forbidden Fruit

FINALISTS: Dreamers, Package Menswear, Sir Rat Leather and Gear

"Classic Austin." - ADREA CRAFT

108 E. NORTH LOOP WWW.FORBIDDENFRUIT.COM

SMOKE SHOP

Planet K

FINALISTS: Cosmic Smoke Shop, MaryJae, Oat Willie's, Restart CBD

"Austin funky to the core. Have found a way the give stoners viable jobs. Got to love that."

- MICHELLE SALAS

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.PLANETKTEXAS.COM

CBD PURVEYOR

Restart CBD

FINALISTS: HappyKarma Hemp, MaryJae, Radix House Coffee Shop, Reliv Organix

"Quality products and female-owned."

- MANNY SANCHEZ

2521 RUTLAND STE. 150-A, WWW.RESTARTCBD.COM

PET STORE

Tomlinson's

FINALISTS: Bark 'n Purr, Healthy Pet, Paws on Chicon

"Best customer service of my life! They know my dog by name and always stop to give me advice."

- KAYLA SANTANA-LINARES

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.TOMLINSONS.COM

BOOKSTORE

BookPeople

FINALISTS: BookWoman, Half Price Books, Malvern Books, South Congress Books

"They went above & beyond to stay in business while keeping both their employees and patrons safe in 2020. One of the few heartbeat-of-Austin businesses that we are lucky enough to still have around."

- CANDY STEINMAN

603 N. LAMAR, WWW.BOOKPEOPLE.COM

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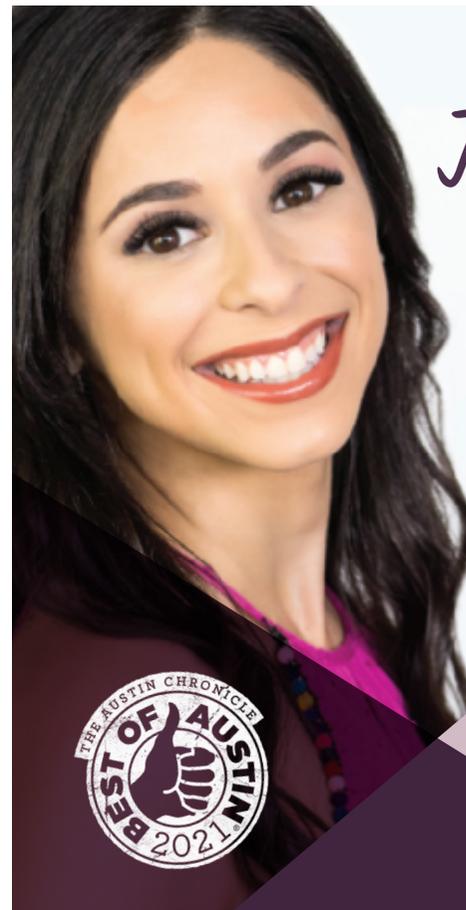
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DAVID BRENDAN HALL

SHOPPING WILD CARD

Eastside Pop Up (traveling handcrafted and vintage pop up shop)

FINALISTS: Clay Imports (handmade custom tile company), Ella's Apothecary (vegan and cruelty free shop), Lights Fantastic (residential and commercial lighting), Modern Rocks Gallery (fine art rock photography)

"Such unique finds & love supporting small!" - DIXON ELIZABETH

ELECTRONICS STORE

Precision Camera & Video

FINALISTS: Discount Electronics, Switched on Austin

"Super knowledgeable and helpful service."

- LAURA DOLL

2438 W. ANDERSON STE. B-4; 9600 S. I-35;
WWW.PRECISION-CAMERA.COM

SPORTING GOODS

Whole Earth Provision

FINALISTS: Academy, Central Texas Gun Works, Duck Camp

"A magical place to explore, so much fun stuff that you never knew you needed (but you do)." - JO ECKLER

4477 S. LAMAR; 1014 N. LAMAR; WWW.WHOLEEARTHPROVISION.COM

COMICS/FANDOM

Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy

FINALISTS: Anime Pop, Austin Books & Comics, Bat City Comic Professionals, Tribe Comics & Games

"Huge selection. Friendly employees. And a cat." - JEFF JOHANNIGMAN

2438 W. ANDERSON STE. 1-B, WWW.DLAIR.NET

GAME/GAMING

Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy

FINALISTS: Emerald Tavern Games & Cafe, Game Over Videogames, Outlaw Moon, Tribe Comics & Games

"Not only are they an awesome shop, but they've been following CDC guidelines during the pandemic, and are an inclusive, diverse spot." - CHRIS ROMANI

2438 W. ANDERSON STE. 1-B, WWW.DLAIR.NET

RECORD STORE

Waterloo Records

FINALISTS: Antone's Record Shop, Breakaway Records, End of an Ear

"Legacy store. Great history. Attention to local artists." - NANCY TOTTON

600-A N. LAMAR, WWW.WATERLOORECORDS.COM

ARTS AND CRAFTS STORE

Jerry's Artarama

FINALISTS: Austin Creative Reuse, Hill Country Weavers, LetterPress PLAY, The Paper + Craft Pantry

"Our go-to for all our supplies, lifesavers during the pandemic." - SARAH SCHIFF

6010 N. I-35, WWW.JERRYSARTARAMA.COM

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home fittings

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JOHN ANDERSON

MOST INNOVATIVE PIVOT

H-E-B's pandemic response

FINALISTS: Coco Coquette's DIY wig parties home delivery, Lone Star Nursery's direct-to-consumer delivery service

"H-E-B should just run the state already. Make H-E-Buddy the state mascot."

- NATALIE CARDENAS
VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.HEB.COM

AUSTIN GIFTS/SOUVENIRS

Blue Genie Art Bazaar

FINALISTS: Atown, Austin Gift Company, Parts & Labour, Planet K

"Tremendous support for Austin artists and the best selection in town for art and gifts."

- LISA ZINNA

6100 AIRPORT, WWW.BLUEGENIEARTBAZAAR.COM

MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION BOX/SERVICE

Johnson's Backyard Garden CSA

FINALISTS: Farmhouse Delivery, Good Apple, Restart CBD Flower Box

"I never knew I needed so many beets."

- JENNY CARROLL

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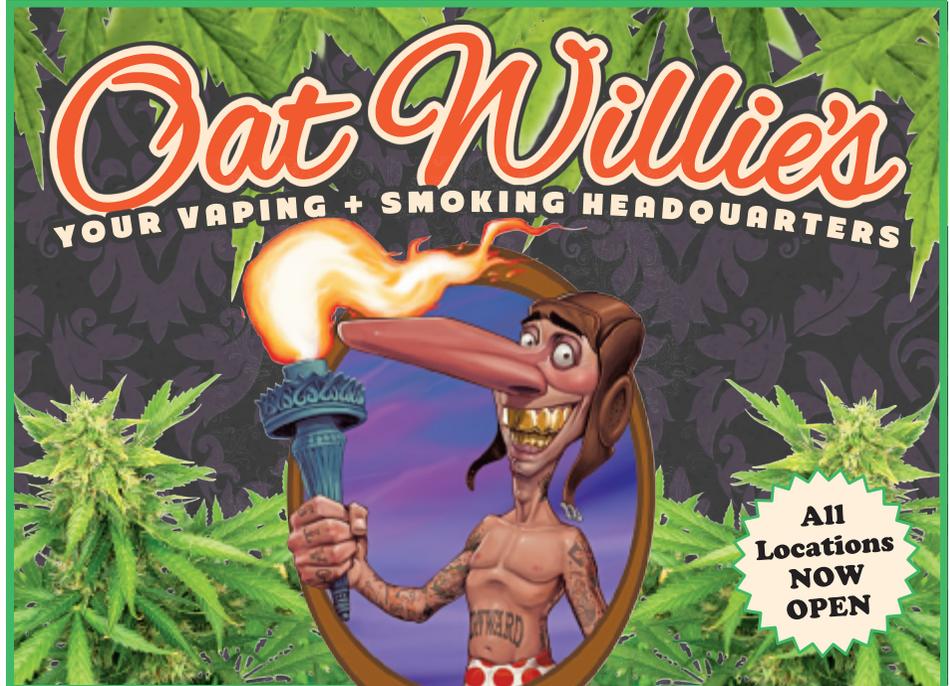


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Critics Picks

SHOPPING



JOHN ANDERSON

BEST ARRAY OF ART SUPPLIES IN A VEGAN COFFEEHOUSE

Dear Diary Coffeehouse

You could visit this Eastside gem of coffee and creativity for the house-roasted java, for the delightful array of locally sourced and 100% vegan treats, or for some of the friendliest counterfolk in this whole burgeoning burg of ours. But you'll likely also be fascinated by the spread of art supplies and notebooks ready to jump-start your own DIY expressions here in this elegant space that's run with such a welcoming vibe by Amalia Litsa and Joshua Adrian. Not an artist yourself? Be an artist supporter by buying one of the prints or stickers from local talent featured around the shop.

1212 CHICON #103, WWW.TOASTTAB.COM/DEAR-DIARY-COFFEEHOUSE/V3

BEST NOT YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S QUILT

Psychic Outlaw

Quilted jackets took over Instagram last fall, emblazoning multicolored Americana patchwork on cozy cold-weather silhouettes. Leading the charge locally is Psychic Outlaw, founded by Rebecca Wright, who began making her own clothes while working at Buffalo Exchange. Her Austin-based team of about a dozen sewing artists fashion bespoke chore coats from vintage blankets, accepting mail-in heirlooms as well as weekly "quilt drops" of their own supply. Distinctly Western and psychedelically styled, the brand also gained notoriety for dresses stitched from vintage bandannas. Cut, color, material, size – it's all up to you.

WWW.PSYCHICOUTLAW.COM

BEST ART BOOK SUPPORTERS

Spend Time Zine Mart

Run by Clare Drummond and Marlon Hedrick, Spend Time debuted in a petite corner of a Clarksville home goods shop in 2019. The pandemic shuttered the brick-and-mortar, host to poetry readings and release parties. (Former storefront Open Invite now sells online.) Still, Spend Time has thrived digitally with participation in Printed Matter's international Virtual Art Book Fair. Inviting first-time and seasoned zinesters alike, their reliable, limited-run curation wrangles zines, chapbooks, and comics by largely Texan creatives. With artist Eva Claycomb and Telepath Design, the shop also offers free risograph printing for BIPOC projects. Follow on Instagram @spendtimezinemart for classes and more.

WWW.SPENDTIMEZINEMART.COM

MOST INTERSECTIONAL MARKETPLACE

Frida Friday ATX

Not only does this intentionally intersectional creative marketplace center women and BIPOC artisans, but the collective proved to be an invaluable community resource during Winter Storm Uri. Founder and director TK Tunchez – a maker of gorgeous flower crowns, jewelry, and graphic design pieces – rallied the vendor team and their fans to provide no-questions-asked resources for folks in crisis. Frida Friday's multicultural entrepreneurial space also spotlights local food and beverage businesses and DJs/musicians for events all over this weird city, and we're pretty sure that Sra. Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo y Calderón would be very proud of the art, and community work, indeed.

WWW.FRIDAFRIDAYATX.ORG

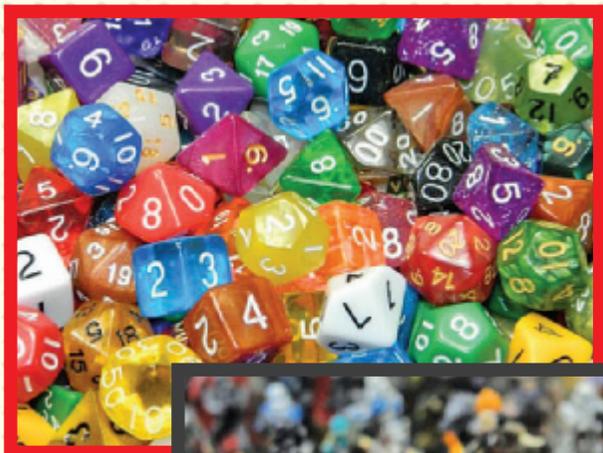
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JANA BIRCHUM

BEST MONSTER LOVIN' LOOT

Strange Bedfellas

Do you dream of dragons? Do you sigh wistfully at the thought of werewolves? Do you find aliens alarming yet arousing? If you're saying yes to any of these questions, Strange Bedfellas might have the tools to fit your fantasies. A small crew of local sex toy makers with big creativity, SB makes their fantasy sex toys from 100% platinum silicone and vibrant, body-safe mica for coloring. Order from a wide array of dildos, wand toppers, vibrator sleeves, and other monstrous creations that you'll want to keep on top of your bed rather than under.

STRANGETOYS.COM

BEST DEAD FLOWERS

Second Bloom

Normally we wouldn't recommend giving your mom something dead for Mother's Day. Somehow, Second Bloom calls that recommendation into question. The floral company takes a careful approach to preserving flowers, using a desiccant preservation process that can take up to four weeks. Want to make art of those flowers from a special day? Second Bloom can help with that, too. For event specific flowers, they will help preserve and design them for display in shadow boxes or frames. They also take custom floral photographs.

WWW.SECONDBLOOMDESIGNS.COM

BEST PLACE TO EMBRACE THE SPORTS-CARD CRAZE

Card Traders of Austin

While many businesses have suffered during the pandemic, the market for buying and selling sports cards (and collectibles) has never been better, and the folks at CTOA are here to take your money. Whether you're looking for the hot new rookie sensation, an autographed jersey, or even some Pokémon to round out your collection, they've got what you need. The owners have been slinging cards out of their current location since 1995, so they're no Johnny-come-latelys.

8650 SPICEWOOD SPRINGS RD. #128, WWW.FB.COM/CARDTRADERSOFAUSTIN

BEST WAY TO BLOW THE STINK OFF YOUR HOME

The Burlap Bag

Real talk: We've all been spending a lot of time at home, stewing in our own juices, and the resultant odor has not always been the most enticing. Enter the Burlap Bag's addictive candles, which smell like the Platonic ideal of "homey" – warm, luxe scents like the yeasty Fresh Baked Bread, yuzu-forward Crazy Cat Lady, and tobacco-redolent King of Farts. Did we mention this mom-and-pop operation has a sense of humor, too?

WWW.THEBURLAPBAG.COM

BEST CURBSIDE QUEER LIT HOOKUP

BookWoman

As we live through constant massive historical events, what better time is there than now to dig into the herstory available through BookWoman's online catalog? The Austin independent bookstore staple keeps all the usual bestseller accoutrement, but stands out in its selection of marginalized authors. During these pan-Demi-Lovato days where curbside is queen, BookWoman provides a comprehensive and quick ordering system through their website with friendly email communication on when and how to pick up your new novel, cookbook, or collected diaries of transgender activist Lou Sullivan safely.

5501 N. LAMAR STE. 105-A, WWW.EBOOKWOMAN.COM

BEST STORE FOR WHEN YOU WANNA SHOP EVERYTHING MADE BY QUEERS

The Little Gay Shop

The name pretty much says it all, and how sweet it does sound: Housed in a one-room studio, co-owners and husbands Kirt Reynolds and Justin Galicz's pop-up-turned-brick-and-mortar is the, and we mean *the*, spot if you're in the mood to shop a fine selection of goods courtesy of the more artistically inclined friends of Dorothy. From rare and out-of-print LGBTQIA publications to queer- and trans-owned apparel, accessories, and other doodad (or should we say doo-zaddy?) purveyors, The Little Gay Shop stands as a rainbow beacon in Austin's LGBTQmmunity.

828 AIRPORT, THELITTLEGAYSHOP.COM

BEST EARTH-FRIENDLY CRAFTING

Austin Creative Reuse

The local favorite relocated smack-dab in the middle of the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, but that wasn't gonna break their stride. They consistently provide thoughtful updates and fun virtual contests so creative Austinites can compete with eco-friendly iterations of gift wrap, planters, packaging, and more. ACR's entertaining tutorials teach how to reuse items to create kites, shopping bags, and games, and beyond providing the fabric we all need for our mask wardrobe, they always supply options for the ideas they're based on: Every object has impact; reuse creates awareness; communities are powerful; and action is advancement.

2005 WHEELS, WWW.AUSTINCREATIVEREUSE.ORG



COURTESY OF CANS THAT SUCC

BEST USE OF AN EMPTY BEER CAN

Cans That Succ

Recycling is cool and all, but what if your discarded beer can could become a home for a living, breathing succulent? Cans That Succ will make treasure out of your empty Blue Owl, Austin Beerworks, or Rambler cans. And if you thought upcycling cans was cool, they recently expanded into using candle jars, too. The business originated in El Paso in 2015 and eventually migrated to Austin in 2018. Don't forget that they accept donations of cans, so hang on to those empties.

WWW.FB.COM/CANS-THAT-SUCC-102239098344987

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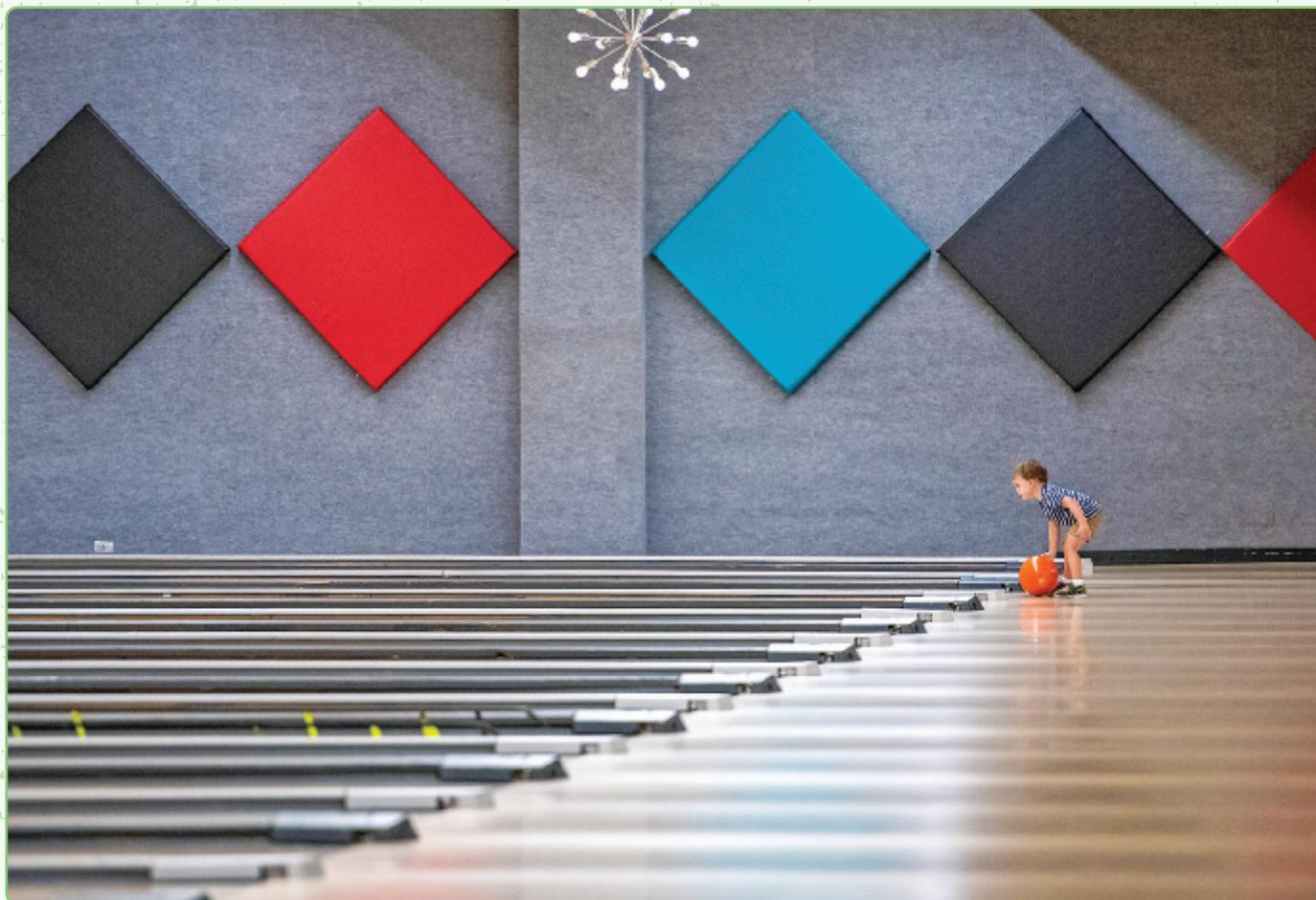
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Readers Poll

SPORTS & RECREATION



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

BOWLING ALLEY

Dart Bowl

FINALISTS: High 5, Highland Lanes, Mel's Lone Star Lanes, Westgate Lanes

“RIP dear friend, you are missed.” — KATHARINE GARZA

PLACE TO TUBE

Texas Tubes (Comal River)

FINALISTS: Don's Fish Camp (San Marcos River), Texas State Tubes (San Marcos River)

“The Comal is always flowing, has less trash, and is an easygoing float!”

— BRADFORD FULTS

250 MEUSEBACH, NEW BRAUNFELS, WWW.TEXASTUBES.COM

PLACE TO CAMP

Inks Lake State Park

FINALISTS: Garner State Park, McKinney Falls State Park, Pedernales Falls State Park

“Beautiful wildflowers in the spring.”

— SUSAN KUNG

3630 PARK ROAD 4 W., BURNET,
WWW.TPWD.STATE.TX.US/STATE-PARKS/INKS-LAKE

SWIMMING POOL

Barton Springs Pool

FINALISTS: Big Stacy Pool, Deep Eddy Pool

“Nothing else like it in the world.”

— BARBARA KLITCH

2131 WILLIAM BARTON DR., WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/
BARTON-SPRINGS-POOL

SWIMMING HOLE/LAKE

Hamilton Pool

FINALISTS: Blue Hole, Campbell's Hole, Hippie Hollow, Sculpture Falls

“The beauty of the pool after hiking down to get to it...” — LARRY DUNCAN

24300 HAMILTON POOL RD., DRIPPING SPRINGS,
PARKS.TRAVISCOUNTYTX.GOV/PARKS/HAMILTON-POOL-PRESERVE

SPORTS VENUE

Circuit of the Americas

FINALISTS: Dell Diamond, Disch-Falk Field, DKR Memorial Stadium, H-E-B Center at Cedar Park

“Love all the innovative events hosted at COTA!” — KATHLEEN BAKER

9201 CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS BLVD.,
WWW.CIRCUITOFTEAMERICAS.COM

GYM

Austin Bouldering Project

FINALISTS: Austin Simply Fit, Bodies By Design Workout Room, Castle Hill Fitness, Dane's Body Shop

“ABP has been so responsible throughout all of COVID while still providing a great place to exercise, climb, and safely connect with other people.”

— JACK MCCORMICK

979 SPRINGDALE #150, WWW.AUSTINBOULDERINGPROJECT.COM

EXERCISE CLASS

ToddPilates & Barre

FINALISTS: Camp Gladiator, HIT Athletic, Love Cycling, Sky Candy

“Easy on the body. Good for the soul.”

— IVAN BENAVIDES

9029 RESEARCH #200; 4032 S. LAMAR #700;
2000 S. I-35 STE. M-1, ROUND ROCK; WWW.TODDPILATES.COM

SELF-DEFENSE CLASS

Fit & Fearless

FINALISTS: Brazilian Fight Factory, The Mat Martial Arts & Fitness, Paragon Jiu-Jitsu, Sun Dragon, Warrior Family Muay Thai

“Love the place, love the people.

Practical self-defense work combined with sport fighting and fitness.”

— GRANT HARTLINE

4109 TODD LN., #1600, WWW.FITANDFEARLESS.COM

PERSONAL TRAINER

Briana Ellsworth

FINALISTS: Krista Bergeron, Beckie Lough, Sierra Nevels, Irene Tapia

“Bri always keeps our workouts spicy and safety is her number one priority!”

— RACHEL GILBERT

WWW.FB.COM/LITTLEB.FIT



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JANA BIRCHUM



PLACE TO HANG WITH YOUR PET

Zilker Park

FINALISTS: Auditorium Shores, Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park, Yard Bar, Onion Creek Metropolitan Park

“Lots of space for the hounds to have a good time.” – MILTON WASHINGTON

2100 BARTON SPRINGS RD., WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/ZILKER-METROPOLITAN-PARK

YOGA

Practice Yoga Austin

FINALISTS: Black Swan Yoga, Flow Yoga, My Vinyasa Practice, Wild Heart Yoga

“A wonderful, supportive yoga studio that’s involved with the local community.” – LIANE GAYLER

1103 E. SIXTH, PRACTICEYOGAAUSTIN.COM

CITY TRAIL

Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail

FINALISTS: Brushy Creek Lake Park, Onion Creek Metropolitan Park, Shoal Creek Trail, Violet Crown Trail, Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park

“Too many people agree with me!”

– PAUL NORMANDIN

THE TRAIL FOUNDATION, PO BOX 5195, AUSTIN, 78763, WWW.THETRAILFOUNDATION.ORG

OUT-OF-TOWN HIKE

Enchanted Rock State Natural Area

FINALISTS: Hill Country State Natural Area, Lost Maples State Natural Area, Palmetto State Park, Pedernales Falls State Park

“Hike up a pink rock in the middle of nowhere.”

– SAM SMITH

16710 RR 965, FREDERICKSBURG, WWW.TPWD.STATE.TX.US/STATE-PARKS/ENCHANTED-ROCK

OUTDOOR RUN/RACE

Cap10K

FINALISTS: 3M Half Marathon, CASA Superhero Run, Salmagundi Trail Race, Star Ranch Bare Buns Run

“It’s an icon.” – LORI LAURON

WWW.CAP10K.COM

ALTERNATIVE SPORTS

Texas Roller Derby

FINALISTS: Austin Bouldering Project, Jungle Movement Academy, Laché Movement Co., Sky Candy

“Badass bitches on quad skates. What else can I say?”

– JILL IVIE

WWW.TXRDCOM

PRO/SEMI-PRO SPORTS TEAM

Austin FC

FINALISTS: Austin Bold FC, Austin Gilgronis, Round Rock Express, Texas Stars

“LISTOS! VERDE!” – ANDREW URBAN

WWW.AUSTINFC.COM

MOST INNOVATIVE PIVOT

Everybody buying a bike

FINALISTS: Esquina Tango livestream fitness classes, Sports fields in public parks giving way to wildflowers

“More butts on bikes makes the world a better place.”

– TAWNY VILLAIN

SPORTS & RECREATION WILD CARD

Chicken Shit Bingo at the Little Longhorn Saloon

FINALISTS: Barking Springs (unofficial dog beach), Footgolf at Harvey Penick, Minx + Muse (dance, music, and witchcraft studio), YourBikerGang.com (e-bike adventures)

“When you find yourself day drinking, fixated on a chicken, trying to asses the trajectory of their waste, my friends you are having a proper Texas Sunday.” – SARAH STATHAM

5434 BURNET RD., WWW.THELITTLELONGHORNSALOON.COM



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

GOLF COURSE

Lions Municipal Golf Course

FINALISTS: Butler Park Pitch & Putt, Hancock Golf Course, Harvey Penick Golf Campus, Morris Williams Course

“Love the ancient trees and history of Lions.” – EDY CHAMNESS

2901 ENFIELD, WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/LIONS-MUNICIPAL-COURSE

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Critics Picks

SPORTS & RECREATION



BEST GREEN THUMB INSPIRATION

Stay Home Garden Club

In March of 2020 – you know, one of the most terrifying months on record – Jennymarie Jemison sought to soothe her own nerves while also creating some much-needed positivity and human/Earth connection during the long monotony of quarantine and shelter-in-place orders. So, she launched an offshoot of her gardening website Joy Max Jardín to help folks in need of mental health-boosting nature photos and gardening pro-tips. The Stay Home Garden Club offers friendly information for all types of gardeners about flowers and food crops, container gardening how-tos, critter and soil knowledge, and seed options. With Texas opening back up, and the sunshine months upon us, Jemison and her growing online community are still going strong, one rainbow-soaked seedling at a time.

WWW.JOYMAXJARDIN.COM/STAY-HOME-GARDEN-CLUB

BEST PLACE TO TAKE A PLUNGE WITH YOUR POD

Tom Hughes Park

If you're looking for a place to get some sun on a rocky shore, Tom Hughes Park offers ample room to bask, and it's only a 30-minute drive from Downtown Austin. For folks who prefer to tread water in more tepid temperatures than Barton Springs, Lake Travis will feel like a delightful douse. However, reaching the lakefront requires navigating some steep and tricky terrain, so you'll definitely want to ditch the flip-flops for more substantial footwear. But trust us – your sunset swim will be well worth the climb.

12714 HUGHES PARK RD., PARKS.TRAVISCOUNTYTX.GOV/PARKS/TOM-HUGHES

BEST GROUP ACTIVITY FOR HOSPITALITY FOLKS

Comedor Run Club

The pandemic dumped a tremendous amount of additional stress on the food and beverage industry, but this running group, established in early 2019, provided much relief to its members, many of whom found themselves suddenly furloughed. Comedor Run Club strategically makes space for health and healing in their beloved but demanding industry, one rife with addiction and burnout. Focused on offering an alternative lifestyle for hospitality workers, the group is open to all paces. They meet several times a week for a casual 5K run, and follow the workout with community-building camaraderie, plus treats like tacos and biscuits. Connection and decompression are just part of their great work to “shift post-shift culture.”

WWW.COMEDORRUNCLUB.COM



ZEKE BARBARO

BEST NONFUNCTIONING WINDMILL

Johnson Creek Trailhead

Homesteaders Wylie and Effie Bennett are commemorated along the Johnson Creek Trailhead by a useless windmill constructed with stone. Apparently they used to live there. That's about all the information you'll find about this strange landmark tucked under the shadow of MoPac. Despite its proximity to Downtown and the six-lane highway, this stretch of the hike-and-bike trail is a surprisingly quiet green space. You can find the windmill easily enough on a map, but better to stumble onto it as if in a dream on a long aimless walk around the city.

WWW.THETRAILFOUNDATION.ORG



JOHN ANDERSON

BEST OUTDOOR WORKOUT

Fuerte Fitness

Staying healthy in the pandemic has been tougher than ever, and the team at Fuerte does everything they can to keep you well while you're getting fit, including outdoor group classes with small caps and 8 feet minimum between you and the nearest workout buddy, plus no shared equipment. If being around people seems too much, they offer online courses too. Fuerte understands that staying healthy is about a lot more than how much you can bench.

4631 AIRPORT, STE. 110-A, WWW.IAMFUERTE.COM

BEST HORSE STABLES WITH AN EQUITY MINDSET

Idylwood Stables

Opting for a hands-on curriculum over standardized education, Idylwood Stables believes in the power of lifelong skill-building through horsemanship, such as physical and emotional balance, understanding, compassion, perseverance, and self-reflection and self-kindness. Idylwood Stables has strived to increase equity in horsemanship, and now offers a youth-of-color scholarship for young persons to participate in a sport historically lacking diversity. "This should not be a sport of kings" is how founder Sydney Kornman puts it, and that spirit of inclusivity has been a defining feature of Idylwood Stables since it first opened in 2002.

12608 HARRIS BRANCH PKWY., WWW.IDYLWOODSTABLESATX.COM

BEST UNBEATEN PATH

Shaffer Bend Recreation Area

Just past the county line, by the rustic little hamlet of Smithwick, lies this pleasantly rough-edged LCRA park fronting the very northwest tip of Lake Travis. It's more than 500 acres of semi-developed open space, with more than 5 miles of interlocking trails for foot, hoof, or bike tire, some very challenging, plus room to sprawl out and get your feet wet. While the RV-ready camping areas are usually occupied, in most places most of the time you'll not be lacking in solitude.

706 CR 343A, MARBLE FALLS, WWW.LCRA.ORG/PARKS/SHAFFER-BEND

BEST WAY TO UPGRADE THE BACKYARD

Stock Tank Social Club

Not everyone has access to a swimming pool even in a good year, but when coronavirus snatched away public pools on top of everything else, Kelly Francis West and Michelle Daly joined the select group of brave humans that launched a business during a global pandemic. This "women, veteran, LGBT owned biz" offers turnkey service for folks seeking a little backyard oasis via a stock tank pool. That's right: Huge galvanized steel tubs full of water aren't just for livestock anymore. Add professional installation and guidance, a filtration system, and maybe an inflatable pink flamingo, and start living your best life.

WWW.STOCKTANKSOCIALCLUB.COM

BEST QUICK DETOUR INTO THE WILDERNESS

Canyon Creek Nature Trail

You'd think a trail that starts at Trailhead Park wouldn't be much of a mystery, but this 4.5-mile out-and-back in Northwest Austin is surprisingly untamed. Good for runs and dogs (but on-leash only) but also for lazy wandering, communing with nature, and getting lost, without ever losing your cell phone signal or worrying about being rousted by the HOA.

WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/PARKS-AND-RECREATION

BEST INCLUSIVE YOGA UNDER AN ANCIENT OAK

Sanctuary Yoga

This nonprofit yoga studio works to intentionally create space for wellness with a clear focus on humanity through many styles of yoga, plus workshops like restorative yoga and writing, sound bath meditations, Greenbelt hikes, *White Fragility* training in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, and more. Their canopy of giant ancient oak trees makes a uniquely beautiful outdoor setting, one that proved particularly helpful during the difficult year of pandemic protocols that forced a pivot to virtual classes. Even more, proceeds from each yoga class benefit the Amala Foundation's youth programs.

1006 S. EIGHTH, WWW.SANCTUARYYOGAAUSTIN.COM

BEST PLEASANT WALK IN THE SHADE

Richard Moya Park

When you need to be outside, getting your steps, taking a stroll, but it's also Texas' endless summer, don't forget this friendly green space by Onion Creek, directly south of the airport. With 2 miles of well-groomed trails looping through old pecan groves and under the century-old Moore's Crossing Bridge (that was once the Congress Avenue Bridge), you won't be alone but it won't feel crowded – a not-so-easy thing to come by in our bustling city.

10001 BURLESON, PARKS.TRAVISCOUNTYTX.GOV/PARKS/RICHARD-MOYA

BEST EASTSIDE VISTA

Red Bluff

The western perspective of Mount Bonnell receives understandable hype as the finest vantage point of Downtown Austin, but on the other side of town, Red Bluff offers a comparably stunning panorama of the city center. A low-key vista, the cactus-lined hilltop clearing contains only a wood platform and a couple of pieces of donated patio furniture, but remains a magical environment for an eagle-eyed glimpse of the Eastside. The high-point of a 57-acre natural area bordered by Springdale and Highway 183, Red Bluff used to be littered with tires, scrap lumber, and plastic containers, but has been cleaned up in recent years by the yeoman's work of community groups, notably led by Springdale-Airport Neighborhood Association President Pete Rivera. The green space is easily accessible from Harold Court, but parking where Ledesma Road ends offers a more scenic, short uphill hike. You can also reach it via unofficial trails historically used by mountain bikers, connecting to the East Boggy Creek Greenbelt and the Southern Walnut Creek Trail.

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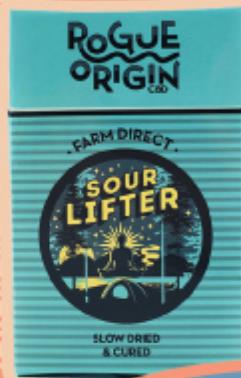
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