

THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE



Winners Revealed!

CELEBRATING THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST
IN A CITY THAT OOZES GREATNESS



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AUSTIN: YOU OOZE GREATNESS

Much like you, I imagine, I've done my fair share of eye-rolling at Austin circa 2024 – the endless development, the glacial pace of progress, the pack gallop toward the next buzzy thing, *the heat my god the heat*. But every year, my faith is restored when we roll out another Best of Austin and tens of thousands of our friends and neighbors sing the praises of this city. Their enthusiasm is infectious, and it infuses every page of this issue. How much enthusiasm? In our finalist round, nearly 27,000 people cast 285,000 votes and left 12,000 testimonials about the people and places they value most.

There are a number of folks who contributed to the making of this issue, our 34th annual Best of Austin Awards. It's astonishing to me what Art Director Zeke Barbaro can conjure from just a few words (this year, it was basically: "what if slime?"). Associate Art Director Lauren Johnson is my absolute hero for taking on the herculean task of finding art for 200+ winners. Copy Editor Kat McNevins spares you from our many gaffes and makes us all look good. Systems

Administrator Brandon Watkins and Web Consultant Brian Barry do essential things I don't understand but am deeply grateful for. Too many writers, editors, photographers, and interns contributed to list individually, but you'll find them all represented somewhere in the staff box on the left.

We couldn't pay any of those folks without the gump-tion and great dedication of our sales staff, as well as the support staff that keep the trains running on time and the papers delivered all over town. Managing Editor James Renovitch, Marketing + Engagement Manager Cassie Arredondo, and PR maven Sarah Wolf are the ones spreading the message of what we do.

Finally, I want to say a massive thank you to Associate Publisher Cassidy Frazier, whose long-range vision for a sustainable future for the *Chronicle* has powered us through a challenging time, and to our owner Nick Barbaro, for his awesome commitment to this staff and to the little community newspaper he co-founded 43 years ago.

- EDITOR KIMBERLEY JONES



COVER BY
ZEKE BARBARO

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

READERS POLL



COURTESY OF RUBEN ESQUIVEL

MURALIST

Ruben Esquivel

FINALISTS: REX HAMILTON, JIMINAI, SAM SOPER, ZUZU

"Austin OG. Incredibly talented and cares about the community." – *Loida Martinez*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/_ESQUIVEL

MUSEUM

The Blanton Museum of Art

FINALISTS: BULLOCK TEXAS STATE HISTORY MUSEUM, THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN - LAGUNA GLORIA, MEXIC-ARTE MUSEUM, THINKERY

"Lots of cool art, great programs for all ages. A free day each week, so all are able to come and visit." – *Kate Schnack*

200 E. MLK, WWW.BLANTONMUSEUM.ORG

ART GALLERY

Women & Their Work

FINALISTS: ART FOR THE PEOPLE, RICHESART GALLERY, SAGE STUDIO & GALLERY, WEST CHELSEA CONTEMPORARY

"Thoughtfully curated, highly talented and diverse artists, and really awesome people managing the gallery." – *Sara Smith*

1311 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, WWW.WOMENANDTHEIRWORK.ORG

VISUAL ARTIST

Elissa Marie

FINALISTS: REX HAMILTON, JEREMY THE ARTIST, GABE LANGHOLTZ, CODY SCHIBI

"I loooooove Elissa Marie's work: It's witchy, feminist, and powerfully original." – *Angela Polacheck*

WWW.ELISSAMARIECREATIVE.COM

PERFORMANCE SPACE/THEATRE

Paramount Theatre

FINALISTS: COLDTOWNE THEATER, GROUND FLOOR THEATRE, THE VORTEX, ZACH THEATRE

"I can't imagine Austin without the Paramount Theatre. It's that iconic." – *Nicole Mueller*

713 CONGRESS, WWW.AUSTINTHEATRE.ORG

THEATRE DIRECTOR

Lisa Scheps

FINALISTS: KATIE MOORE, DAVE STEAKLEY, TRACE TURNER, KEN WEBSTER

"Lisa Scheps doesn't just make theatre, she fosters an environment of love and growth. I have worked with her three times now as a costume designer and this theatre is loving and giving and gives me the space to play."

– *Desiree Humphries*

WWW.GROUNDLOORTHEATRE.ORG



COURTESY OF KATIE FOLGER

ACTOR

Katie Folger

FINALISTS: JOE KELLEY, KHATTIEQ, AMBER QUICK, KENNY WILLIAMS

"She is a fabulous talent! Saw her recently and was blown away by her energy, wit, and brilliant charm."

– *Amy Sawtelle*

WWW.KATIEFOLGER.COM



JANA BIRCHUM

DRAG PERFORMER

Brigitte Bandit

FINALISTS: BOBBY PUDRIDO, GOTHES JASMINE, LOUISIANA PURCHASE, MAXINE LAQUEENE

“Brigitte not only has FIERCE stage presence but is progressing this country as she does it. She is an inspiration, a bad bitch, and one hell of a queen.” – *Morgan Miller*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/BRIGITTEBANDIT

CLASSICAL MUSICIAN

Sophie Mathieu

FINALISTS: ALI COOK, ANTON NEL, GRAHAM REYNOLDS, WILL TAYLOR

“Sophie is a phenomenal composer, cellist, and collaborator. She continually inspires me in my practice as a musician.” – *Maura Tuffy*

WWW.SOPHIEMATHIEUMUSIC.COM

DANCER/CHOREOGRAPHER

Stephen Mills

FINALISTS: COUNTRY FRIED DANCE, AJ GARCIA-RAMEAU, AMY MYERS, VERTARIAS

“Ballet Austin has become a national sensation, almost solely due to Stephen Mills. His original choreographed works are being performed globally.” – *Norma Hawes*

WWW.BALLETAUSTIN.ORG

COMEDY TROUPE

Esther’s Follies

FINALISTS: ALL NIGHT ALL NIGHT ALL NIGHT, BIG FART, FUCK THIS WEEK, MASTER PANCAKE

“Political humor that’s fun to take your conservative visiting relatives to when they visit.” – *Susanne Harm*

525 E. SIXTH, WWW.ESTHERSFOLLIES.COM

COMEDY CLUB/VENUE

Cap City Comedy Club

FINALISTS: COLDTOWNE THEATER, COMEDY MOTHERSHIP, THE CREEK AND THE CAVE, FALLOUT THEATER

“The OG for Austin comedy.” – *Channing Kingery-Boles*

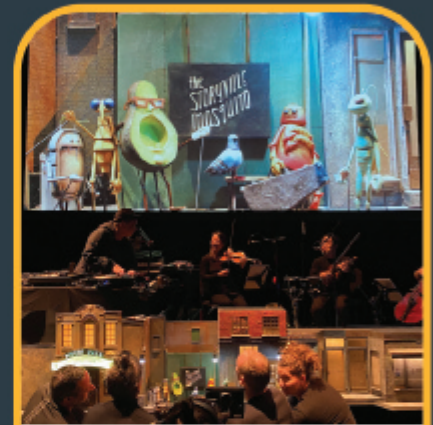
11506 CENTURY OAKS STE. B-100, WWW.CAPCITYCOMEDY.COM

TEXAS PERFORMING ARTS 2024/25 Season

“TPA brings the world to Austin.”
– *Austin American Statesman*



Twyla Tharp Dance
Diamond Jubilee



Kid Koala
The Storyville Mosquito



Conspirare:
Considering Matthew Shepard



DakhaBrakha

FULL SEASON AT
TEXASPERFORMINGARTS.ORG

STAND-UP COMIC

Avery Moore

FINALISTS: ROXY CASTILLO, VANESSA GONZALEZ, ANGELINA MARTIN, ROCHELLE MCCONICO

“Her laugh alone is contagious and she absolutely slays.” – *Brenda Hubbard*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/LILMISSPOPOVICH

DRAG SHOWCASE

Vixens of Volstead Drag Brunch

FINALISTS: BIG TITS, BIGGER DREAMS; BOYZ OF AUSTIN; BROKEBACK CANTINA; BRUNCH WITH THE BABES

“The Vixens always bring the moves, fashion, drama, and laughs to the patio every single Sunday.” – *Skyler Korgel*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/VIXENSOVOLSTEAD



PHOTO BY RUSK PHOTOGRAPHY

BURLESQUE PERFORMER

Ginger Snaps

FINALISTS: BLAISE RICIN, GEMMI GALACTIC, RUBY JOULE, ZENYTH GALE

“Whether on the ground or in the air, Ginger Snaps exudes confidence and sexuality with every move. A pleasure to watch onstage.”

– *Betsy Greytok*

WWW.GINGERSNAPSBURLESQUE.COM



COURTESY OF QUEER TO TELL

COMEDY/STORYTELLING SHOWCASE

Queer to Tell

FINALISTS: HYDE PARK STORYTELLING, MORTIFIED, ONE PAGE SALON, TONGUE IN CHEEK

“Love shines from the stage and fills the room; you leave glowing.” – *Melissa Meyer*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/QUEER.TO.TELL

FICTION WRITER

Sarah Bird

FINALISTS: ALINA GRABOWSKI, JACOB GROVEY, JAMES WADE, WRATH JAMES WHITE

“She always tells a good tale.” – *Myra McIlvain*

WWW.SARAHBIRDBOOKS.COM

NONFICTION WRITER

Lisa Doggett

FINALISTS: GREG MARSHALL, AMANDA WALLINGSFORD, ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL, LAWRENCE WRIGHT

“Lisa has lived her life out loud. She is brave and steadfast in her mission to educate others.” – *Barbara Foreman*

WWW.LISADOGGETT.COM

NEW BOOK BY AN AUSTIN WRITER

Inverse Cowgirl by Alicia Roth Weigel

FINALISTS: *A CURIOUS MIX OF PEOPLE: THE UNDERGROUND SCENE OF '90S AUSTIN* BY GREG BEETS AND RICHARD WHYMARK, *DARK DAYS: FUGITIVE ESSAYS* BY ROGER REEVES, *LOWDOWN ROAD* BY SCOTT VON DOVIK, *YOU'RE AN ANIMAL* BY JARDINE LIBAIRE

“Such an important book!” – *Kirt Reynolds*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/XOXY_ALICIA

OUTDOOR FESTIVAL

Austin City Limits Music Festival

FINALISTS: ABC KITE FEST, AUSTIN PSYCH FEST, AUSTIN TRAIL OF LIGHTS, EYORE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

"Music and fun times. Best back-to-back weekends all year." – *Ruben Sanchez*

WWW.ACLFESTIVAL.COM

FILM FESTIVAL

Austin Film Festival

FINALISTS: AGLIFF, CINE LAS AMERICAS, FANTASTIC FEST, SXSW FILM & TV FESTIVAL

"Amazing variety of films, more chances for audiences to hear the filmmakers speak even at the smaller films, and easy for locals to attend." – *Kynna Sullivan*

WWW.AUSTINFILMFESTIVAL.COM

FILMMAKER

Richard Linklater

FINALISTS: PJ RAVAL, ROBERT RODRIGUEZ, HANNAH VARNELL, ZELLNER BROTHERS

"Legend. *Dazed and Confused* was one of my favorite movies. I never even knew it was filmed in Austin till I moved here. It just influenced my life and Linklater will always be the king in my books." – *Nathan Bernier*

WWW.DETOURFILM.COM

CARTOONIST/ COMIC CREATOR

Rory Blank

FINALISTS: DREW EDWARDS, JON FORTENBURY, SAM HURT, DAN PRICE

"Most unhinged comics out there. Love 'em to death." – *Daniel Christensen*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/RORYBLANK

GRAPHIC ARTIST

Billie Buck

FINALISTS: RORY BLANK, TIM DOYLE, DAN GRISSOM, KENNON JAMES

"Love the retro vibe & colors. Captures an energy." – *Kim Dunn*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/BILLIEBUCKPOSTERS

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT WILD CARD

Strings in the Woods (nature walk + acoustic concert)

FINALISTS: ONE OUNCE OPERA (PRODUCTION COMPANY DEDICATED TO REIMAGINING OPERA), UNDERGROUND VOICES (OPEN MIC SHOWCASE)

"Will Taylor has created a truly unique and beautiful way to bring nature and music together. He is an Austin treasure." – *Brett Bachus*

WWW.STRINGSINTHEWOODS.COM



JANA BIRCHUM

MOVIE THEATRE

AFS Cinema

FINALISTS: ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE MUELLER, ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE SLAUGHTER LANE, ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE SOUTH LAMAR, VIOLET CROWN CINEMA

"A cinephile's nirvana." – *John Langmore*

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WWW.AUSTINFILM.ORG/CINEMA

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

CRITICS PICKS



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

BEST ALL-STAR LATIN LAUNCH

Besame Mucho

March madness in Austin prompts more culture-altering installs than the World's Fair. Unknowingly to no particular segment of the Live Music Capital, perhaps, a game-changer arose on March 2 at Circuit of the Americas. Across 12 hours, seven dozen Hispanic acts rampaged on four stages for what could only be characterized as a Latin Lollapalooza. A time-warping cross section of vintage, traditional, and contemporary headliners played to a wholly brown demographic 55,000 strong – at no-poseur prices. Behold a whole new music festival, one programmed for fans no longer in the minority. ATX paves the way forward: MX, TX, ALLX.

WWW.BESAMEMUCHFESTIVAL.COM/AUSTIN

BEST WINE BAR ARTS PROGRAMMING

Community Garden

In its first year of wine-slinging, Community Garden has blossomed into a bona fide Eastside staple, wasting no time in curating ultra-cool weekly programming. Complemented by hanging pothos vines and a stellar vinyl sound system, recent schedule standouts include zine markets, poetry readings, and dinner pop-ups. Frequent CG Live music series lands on Thursdays, with past performances from pop experimenters Felt Out and atmospheric songwriter Schaefer Llana. Pair with an açai bowl or natural wine for a perfect night.

1401 CEDAR AVE. #2, COMMUNITYGARDENAUSTIN.COM

BEST FOLK FEST REFRESH

Welcome Home Fest

Reimagined by longtime Kerrville Folk Festival organizer Amy Sue Berlin, Welcome Home preserves the freewheeling spirit of its parent festival while drawing new attendees into the songwriter's paradise. Compared to its behemoth 18-day sister fest, the intimate weekendlong event makes a point to recruit younger, queerer, and more diverse acts. Last October's attendees camped under pristine skies and caught sets from folk-focused headliner Adrienne Lenker and R&B hellraisers Sir Woman. Come for the music, stay for the community: Campfire story-sharing and finger-picking sessions run late into the night.

WWW.KERRVILLEFOLKFESTIVAL.ORG/WELCOME-HOME-FEST

BEST SUMMERTIME COMMUNITY BUILDER ON THE EASTSIDE

Jump On It Week

In 1997, 78702 native NOOK Turner co-founded Jump On It as a teenager alongside civil rights activist Dorothy Turner (no relation) and his mother after the former called for more Black activity at Rosewood Park. The summertime extravaganza has experienced a multitude of changes throughout the years, but NOOK's resilient vision for an Eastside hub fostering Black community keeps its heartbeat alive. His event's current format features music, panels, youth-targeted workshops, and a celebrity basketball game. This year's occasion occurred on June 2-9 and tapped raunchy rapper Sukihana as a headliner.

WWW.JUMPPONITONLINE.COM

BEST TEENAGE TWANG

Pedal Steel Noah

On a friend's Instagram story earlier this year, I immediately recognized a curly-haired, cowboy-hatted teen seated behind his vintage instrument. *Wait, Pedal Steel Noah lives here??* Indeed, Instagram favorite Noah Faulkner – known for twangifying Eighties rock songs alongside his bassist brother Nate and their dog Kara – is from Austin. With deep roots in the country scene, he was taught piano by Bukka Allen, and later received his first and only pedal steel guitar lesson from Lloyd Maines. Faulkner self-educated from there, leading to his *Texas Madness* EP, which reworks Joy Division and the Cure. Austin industry catches up with 2024 appearances at SXSW and the Ameripolitan Awards, where he wore his signature patterned Crocs.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/PEDALSTEELNOAH



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COURTESY OF POONEH GHANA

BEST PHOTOGRAPHER-TURNED-BOOKER

Pooneh Presents

It's hard to overestimate the impact of Texas native Pooneh Ghana's concert photography style on the Instagram era. On her saturated feed, she's on tour with all-stars Noah Kahan and Olivia Rodrigo, then back in town for ACL Fest and killer Danny Brown portraits. Locals benefited big-time from her longtime between-Austin-and-L.A. status with the launch of Pooneh Presents, a concert series at Radio Coffee's excellent second location, Radio/East. Her astute taste in of-the-moment rock, punk, and pop played out in two blowout spring break shows – packing Dry Cleaning, Omni, and Snōoper alongside locals Big Bill and Font – and continues monthly with colorful posters by Austin artist Cat Barrera.

WWW.POONEHGHANA.COM

BEST RESURRECTED MOVIE RENTAL SPOT

We Luv Video

The iconic I Luv Video movie rental stores, the last of which closed in 2020, have been revived in the form of a nonprofit. We Luv Video in North Loop now holds the former business' remarkable collection of DVDs and VHS tapes, preserving physical media and the experience of picking out what to watch in person. Even if you don't have a DVD player, it's a comfort to return to the tactile world, attend screenings, and meet other folks who love cinema. There's ultimately no permanence in streaming, but a VHS tape of a weird sci-fi alien abduction film is forever.

100 E. NORTH LOOP, WWW.WELUVVIDEO.ORG

MOST IMMERSIVE ART GALLERY IN A GARAGE

Goodluckhavefun

In most art galleries, the standard is big white walls and framed art – classic but not necessarily transformative. What sets the Downtown-adjacent Goodluckhavefun gallery apart – other than its location within an Enfield Road garage – is how each exhibition that founders/curators Tim and Kira McCool put on completely reinvents the space to immerse the audience in an artist's world. Viewers will find art spilling free from its frame to transform everyday objects like a garage-door pull cord into pieces themselves. No matter where you look in the GLHF space, you'll find art.

1207-A ENFIELD, WWW.GLHFGALLERY.COM

BEST ZINE LIBRARY WITH A FRIENDLY CAT

Sherwood Forest Zine Library

This independently run media library is located in someone's living room. Since 2012, founder Michelle has shared her thoughtfully arranged collection of zines for free as a passion project. Every other Saturday she opens her home to visitors to flip through and borrow from thousands of DIY projects covering an array of topics like gardening, comedy, politics, literature, and more. A uniquely cozy experience, you're welcome to sit and peruse through the creations while Twister the affectionate cat naps and plays beside you. Another perk: When you commence your membership, you'll receive a darling laminated and personalized library card.

WWW.SHERWOODFORESTZINELIBRARY.ORG

BEST MUSICIAN MATCHMAKING EVENT

The Hideaway Jam

There are a lot of great jams around town geared toward meeting other musicians and landing gigs, but few are able to thread the needle between inclusivity and professional opportunity quite like the Hideaway Jam. The sign-up sheet model might be part of what makes it so successful, but the not-so-secret ingredient in this mix is Jim Briggs. The host and guitarist radiates warmth. Like Briggs, many of the jam's regulars are musical powerhouses, but they're also sweethearts. That's what makes the whole affair feel distinctly *Austin*. Some jams are centered around a genre. This one is centered around an attitude.

WWW.HELLAJIMBRIGGS.COM/THE-HIDEAWAY-JAM

MOST UP-AND-COMING COMMUNITY THEATRE IN A 135-YEAR-OLD BUILDING

Bastrop Opera House

Just 30-or-so miles outside of Austin, the Bastrop Opera House has provided entertainment for Central Texans since 1889. The historic theatre took various forms in its history, including as a movie theatre and youth community center. Today, it hosts unique performances nearly every weekend. Earlier this year, the small-town theatre took home 13 of 20 BroadwayWorld Austin Awards, including Favorite Local Theatre, Best Play, and Best Direction of a Musical. But the Opera House isn't resting on its laurels: Upcoming productions *Moon Over Buffalo*, *Treasure Island*, and *Young Frankenstein* are all reasons to mull a trip to our neighbors to the east.

711 SPRING ST., BASTROP, WWW.BASTROPOPERAHOUSE.ORG



JANA BIRCHUM

MOST SURPRISING DRAG SEMICENTENNIAL

Hole in the Wall

Record stores, restaurants, and even full-on buildings (does the standalone "Hi, How Are You" wall make you more happy or sad?) disappear from the Drag at lightning speed these days, but somehow, Hole in the Wall has prevailed. The restaurant/arcade-turned-everyday music venue has officially reached its golden anniversary, and it's continued to launch the careers of nationally celebrated acts without losing its character. The women's bathroom? Still has two toilets! The drinks? Still cheap! Thanks to a 2023 check from the Iconic Venue Fund, the oft-endangered club secured its lease for another 20 years. Thank God some things never change.

2538 GUADALUPE, WWW.HOLEINTHEWALLAUSTIN.COM



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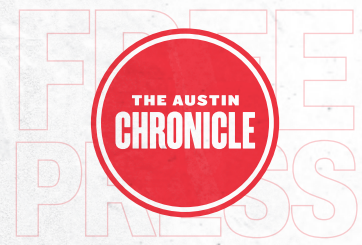
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we are so grateful to be part of Austin's creative community!

thank you for voting in the Chronicle's reader poll ♥

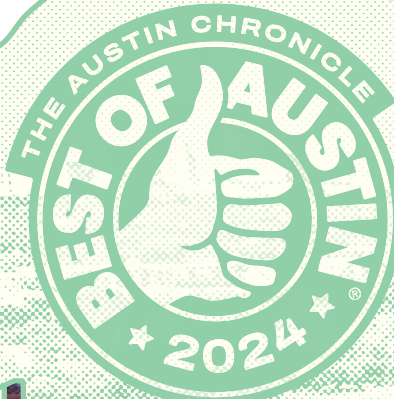
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NIGHTLIFE

READERS POLL



DAVID BRENDAN HALL

LARGE LIVE MUSIC VENUE

Mohawk

FINALISTS: ACL LIVE, MOODY CENTER, MOODY AMPHITHEATER AT WATERLOO PARK, STUBB'S

"I like my music venues like I like my men – dirty and cheap." – *Susan Sharp*

OUTDOOR VENUE

Mohawk

FINALISTS: CHEER UP CHARLIES, FAR OUT LOUNGE, MOODY AMPHITHEATER AT WATERLOO PARK, STUBB'S

"Vibes are strong. Shows are always killer. Great bar and beer selections." – *Miguel Leon*



912 RED RIVER, WWW.MOHAWKAUSTIN.COM

INTIMATE LIVE MUSIC VENUE

Hotel Vegas

FINALISTS: ANTONE'S, CONTINENTAL CLUB, ELEPHANT ROOM, SAXON PUB

"They book the best acts. There's nowhere else I'd rather get my eardrums blown out at." – *Ashley Manley*

1502 E. SIXTH, WWW.TEXASHOTELVEGAS.COM

DANCE CLUB

Cheer Up Charlies

FINALISTS: BARBARELLA, COCONUT CLUB, ELYSIUM, OUTER HEAVEN DISCO CLUB

"Inclusive club with live music and a lively patio scene. It's refreshing to go to a club where it doesn't matter if you're dressed up or down." – *Kay Marley-Dilworth*

900 RED RIVER, WWW.CHEERUPCHARLIES.COM

CHEAP DATE

Peter Pan Mini-Golf

FINALISTS: BUZZ MILL, THE CAVALIER, CROWN & ANCHOR PUB, THE LOST WELL

"Slice of history (get it?)" – *Kristen Drenning*

1207 BARTON SPRINGS RD., WWW.PETERPANMINIGOLF.COM

COCKTAIL BAR

Roosevelt Room

FINALISTS: SMALL VICTORY, THE TIGRESS PUB, TRONA, WHISLER'S

"Absolute Vibe." – *Danny Brock*

307-B W. FIFTH, WWW.THEROOSEVELTROOMATX.COM

DIVE BAR

Nickel City

FINALISTS: BACK LOT, BARFLY'S, DEEP EDDY CABARET, WORKHORSE

"Cool hang." – *Charles Dickey*

1133 E. 11TH, WWW.NICKELCITYBAR.COM

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JOHN ANDERSON

BARTENDER

Maria Rodriguez (Cheer Up Charlies)

FINALISTS: DOMINIC LARA (THE CONTINENTAL CLUB/C-BOY'S HEART & SOUL), OSCAR MARTINEZ (CORINNE/THE LOBBYIST), ALEX MIKRUT (BAR PEACHED/CHEF BAR), BRANDON PATRICK (DOUBLE TROUBLE)

"The kindest, sweetest soul to be around. Goes above and beyond to take care of everyone around her!!" – *Sydney Bastian*

SPORTS BAR

Haymaker

FINALISTS: THE BON AIRE, LAVACA STREET BAR, PLUCKERS WING BAR, THE TAVERN

"Best beer selection, and shows even the most obscure games I request!" – *Keith Sandel*

2310 MANOR RD., WWW.HAYMAKERAUSTIN.COM

BAR FOR SINGLES

Cheer Up Charlies

FINALISTS: BACK LOT, BELLAS BAR, LATCHKEY, TRONA

"For the gaaaays" – *McLean Carrington*

900 RED RIVER, WWW.CHEERUPCHARLIES.COM

PLACE FOR SOBER SOCIALIZING

Radio Coffee & Beer

FINALISTS: ARMADILLO DEN, COSMIC COFFEE, EPOCH COFFEE, SANS BAR

"Lovely outdoor and indoor spaces and plenty of good nonalcoholic drinks."

– *Candice Brusuelas*

4204 MENCHACA RD., WWW.RADIOCOFFEEANDBEER.COM

KARAOKE

Ego's

FINALISTS: THE COMMON INTEREST, HOLE IN THE WALL, OUTER HEAVEN DISCO CLUB, RUCKUS KARAOKE

"Great staff, cheap drinks, fun environment and crowd." – *Paul Zienty*

510 S. CONGRESS, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/EGOSBARATX

JUKEBOX

Casino El Camino

FINALISTS: BACK LOT, BARFLY'S, CASINO SOUTH SIDE LOUNGE, DEEP EDDY CABARET

"Because it's CASINO! My home away from home since opening week." – *Meg Geminden*

517 E. SIXTH, WWW.CASINOELCAMINO.NET

TRIVIA NIGHT

The Little Gay Shop Queer Trivia with Aira Juliet

FINALISTS: BRAINCELL BATTLE MUSIC TRIVIA AT TWEEDY'S, PLUCKERS WING BAR, SOBER & FUNKY TRIVIA NIGHT, TRIVIA 512 AT RADIO COFFEE & BEER

"Consistently my favorite night with friends and community. Aira is the kind of star that welcomes everyone into her light. And she's fucking funny."

– *Lindsey Christensen*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/CANTBREATHEWITHNOAIRA

LGBTQIA CLUB

Cheer Up Charlies

FINALISTS: COCONUT CLUB, THE IRON BEAR, OILCAN HARRY'S, RAIN ON 4TH

"Cutest, neonest, most QUEER-friendly – truly for all." – *Michelle Budin*

900 RED RIVER, WWW.CHEERUPCHARLIES.COM

QUEER PARTY

Neon Rainbows

FINALISTS: ATX VOGUE NIGHTS, PAPI SIII, QUEERBOMB, SAPPHICS AFTER DARK

"Queer country night is just about the most Austin thing imaginable." – *Ty Stonecipher*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/NEONRAINBOWSTX

POOL HALL

The Grand

FINALISTS: ARISTOCRAT LOUNGE, BETSY'S BILLIARDS, FAST EDDIE'S, SLICK WILLIE'S

"Hands down best pool hall in town! Cleanest as well. Never going anywhere else."

– *Caleb Rich*

4631 AIRPORT #121, WWW.THEGRANDATX.COM

ADULT CLUB

Yellow Rose

FINALISTS: THE DOLL HOUSE, MAXIMUS MEN'S CLUB, PALAZIO MEN'S CLUB, RED ROSE

"Complimentary limo service and great lobster." – *Uriel Reyes*

6528 N. LAMAR, WWW.YELLOWROSE.COM



JANA BIRCHUM

NIGHTLIFE WILD CARD

Tiny Minotaur (immersive/live action DnD tavern)

FINALISTS: SLICK DICK'S WILD RIDE (INTERACTIVE PLAYHOUSE FOR ADULTS), TX EMO CLUB (EMO PARTIES)

"My little geek heart swoons!" – *Elizabeth Means*

2701 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, WWW.TINYMINOTAUR.COM

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NIGHTLIFE

CRITICS PICKS



PHOTO BY JAMES RENOVITCH

BEST BAR WE WANT TO HATE

Sign Bar

It's fitting that this illuminated shrine to "old" Austin is halfway between the heart of the city and Elon Musk's Gigafactory. The premise of the bar smacks of manufactured nostalgia, and at first glance, it's hard not to wince at the walls, chockablock with signage from beloved local haunts, past and present. However, bring a few friends, have a seat, and let the reminiscing begin. It's impossible to avoid and undeniably pleasant. Also, if the lights get too bright, and you hunger for something a bit more "authentic," there's a convenient path that leads right to Donn's BBQ.

9909 FM 969 BLDG. 3, WWW.SIGNBARTEXAS.COM

BEST TWO-STEPPING LESSONS

Double or Nothing Two-Step

Vanessa Vaught's two-stepping lessons are the portal you pass through to be inducted into South Austin's thriving country scene. Anyone who has felt intimidated by the whirling dance floor at Sagebrush or Sam's Town Point is guaranteed to melt their fears away by attending one of her weekly beginner lessons. Vaught's approachable and concise teaching style, combined with her handy Instagram calendar of country music to dance to each night around town, has made her a mainstay of the scene, symbiotic with the musicians. Once you've gotten your sea legs, you can move on to intermediate or advanced classes, take a private lesson, and bust a move at any honky-tonk with confidence.

WWW.DOUBLEORNOTHINGTWOSTEP.COM

BEST DRAG LOTERÍA NIGHT

Lotería With Santina

Actor, model, spiritual guide, event producer, and drag queen: Vida Santina can pretty much do it all, and that includes emceeing the always-fun monthly lotería night at Revival Coffee. Santina entertains her guests with jokes and lip-synching and bouncing off special guest performers, such as Cynthia Lee Fontaine from *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Want to take a breather? Peruse the wares from new partner La Cooltura Market and sample the eats from on-site food truck Pinches Tacos. A celebration of queer and Latino culture, Lotería With Santina is a win.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/SANTINA_ATX

BEST AFTER-HOURS EVENTS FOR GROWNUP ART GEEKS & DRAMA KIDS

The Cathedral ATX

From poetry readings to burlesque, the Cathedral ATX has become one of Austin's most fascinating venues. From the outside looking in, it's innocent enough. Carved from the sacred bones of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, it now acts as an art gallery-slash-shared workspace for artists and their ilk by day. Then when night falls, it transforms into something unholy. While all the good boys and girls flavor their lips with whispered prayers before bedtime, the patrons of Cathedral ATX sip stronger spirits, appreciating art from local woman-identified masterminds and taking in the sights and sounds of a night-tipsy Austin.

2403 E. 16TH, WWW.THECATHEDRALATX.COM

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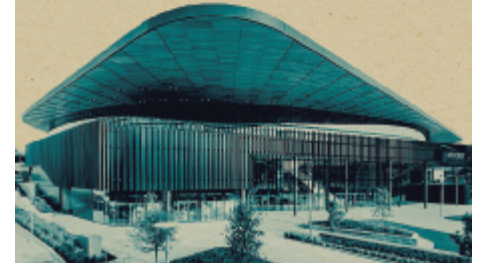
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CREEPIEST DOLL COLLECTION AT A BAR

Mama Dearest

Like dead babies? They've got 'em! Well, their likeness at least. There are so many creepy baby dolls hanging above your head at Mama Dearest that we would not venture to count them. There are other eerie dead things to take in – think Norman Bates' office meets Leatherface's cocktail lounge – but the baby dolls are so prominent that the bar has been forced to lay down the law for patrons. "Mama's Rule: Don't Fuck the Dolls." Fear not: If you're looking for dead things you can put in your mouth, the food truck serves chicken and beef.

515 PEDERNALES ST., WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/MAMADEARESTATX

BEST DIMLY LIT BAR REVIVAL TO MEET ALL NEEDS

Tweedy's

When the Spider House Cafe closed in 2020, Tweedy's rose from its ashes. Decorated with vintage concert posters and twinkling Christmas lights, the revived dive bar revels in its dark (literally) rock & roll atmosphere. Enjoy a casual night out with the revolving rotation of punk and New Wave and a wide selection of cocktails and draft beers to choose from. The spacious outdoor patio is the ideal spot for socializing and smoke breaks, while the Counter Culture on-site food truck and arms-length-away Zucchini Kill Bakery make for optimal late-night munchies.

2908 FRUTH, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/TWEEDYSBAR



JANA BIRCHUM



ZEKE BARBARO

BEST NEW PATIO FOR PATIO-ING

Double Trouble

Roast gods at Barrett's Coffee not only sling the best brown in town, but feature it prominently at their satellite cafe, Double Trouble, the North Loop coffee shop with the best backyard in Austin. And while this is a bold ruling by us, the quality content that they host on their patio speaks for itself: Tarot Tuesgay, *Mario Kart* tournaments, Babe ATX Open Deck Femme and NB DJ night (a mouthful fo sho!), and more. Or, heck, maybe you just want a fresh morning cup with just the right amount of sunshine peeking through the trees. Oh, us? We're just over here crushing orders of vegan flautas and a half-dozen frozen cocktails while listening to the grackles fight.

103 E. NORTH LOOP, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/DOUBLETROUBLE.ATX

BEST FIREPIT SITUATION AT A BAR

Armadillo Den

Some smart scientists say fire is what made us human. So imagine being tipsy outside, listening to a live local band, and gobbling up a fat fried-chicken sammy *without* a fire. The inhumanity! Luckily, Armadillo Den gets it. They're not the only watering hole in Austin that prioritizes the pyromaniacs among us, but between the quality and quantity of their firepits, they're at the top of the flame game. And if you can't find a seat near the flames, they've thoughtfully distributed hardy blankets around the whole joint so you can stay warm while you wait for a spot to open up.

10106 MENCHACA RD., WWW.ARMADILLODENAUSTIN.COM

BEST TUESDAY BINGO NIGHT

Bat City Bingo at Long Play Lounge

The Long Play not only boasts the sexiest selection of wax on tap, but also hosts a heck of a fun bingo night brought to the folk of Crestview and Highland by Bat City Bingo each Tuesday night. Free to play, provided you're 18+, the prizes range from records to clothing to plants to books, and a new game starts each half hour between 7pm and 9pm. Grab a partner and a cocktail, then bingo-up with all the other flirty bingo-heads waiting for the best call of the night: O-69.

704 W. ST. JOHNS AVE., WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/BATCITYBINGO



JANA BIRCHUM

CLEANEST BATHROOMS ON DIRTY SIXTH

San Jac Saloon

It ain't saying much, and yet, it really, really is. In a pissy pinch, there's probably no better place to relieve yourself on Dirty Sixth than San Jac Saloon. These guys have toilet paper. We repeat: There is toilet paper. Pee on the seat? Not usually! The doors close properly. The sinks work well. And crucially, the lighting is bright – a good indication they have nothing to hide. Women love giving compliments and spilling the beans in bathrooms, but when you're hurrying to escape your own gag reflex on Dirty Sixth, it's hard to connect. Now here's a watering hole you can actually make friends in.

300 E. SIXTH, WWW.SANJACSAALOON.COM

BEST BAR FOR WINE NERDS

The Violet Crown

Tucked in a quiet Brentwood block, you'll find the Violet Crown, a sunny and airy destination for wine aficionados and newbies alike. Owners Grant Richardson and Chris Nagelhout focus their list on natural wines, which they source from all over the world. Their staff knows these wines inside and out and lends their expertise in a way that feels genuine and friendly rather than know-it-all-ish. Tell your bartender which wines you generally prefer, let them choose an ideal low-intervention bottle for you, and enjoy Violet Crown's serene vibes and excellent cheese and charcuterie selection.

7100 WOODROW, WWW.THEVIOLETCROWNATX.COM

BEST NEW BREWERY

Prost Alehouse

"Best New Brewery" is a coveted title in the craft beer industrial complex and no amount of coaxing from my editor could entice me to change the title of this here award to something "more interesting" or that has "something, anything to do with Nightlife" because dangit, "BEST" and "NEW" and "BREWERY" are three words that any plucky upstart beer maker gets a shot at but once in its entire lifetime! Prost Alehouse is kicking so much ass tonnage with their turn-of-the-century, two-story brick masterpiece that overlooks a charming small-town main street that Texas is so famous for. This Pflugerville outfit is brewing a variety of inspiring lagers and delicious ales and is unafraid to take a schwarzbier into the summer season. We love that for us. They also host a banger of a Mexican hamburguesa truck in their courtyard that we fuck with. (*Ed. note: All of which you can enjoy ... at night.*) So, yeah, they're getting the most basic, yet most alluring award title we dole out because they're those three things: "Best New Brewery."

115 E. MAIN ST., PFLUGERVILLE, WWW.PROSTALEHOUSE.COM

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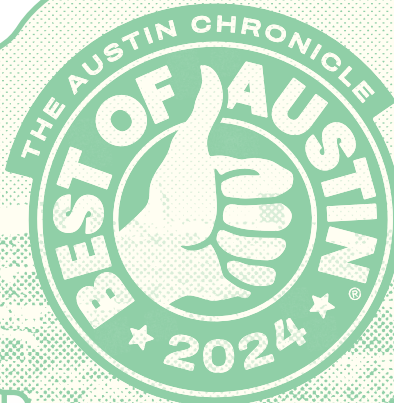


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POLITICS & MEDIA

READERS POLL



JOHN ANDERSON

CITY OFFICIAL

District Attorney José Garza

FINALISTS: CITY COUNCIL MEMBER VANESSA FUENTES, CITY COUNCIL MEMBER NATASHA HARPER-MADISON, CITY COUNCIL MEMBER ZO QADRI, MAYOR KIRK WATSON

“Hold strong, José! We voted for you because of what you stand for. US!” – *Holly Sellers*

WWW.TRAVISCOUNTYTX.GOV/DISTRICT-ATTORNEY/OUR-OFFICE/MEET-THE-DA

RADIO PROGRAM

Texas Standard (KUT News)

FINALISTS: THE BREAKS (KUTX), THE CJ MORGAN SHOW (101X), DOUBLE HEADS VARIETY HOUR (KOOP RADIO), MORNINGS WITH MATT AND BOB (KLBJ-FM)

“Local news and great hosts.” – *Casey Papovich*

WWW.TEXASSTANDARD.ORG

RADIO STATION

KUTX 98.9

FINALISTS: KMFA CLASSICAL 89.5, KOOP RADIO, KUT NEWS, SUN RADIO

“No one else cares as much about Austin musicians. This is the best radio station in our entire country.” – *Kat Moody*

300 W. DEAN KEETON, WWW.KUTX.ORG



PHOTO BY MICHAEL MINISI / KUT

RADIO OR PODCAST HOST

Jerry Quijano (All Things Considered - Austin)

FINALISTS: STEPHEN BELYEU (THE NIGHT OWL), AYDEN CASTELLANOS (SUSTO), KOREY COLEMAN (DOUBLE TOASTED), MINDY HOFMAN (WOMEN OF AUSTIN)

“I just love how he says his name. I listen just for that.” – *Kristin Henn*

WWW.KUT.ORG/PEOPLE/JERRY-QUIJANO-KUT

PRINT PUBLICATION

The Austin Chronicle

FINALISTS: AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN, AUSTIN MONTHLY, COMMUNITY IMPACT, THE TEXAS OBSERVER

“Telling the TRUTH, with sass, for over 40 years.” – *Tex Obie*

1000 E. 40TH, WWW.AUSTINCHRONICLE.COM

ONLINE MEDIA OUTLET

KUT.org

FINALISTS: THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE, THE AUSTIN COMMON, REPORTE AUSTIN, THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

“Most reliable, smart, engaging, and always there!” – *Donna Bueche*

300 W. DEAN KEETON, WWW.KUT.ORG

PODCAST

The Night Owl

FINALISTS: PARANORMAL PUTAS, QUEERTOWNE, SUSTO, UNSUNG HORRORS

“The paranormal is not always something to be feared, and if you're looking for proof, this podcast proves that even the afterlife can be heard.” – *Greg Munoz*

WWW.THENIGHTOWLPODCAST.COM



TODD V. WOLFSON

WEATHERPERSON

Jim Spencer (KXAN)

FINALISTS: KRISTEN CURRIE (KXAN), AVERY TOMASCO (CBS AUSTIN), HUNTER WILLIAMS (KVUE), CHIKAGE WINDLER (CBS AUSTIN)

"Always the best, ahead of the rest. Energizer bunny Jim just keeps on tickin'.

Give that man a storm." – *Dennis Schneider*

KXAN, 908 W. MLK, WWW.KXAN.COM

TV NEWS

KXAN

FINALISTS: CBS AUSTIN, FOX 7, KVUE, SPECTRUM NEWS

"Absolutely love my KXAN news all day. Great teams." – *Steve Cardenas*

908 W. MLK, WWW.KXAN.COM

TV ANCHOR/ REPORTER

Quita Culpepper (KVUE)

FINALISTS: JOHN-CARLOS ESTRADA (CBS AUSTIN), CHELSEY KHAN (CBS AUSTIN), BRITT MORENO (KXAN), TREVOR SCOTT (CBS AUSTIN)

"She's one of us!! Very much a woman of the people and for the people." – *Erin Geisler*

WWW.X.COM/QUITAC_KVUE

SPORTSCASTER

Roger Wallace (KXAN)

FINALISTS: ED CLEMENTS (NEWSRADIO KLBJ AND ESPN 102.7 AUSTIN), DENNIS DE LA PEÑA (FOX 7), JEFF JONES (KVUE), CRAIG WAY (AM 1300 THE ZONE)

"I like his straightforward way of reporting."

– *Martha MacDonald*

WWW.X.COM/RWALLACEKXAN

NEWS REPORTER

Tony Plohetski (Austin American–Statesman, KVUE)

FINALISTS: NATHAN BERNIER (KUT), AUSTIN SANDERS (THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE), MARIO TAPIA (REPORTE AUSTIN), MAGGIE Q. THOMPSON (THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE)

"Absolutely the best. After his investigative reporting on Uvalde, I hold Tony at the national level of reporting quality." – *Gail McClanahan*

WWW.X.COM/TPLOHETSKI

COLUMNIST

Michael Barnes
(Austin American-Statesman)

FINALISTS: KIRK BOHLS (AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN), BRIDGET GRUMET (AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN), JAMES SCOTT (THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE), PHIL WEST (VERDE ALL DAY)

“Michael has been around long enough to know what he’s talking about.”

– *Rebecca Campbell*

WWW.X.COM/OUTANDBOUT

FOOD WRITER

Nadia Chaudhury
(Eater Austin)

FINALISTS: MELANIE HAUPT (THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE), ALI KHAN (ALI KHAN EATS), MATTHEW ODAM (AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN), AMANDA WONG (AUSTIN FOOD ADVENTURES)

“She’s got the good scoops.”

– *Ruben Sanchez*

WWW.X.COM/NADIACHAUDHURY

**GRASSROOTS/
POLITICAL ORG**

Austin Justice Coalition

FINALISTS: AURA, AUSTIN DSA (DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA), TEXAS HARM REDUCTION ALLIANCE, UNIVERSITY DEMOCRATS

“Doing the hard work and never letting up!” – *Martin Jones*

1603 E. 38th, WWW.AUSTINJUSTICE.ORG



AJC’s Chas Moore

JANA BIRCHUM



Dalkalju at Hotel Vegas during Free Week 2024

ISABELLA MARTINEZ

PHOTOGRAPHER

Isabella Martinez

FINALISTS: SUZANNE CORDEIRO, DAVE CREANEY, DAVID BRENDAN HALL, ANNIE RAY

“She is everywhere, all the time. I don’t think there is another Austin photographer at more gigs than Isabella.” – *Devyn Miller*

WWW.PEPPERMINTGIRLPHOTOS.COM

FILM CRITIC

Alejandra Martinez
(The Austin Chronicle, LatinaMediaCo)

FINALISTS: KOREY COLEMAN (DOUBLE TOASTED), JENNY NULF (THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE), MARTIN THOMAS (DOUBLE TOASTED), RICHARD WHITTAKER (THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE)

“Unique, detailed, and passionate! You can tell she’s speaking from her heart and personal connections rather than repeating traditional talking points.” – *Noah Solis*

WWW.MARTINEZALEJANDRA.INFO

NONPROFIT

Austin Pets Alive!

FINALISTS: AUSTIN PARKS FOUNDATION, HAAM (HEALTH ALLIANCE FOR AUSTIN MUSICIANS), HEADSTRONG GIRLS’ BOXING, I LIVE HERE I GIVE HERE

“Are you kitten?! This org has done so much for animals and people!”

– *Hannah Horstman*

1156 W. CESAR CHAVEZ, WWW.AUSTINPETSALIVE.ORG

U.S./STATE OFFICIAL

U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett

FINALISTS: U.S. REP. GREG CASAR, STATE REP. GINA HINOJOSA, STATE REP. DONNA HOWARD, STATE REP. JAMES TALARICO

“Austin’s Abe Lincoln.” – *David Jarmon*

DOGGETT.HOUSE.GOV

ACTIVIST

Brigitte Bandit

FINALISTS: CHRIS HARRIS (AUSTIN JUSTICE COALITION), DAPHNE HOFFACKER (AUSTIN COUNCIL OF PTAS), CHAS MOORE (AUSTIN JUSTICE COALITION), REV. ERIN WALTER (TEXAS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST JUSTICE MINISTRY)

“Nobody gives the far right a bigger, more confused & angry fear boner than Brigitte.” – *Zenyth Gale*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/BRIGITTEBANDIT

ONLINE PERSONALITY

Evil MoPac

FINALISTS: ALLASTER MCKALLASTER, GODDESSQUEENJUSTME23, LIFE OF A CHERRY WIFE, LYMPH LOVE CLUB

“Better than Evil I-35.”

– *Nathan Bernier*

WWW.X.COM/EVILMOPACATX



ZENE BARBARO (PHOTOS BY JANA BIRCHUM / JOHN ANDERSON / GETTY IMAGES)

LOCAL CONTROVERSY

Ken Paxton impeachment & acquittal

FINALISTS: ANTI-DEI LEGISLATION IMPACT ON UT, ART ACEVEDO HIRING BACKLASH, I-35 EXPANSION, #WOLFFOUT CAMPAIGN TO GET AUSTIN FC'S HEAD COACH FIRED

"His acquittal was a slap in the face to the rule of law in Texas." — *David Fouts*

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Central Texas Food Bank

FINALISTS: AUSTIN ALLIES, CENTRAL TEXAS PIG RESCUE, FESTIVAL BEACH FOOD FOREST, LOS VERDES

"Day in, day out, they're there to support the health and welfare of those needing a helping hand." — *Dahl Black*

6500 METROPOLIS DR., WWW.CENTRALTEXASFOODBANK.ORG

POLITICS & MEDIA WILD CARD

Tux the cat's wild ride

(Austin cat who went missing in a Lyft and became a social media sensation)

FINALISTS: ALL MY LEFTISTS LIVE IN TEXAS (PODCAST & INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT), "ADVICE NEEDED: A GRACKLE HAS FALLEN IN LOVE WITH A TENNIS BALL IN MY BACKYARD" (R/AUSTIN THREAD)

"Happy endings rule 🐱" — *Kelly Overton*

WWW.X.COM/PALASHP40616755/STATUS/1708940161310986695



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POLITICS & MEDIA

CRITICS PICKS



PHOTO BY PATTI SIGMON

BEST SLIME-BASED CONTENT CREATORS

PeachyBbies Slime Shop

Nothing can re-create the feeling of uncorking a fresh batch of slime from Austin-based manufacturer PeachyBbies and digging your fingies in. But dare we say there's as much pleasure to be had in digging into their socials? Just ask the millions of slime enthusiasts tuning in for new product reveals; behind-the-scenes looks at how the slime sausage gets made; warehouse games serving real *Double Dare* energy; and ASMR videos that amplify every squelch, crunch, and glitter crinkle. Never change, bbies.

WWW.PEACHYBBIES.COM

BEST BILINGUAL LIFESTYLE INFLUENCER

Paulina Perez

Paulina Perez knows what being a tourist in your own city looks like. Her hunt for the hottest and most picturesque Austin has to offer is never-ending, and what's more, she shares her findings in both English and Spanish. Perez grew up on the Mexican-American border and moved to Austin for college, where she began posting exceedingly popular bilingual "day in the life" content of her days at UT-Austin on TikTok. Post-graduation, Perez continues to document her adventures, her experience as a Mexican American, and her Austin recommendations. Skip Googling "best coffee near me" and check out what Perez thinks is the bomb-dot-com instead.

WWW.TIKTOK.COM/@PAULINAPEREZ

THIRSTIEST INSTAGRAM FOODIE

David Douglass

With mustachioed mouth right up to the camera, David Douglass sauces. He chomps. He slurps. He moans. There's something very visceral about the videos of this Austin restaurant recommender. The commentary gets messy, too, offering single-guy takes like "I haven't seen manipulation this good since I love-bombed a girl I just met" (on Comadre Panderia's buzzy pastries). Even if you're not up for the light raunch and überonline references, his feed is a great resource for new-to-you ATX meals. Clicks across Instagram and TikTok have led to a townie brand partnership with Chuy's, as well as a pasta, jazz, and wine pop-up called Prati.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/THEDAVIDDOUGLASS

BEST LIVE PERFORMANCE JOURNALISM

ATXplained Live

No matter how long you've lived in Austin, KUT's ATXplained will surprise you with something you didn't know about our city. Taking the popular podcast and radio news feature to the live stage is a different experience altogether, though, as the familiar voices augment their stories with visuals and performances. It's an exercise in rabbit holes, more about taking the audience along on the journey of the investigators joyfully following their curiosity and journalistic instincts than necessarily finding answers to listeners' questions. The results are often hilarious, sometimes deeply emotional and personal, and always enlightening and entertaining.

WWW.KUT.ORG/ATXPLAINED

BEST HUMAN MEGAPHONE FOR PRISONERS

Amite Dominick

Texas Prisons Community Advocates has been in existence for only three years but is already one of the most effective messengers for incarcerated people in the state. That's in large part thanks to the efforts of TPCA's founder and president, Amite Dominick. Dominick organized the group to draw attention to the life-threatening heat that 85,000 inmates endure every summer in Texas prisons without air conditioning. The goal is to get the prisons to install A/C so cells don't exceed 85 degrees, and TPCA, under Dominick's admirable leadership, will be holding 85 to Stay Alive events through the summer to get the word out.

WWW.TPCADVOCATES.ORG

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JOHN ANDERSON

MOST RESOLUTE

The Ceasefire Protesters

It takes guts to stand up for what you believe in, and guts are what we've seen from countless Austinites who've taken to City Hall, stepped off of SXSW stages, and sat down on campuses to call for a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war. At UT-Austin in particular, hordes of mostly young people were tackled, pepper sprayed, and even arrested for their convictions. While the administration has not bent to students who demanded the school divest in weapons manufacturers whose products are killing civilians in Gaza, the impact of nationwide protests has been felt in Gaza. As one Gazan told the *Chronicle*, "I feel like someone is with us for the first time. I'm certain that the whole world sees what is happening to us."

WWW.X.COM/AWAIS_CRP

HARDEST-WORKING PLANNING COMMISSIONER

Awais Azhar

It's no surprise that when City Council prepared to give final approval to a series of land use reforms in May – the most ambitious in at least 40 years – Council members took a moment to thank Awais Azhar. Deputy director of HousingWorks Austin and a fourth-term planning commissioner, Azhar is widely regarded as one of the most knowledgeable and hardest-working individuals in Austin's housing policy space. Through his work on the Planning Commission and as a community advocate, he helped improve many of the housing reforms Council recently passed. The people of Austin are lucky to live among smart, dedicated volunteers like Azhar.

BEST ADVOCATE FOR AUSTIN FILM

Rebecca Campbell

Running the Austin Film Society means a lot more than just watching a few films and talking movies with fellow film buffs. In the 26 years since Rebecca Campbell joined as executive director, and in her last 8 years as CEO, she's helped AFS grow from a movie-watching club to the state's most powerful advocates for movie production and appreciation. That includes leading the team that opened Austin Studios, established the Texas Film Hall of Fame, distributed millions and counting in grants to rising filmmakers, lobbied the Texas Legislature for TV and film tax rebates, and brought to life AFS Cinema, a theatre so beloved that *Chronicle* readers voted it their favorite in Austin this year.

WWW.AUSTINFILM.ORG

BEST HISTORICAL DOCUMENT OF A MOMENTOUS POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN AUSTIN

An Army of Women

Regular *Chronicle* readers know many of the people and stories that make up the documentary film *An Army of Women*, which had its world premiere at this year's SXSW Film & Television Festival. But thanks to the work of Julie Lunde Lillesæter and her producers, a wider audience can also learn about three of the women who fought a legal and political campaign to force the Austin Police Department to better serve survivors of sexual assault. That work is ongoing, but the efforts of the survivor-advocates who made it happen will now be immortalized in film.

WWW.AARMYOFWOMEN.FILM

HIGHEST-IMPACT EDUCATORS MOST TARGETED BY THE STATE

UT's Division of Campus and Community Engagement

UT's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion staff didn't deserve this. At the *Chronicle*, we've reported on life-changing courses that helped lift Black and brown kids from low-income families into spaces they never expected to occupy. We've heard in interviews how a DEI lens in UT classes helped students feel a sense of belonging, even as they studied STEM subjects that so often lack a historical perspective. The more than 60 people in DEI-related roles laid off by the University of Texas deserve applause, not severance.

BEST NEW PLANNED COMMUNITY

Green Gate Farms & Village Farm

An urban planning trend we'd like to see more of is a concept known as the "agrihood," which is basically a planned community that incorporates agriculture into the daily lives of residents. East Austin's Green Gate Farms is one local example, where people living on the organization's 30-acre Village Farm can learn to farm and garden, purchase freshly harvested fruits and vegetables from neighbors, and participate in regular social events. A City Council resolution authored by CM Natasha Harper-Madison hopes to spur development of other agrihoods across the city.

8316 CANOGA AVE., WWW.GREENGATEFARMS.NET/THEFARMS



JANA BIRCHUM

MOST VOCAL AND VULNERABLE ADVOCATE

Amanda Zurawski

Amanda Zurawski wanted to become a mom. Instead, Texas' extreme abortion ban caused a chain of events that nearly killed her, and put her fertility in jeopardy. At 18 weeks pregnant, she developed a condition her baby likely would not survive, but Texas doctors couldn't help her abort. Zurawski went into septic shock twice before she was considered close enough to death for an abortion. She is the Zurawski in *Zurawski v. Texas*, the high-profile lawsuit that challenged Texas' abortion bans. The Texas Supreme Court unanimously rejected that challenge in May, but Zurawski's efforts aren't limited to court. She's at press conferences, the State of the Union address, in panels at SXSW, and even a Biden campaign commercial. Her story has touched the nation. We thank her for her service.

WWW.TINYURL.COM/ZURAWSKIVTEXAS



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MON 07/15 at 7PM
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(Sci-Fi/Fantasy)
SILVER NITRATE
by Silvia Morena Garcia

THURS 07/18 at 4PM
Kids Book Club with Austin Allies
(Middle Grade)
MAIZY CHEN'S LAST CHANCE
by Lisa Yee
WHAT LANE by Torrey Maldonado

THURS 07/18 at 6PM
Happy Hour
(Variety)
THE AGE OF MAGICAL OVERTHINKING
by Amanda Montell

THURS 07/25 at 7PM
New & Noteworthy
(Hot New Titles)
JAMES
by Percival Everett

SUN 07/28 at 4PM
Latinas & Libros
(Latinx Stories)
I AM NOT YOUR PERFECT MEXICAN DAUGHTER
by Erika L. Sanchez

MON 07/29 at 7PM
Amplify
(BIPOC Authors)
THESE IMPOSSIBLE THINGS
by Salma El-Wardany

WED 07/31 at 7PM
Y'all Means All
(LGBTQ+)
BEING ACE
by Madeline Dyer


THURS 08/01 at 7PM
The Seven Per-Cent Solution
(Cozy Mystery)
WORD IS MURDER
by Anthony Horowitz

SUN 08/04 at 4PM
ATX SciRead
(Nonfiction)
SONG OF THE CELL
by Siddhartha Mukherjee

MON 08/05 at 7PM
The New Romantics
(Romance)
NOT IN LOVE
by Ali Hazelwood

TUES 08/20 at 7PM
Nightmare Factory
(Horror)
THE ONLY GOOD INDIANS
by Stephen Graham Jones

MORE INFO HERE





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FINALISTS: HEART SEED HEALING, INTUITIVE CONSULTING BY LOIS, MAK JAGGER TAROT, SOUND SIGHT TAROT

"Insightful, generous, kind, funny – a true gem." – *Leslie Wells*

WWW.SISTERTEMPERANCE.COM

BARBERSHOP

Birds Barbershop

FINALISTS: BARBON'S BARBERSHOP, DADDY'S BARBERSHOP, OLDE SOUL BARBERSHOP, SHED BARBER AND SUPPLY

"Always feel so welcomed and the vibe is just it. Never want to go anywhere else but Birds for a cut." – *Mercedes Treto*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.BIRDSBARBERSHOP.COM

SALON

Urban Betty

FINALISTS: APOTHECA SALON & BARBERSHOP, HARLOW BEAUTY AND HAIR SALON, METHOD HAIR, PRECISION DECISION HAIR GROUP

"For the first time in my adult life, I found a stylist that actually LISTENED to me, and provided expertise and information that confirmed I was heard." – *Mary Capps*

1206 W. 38TH #1107; 4631 S. CONGRESS #108, 3001 JOE DIMAGGIO #1350, ROUND ROCK, WWW.URBANBETTY.COM

SPA

milk + honey

FINALISTS: CEREMONY SPA, SPA 7, SPA SWAY, VIVA DAY SPA + MED SPA

"It's a place that encourages gratefulness and healthy self-care."

– *Belinda Hodges*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.MILKANDHONEYSPA.COM

MASSAGE

Ace of Cups Massage & Wellness

FINALISTS: CEREMONY SPA, DEEP RELIEF, MANTRA WELLNESS, SPA SWAY

"They are all magical witches in the best possible way ♥" – *Rebecca Hume*

2121 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, WWW.ACEOFCUPS.AUSTIN.COM

ACUPUNCTURE

Rosedale Acupuncture & Wellness Center

FINALISTS: CEREMONY SPA, DEEP RELIEF, SAGE ACUPUNCTURE, SOUTH AUSTIN COMMUNITY ACUPUNCTURE

"They are the best in town! Mega healers!" – *Elizabeth Baird*

1403 W. 45TH, WWW.ACULETE.COM

MANI/PEDI

Cute Nail Studio

FINALISTS: LACQUER, MILK + HONEY, QUEEN SPA, VIVA DAY SPA + MED SPA

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1211 E. SEVENTH; 3801 S. CONGRESS #104, WWW.CUTENAILSTUDIO.COM



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LASHES

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4524 MATTIE #101, WWW.LUNALASHATX.COM

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Hotel San José

FINALISTS: CARPENTER HOTEL, HOTEL MAGDALENA, HOTEL VIATA, SOUTH CONGRESS HOTEL

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1316 S. CONGRESS, WWW.SANJOSEHOTEL.COM

AUTO REPAIR/SERVICE

Groovy Automotive

FINALISTS: DAVE’S ULTIMATE AUTOMOTIVE, FLAMINGO AUTOMOTIVE, JUKE AUTO, YOST AUTOMOTIVE

“I love these guys. No upselling, hard push, or nonsense. Just dedication to keeping your set of wheels in its best possible condition.” – *Elizabeth Means*

4011 RED RIVER; 3511 GUADALUPE, WWW.GROOVYAUTOMOTIVE.COM

HOME MAINTENANCE/SERVICES

ABC Home & Commercial Services

FINALISTS: A TEAM HOME SERVICES, BLUE DIAMOND REMODELING, QUEEN OF TO DO, RUNNERCITY

“They do it all and also give back to the community.” – *Jocelyn Winter*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.ABCHOMEANDCOMMERCIAL.COM

A/C REPAIR/INSTALLATION

Radiant Plumbing & Air Conditioning

FINALISTS: ABC HOME & COMMERCIAL, MCCULLOUGH HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING, SALT SERVICE CO., STAN’S HEATING, AIR & PLUMBING

“They ALWAYS got us covered. Great communication. Transparent appointments/wait time. Affordable. Wouldn’t trade ‘em!” – *Victoria Moreno*

901 REINLI, WWW.RADIANTPLUMBING.COM

ELECTRICIAN

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FINALISTS: A TEAM HOME SERVICES, TERRAPIN ELECTRIC, TRUTEC ELECTRIC

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– *Sam Eleanor*

901 S. MOPAC, BLDG. 1 #300, WWW.CALLSALT.COM

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2200 S. LAMAR, WWW.REWAXATIONTX.COM

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FINALISTS: CLEAN SLATE WAXING LOUNGE, MANTRA WELLNESS, POTION TX, SPA 7

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– *Sarah Wong*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.VIVADAYSPA.COM

TATTOO

Atomic Tattoo

FINALISTS: COPPERHEAD TATTOO & PIERCING, ELECTRIC 13 TATTOO, NO GOOD TATTOO, STUDIO INK

“Simply the best shop in Texas.”

– *Charles Gilbert*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.ATOMIC-TATTOO.COM

BIKE SHOP/REPAIR

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– *Michael Fleming*

5015 DUVAL ST.; 13010 W. PARMER LN. #500, CEDAR PARK, WWW.PEDDLERBIKE.COM



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK

PLUMBER

Reliant Plumbing

FINALISTS: ABC HOME & COMMERCIAL, THE PLUMBINATOR, SALT SERVICE CO., WILSON PLUMBING

“Quality work & exceptional employees.” – *Cynthia Ellis*

12111 MENCHACA, WWW.RELIANTPLUMBING.COM



PHOTO BY JENNA MCELROY / COURTESY OF THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

WEDDING VENUE

The Contemporary Austin - Laguna Gloria

FINALISTS: BARR MANSION, CHAPEL DULCINEA, SOUTH CONGRESS HOTEL, SPRINGDALE STATION

"STUNNING venue, amazing team. Highly recommend this space for getting married." – *Dominique Estevez*

3809 W. 35TH, WWW.THECONTEMPORARYAUSTIN.ORG

LAWN CARE/ LANDSCAPING

Earthling Landscaping

FINALISTS: FERTILE GROUND GARDENS, GRASS WORKS, MATHIS DESIGNS, SEEDLINGS LANDSCAPE DESIGN BUILD

"They're saving the Earth one yard at a time." – *Ryan Robbins*

WWW.EARTHLINGLANDSCAPING.COM

LOCKSMITH

Cothron's

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"An old Austin staple."

– *Tracy Roquemore*

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1315 W. BEN WHITE, WWW.COTHRONS.COM

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WWW.MOODAURANOMAD.COM



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VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.SPINZONELAUNDRY.COM

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Rick's Cleaners

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"Clothes are always ready on time. Great customer service."

– *Juan Sepeda*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.RICKSCLEANERS.COM

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"They've always done right by me."

– *Brian Ramirez*

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

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Cofer & Connelly

FINALISTS: BATRICE LAW FIRM, CLAYTON, RAMIREZ & NULL LAW, TED KARR (BERKELEY LAW & TECHNOLOGY GROUP AUSTIN), ALLISON MATTOCKS (WARREN KALYAN MATTOCKS)

"Great attorneys that really care about their clients." – *Mariel Puryear*

602 W. 11TH, WWW.COFCRCONNELLY.COM

VETERINARIAN

Emancipet

FINALISTS: AUSTIN VET HOSPITAL, BLUEBONNET ANIMAL HOSPITAL, PAZ VETERINARY, ROOTS INTEGRATIVE VETERINARY CENTER

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DOGGIE DAY CARE

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"My dog literally drags me inside when it's time to board him. He loves it that much."

– *Karen Sanchez*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.TAURUSACADEMY.COM

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FINALISTS: AS THE FUR FLIES, AUSTIN DOGTOWN, DIRTY DOG, MUD PUPPIES

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VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.BARKINCREEK.COM



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COURTESY OF EXTRAGRAMS

BEST DRAG QUEEN DELIVERY SYSTEM

Extragrams

Oh: Who hasn't dreamed of a drag queen delivered right when you need a direct injection of fabulous into an occasion? This is the exact dream local telegram service Extragrams was created for back in 2020, when event coordinator Kerry Lynn was looking for a pandemic-friendly way to support local performers. From weddings to wacky bachelor/ette parties, virtual bingo nights to kids' princess parties, hiring Extragrams means you'll be getting top-tier drag artists to liven up any celebration. Now, if the founder's name sounds familiar, that's because Lynn was actually a plaintiff on the lawsuit that brought down Senate Bill 12 – aka the anti-drag bill – alongside fellow Best of Austin honoree Brigitte Bandit. So next time you need drag entertainment delivered in their now-extended service area of Austin and Houston, pick the people who helped make a lot of Texas GOP jerks really mad.

WWW.EXTRAGRAMSATX.COM

MOST ROCKING REPAIRS

ATX HandyBand Collective

It's a one-stop, rocking shop for any repairs you've got. Broken fence? Leaky faucet? Looking to install that new light fixture? This merry band of local musicians has got you covered. Founder True Lawton, musician/concert producer/handyman extraordinaire, created the collective as a way to help struggling musicians fill in the gaps between gigs. Get stellar work done, and feel satisfied that you're investing in what makes Austin special. Plus, all their communication is full of music puns. Beautiful repairs and concert-themed communique? It doesn't get much better than that.

WWW.HANDYBANDCOLLECTIVE.COM

BEST ACTOR ADVOCATE WIZARDS

Collier Talent Agency

For professional actors, the journey to success is riddled with fire starters and flying monkeys – and making it to Emerald City intact requires more than self-determination. With the Glinda-level good guidance of founder/owner Heather Collier and Laura Maxwell-Scott, head of the young talent division at this full-service agency, dozens of local actors have been equipped with all the heart, brain, and courage they need to navigate an ever-evolving, often treacherous, road. Even better, thespians and their loved ones can rest assured this dynamic duo offers stellar industry knowledge, unprecedented individual care, and inspired advice.

WWW.COLLIERTALENT.COM

BEST HAVEN FOR DIY PLUMBERS

Josco Plumbing Supply

When Crump Plumbing Supply on Burnet Road closed several years back, Austin was left with one last place carrying the random parts necessary to cheaply fix leaking faucets and running toilets. This DIYer recently had a valve stem on a bathtub faucet go bad. Fortunately we were just around the corner from Josco's. The young men behind the counter identified the part instantly – something that probably wouldn't have happened at Home Depot. Total cost of repair: \$30. And the feeling you get supporting a 50-year-old Austin business? You can't really put a price on that.

719 W. POWELL; 515 INDUSTRIAL BLVD.,
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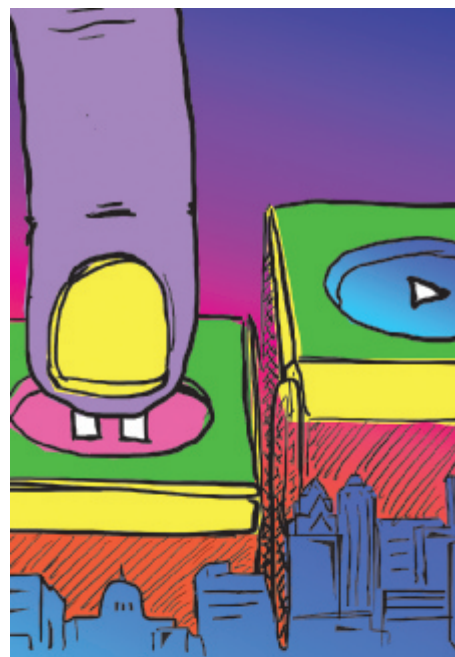
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PAUSE/ PLAY

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ABOUT AUSTIN'S
LIVE MUSIC
SCENE & WHY IT
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[KUT KUTX]
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Rick's

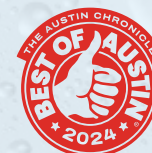
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COURTESY OF SUGAREE HAIR STUDIO

BEST CURLY CUTTERS

Sugaree Hair Studio

Anyone with wavy, curly, or otherwise textured hair knows the trepidation associated with finding the right hairstylist. Our well-meaning friends are brimming with recommendations, but for every beautician thrown our way, we have to ask: Can they cut *my* hair? The four stylists at Sugaree Hair Studio can. Katy, Christine, and KP are certified American Wave Specialists, while Rae is an expert at cutting – and even coloring! – curly (read: Black) hair. Take comfort in knowing these ladies actually know what they're doing with your beautifully frustrating locks – and get ready to snuggle some puppies when you visit, as they often bring their pets to the studio.

5350 BURNET RD. #101, WWW.SUGAREEHAIRSTUDIO.COM

MOST UNIQUE FRAMING ON THE CHEAP

Vintage Framing Studio

Inside the Vintage Framing Studio's workshop lies a sea of colorful mat options and even more vintage frames in all shapes and sizes. It's momentarily overwhelming. But then Jennifer swoops in, calmly laying out your prized item-to-be-framed. She looks at it, talks through what she sees, and then gets to work pulling out frame after frame, mat color after mat color, from the walls of her garage studio. Until, at last, she finds the perfect match and asks what you think. "It's perfect," you say, as you worriedly think about how much such thoughtful service will cost. But when the bill comes, you breathe a sigh of relief.

917 NILE ST., WWW.VINTAGEFRAMINGSTUDIO.COM

BEST PLATINUM ANNIVERSARY

Bond's

It's rare to find something with the longevity to celebrate 70 years, but Bond's has now done it. Founder Robert A. "Bob" Bond was the first trained TV tech in Austin, starting when only 65% of Americans had a television set at home (it's been about 98% since the late Seventies). Now run by Bob's son David, Bond's is who you call to deck out a home theatre or set up an office conference room for Zoom calls. Bond's looks to the future while preserving the past, as evidenced by their vintage TV museum with over 60 sets dating back to 1948.

1010 W. LYNN, WWW.BONDSTV.COM

BEST WAY TO PAY RESPECTS TO SOMEONE ELSE'S TREASURES

Estate Services of Austin

Austin's weirdness can be hard to put a value on, but that price must be calculated when disposing of the dearly departed's estate. How do you do that in a city of artists, musicians, oddballs, and curio collectors? You call Carl McQueary of Estate Services of Austin. Or rather, those in the know will call him for you, because this self-described funeral director of stuff is known as the expert in the sort of ephemera that you'll find in this town. A former museum curator, he's not just there to slap a price tag on some old Tupperware, but to appreciate the worth of the strange and unusual – to make sure, as he always puts it, that it goes to the person it's supposed to go to.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/ESTATE_SERVICES_OF_AUSTIN



COURTESY OF PRECIOUS NAILS

BEST PLACE TO GET NAILS FROM OUTER SPACE

Precious Nails

Gen Z salontrepreneur Aspen Babnick can do basic manicures, she just doesn't want to. The New Mexican-turned-Austinite specializes in wacky works: 3D metallic nails that look like extraterrestrial tech, too-real blood spatter, lightning that glows, underwater effects, and sure, if all you want is cutie little cherries, she'll give that her special touch, too. Just be prepared to dish some dirt to keep her entertained. This former Cute Nail Studio tech has a personality that dazzles as much as her designs, and with her trusty Red Bull in hand, an appointment may just leave you breathless.

5524 BEE CAVES RD. STE. F-1, WWW.TINY.CC/PRECIOUSNAILS

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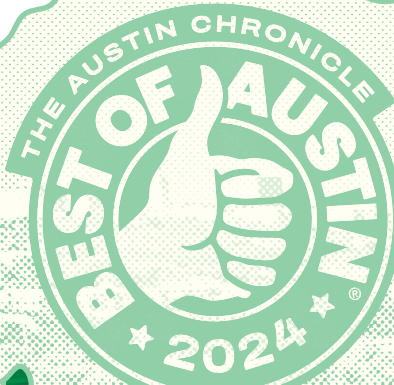
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GARDEN STORE/NURSERY

The Natural Gardener

FINALISTS: EDEN HOUSE BOTANICALS, THE GREAT OUTDOORS, SHOAL CREEK NURSERY, TILLERY STREET PLANT COMPANY

"My favorite nursery, whether it's for variety of plants, knowledgeable employees, or garden products. What a delightful place to go to!" — *Nola Fadel*

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

MEN'S CLOTHING

Stag

FINALISTS: BLOODY ROSE BOUTIQUE, BROTHER FRIEND, HOWLER BROTHERS, UPTOWN CHEAPSKATE

"Aspirational brands and style, great quality, the staff doesn't bug you."

— *Dennis Gleason*

1423 S. CONGRESS, WWW.STAGPROVISIONS.COM

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

Uptown Cheapskate

FINALISTS: BLUE ELEPHANT, BROOKE RODD, DAUGHTERS, FORTRESS

"Love buying secondhand!"

— *Candice Brusuelas*

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

VINTAGE/ CONSIGNMENT CLOTHING

Room Service Vintage

FINALISTS: BLUE VELVET, PROTOTYPE VINTAGE, TOP DRAWER THRIFT, UPTOWN CHEAPSKATE

"Excellent inventory. Super organized. Good people." — *Tina Rose*

117 E. NORTH LOOP, WWW.ROOMSERVICEVINTAGE.COM

JEWELRY

Nina Berenato Jewelry

FINALISTS: COURTNEY MARIE JEWELRY, KELSEY LEIGH FINE JEWELRY & GIFTS, LM ADORNMENT, SHELLEY MOON DESIGNS

"Badass all-women team making dope designs!" — *Shayda Torabi*

3200 PALM WAY #152, WWW.NINABERENATO.COM

FURNITURE/HOME GOODS

Four Hands

FINALISTS: AUSTIN'S FURNITURE DEPOT, CLAY IMPORTS, GOLDEN MEAN, MAARIBU

"15 years ago we got a coffee table there, and that thing will last forever; I think it was built stronger than my house was." — *Robin M*

2090 WOODWARD, WWW.FOURHANDS.COM

USED FURNITURE/ ANTIQUES

Uncommon Objects

FINALISTS: ARMSTRONG'S HOUSE OF VINTAGE, FAR OUT HOME FITTINGS, ROOM SERVICE VINTAGE, SHOW AND TELL AUSTIN

"The most unique vintage items in a wonderful space; I can browse for hours."

— *Kathleen Carey*

1602 FORTVIEW, WWW.UNCOMMONOBJECTS.COM



ZEEK BARBARO

ARTS & CRAFTS STORE

Austin Creative Reuse

FINALISTS: BEEHIVE CRAFT STUDIO, JERRY'S ARTARAMA, THE PAPER + CRAFT PANTRY, SEA OF BEADS

"A thrift store just for arts & crafts is a dream come true. What's not to love?!"

— *Piper LeMoine*

2005 WHELESS, WWW.AUSTINCREATIVEREUSE.ORG

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PET STORE

Tomlinson's Feed

FINALISTS: BARKIN' CREEK DOG KITCHEN, GALLERY OF PETS, HEALTHY PET, PAWS ON CHICON

"They have everything and anything your furry child could need or want!" – *Avileni Martinez*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.TOMLINSONS.COM

FLORIST

Freytag's Florist

FINALISTS: AUSTIN FLOWER CO., BEN WHITE FLORIST, FLORERIA CASTILLO, KING FLORIST

"My vote goes to Freytag's this year because I witnessed firsthand what they do for community. Freytag's donates flowers to Hospice Austin's Christopher House, where my Dad ended up in his final days. To walk in and see a special bouquet each day in my Dad's room was so meaningful and comforting. What a beautiful thing Freytag's does donating to such an incredible cause." – *Vivian Holmes*

2211 W. ANDERSON, WWW.FREYTAGSFORLIST.COM

NEIGHBORHOOD GROCERY

Wheatsville Food Co-op

FINALISTS: DIA'S MARKET, FRESH PLUS, THOM'S MARKET, TINY GROCER

"Community-focused grocery." – *Sounthaly Outhavong*

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

LIQUOR STORE

Twin Liquors

FINALISTS: THE AUSTIN SHAKER, KING LIQUOR, MONARCH LIQUOR, SPEC'S

"If I have any questions about what to buy I go out of my way to shop at Twin because they are so helpful and informed."

– *Kynna Sullivan*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.TWINLIQUORS.COM

ADULT STORE

Forbidden Fruit

FINALISTS: DREAMERS, PACKAGE AUSTIN, SIR RAT LEATHER AND GEAR, XXXCITE

"Old-school Austin, amazing finds, and zero judgment."

– *Elizabeth Means*

108 E. NORTH LOOP, WWW.FORBIDDENFRUIT.COM

SMOKE SHOP

Planet K

FINALISTS: HAPPY CLOUDS, MARYJAE, TEXAS SMOKE CONNECTION, TRIPPIEZ SMOKE SHOP

"Most knowledgeable employees in a smoke shop." – *Josh Brown*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.PLANETKTexas.COM

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RESTART

FINALISTS: HAPPY KARMA HEMP, TEXAS CANNABIS CLINIC, TEXAS ORIGINAL, TRUE HEMP SCIENCE

"Amazing product and even more amazing people there! Their products have changed my life and I can actually be a functioning person again because of them." – *Spencer Najera*

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

SPORTING GOODS

Whole Earth Provision Co.

FINALISTS: MEDUSA SKATES, NO-COMPLY SKATESHOP, RECESS PICKLEBALL, SPORTSMAN'S FINEST

"An Austin institution promoting everything outdoors!" – *Janis Dosky*

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

LOCAL NONALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE BRAND

Waterloo Sparkling Water

FINALISTS: BUDDHA'S BREW KOMBUCHA, RAMBLER SPARKLING WATER, RESTART RITA, RICHARD'S RAINWATER

"Yummy flavors." – *Aisha Turner*

WWW.DRINKWATERLOO.COM

LOCAL ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE BRAND

Austin Eastciders

FINALISTS: DEEP EDDY VODKA, PINTHOUSE, STILL AUSTIN WHISKEY CO., TITO'S HANDMADE VODKA

"Honey cider is love." – *Travis Keltner*

979 SPRINGDALE #130, WWW.AUSTINEASTCIDERS.COM

POP-UP MARKET

Queer Markets With The Little Gay Shop and Eastside Pop Up

FINALISTS: AUSTIN FLEA, EASTSIDE POP UP, FLORES MARKET, MUTINY MARKET

"Support local queer artists, always."

– *Kiro Louie*

THE LITTLE GAY SHOP, 1902 E. 12TH, WWW.THELITTLEGAYSHOP.COM; EASTSIDE POP UP, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/EASTSIDEPOPOP

BOOKSTORE

BookPeople

FINALISTS: BLACK PEARL BOOKS, BOOKWOMAN, FIRST LIGHT BOOKS, REVERIE BOOKS

"Great booksellers that know about a wide range of genres, plus unique gifts and amazing author events. And I love their cafe!!" – *Rita Painter*

603 N. LAMAR, WWW.BOOKPEOPLE.COM



COURTESY OF SIETE

LOCAL FOOD BRAND

Siete Family Foods

FINALISTS: BOLA PIZZA, DIABLO HUMA BBQ SAUCE, PICKLE ENVY, YELLOWBIRD

"Giving delicious taco options to those of us with gluten allergies? Quite possibly the best gift one can give in Austin!" – *Melissa Plunkett*

6320 E. STASSNEY LN., STE. 325, WWW.SIETEFOODS.COM



KIMBERLEY JONES

FARMERS' MARKET/ FARMSTAND

Texas Farmers' Market at Mueller

FINALISTS: BARTON CREEK FARMERS MARKET, BOGGY CREEK FARM, SFC FARMERS' MARKET AT SUNSET VALLEY, TEXAS FARMERS' MARKET AT LAKELINE

"It's a party every Sunday! It's my church :)" – *Donna Bueche*

2006 PHILOMENA
WWW.TEXASFARMERSMARKET.ORG/MUELLER

COMICS/FANDOM STORE

Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy

FINALISTS: AUSTIN BOOKS & COMICS, COLLECTORS CROSSROADS, JUNIORS COMICS & CARDS, TRIBE COMICS AND GAMES

"Awesome place!" – *Maria Briscese*

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

GAME STORE

Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy

FINALISTS: EMERALD TAVERN GAMES AND CAFE, GAME OVER VIDEOGAMES, OUTLAW MOON GAMES & TOYS, TANUKI GAMES

"Love playing cards there." – *Shawn Sanchez*

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

ELECTRONICS/ COMPUTER STORE

Discount Electronics

FINALISTS: AUSTIN MACWORKS, FRANKENSTEIN COMPUTERS, MACTRONICS, THAT BYTES! COMPUTER REPAIR

"Staff at Discount Electronics is so helpful. They have been able to solve each of my computer-related issues." – *Pat Gustafson*

4005 W. PARMER, 1001 S. I-35, ROUND ROCK,
WWW.DISCOUNTELECTRONICS.COM

AUSTIN GIFTS/ SOUVENIRS

Atown

FINALISTS: AUSTIN GIFT COMPANY, CLOVER + MAVEN, THE LITTLE GAY SHOP, PRIMA DORA

"It's funky, has a great selection of Austin-specific products, and the staff is amazingly helpful." – *Mary Baker*

5502 BURNET RD., WWW.KEEPTOWNWEIRD.COM

SUBSCRIPTION BOX/SERVICE

Farmhouse Delivery

FINALISTS: BON VIVANT, MAMA BIRD BOX, RESTART, SLOW NORTH

"Fantastic products." – *Jodi Gonzalez*

9715 BURNET RD. BLDG. 7 #400, WWW.FARMHOUSEDELIVERY.COM

SHOPPING WILD CARD

Austin Swappin' (monthly clothing, household, and accessories swap)

FINALISTS: KAIJU CUT AND SEW (HANDMADE LEATHER GOODS AND MORE), SHOP SLOW (HANDMADE AND RECYCLED MATERIALS BOUTIQUE)

"My favorite monthly activity! So thoughtfully managed and the community they've created is kind, generous, and beautiful." – *Red Yeager*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/AUSTINSWAPPIN

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BEST OBSCURE LITERATURE COLLECTION

Alienated Majesty Books

Hosting one of the shrewdest and grandest selections of rare reads in the city, Alienated Majesty Books puts literary poseurs to shame. The outstanding and zany curation of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, comics, and translated books does what a bookstore ought to do – expose you to what you likely wouldn't have discovered on your own. Their shelves hold various treasures, ranging from a devastating book of poems to the lowliest zine you can imagine. Don't fret if it sounds intimidating, as their staff of savants and friendly punks are enthusiastic to serve as your Sherpa.

613 W. 29TH, WWW.ALIENATEDMAJESTYBOOKS.COM

BEST SHOP FOR SOBER SPIRITS

Dear Dry Drinkery

This zero-proof liquor store with a boutique feel provides a welcome, non-triggering shopping experience for people who live an alcohol-free lifestyle, but still like to sip interesting drinks. Opened as a food truck in early 2023 by couple Grace Vroom and Joe Patterson, the community around it soon necessitated a brick-and-mortar upgrade. Dear Dry's selection of NA distilled spirits, bitters, aperitifs, mixers, and bottled cocktails (like a Phony Negroni by St. Agrestis) will open your eyes to a growing market of booze-free cocktail products. The homey Cesar Chavez space, containing a comfy little nook for reading or listening to 8-tracks, also has a cooler full of nonalcoholic beers and spritzers, plus a solid selection of non-inebriating wines and various THC-infused drinks.

2226 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, WWW.DEARDRYDRINKERY.COM

BEST CORNER STORE IN A CHINESE RESTAURANT

Wok 'N Express

Of all the convenience stores in Austin, Wok 'N Express possesses perhaps the most prestigious inventory. While the aesthetic stays true to that of the typical c-store, this establishment is distinguished by its emphasis on East Asian snacks you won't find at your basic supermarket chain. At a notably affordable price, find treats like Japanese plum wine, matcha Kit Kats, and Thai tea – each accompanied by the more recognizable beverage and snack brands. Adding to its distinctiveness, the space has also served as a great and inexpensive Chinese takeout option since 2012.

4413 GUADALUPE, WWW.WOKNEXPRESS.COM

NEWEST MULTI-VENDOR SECONDHAND STOP

Potluck Vintage

As pickers mourned the closing of the Austin Antique Mall, a smaller, more curated, but still plenty wanderable multi-vendor option popped up in South Austin. Opened in May, Potluck Vintage packs two stories of covetable goodies under the discerning eye of owner Katie Vincent McClure, of South Lamar's Show and Tell Vintage & Art. Looping in a supersquad of local resellers, the shop invites SRK Designs, Modern Arc, Amelia Tarbet, and many more to hold down the checkerboard of furniture and home goods. Passport, Jello Mom, Poorbaby, and La Ropa contribute clothing, plus rows of cowboy boots.

2208 S. LAMAR, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/POTLUCKVINTAGEAUSTIN



COURTESY OF LEAH MAREN DANIEL

BEST BLING FOR WITCHY WOMEN'S LIGHTERS

LM Adornment

When it comes to jewelry, why stop at adorning your body? Metalsmith and lifelong Austinite Leah Maren Daniel makes metalworks to dress up your lighter, your window, your plant, you name it. Each of her pieces is handmade with recycled materials. Custom creations can go in any direction, but her designs frequently feature Ouija boards, snakes, skeletal hands, celestial bodies, and all things witchy.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/LM_ADORNMENT

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BEST CUTE AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT EMBROIDERY

Cousin Kenny's

A story, so as to demonstrate why Cousin Kenny's deserves this award: It is a Friday in August 2022, and Kim Kardashian and Pete Davidson broke up. Naturally, we're all devastated. Next day, Saturday, all those showing up to the Little Gay Shop's annual Austin Pride market are gobsmacked to find baseball hats displaying tiny embroidered tombstones reading "Kim + Pete" for sale not a day after the relationship ended – made in a flurry of creative inspiration by the embroidery empresario himself, aka Kenny. Thirteen years in the clothing and accessory decoration business gave him the skills, but it's that keen sense of what's cool that sets Cousin Kenny's above the rest.

WWW.COUSINKENNY.COM

BEST TWIN-RUN RETRO RETAIL

Vintage Hideout

Plaid bell bottoms, acid-green dresses, suede Oxfords, psychedelic ties: Identical twins Emma and Grace, known as the Psych Sisters, first grew an online following for their synergetic Sixties and Seventies outfits. Of course, their statewide vintage sleuthing eventually led to a wardrobe surplus. The duo's retro sales lived online until last March, when the San Marcos sibs opened a brick-and-mortar in the previous Full Circle Vintage location, catty-corner from the Ballroom at Spider House. The shop stocks pieces from the Fifties through early 2000s in all shades of the rainbow.

2815 FRUTH ST., WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/PSYCH_SISTERS

BEST EDGY YET TIMELESS COSTUME JEWELRY

Vinca

Since 2006, Vinca has operated out of Austin's Eastside, designing kitschy, fun, sometimes-weird-but-always-cute jewelry. Their highly covetable statement pieces are handmade, and never boring – think: grackles, bats, narwhals, rubber duckies, the moon, aliens, and chef's knives. Catch them at the Blue Genie Art Bazaar, or visit them at their East Fourth storefront and gaze at the custom pet portraits that serve as in-house art installations, and maybe pet the real-life store cat if you're lucky.

1800 E. FOURTH #173, WWW.VINCAUSA.COM

BEST CARTOONS-COME-TO-LIFE

lian.soy

We didn't know we needed a lighter shaped like a farm-fresh brown egg until happening upon Lian Soy's table at an Asian American Resource Center market. Turns out we did. Aptly described as "objects that make you gasp a little gasp," the designs of local artist Lian C. generally have a smiling face on them, and are often delightfully minified. There's bok choy earrings, french fry hair clips, and a dragon print reading "Ni Howdy!" – all ideal for never-seen-on-Amazon gift-giving. The Parsons School of Design graduate also offers adorable custom hand-drawn portraits (ideally of you and/or your pet), both online and live at her pop-ups around Austin.

WWW.LIAN.SOY

BEST PLACE TO GET YOUR GOAT (PRODUCTS)

Goatlicious

This New Braunfels goat farm specializes in everything goat, from soap to milk to cheese and even semen, if you're looking to expand your own goat family. A Grade A dairy and creamery, Goatlicious sets up shop at the Texas Farmers' Market at Mueller every Sunday; swing by to shake the hands of the folks making the outta-this-world fig and black pepper goat cheese – the GOAT in every sense of the word.

WWW.DRINKGOATSMILK.COM

BEST POP-UP VINTAGE MARKET

Quad Vintage Market

Sundays from noon to 6, enter a wonderland of vintage clothing, handcrafted jewelry, and technically legal marijuana products. Sponsored by sister vintage stores Pavement and Leopard Lounge, the market hosts dozens of local vendors in the parking lots of the Houston-based chains and local favorite Antone's record store. Every week offers new selections and old favorites: one weekend, create a classic Italian charm bracelet piece by piece; another weekend, hand-soldered metal jewelry and crystals. What treasures await next weekend? Only one way to find out.

2932 GUADALUPE, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/GUADVINTAGEATX



ZEKE BARBARO

BEST LITTLE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE IN TOWN

Tiny Grocer

With thousands of global delights and Texas-local treats at this Hyde Park one-stop shop – the second location, following SoCo's flagship – you can fulfill your totally random shopping list and fill your belly, too. Steph and Co. provide friendly, knowledgeable service with sustainability and ethical production kept top of mind. Located in the former Speedway post office and sharing space with on-site French bistro Bureau de Poste, Tiny Grocer's shelves teem with delectable deli items and artisanal goods. Consider: Farmhouse Delivery's grab-n-go muffeduletta, Bouldin Food Forest arugula, Fox Pots ceramics, Two Hives raw honey, fancy soap, dreamy candles, and a sommelier-level wine list. Walk away feeling good.

1718 S. CONGRESS; 4300 SPEEDWAY #101, TINYGROCER.COM



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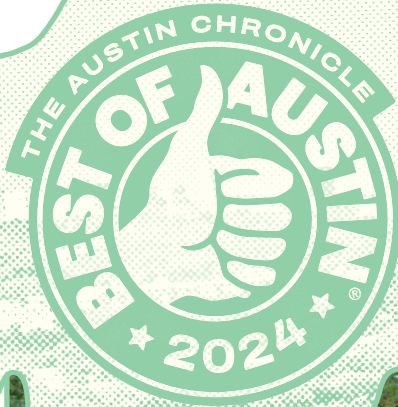


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KIDS & FAMILY

READERS POLL



JOHN ANDERSON

PLAYGROUND

Pease Park

FINALISTS: ALLIANCE CHILDREN'S GARDEN, MEANWHILE BREWING, PLAY FOR ALL ABILITIES PARK, ZILKER PARK

"The renovation from a few years back really turbo-charged the play opportunities." — *Seth Johnson*

1100 KINGSBURY, WWW.PEASEPARK.ORG

PARTY PLACE

Pinballz Arcade

FINALISTS: THE ART GARAGE, BLAZER TAG ADVENTURE CENTER, INDIGO PLAY, THINKERY

"Pinball machines and old-school arcade games." — *Anthony Rozada*

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

BIRTHDAY CAKES

Sugar Mama's Bakeshop

FINALISTS: HAYLEY CAKES AND COOKIES, MANDOLA'S ITALIAN KITCHEN, MERINGUE ME, UPPER CRUST BAKERY

"Delicious cakes and they do amazing designs. The gluten-free/vegan cakes are also amazing." — *Valeri Reeder*

1905-A S. FIRST, WWW.SUGARMAMASBAKESHOP.COM

KIDS' CLOTHING

Once Upon a Child

FINALISTS: BRIGHT BEGINNINGS BOUTIQUE, DEARLY, ESTILO KIDS, KID TO KID

"Great for the environment!" — *Catalina Cuervo*

7010 W. HWY. 71, STE. #155; 1801 S. I-35 #325, ROUND ROCK,
WWW.ONCEUPONACHILD.COM

YOUTH ARTS PROGRAM

Creative Action

FINALISTS: E4 YOUTH, EXCUSED ABSENCE COMEDY, KIDS-ACTING STUDIO, PARAMOUNT STORY WRANGLERS

"There is really no other arts organization like them. They combine the arts, social justice, and social and emotional learning to support our youth in creating the world they want to see." — *Jaclyn Jaramillo*

1023 SPRINGDALE BLDG. 3, WWW.CREATIVEACTION.ORG

YOUTH STEM PROGRAM

Girlstart

FINALISTS: IDEA LAB KIDS, LATINITAS, THINKERY, UT PREP SUMMER STEM PATHWAY

"This organization is such a bright spot in the male-dominated world of engineering. I love the work that they are doing and the young ladies really enjoy themselves while doing it." — *LaKeisha Bardwell*

1400 W. ANDERSON, WWW.GIRLSTART.ORG



PHOTO BY KEVIN GARNER PHOTOGRAPHY

SUMMER CAMP

Camp Paramount

FINALISTS: THE ART GARAGE, KIDSACTING STUDIO, NATUREVERSITY, SKY CANDY SKY CAMP

"My kids have grown so much over the past few years in this camp. Their confidence and joy is soaring." — *Priya Naikur*

WWW.AUSTINTHEATRE.ORG/LEARN-ENGAGE/CAMPS



ZEKE BARBARO

TOY STORE

Terra Toys

FINALISTS: ATOWN, LEARNING EXPRESS TOYS & GIFTS, MONKEY SEE MONKEY DO, TOY JOY

"Passionate employees make shopping here a joy." — *Sarah Schiff*

2438 W. ANDERSON STE. C1, WWW.TERRATOYS.COM

YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAM

Greater Austin YMCA

FINALISTS: AUSTIN YOUTH FITNESS, AUSTIN WOMEN'S BOXING CLUB, THE MAT MARTIAL ARTS & FITNESS, SOCCER SHOTS

"Great facilities all over town, amazing programs for kids and adults at a fair price, inclusive of people of all backgrounds." — *Lisa Doggett*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.AUSTINYMCA.ORG

FAMILY FESTIVAL

Austin Trail of Lights

FINALISTS: ABC KITE FEST, EYORE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY, EXCUSED ABSENCE ALL AGES COMEDY FESTIVAL, ROCK THE PARK

"A beautiful way to experience Austin." — *Deborah Vlam*

WWW.AUSTINTRILOFLIGHTS.ORG

KIDS & FAMILY WILD CARD

Mi Casa Es Tu Casa

(bilingual music classes for babies and toddlers)

FINALISTS: ATX YOGA GIRL (YOGA AND MINDFULNESS FOR KIDS), LONE STAR CHARACTER ENTERTAINMENT (COSTUMED CHARACTERS FOR CHILDREN'S PARTY ENTERTAINMENT)

"Es el lugar en donde encontré mi comunidad latina!"

— *Teresa Trevizo*

2110 WHITE HORSE TRAIL, WWW.MICASASTUCASA.COM

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KIDS & FAMILY

CRITICS PICKS



PHOTO BY AARON WHARTON

BEST LEGO BUILDER

Emmasaurus

It takes a lot of work to build the kind of fan base that Emma has. It has to be done brick by brick, locking together all the pieces – just like LEGO, which is lucky because no one knows more about everyone's favorite construction toy. Her endless energy and enthusiasm for those little plastic blocks has earned her 1.7 million followers and LEGO Ambassador status, and turned her into Austin's globe-trotting advocate for building fun.

WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/EMMASAURUS

BEST FAMILY OUTPOST IN SUNSET VALLEY

Nomadic Outpost

"Kids-in-Breweries" hot takes expired back in 2021 when local beer makers were on a push to get people back to the taprooms and beer gardens in order to survive post-pandemic collapse. Breweries continue to progress toward modern-day Vegas, making their spaces communal and accessible to customers of all ages and less toward 21+ exclusivity. We're particularly enamored with Nomadic Beerworks' South Austin beer garden, Nomadic Outpost, for its lively play-scape, free live music, rotating food pop-ups, and acres of running room for everyone's 1.94 children. Oh, and the excellent selection of house beers for the grownups doesn't hurt either.

505 COUNTRY WHITE LN.,
WWW.NOMADICBEERWORKS.COM/OUTPOST

BEST BAT SIGNAL

Ernest Cline

Did you know that Ernie Cline got his start here in Austin after moving from Ohio to become a slam poet at the (RIP) Electric Lounge back in the late Nineties? Neither did we, until we repeatedly circled the bestselling author's DeLorean Time Machine in the loading docks of the old *Austin American-Statesman* building for the launch of his new children's book, *Bridge to Bat City*. Besides driving there in his *Back to the Future* icon, the *Ready Player One* author regaled kids and parents alike with bat history just a guano toss from the world-famous spontaneous millions living under the Congress Avenue Bridge. When they say inspiration is all around us, believe it.

WWW.HACHETTEBOOKGROUP.COM/TITLES/ERNEST-CLINE/BRIDGE-TO-BAT-CITY/9780318460583

MOST "SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE" SCHOOL

Alpha School

Co-founded by MacKenzie Price, Alpha School in Austin has taken the century-old model of education and given it a much-needed makeover via Price's 2hr Learning program. Gone are the six- to eight-hour days of sitting in classrooms, basing intelligence on standardized testing. Using AI to meet students at their pace, the Alpha model illustrates how two hours of fundamental learning combined with two hours of experiential learning and focused physical activity (to engage the mind and the body) allow for children to believe in and act on their limitless potential.

1201 SPYGLASS, WWW.ALPHA.SCHOOL

COOLEST SCHOOL BAND

Semi-Modulars from Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

When's the last time you popped on a school band's album and grooved out? Or went to their year-end concert even though you don't have kids at the school? In TSBVI's Synthesis & Sound Design class, taught by musician Dan Butler, students compose an album over each school year and take it live around town in the spring as electronic/experimental band the Semi-Modulars. These kids dazzle audiences with danceable tunes, record excellent albums, and sell rad merch, making them not only the coolest school band around, but one of the coolest bands, period.

THESEMIMODULARS.BANDCAMP.COM



COURTESY OF LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER

BEST NATURE PLAY

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

The Wildflower Center isn't just for botanists – it's a perfectly curated outdoor wonderland. Watch kiddos build muscle constructing wooden wonders in the log area, or explore the cave and search for frogs by the pools. They can wander the butterfly maze, play house in giant bird nests, or dig to their heart's content in the covered sand area. Got more of an indoor kid? They'll love resting in Lynda's Library, an ingenious gazebo stocked with wooden benches and nature books. Make sure to check out the statue scavenger hunt, grab some lemonade in the cafe, and say goodbye to Athena the owl on your way out.

4801 LA CROSSE, WWW.WILDFLOWER.ORG

BEST FIELD OF DREAMS

Marshall Middle School

Not fully enrolled yet, Mueller's new middle school built a "Field of Dreams" populated most afternoons, nights, and weekends by surrounding area parents, kids, adult soccer leagues, Frisbee throwers, you name it. Elevated by a mound some of us climbed with our kid during the pandemic, the view and wind on that plateau will take your breath away. Behold a Sunday evening there when the sky's streaked hot pink by the great sky tiger while you're shooting Premier League goals into the wind and back of a regulation net under the great yellow goalposts – futbol meeting football. Dreamy.

4401 TILLEY ST., MARSHALLAUSTINSCHOOLS.ORG

LEAST HAMSTER CAGE-LIKE INDOOR PLAY AREA

Indigo Play

Indoor play areas are a necessity with summer heat, but aren't they sort of ...stressful? Do you worry you're going to lose a child to labyrinthine tunnels or Technicolor arcades? Well, at Indigo Play, there's plenty to discover without wishing you had a million eyes to track your children. With mazes and slides, secret passageways that are still parent-accessible, and a secure toddler area in view of the larger section, Indigo Play lets you actually relax while kids wear themselves out.

13530 RESEARCH #102, WWW.INDIGOPLAY.COM

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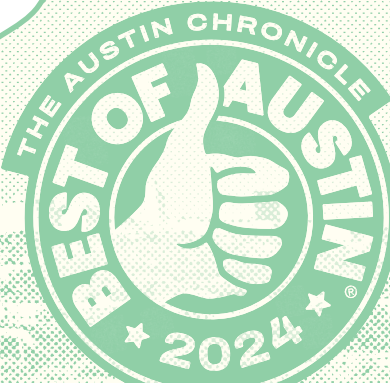


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www.centraltexasfoodbank.org



SPORTS & RECREATION

READERS POLL



PHOTO BY JIM JOHNSON IMAGERY

OUT-OF-TOWN HIKE

Enchanted Rock

FINALISTS: COLORADO BEND STATE PARK, INKS LAKE STATE PARK, LOST MAPLES STATE NATURAL AREA, PEDERNALES FALLS STATE PARK

“Very mystical place.” – *Leslie Botts*

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

PLACE TO TUBE

Don’s Fish Camp (San Marcos River)

FINALISTS: FRONTERA TOURS (SAN MARCOS RIVER), LIONS CLUB TUBE RENTAL (SAN MARCOS RIVER), RIVER FOREST HAVEN (COLORADO RIVER), TEXAS TUBES (COMAL RIVER)

“The GOAT.” – *Erik McC*

105 NELLE LN., SAN MARCOS, WWW.DONSFISHCAMP.COM

PLACE TO CAMP

Inks Lake State Park

FINALISTS: BUESCHER STATE PARK, ENCHANTED ROCK STATE PARK, KRAUSE SPRINGS, MCKINNEY FALLS STATE PARK

“So beautiful and so many campsites with water access.” – *Jennifer Remington*

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

DOG-FRIENDLY SPACE

Yard Bar

FINALISTS: THE ABGB, ARMADILLO DEN, NEIGHBORS DOG PARK & COFFEE SHOP, THE WATERING BOWL DOG PARK & BAR

“Neighborhood feel, I know my dogs are safe, I can catch up with my friends over a drink while my dog gets to run his energy out. 10/10.” – *Kelly Wright*

6700 BURNET RD., WWW.YARDBAR.COM

SWIMMING POOL

Barton Springs

FINALISTS: BARTHOLOMEW, BIG STACY, DEEP EDDY, NORTHWEST

“Uniquely Austin.” – *Bill Horton*

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

SWIMMING HOLE/LAKE

Hamilton Pool

FINALISTS: COMMONS FORD, DEVIL’S WATERHOLE, HIPPIE HOLLOW, KRAUSE SPRINGS

“So beautiful! Very peaceful; limited entry keeps it from getting crowded.” – *Riley Meth*

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



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FINALISTS: AUSTIN GAMBLERS, AUSTIN RISE FC, ROUND ROCK EXPRESS, TEXAS STARS

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– *Nuvia Sanchez*

WWW.AUSTINFC.COM

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COURTESY OF SAGE BROUSSARD

PERSONAL TRAINER

Sage Broussard

FINALISTS: DONOVAN OWENS, ALEX PLICHTA, FRED SASSANI, LU VILLARREAL

“Sage brings the energy when training. One of the toughest but also the funniest to have as a trainer.” – *Joe Martinez*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/TRAINERSAGEATX

BOWLING ALLEY

Highland Lanes

FINALISTS: HIGH FIVE ENTERTAINMENT, SPARE TIME TEXAS, TEXAS UNION UNDERGROUND, WESTGATE LANES

“Forever and always <3” – *Miguel Leon*

8909 BURNET RD., WWW.HIGHLANDLANES.COM

GOLF COURSE

Butler Pitch & Putt

FINALISTS: GREY ROCK GOLF CLUB, HANCOCK GOLF COURSE, LIONS MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE, MORRIS WILLIAMS GOLF COURSE

“Love the low-key vibe against the background of the Austin skyline. Staff is super chill and it’s always a fun time.”

– *Mary Grace Mooney*

201 LEE BARTON, BUTLERPITCHANDPUTT.COM

YOGA

Black Swan Yoga

FINALISTS: FLOW YOGA, MY VINYASA PRACTICE, PRACTICE YOGA AUSTIN, STUDIO SATYA

“Great vibe, cool artwork, love all the sound bath offerings.” – *Seva Simran Khalsa*

4534 WEST GATE BLVD.; 1417 W. ANDERSON; 403 ORCHARD, WWW.BLACKSWANYOGA.COM

GYM

Austin Women’s Boxing Club

FINALISTS: BODIES BY DESIGN, FIT & FEARLESS, THE MAT MARTIAL ARTS, ONNIT GYM

“Amazing energy & uplifting atmosphere while also a hard-ass workout.”

– *Emma Carr*

2919 MENCHACA RD. #210, WWW.AUSTINWOMENSBOXINGCLUB.COM

BIKE TRAIL/TRACK

Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake

FINALISTS: BRUSHY CREEK REGIONAL TRAIL, ROY G. GUERRERO COLORADO RIVER PARK, SOUTHERN WALNUT CREEK TRAIL, VELOWAY

“All trails are good trails, but this is no competition.” – *Jocelyn Winter*

WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/ANN-AND-ROY-BUTLER-HIKE-AND-BIKE-TRAIL-AND-BOARDWALK-LADY-BIRD-LAKE

PLACE TO WALK

Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake

FINALISTS: BARTON CREEK GREENBELT, MUELLER LAKE PARK, PEASE PARK, SOUTHERN WALNUT CREEK TRAIL

“You can walk a little ways or a long ways. There are bridges to cross the lake and just stop to take in the unique beauty that is Austin.”

– *Kate Schnack*

WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/ANN-AND-ROY-BUTLER-HIKE-AND-BIKE-TRAIL-AND-BOARDWALK-LADY-BIRD-LAKE

OUTDOOR RACE

ThunderCloud Subs Turkey Trot

FINALISTS: ASCENSION SETON CAPTEX TRI, AUSTIN MARATHON, CAP 10K, 3M HALF MARATHON

“Fun way to start Thanksgiving.”

– *Debbie Childers*

WWW.THUNDERCLOUD.COM/EVENT-INFO

SPORTS VENUE

Q2 Stadium

FINALISTS: DELL DIAMOND, DARRELL K. ROYAL-TEXAS MEMORIAL STADIUM, MOODY CENTER, UFCU DISCH-FALK FIELD

“Have you been to a game? This is no contest in terms of energy and atmosphere.”

– *Molly Blackman*

10414 MCKALLA PLACE, WWW.AUSTINFC.COM/STADIUM

ALTERNATIVE/AMATEUR SPORTS

Texas Roller Derby (banked track league)

FINALISTS: AUSTIN COMMUNITY SOCCER ASSOCIATION, AUSTIN WOMEN’S BOXING CLUB COMPETITION BOXING TEAM, LONE STAR CURLING CLUB, TEXAS ROLLERGIRLS (FLAT TRACK LEAGUE)

“Killer athleticism and entertainment on the track, all kindness in the community.”

– *Emma Zarate*

WWW.TXRD.COM



COURTESY OF UT ATHLETICS

SPORTS & RECREATION WILD CARD

Texas Beach Volleyball (new UT varsity sport)

FINALISTS: ARTIST RUN CLUB (WEEKLY ART APPRECIATION AND RUNNING CLUB), CELTIC AXE LEAGUE (AXE THROWING)

“Great new program with highly skilled players.”

– *Belinda Hare*

WWW.TEXASSPORTS.COM/SPORTS/WBVBALL



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PUMAS UNAM vs CF MONTERREY

8.3 • 9PM • Q2 STADIUM

AUSTINFC.COM/TICKETS



SPORTS & RECREATION

CRITICS PICKS



COURTESY OF UT ATHLETICS

BEST FRESHMAN ATHLETE

Madison Booker

When the UT-Austin women's college basketball team lost star point guard Rori Harmon to an ACL injury, freshman small forward Madison Booker didn't just take over the reins at guard – she made history while adapting to a new position. After Harmon went down, the Germantown High School (Miss.) graduate averaged 19 points, 5.6 assists, and 5.2 rebounds per game during UT's league-winning final year in the Big 12 Conference. She was named an Associated Press second team All-American for her tremendous season and became the first-ever freshman to earn Big 12 Player of the Year. Next season, SEC accolades surely await.

WWW.TEXASSPORTS.COM/SPORTS/WOMENS-BASKETBALL

BEST LOW-PRESSURE CYCLING CLUB

Breakfast Club

Breakfast Club melds two of Austin's favorite pastimes: being active and eating breakfast. What started as a meetup among friends who liked to bike around and get pancakes afterward has blossomed into a true community, bringing together hundreds of cyclists on Saturday mornings at either Central Machine Works or the Meteor Cafe for a healthy two-hour ride. They've also got pop-ups galore, from Hill Country gravel rides to one in Marfa this August. All paces and skill levels are encouraged; as they say on their website, "Everyone starts and finishes at the same place, regardless of speed and distance, and everyone from first time riders to world tour all stars are welcome. Bring a bike, a helmet, a couple bucks for breakfast, and leave the ego at home." Here's to the most important wheel of the day.

WWW.BREAKFASTCLUBATX.COM

BEST KEEPERS OF HISTORICAL AFRICAN MARTIAL ARTS TRADITIONS

Austin Warrior Arts

At Austin Warrior Arts, led by chief instructor Da'Mon Stith, students dive into the realm of historical African martial arts. From machete arts to stick fencing, capoeira to kickboxing, the instruction blends artistry, footwork, and traditional weaponry skills. If you're lucky enough to find yourself in the right space and time, you might witness a pop-up public performance, but you can immerse yourself in multidisciplinary workshops and seminars year-round. Add in mindfulness training, de-escalation tactics, and social and emotional learning (SEL) lessons for a holistic training experience. Hoping to unleash your inner warrior? Head to the African American Cultural & Heritage Facility.

WWW.AUSTINWARRIORARTS.COM

BEST CONVERGENCE OF OWNERSHIP

Texas Ranchers

Combining elements of tennis, table tennis, and badminton, pickleball continues to see an upswing in popularity. Support for America's fastest-growing sport extends locally in the form of the Austin-based Texas Ranchers, one of Major League Pickleball's eight founding teams. Celebrity-led groups co-own multiple teams across MLP, but the Ranchers might have the cream of the crop. Last October, prolific rapper/avid sports fan Lil Wayne joined a stacked Ranchers ownership group and also took on the role of strategic adviser. Other co-owners include country music artist Zach Bryan, 2024 Masters Champion Scottie Scheffler, Falcons running back Bijan Robinson, and designer/entrepreneur Kendra Scott.

WWW.RANCHERS.COM

BEST TRANS MASCULINE-FOCUSED FITNESS WORKSHOP

OutWellness

Any post-top-surgery trans guy will tell you that getting back into movement after the massive medical procedure is tough. Not just because scar tissue builds up, or because you have restricted movement. Really, the difficulty is how few good resources are out there for trans masculine people on how to take care of their bodies in a balanced way. However, inclusive physical therapy and fitness purveyors OutWellness provide tons of queer-forward workout education with many classes focusing specifically on trans masculine bodies. Led by trainers who are either allies or trans masc themselves, these classes make for a safe and gender-affirming space where trans men can work out, make new friends, and move freely.

211 E. ALPINE #100, WWW.OUTWELLNESSATX.COM

BEST TROLL WITH A PURPOSE

Malin's Fountain

If you feel like the world is moving entirely too fast, then head to Pease Park to mediate with Malin, the 18-foot-tall troll who arrived in the spring. Made from repurposed cedar by Danish recycling artist Thomas Dambo, Malin holds a welcoming bowl – itself mostly made from recycled, repurposed, and found materials – offering water for park critters, a reminder to share and protect our resources. Malin's not alone in her waste-not mission: There are now more than 100 Dambo trolls sprinkled internationally.

WWW.PEASEPARK.ORG/PEASE-PARK-TROLL



KIMBERLEY JONES

BEST LAND GIFT

Pecan Springs Karst Preserve

Williamson County has seen explosive growth in recent years, and that kind of development can wreak havoc on natural habitats. Good news, then, for threatened species like the Salado salamander and the golden-cheeked warbler, that 1,205 acres of ecologically sensitive private land within the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone was gifted last year to the Hill Country Conservancy. The preserve isn't open to the public on a regular basis, but nature lovers should check the website for scheduled birding and nature hikes to take in some of the property's splendors – including six limestone caves and the headwaters for three tributaries of Salado Creek – themselves.

JARRELL, WWW.HILLCOUNTRYCONSERVANCY.ORG/PECAN-SPRINGS-KARST-PRESERVE

BEST BOWLING FOR YOUR BUCK'S WORTH

Union Underground

In the shadow of the University of Texas Main Building, the Union Underground has provided affordable bowling for students and non-students alike for 64 years. UT students pay as little as \$2 per game, while non-students pay a premium of \$3 per game. Though the scoreboard isn't the most accurate and the 12 lanes show their age, who can complain about affordable fun with equally affordable food and drink? On the weekend, Glow Ball ups the ante with black lights and lasers. Tired of bowling? The Union Underground also boasts five pool tables, three air hockey tables, and one foosball table, each with cheap hourly rates.

TEXAS UNION, 24TH & GUADALUPE, UNIVERSITYUNIONS.UTEXAS.EDU/UNDERGROUND

BEST WRESTLING PROMOTER

Justin Bissonette

What would wrestling in Texas be like without Biss? There'd be fewer stars, because he's booked and supported so many talents before they became TV mainstays. It would be less unified, because the man behind Austin's Inspire A.D. has always gone out of his way to work with other promoters, seeing them as friends and not rivals. And it wouldn't be as friendly, because no one cares for the crowd or the talent as much as Biss, the triple crown champion of the Texas wrestling scene.

WWW.X.COM/BISSAYS

TEAM TED LASSO WOULD MOST BE PROUD OF

Austin Rise

From the dissolution of one of the first all-woman soccer teams in Austin (FC Austin Elite) under not-so-great circumstances to becoming one of Austin's premier soccer clubs, the women of Austin Rise FC embody their namesake. Founders Amanda Lisberger, Rachelle D'Amico, Erin Webb, Bethany Cyrtmus-DaVaul, and Katie Reed took their past trauma and in 2022 created a team that intentionally fosters community and offers women-identified athletes a safe space to express themselves and celebrate their love of the game.

WWW.AUSTINRISEFC.COM



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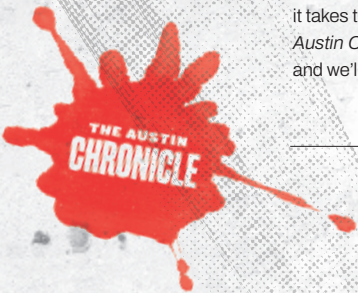
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HOW IT WORKS

In return for contributing, donors will be automatically entered to win tickets to attend our inaugural **Free Press Forever** mini live music series, held once a month in the courtyard of the *Chronicle* offices! Enjoy must-see local music, complimentary beverages, rotating food options, giveaways, and more!

THE SERIES KICKS OFF THURSDAY, JUNE 27,
FEATURING MUSIC FROM: MADAM RADAR

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