

THE AUSTIN

CHRONICLE

DECEMBER 27, 2013

1969

HAPPY NEW
BEARD!

TIME CAN'T CATCH UP
TO ZZ TOP

(AND NEITHER CAN TIM STEGALL)

P.44



2014

+ NEW TEXAS SPIRITS 36

Jaguar Gang

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Right, everyone is tired of fielding environmentalist diatribes, and who really cares that the earth's eco-systems are dying with numerous extinctions daily? We care and we are doing something about it, and we will succeed in our mission - we have real teeth! It is all detailed at www.jaguarambassadorsgang.org

Who are we? Better check us out, better join in the Fun.

What IS going on? Not since the 70's have we shaken off our apathy to get moving. Now here it is - Vamos! Herein we give Fair Warning that Change is coming, and ask that you visit the site to both arm yourselves and consider a happy involvement with us.

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The Chronicle offices will be closed for New Year's, Dec. 31 and Jan. 1. The next issue of the Chronicle will be distributed Friday, Jan. 3.

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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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UPDATED DAILY

Postmarks

IT'S ABOUT LOSING ALL CREDIBILITY

Dear Editor,

Regarding Michael King's "Point Austin: Lehmberg's Scarlet Letter," [News, Dec. 13]: Let's say a major city newspaper editor puts out an editorial page that has flagrant misspellings and typos – and worse – totally incorrect information. As the publisher, you are not happy with the editor. In fact, his or her credibility with you, and the salary for what he or she is purportedly hired to do, are now in question.

Moreover, as a reader, would I buy your newspaper again? Probably not, unless I knew they had hired another competent editor.

The district attorney is hired to protect society – with one of his or her roles being to prosecute DUIs. To have anyone in that office display a disregard for the role and commit that very offense, means he or she is no longer credible. I don't blame Mr. Escamilla for going after Ms. Lehmberg with a vengeance. She should have resigned, period. Further, just like the newspaper referenced above, why should I give the D.A.'s office any real credibility now? And, anyone working under her probably feels resentful to have to continue to do so.

The whole scenario with Ms. Lehmberg nearly cost her her job. It certainly cost her the loss of credibility. And by not resigning, it ultimately cost us, the taxpayer, a very large legal bill.

Courtney Barry

continued on p.8

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KING IS 'WAY OFF ON THIS'

Dear Editor,

Regarding "Point Austin: Lehberg's Scarlet Letter," [News, Dec. 13]: Michael King, you're way off on this. You name a list of elected officials with drinking problems and DWIs to show that Lehberg was treated differently – yet not one of those was an elected law enforcement official. If constituents want to elect or keep legislators with drinking problems because they like his or her ideas, maybe that's their business. But when your sole function in our community is prosecuting our most violent crimes, you don't get to sit in jail for three weeks by your own doing and go back to work. You don't get to teach the public how not to cooperate with police officers and magistrate judges and go back to work. That is, unless you're a delusional alcoholic heading the Travis County District Attorney's office, apparently. Your failure to distinguish her case from the others on a law enforcement basis is intellectually dishonest.

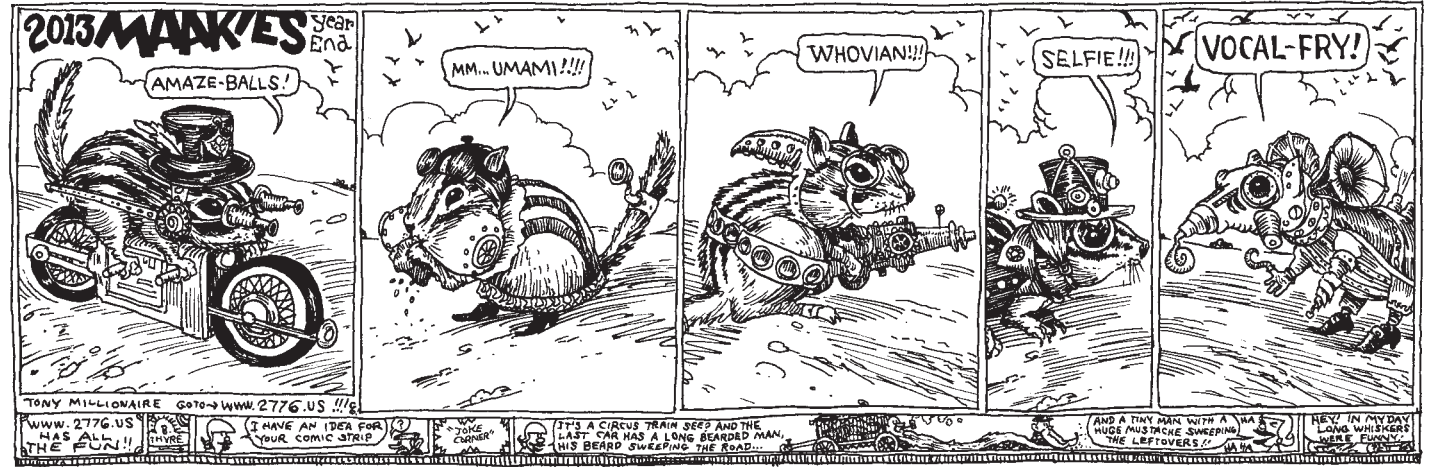
Kerry O'Brien

[Editor's Note: Kerry O'Brien is the attorney who filed the original removal lawsuit against D.A. Lehberg. It was dismissed and superseded by the similar suit filed by Travis County Attorney David Escamilla. See "What Happens Next?" News, May 3.]

THE QUESTION IS TIMING

Dear Editor,

John Langmore's willingness to misrepresent the arguments of the folks he disagrees with is insulting ["The Best Transit Plan Is ...,"



Postmarks, Dec. 20]. Who said we should "pull the plug on a \$48 million investment the month before it opens"? The message he has heard from the citizens who disagree with him is clear: Do not build a rail line to Highland before putting rail on Lamar. Either start with a line on Lamar and move MetroRapid when the rail line opens a decade from now, or start with East Riverside so Lamar can come second.

As an exercise for the reader, how often do you find yourself needing to head to places on Guadalupe and Lamar? How often for Red River? If you're like most of the Austinites who are forced to waste their time stuck in traffic on the Drag each day, it's clear that there are tons of people who want to go places along the Guadalupe/Lamar corridor. We should put rail there.

The question before us is timing. Ideally, we'd start with Lamar, which has the jobs and housing that make it the highest transit ridership already. A good plan B would be starting with East

Riverside, where ridership is high, and the zoning allows for enough density for the ridership to be even higher. Highland, however, doesn't have the density of people or jobs to make for a block-buster first line, which endangers our chances of building a second and a third.

The biggest issue with Highland is that there is no way voters will approve rail down Lamar once there's a line to Highland. A second line through Hyde Park before the rest of the city has seen any rail won't seem fair to most people, and I don't blame them. Rail to Highland means rail on our best transit corridor won't happen until the middle of the century. If the places that people want to go can only be reached by buses stuck in traffic, people will stay in their cars, traffic will stay terrible, and we won't become a city where it's normal to take transit for decades.

This is the future that the citizens who have been paying attention are trying to avoid. We're not trying to "pull the plug" on MetroRapid. We're trying to avoid making the mistake of allowing the backbone of our transit system to remain slow for decades. Join us, and tell City Council that if they put a rail line to Highland on the ballot, you'll vote against it.

Niran Babalola

LIBERTARIANS ARE NOT 'FAR RIGHT'

Dear Editor,

As chair of the Libertarian Party of Texas, I am happy to see Richard Whittaker acknowledge our successful candidate recruiting ["Third-Party Candidates Lining Up Again," News, Dec. 20]. However, I believe Richard is in need of a political compass. Anyone who labels the Libertarian

Party as "far-right" hasn't seen the Nolan Chart or our platform. We are the party that has consistently opposed government intrusion into the bedroom, fought to end the war on drugs, defended privacy, opposed aggressive foreign policy, opposed corporate welfare, stood up for gay marriage, and supported the legalization of prostitution. These and many other issues illustrate that when it comes to civil liberties, we are the champions. If you don't accept that, then at least acknowledge that Democrat Karen Huber is no longer a county commissioner after my campaign. Democrat Valinda Bolton is no longer in the state House, and Democrat Solomon Ortiz is no longer in Congress. Libertarians did not run in these races to put a Republican in office. As a two-time winner, I want Libertarian candidates blazing a trail toward winning campaigns. I do not expect overnight success. However, at least acknowledge that all political parties that intrude into our private lives and our wallets, be they Democrat, Republican, or other, are all equally susceptible to losing in the growing Libertarian generation.

Patrick Dixon

[Richard Whittaker responds: It's probably of interest to our readers to know that the Nolan Chart was a political barometer created by Libertarian Party of the United States co-founder David Nolan, and that its main objective has been to make people think that libertarianism is not a hard-line form of conservatism.]

WHY I DON'T TRUST FILM CRITICS

Dear Editor,

Marc Savlov's movie review of *The Book Thief* is why I don't read critics' reviews before seeing movies [Film Listings, Nov. 29]. How many people missed out on this very good film because of Marc Savlov's negative review (largely based on his disappointment that the movie doesn't live up to the book)? I had not read the book and wasn't planning on seeing the film, but I was aware of the 1½ star rating in the *Chronicle*. At my daughter's insistence, I accompanied her to the movie and found a powerful film with wonderful acting and a gripping tale of a family living in Nazi Germany trying to do the right thing in the face of the horrors of that time. I really did laugh and cry, and my daughter and I had an excellent discussion about the powerful message in the film and the importance of understanding history and standing up for what's right. The only "torture" I suffered was reading Marc Savlov's review of the movie afterward. Do yourself a favor and ignore Marc Savlov and go see this movie.

Michael Simmons

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Oops!

In the Dec. 20 story, "Running to Daylight," the paragraph describing the DARS program should have read: "By then, Baylon had gotten involved with the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, a state agency that affords disability care to the blind, the deaf, and children with developmental delays. There are a number of eligibility requirements for admission to the DARS program, but if you're legally blind, you stand a good chance of getting in."

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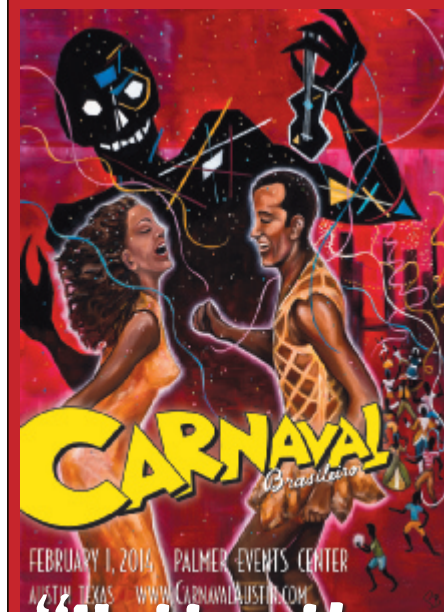
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AUSTIN  *cycle*



A child opens gifts at a holiday party for the victims of the Onion Creek and Yarrabee Bend flooding Halloween night.

JANA BIRCHUM

The Meanings of “Affordability”

THE NEW YEAR SIGNALS CHANGES IN THE LIFE OF AUSTIN

Over the Christmas holiday, I spent a lot of time corresponding and talking with potential City Council candidates, primarily to confirm whether each one is indeed considering a run for a seat in the new 10-1 Council to be elected next November (see “Very Early Returns,” p.14). I’m sure it’s not a definitive list – there’s plenty of time for additional entries, especially of the sort of hobbyists who volunteer to be hangers-on to the local political circus, as long as they receive a little free publicity in return. Just Keeping It Weird, yo.

These were very brief conversations, with no attempt yet to sort the wheat from the chaff, although several would-be candidates were ready to describe in a nutshell what they anticipate will be their campaign priorities going forward, and what they believe will be the most important issues facing Austin voters in the coming year. There were no real surprises: “quality of life,” transportation, full representation, “affordability.”

I’ve put a couple of those values in quotation marks, because I was again struck by the implicit differences in definition of the terms, depending on who was using them. In the simplest terms, “quality of life” can mean quite a different thing to someone living in Northwest Hills than it does to someone in Montopolis – perhaps only a difference in immediate emphasis, but with potentially a great deal of effect on what that person believes should be City Hall’s priorities. The same is more strikingly true – and not just for Council candidates – of “affordability”: what the term (and broader

idea) means to an Austinite just trying to climb uphill to make ends meet, and to one whose primary ideological connection to city government is his property tax or utility bill, can be very different indeed.

A Changing Neighborhood

There is no doubt that the city is changing rapidly, willy-nilly. In a recent blog post,

Civic Analytics policy wonk Brian Kelsey posted some fairly stunning demographic statistics.

Noting that the city has been No. 1 in job growth among big cities over the last decade (2001-12), presumably a good thing, Kelsey writes that it has inevitably meant a continuing influx of people hoping to share in that prosperity – a consequence greeted here with very mixed responses.

A more striking result, at least to me, is that the economic changes have meant a dramatic flip in the Austin percentages of rich and poor (see “Austin’s Growth,” www.civicanalytics.com/austins-growth).

“In 2000,” writes Kelsey, “14% of households in Austin (city) had incomes of at least \$100,000. In 2012, it was up to 24%. In 2000, households with incomes of less than \$15,000 outnumbered households with incomes of \$100,000 or more. In 2012, \$100,000+ households outnumbered < \$15,000 households by almost two to one. This is a remarkable shift in the city’s demographics in a very short amount of time and can go a long way toward explaining why housing is so expensive, especially in centrally located neighborhoods.”

continued on p.12



Headlines

- > **City Council** formally returns from the holidays on Jan. 23 (with a work session Jan. 21), but in the meantime, the queue is already forming for the November council election: See “Very Early Returns,” p.14.
- > The city is announcing its fourth annual “family-friendly” **New Year’s Eve event** Friday morning, Dec. 27, on City Hall’s outdoor plaza, 11am: Council members, public safety folks, and entertainers will be on hand.
- > President **Barack Obama** declared the Austin **Halloween flooding** a federal disaster on Dec. 20. The proclamation will make **Federal Emergency Management Agency** funds available for the continuing cleanup and rebuilding efforts. Local officials are still waiting for word on whether assistance will be available for individual victims.
- > On Dec. 20, Travis County District Attorney **Rosemary Lehmborg** announced that a grand jury had declined to indict Austin Police Department Officer **Brandon Blanch** in the Sept. 25 shooting of **Maurice Paladino**. Paladino (who died the next day) reportedly sped toward Blanch in a stolen vehicle that police had located in a South I-35 parking lot. Police video and eyewitnesses supported the APD summary.
- > **Austin-Bergstrom International Airport** was stuffed over the holidays. Because of the ever-growing passenger list, by Christmas Eve all regular parking lots at the airport were full, so management started using the overflow space in the cargo area.
- > The **Austin B-cycle** bike sharing project rolled out Dec. 21. The initial phase includes 11 stations and more than 100 bicycles, mostly clustered Downtown. By spring, the number of kiosks is expected to grow to 40.
- > **Travis County Commissioners Court** declined last week to follow the city of Austin’s example and the recommendation of its own task force to require **prevailing wages** on construction projects in order to receive county tax incentives. Commissioners settled on higher incentives but no requirement for prevailing wages above \$11 an hour; the policy still needs to be codified for final approval.
- > Gov. **Rick Perry** has appointed Houston-based corporate attorney **Nandita Berry** as the new secretary of state, effective Jan. 7. She’ll replace **John Steen**, who unexpectedly announced his resignation on Dec. 13. Democrats have already voiced concerns about having a new elections boss less than two months before the primaries.
- > As expected, a final rush on the **Healthcare.gov** website and in-person signups met the holidays, as people without insurance approached the deadline for health insurance coverage that would begin Jan. 1. The federal government stretched the deadline for those who had Web trouble, while opposing GOP governors (e.g., Perry) attempted to obstruct the law with additional requirements for nonprofit counselors.

QUOTE of the WEEK



“I didn’t want to change society. I wanted to give society a chance to determine if it should change itself.”

– Edward Snowden to *The Washington Post*, explaining his motivation for leaking top-secret NSA documents

POINT AUSTIN *continued from p.11*

In other words, while many of us were effectively standing still, financially speaking – and here I’m definitely speaking for myself – our economic surroundings were changing dramatically around us, and we’re steadily becoming a city that economically looks less like what we have thought of as Austin, and more like what is now San Francisco. Some people will welcome that, of course; others, not so much. But at a minimum, we need to be more aggressive than we have been in addressing issues of “affordability” if we want to avoid the sort of inequitable polarization that is now plaguing the City by the Bay, where the Haves and the Have Nots are increasingly at each other’s throats.

One Step Forward ...

No one possesses a magic formula, and complex problems require complex solutions. Our locally mixed fortune is but one instance of larger trends across the country, as summarized recently by Robert Reich: “America is now more unequal than it’s been for eighty or more years, with the most unequal distribution of income and wealth of all developed nations. Equal opportunity has become a pipe dream.” In recent years, that dismal trend has mostly been exacerbated at the federal level. Locally, we’ve taken a few good steps: trying to bring in a wider range of good jobs, tying city incentives to better pay and working conditions, promoting unionism to the limited extent allowed under union-busting state laws.

Voting directly to support affordable housing bonds is also a relatively small but important step; working to establish a viable mass transit system (where transportation increasingly requires as much as housing in the average family budget) is also important, although as a community we have waited so long to do so, that it will be a long time before those slow-moving plans make a substantial dent in our common expenses.

Notably, on the housing side, the same people and neighborhoods (and city officials) persistently clamoring for “affordable housing” are simultaneously doing what they can to obstruct the actual construction of affordable multi-family units in central city neighborhoods. I’ve seen and heard it among my own neighbors: newly prosperous residents opposing necessary, viable, supportive housing projects for working people because, as one neighbor put it, “We’ve already got enough poor people around here.” Too often for many people, “affordable” has come to mean, in fact: “Affordable for me, but not for thee.”

As we enter the new year, and a new political era at City Hall, it will be interesting to see what “affordability” and “quality of life” mean to the next generation of Austin voters and Austin public officials. I hope the changes will mean, at a minimum, that the best values of the old Austin can survive and thrive in the new. ■

Do Kids Count?

STATE LEADERS DON’T WALK THE TALK ON CHILDREN

For all the rah-rah we’ve heard from **Rick Perry** over the years about the value of “life,” you’d think we’d start to see some positive results from his hard work protecting our youngest and most vulnerable citizens.

But for a state with one of the largest and fastest-growing population of children – more than 6.9 million kiddos, up 16% from 2001 to 2011 – Texas is failing to keep up with its growing brood. That’s the takeaway from the latest findings of the **Center for Public Policy Priorities**, an organization of socially minded wonks who draw on hard data to support their advocacy work on behalf of low-income and uninsured Texans.

CPPP’s annual **Kids Count** report, released early this month, points to some worrisome trends that threaten to reverse the state’s economic stability. Perry touts Texas’ business climate as the chief driver of the state’s explosive growth; however, CPPP points to a baby boom as the foremost reason for the population surge. In 2010 alone, more than 385,000 babies were born in Texas, which had the third highest birth rate in the country (behind Utah and Alaska).

Many of the report’s dismal findings call to mind the nursery rhyme about the old woman who lived in a shoe: “She had so many children, she didn’t know what to do; she gave them some broth without any bread, then whipped them all soundly and put them to bed.”

That would be the most succinct analogy to sum up the Kids Count report – consider some specifics:

THE EDUCATION OF TEXAS

As CPPP researchers note, over 60% of the state’s 5 million public school students are considered “economically disadvantaged.” Prekindergarten opportunities are the best way to ensure a child’s success in school, but, according to the report, funding cuts at the federal level led to 4,800 fewer 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in **Head Start Programs** in 2013.

“Because Head Start primarily serves economically disadvantaged children,” the report continues, “these cuts will reduce the number



THEN
THERE'S
THIS
BY AMY
SMITH

of children who will enter kindergarten ready to learn in 2014.” Additionally, because school districts across the state are still picking up the pieces from the Legislature’s devastating cuts in 2011, the \$3.2 billion that lawmakers put back into public education this year is hardly sufficient to salvage the mess created by the avoidable shortfall. On a state-by-state basis, Texas ranks 43rd in adjusted per-pupil spending, the report states, while noting, not too optimistically: “We have tried everything under the sun to educate on the cheap at both the federal and state levels, and that’s not cutting it.”

EMPTY STOMACHS

Texas may be an agricultural state, but nearly 2 million of its kids don’t have access to enough food, much less healthy food. According to the report, nutrition assistance programs like **SNAP; Women, Infants, and Children;** and school meal programs serve as the main avenues to food for many Texas families. Still, enrollment in WIC decreased from 2010 to 2011 – and it wasn’t because more single mothers climbed their way out of poverty. The report cites other factors for the decline, such as a lack of outreach to eligible participants and the time-consuming recertification process.

HOW TEXAS RANKS ON CHILDREN

Overall: 42nd
Economic Well-being: 30th
Overall Education: 31st
Health: 36th
Family & Community: 48th

The Lege did take a positive step this year with passage of the “**Breakfast Bill**” – **Senate Bill 376** – which provides free breakfasts to children in the state’s poorest school districts. The bill passed easily in the Senate but met opposition in the House – not surprisingly from some of the very folks who led the charge to protect the not-yet-born.

CHILDREN IN POVERTY

One of the more concerning findings in the report reflects that Texas’ child poverty rate is growing faster than our child population. And while Austin may be the progressive bastion of Texas, the city’s low-income kids don’t have it any easier here than in the rest of the state. For a single Austin parent with two kids to get by, for example, the parent would need an annual salary of \$41,532, or an hourly wage of \$20.77. And 65% of jobs in the Austin area don’t pay what single parents need to make ends meet.

ONE STEP FORWARD ...

Believe it or not, Texas has made strides in reducing the rate of uninsured children, going from a 22% rate in 2007 to 16% in 2012 – thanks to the **Children’s Health Insurance Program** and **Medicaid**. Nevertheless, Texas still has the second highest rate in the nation for uninsured kids.

In the shortsightedness department, not only did the 2011 budget cuts to family planning leave 147,000 Texas women in the lurch, but, according to the report, it cost the state more money than expected. The reason? An increase in unplanned pregnancies. Without access to prenatal care, more than one of every three Texas babies are born to a mother who received late or no prenatal care, increasing the probability of low-weight babies or the risk of babies dying before their first birthday.

CPPP’s conclusion on this front is obvious, but it bears repeating here: “For kids, the impact of having access to care starts before birth.” ■

CIVICS 101

TUESDAY 31

DECEMBER PROPERTY TAX RECEIPT DEADLINE Final day to get a property tax receipt for your 2013 tax return. www.traviscountytax.org.

FREE RIDES ON NEW YEAR’S EVE Capital Metro encourages the community to choose a safe ride, by offering free rides for all services from 6pm through the end of service, including local buses and five Night Owl late night routes that travel to and from Sixth & Congress every 30 minutes from midnight-3am. More info at www.capmetro.org.

ONGOING

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HEALTH CARE NAVIGATION CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENT The Texas Department of Insurance is considering changes to the requirements for Texans working or volunteering as Health Insurance Marketplace navigators. Weigh in by emailing chiefclerk@tdi.texas.gov, copying navigatorregistration@tdi.texas.gov. *Through Jan. 6.*

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Very Early Returns: Calling All Council Candidates!

The next municipal election – formerly a spring affair – takes place Nov. 4, 2014, when a new mayor and 10 City Council members will be chosen by Austin voters, the latter for the first time from single-member districts (each including approximately 80,000 residents). Until then, the full governmental effect of SMDs remains unknown.

But the immediate political effect is already manifesting: plenty of potential (or definite) candidates. Although the filing (starting July 19) and official campaign periods (opening early May) are several months away, a number of folks have already declared their candidacies, and many more say they're in the "exploratory" or "seriously considering" stage. The mayoral dance card is already burgeoning, as are a few of the district races – others remain wide open at this early stage.

Although we certainly didn't connect with everybody in the potential pool – especially during the busy holidays – we contacted as many real or rumored candidates as possible, to compile a list of "certains," "possibles," and "maybes." Here's a pending candidate list to ponder as the new year turns; undoubtedly it's incomplete – if you should be on it, or if you know someone considering a run, drop a line to mking@austinchronicle.com.

– Michael King

MAYOR

As expected, at least two and perhaps three sitting Council members – term-limited from their current seats – are contemplating mayoral runs. The field is also filling up with local VIPs who will likely be able to underwrite a citywide campaign. (And we can expect a few literal wild cards as the filing date approaches.)

Mayor Pro Tem Sheryl Cole says she is "thinking about" a run, hopes to make a "family decision" by early spring.

CM Mike Martinez has not made a "final decision," but does "want to serve in that capacity at some point" and "would expect to be a candidate" to be a mayor "who understands the working people of this community."

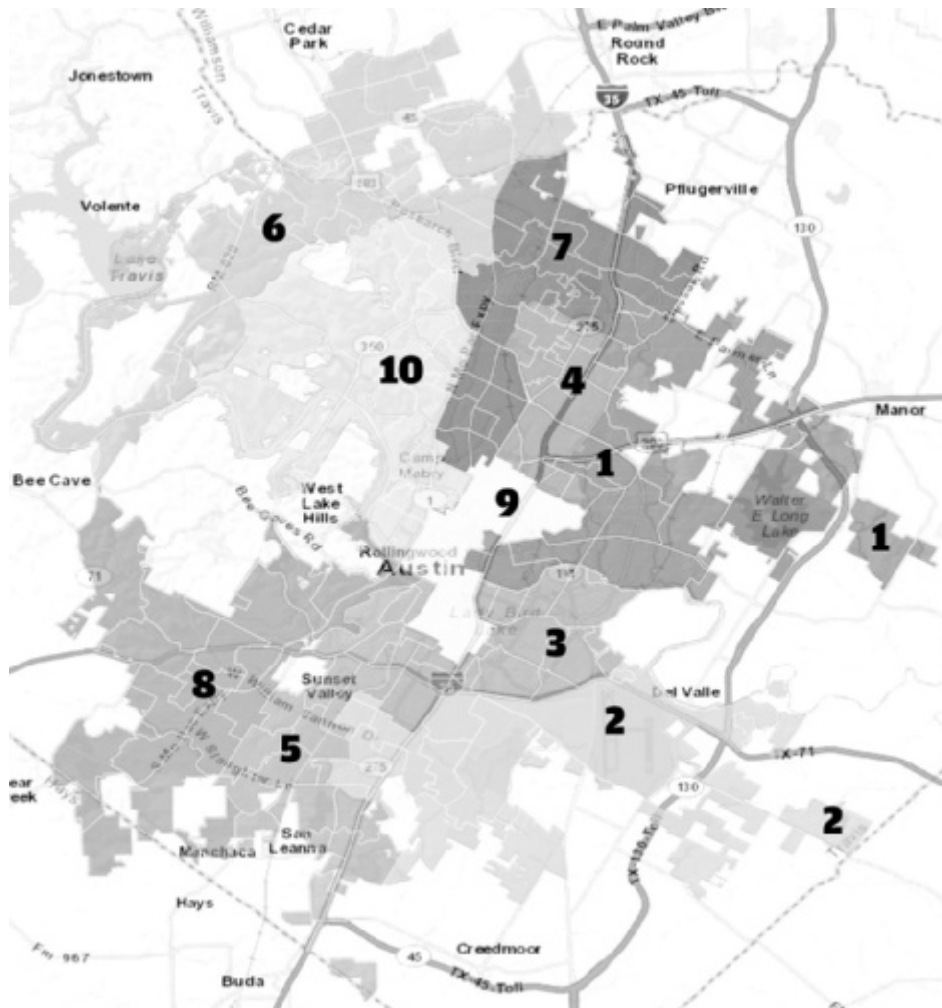
Bill McLellan, former 3M executive, chief development officer at Family Eldercare, and longtime civic activist, is "certainly running" – and this week his Facebook page announced: "Candidate for Mayor."

Patsy Woods Martin is a community leader, and founder of "I Live Here, I Give Here" philanthropic effort; "friend and advisor" Robert Jones says she's "seriously exploring" a mayoral run and is in the "first phase" of that process.

Laura Morrison did not respond to queries, but is reportedly still considering a run.

Mark Williams, former AISD board chair, says he is being encouraged to run, and is "seriously considering" the idea.

Stephen Adler, eminent domain attorney and co-founder of Barron & Adler, LLP, says he's been encouraged by "a fairly wide group of folks," and is considering a possible run.



DISTRICT 1 (EAST/NORTHEAST)

Ora Houston, veteran civic activist (most recently in the single-member district campaign), is "definitely running," according to friend and longtime political consultant David Butts.

DeWayne Lofton, former Place 6 candidate in 2006, says he's been "waiting a long time for another opportunity" and is "looking forward to seeing how this new system will work."

DISTRICT 2 (SOUTHEAST)

Delia Garza, assistant attorney general, former firefighter (Local 975), and Charter Revision Committee member, says she "plans to run" and intends to "provide a voice for a part of Austin that hasn't had a voice."

Marco Mancillas, executive director of the Hispanic Physicians Association, has also been mentioned, but there's no confirmation at press time.

DISTRICT 3 (EAST/SOUTHEAST)

Susana Almanza, co-director of People Organized in the Defense of Earth and Her Resources, did not respond to *Chronicle* queries, but elsewhere has unofficially announced her candidacy.

Perla Cavazos, former Council candidate (2009) and legislative director, is "leaning towards" another run, but remains in the "exploratory stage."

Jayme Mathias, current AISD board member, is "committed to completing his term" but is being "encouraged to consider" a run by supporters.

Fred McGhee, author and public housing advocate, is "strongly considering" a run and would be a "serious candidate."

DISTRICT 4 (NORTH/CENTRAL)

Gregorio Casar, Workers Defense Project political director, is "considering it very seriously" and "will make a decision over the holidays."

Jim Walker, urban planner and activist, has also been mentioned, but said he is not interested in a run at this time.

DISTRICT 5 (CENTRAL/SOUTH)

Jeff Jack, architect, city planning commissioner, and longtime City Hall activist, is "seriously considering" a run and reviewing both his personal circumstances and the political context.

Ann Kitchen, former Texas House member and Liveable City leader, is "definitely running" and "hoping to represent the whole district that might not feel fully represented now."

Fred Cantu, Democratic activist, could not be confirmed at press time, but is reportedly considering a run.

DISTRICT 6 (NORTHWEST/WEST)

Jimmy Flannigan, Web business owner and Austin Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce president, is "seriously considering" a run but hasn't certainly decided yet.

Matt Stillwell, small business owner and former state House candidate, "will run."

Jay Wiley, former George W. Bush and Phil Gramm aide, and former Federalist Society president, already has a campaign website (www.jaywileyforaustin.com), and a no tax, no spend, no bag-ban platform.

DISTRICT 7 (NORTH/CENTRAL)

Jeb Boyd, mass transit and parks advocate, is "definitely" planning to run.

Ben Leffler, public policy professional and former city auditor/investigator, is "considering" a run, but has made no decision yet.

DISTRICT 8 (SOUTH/SOUTHWEST)

Rebecca Bray, Brown & Gay Engineers senior project manager and Real Estate Council of Austin board member, did not respond to queries, but is reportedly considering a run.

Eliza May, longtime civic activist, is "very seriously considering" a run and "exploring the political landscape" toward reaching a decision soon.

Darrell Pierce, former Council candidate and management consultant/business owner, is "close to a decision" to make another run.

Ed Scruggs, civic activist (most recently on local gun control issues), is "carefully considering a run" and expects his early decision process to "come into focus after the new year."

DISTRICT 9 (CENTRAL)

Chris Riley, Place 1 Council incumbent, "doesn't expect to make a formal decision until spring" but is "very excited by the prospect" of a district campaign marked by "knocking on neighborhood doors."

Kathie Tovo, Place 3 Council incumbent, is "seriously considering" another run and "expects to make a decision in the next couple of weeks."

DISTRICT 10 (WEST/NORTHWEST)

Marjorie Burciaga, small business owner and community volunteer, is "seriously considering" a run and is in the exploratory stages of assembling a potential campaign.

Tina Cannon, former Place 5 candidate and educator/entrepreneur, already has a Facebook page – "Elect Tina Cannon" – and has been "encouraged by the support" she's receiving in the new District 10.

Mandy Dealey, former Place 3 candidate and long-serving commissioner-of-all-trades is being "encouraged" to run and is "considering" it, but says it's "not likely" at this time.

Jason Meeker, former Place 1 candidate and current Zoning and Platting Commissioner, says he's not ready to make an announcement, but is "considering" a run.

Robert Thomas, management consultant and Republican, ran against state Rep. Donna Howard in HD 48 in 2012; on his campaign Facebook page, he recently posted: "To be clear, we are VERY seriously inclined to run to represent our home area on the city council."

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This project is funded and supported in part by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts, and is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

HIV/AIDS: Pushing Past the Plateau

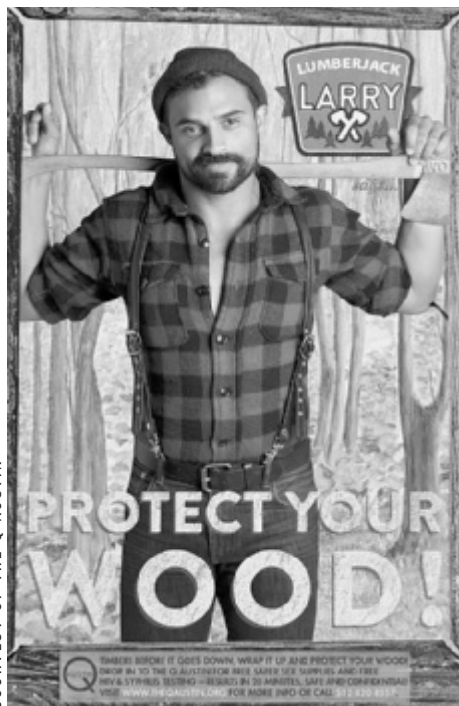
In an age chronicled by Facebook posts and six-second Vine videos, the persistent threat of **HIV/AIDS** barely registers. Even in LGBT media, the disease is most often addressed by the smiling faces of athletic men in drug ads. The lurking danger of the Eighties and early Nineties has somehow emerged benign. It's not easy to fight a monster that many have forgotten exists.

But it's the job of the **Q Austin** to remember. The Q (www.qboyz.org) is an **Mpowerment Project of AIDS Services of Austin**, part of a nationwide evidence-based initiative to curb unprotected anal intercourse among young gay and bisexual men. In Austin, the project is addressing a problem that has long vexed prevention programs: the AIDS plateau.

With the availability of antiretroviral therapy, new cases of AIDS have dropped dramatically since the peak in the mid-Nineties. At that time, widespread public information campaigns helped sharply drive down HIV contraction rates. Although incidences are stable in the United States, the rate of new infections remains troublingly high. In recent studies, the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** have reported approximately **50,000 new HIV infections** per year.

"There is a lack of awareness," says AIDS Services of Austin Prevention Promotions Specialist **Marcus Sanchez**, "I think there's been a lot of indifference from what we've heard and seen doing outreach within the community. We hear [the disease is] not an issue unless it's a visible thing. More guys are concerned with contracting herpes or syphilis as opposed to a disease they've accepted as something that can be lived with. As important as the medical advances have been, it's also giving younger guys an excuse for not thinking about their behavior."

Sanchez's worries are confirmed by the latest **Texas HIV Surveillance Report**, a snapshot of the epidemic released annually by the **Texas Department of State Health Services** (DSHS). At first glance, the numbers seem low. In 2012, 252 new HIV infec-



A poster from the Camp Q Crew PSA campaign

tion diagnoses were reported in Travis County. Only 112 new AIDS cases were diagnosed in the same year.

A closer look at the numbers reveals some distressing trends. The DSHS report showed a 23% increase in new HIV infections in Travis County during 2012. In Dallas and Harris Counties, the percentage is even higher. And those numbers only show a part of the picture. The surveillance data does not include those tested anonymously (as opposed to confidentially) or those who have avoided testing altogether. Stigma is still a prominent deterrent – especially in communities of color.

"In POC [people of color] communities," Sanchez says, "stigma still plays a big role in that. In my [Hispanic] culture, it's something we don't talk about. I've had relatives who have passed away from AIDS compli-

cations. Families either lie about the cause of death or don't talk about it. People aren't getting treatment or getting tested because they don't want to be identified as being a drug user or gay."

To address the stigma, the Q Austin uses humor and references to pop culture. "Not to make light of HIV, but to make the conversation more comfortable," says Sanchez. Visitors to the Q's office first notice a prominent bookshelf, the Q's "sex wall," filled with bins of condoms and condom-safe lube. One container holds a stock of Trojan Magnums, labeled with a photo of **Tom Selleck**. The office Christmas tree is festooned with safer-sex gear. And the walls are lined with cheeky posters for the "**Camp Q Crew**" campaign, launched on Dec. 19. (See www.campqcrew.tumblr.com for more info.)

The campaign revisits the public service announcements that were common during the height of the epidemic. "I came up with the Husky [the Bear] character while I was applying for the job," says Events Specialist **Jeremy von Stilb**, "so I pitched the character as part of a portfolio of concepts. I haven't seen [an HIV prevention] poster in a bar in a really long time."

"Each of the characters has different targeted messaging," adds Sanchez, "We wanted to align all the characters into one storyline, so we could tie it with one campaign. Our volunteers now dress up as junior rangers."

The hope is to normalize the conversation. The PSA rollout will include plastering local gay bars with the posters. "People sometimes don't want to have these conversations," says Sanchez. "So many people assume things about others when they first meet. So if we put these conversation starters up at the bar, that's a good way for someone to start a discussion about the last time they got tested."

The trading card style posters can also be easily posted to social media. Von Stilb says, "we want to encourage people to advertise that they got tested as well. All of these younger people are on Facebook all the time, and it's an influence on how many of them make their decisions." Since social media also often propagates disinforma-

tion, part of the message is reinforcing that getting tested is safe, easy, and free.

Von Stilb says, "Finding where to get tested is sometimes very difficult. If you google HIV testing, the first three sites are [sponsored] ads that are encouraging you not to get free testing. They're for-profit tests, and a lot of the links are dead. And a lot of the testing schedules are out-of-date or really confusing." Sanchez adds, "We run into people who are surprised that we offer free testing. There are a lot of people who don't get tested because they just don't have the money to get tested; a financial barrier has been created because there is not enough accessible information."

Many of the most at-risk persons are also not aware that there can be a three-month period before testing is able to detect HIV. "A lot of new infections come from people who are in relationships," says von Stilb, "who think that because they are monogamous, it's OK to start having condomless sex. But the problem is that they don't get tested multiple times."

The dedication is starting to pay off. Von Stilb says the number of people getting tested at the Q is on the rise. Sanchez adds that the Q is now testing twice a week. "More and more people know about us because we have created that regular schedule," he says, "and they refer their friends to it or post about it on Facebook. We have more of a laid back feeling as opposed to clinics."

Although the progress is heartening, the group says there is still work to be done. Sanchez says, "We are always open to hearing what people want to talk about. This is a safe space for people in the community and we're here as a resource. We are open to people bringing their ideas to the table."

Von Stilb agrees, "It's us continuing to network and work with other groups. Instead of us telling them, 'This is what you need to do, you need to wear a condom or you need to get tested,' we are just presenting the information and staying in constant contact because they are going to have the solution. If the messaging comes from them, it's going to be a lot more effective. That's how empowerment works, it's not a top-down solution. If there's a solution to this, it's coming from the community." — *Brandon Watson*

Mixed Trends on Death Row

Of all Texas counties, **Harris County** has sent the most defendants to **death row** since 1976, when capital punishment was reinstated. But in recent years, **Dallas County** has surged forward, earning it the top spot for new death penalty sentences since 2008, according to a report released last week by the **Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty**.

According to the annual TCADP report, of the 55 inmates condemned to die since 2008, Dallas sent 11 (20%) to death row. That distinction is unsettling, given that Dallas County also leads the state in the number of exonerations established through DNA evidence: Through mid-2012, 24 men have been exonerated. "While most of Texas is moving away from the death penalty, Dallas County has emerged as a major outlier in its pursuit of the ultimate punishment, particularly for defendants of color," **Kristin Houlié**, TCADP executive director, said in a press release. "These troubling patterns directly

counter Dallas' reputation as a leader in criminal justice reform."

Indeed, while the absolute number of new death sentences handed out in Texas remained low in 2013 – just nine new sentences were delivered, the same as in 2012 (up by one over the eight delivered in 2010 and 2011) – the use of the death penalty remains localized, and the imposition of the ultimate sentence on minority defendants remains high. In the last two years, five of the 18 people sentenced to death were from Dallas County. **Travis County** has sentenced just three persons to death since 2008, and none in 2013. And since 2008, two-thirds – or more – of all new death sentences were imposed on minorities. In Dallas County, for example, of the 11 men



From a 2012 march against the death penalty

sentenced to die since 2008, eight are black and two are Hispanic. In Harris County, 12 of the last 14 defendants sentenced to death were black and the other two were Hispanic. Harris County last sent a white man to death row in 2004, according to the report.

Texas also marked an execution milestone in 2013, with the **500th execution** since reinstatement. At year's end, the total had reached 508 inmates put to death since 1982, when Texas resumed executions; 16 inmates were executed this year, up from 15 in 2012. Nationally, Texas accounted for 42% of all executions in 2013, putting to death more than twice as many persons as the second most active state, Florida, which executed seven. On Tuesday, Dec. 17, the 39th and final U.S. execution of 2013 took place in Oklahoma; that marked the lowest total since 38 in 2008. — *Jordan Smith*



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Smoking pot on an outing in Cedar Woods, near Leakey, Texas, 1973

Teens Still Smoke Pot

WOULD LEGALIZATION LEAD TO A DECLINE?

News flash: Teenagers use **marijuana** more than any other illicit drug, a new report on adolescent drug use reveals.

According to the 2013 **Monitoring the Future** survey of drug use, a tool administered annually to thousands of American teens, nearly 13% of eighth graders, 30% of 10th graders, and more than 36% of 12th graders report having used marijuana during the previous year.

While those rates are slightly higher than teens self-reported in 2012, the question still remains, is pot use by teens actually increasing? That depends on how you look at the numbers. According to the survey authors, the percentage of teens who report having used marijuana during the previous year has been “drifting higher in recent years” following a “decade or more of fairly steady decline.”

That the numbers have been trending upward seems technically true – since 2007, for example, eighth-grade use has been

trending upward, from 10.3% to this year’s 12.7% – but the use rates in all three grades are actually lower than they were in the mid-Nineties. In 1997, nearly 35% of 10th graders and 39% of 12th graders reported using pot during the previous year, compared to the nearly 30% of 10th graders and 36% of 12th graders reported in the current survey.

But for high school seniors in particular, use rates are now far lower than they were in 1975, the first year the grade was surveyed by MTF. That year, 40% of high school seniors reported using pot during the previous 12 months, a number that actually peaked at approximately 50% in 1979.

MTF has only started surveying eighth and 10th graders since 1991, a low point for pot use across all three grades. Those numbers then picked up throughout the Nineties – in all three grades – before dipping slightly, then rolling along, up and down, over the last two decades.

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Still, MTF warns that the number of teens who say using marijuana is a "risky" behavior continues to decline. Perceived risk is a "lead indicator" for use, and the continued decline in the number of teens who see use as risky "could foretell further increase in use in the future," reads the report.

With the number of states that have legalized the use of **medicinal marijuana** on the rise, the report notes also that 34% of high school seniors who say they use pot, and who live in a medi-pot state, say that they get their dope from someone with a prescription; 6% of those students say they have their own prescription. "It thus appears that state medical marijuana laws provide an additional avenue of accessibility to the drug for teens," reads the report. That may be true, but since 1975 high school seniors have consistently reported that marijuana is "fairly easy" or "very easy" to get - indeed, if anything, the number of teens saying marijuana is readily available has declined somewhat over the last 15 years.

And whether that will remain the case as states consider broader legalization remains to be seen. Indeed, Washington and Colorado in November 2012 legalized marijuana for recreational use by adults and are in the process of hammering out strict tax-and-regulate schemes. Whether regulation will impact availability among teens in those states remains to be seen, though the folks

with the **Marijuana Policy Project** suggest there is good reason to believe teen use will decline amid an environment of strict regulatory enforcement. Consider the steady decline in any alcohol use, which has steadily dropped across all three grades, from 88% of seniors in 1991 to roughly 69% now, and from a high of nearly 84% of sophomores in 1991 to 52% now. Cigarette use has seen an even more significant decline, from use by 63% of seniors in 1991 to just 38% now, and from 55% of sophomores in 1991 to nearly 26% now. "The results suggest that regulating alcohol and cigarettes is successfully reducing teen use, whereas marijuana prohibition has been unsuccessful," Mason Tvert, MPP's director of communications said in a press release. "By regulating marijuana like alcohol and cigarettes and enforcing similar age restrictions, we would very likely see a similar decrease in availability and use among teens."

With that in mind, MPP is asking the **National Institute on Drug Abuse**, which sponsors the MTF survey, to conduct a new study into whether legalized regulation schemes may positively impact teen pot use. "At the very least, this [MTF] data should inspire NIDA to examine the possibility that regulating marijuana like alcohol and cigarettes could be a more effective approach than the current system," Tvert said.

- Jordan Smith

Read the survey findings online with this story at austinchronicle.com.

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NEWS

Happy Holidays from ALEC

As we've reported before (e.g., "Point Austin," July 26), the **American Legislative Exchange Council** – better known as "ALEC" – is a major-corporation lobbying consortium masquerading as a nonpartisan nonprofit, with heavy influence on state legislatures, particular their Republican members. After bad publicity generated by ALEC's initial promotion of the "Stand Your Ground" law that figured centrally in the Florida **Trayvon Martin** killing by **George Zimmerman**, some legislators – including the handful of Texas Democratic members – fled ALEC, and a few image-sensitive corporations dropped their sustaining support.

But ALEC soldiers on, and recent research by the **Brookings Institution**, a progressive think tank, reflects that the organization continues its successful program of drafting corporate-supported bills, presenting them whole to legislators, and promoting their pas-

sage, often under bland headings suggesting nothing more than good government. All the while, ALEC's managers do their best to conceal both their sponsorship and their process, like the femme fatale in **Elvis Costello's** "Watching the Detectives": "She's filing her nails while they're dragging the lake."



Molly Jackman of Brookings performed a national search – no small task – on ALEC-sponsored legislation by tracking identifying language in drafted legislation. Here are some of her main conclusions: "First, ALEC model bills are, word-for-word, introduced in our state legislatures at a non-trivial rate. Second, they have a good chance – better

than most legislation – of being enacted into law. Finally, the bills that pass are most often linked to controversial social and economic issues." In detail:

- Of 132 ALEC model bills introduced, 12 were enacted – a 9% survival rate nearly five

Oops! Return to Santa ASAP!

You may still be stuffing your recycling container with wrapping paper, and have holiday gifts spread out all over the house. Nevertheless, you may want to make certain that all of the toys piled up for the infants and toddlers are what the doctor ordered – or more precisely, not what the doctor warned might bring more risk than delight.

Last month, the **Texas Public Interest Research Group** issued its annual "Trouble in Toyland" report, announcing that "dangerous or toxic toys can still be found" on store shelves. In a press conference at **Dell Children's Medical Center**, **TexPIRG** warned parents to remain wary of certain products aimed at children. "The report reveals results of laboratory testing on toys for toxic chemicals ... all of which can have serious adverse health impacts. ... The survey also found small toys that pose a choking hazard; extremely loud toys that threaten children's hearing; and toy magnets that can cause serious injury if swallowed."

"Too often, we see kids' holiday cheer turn into fear, pain, and potential tragedy in our emergency room – for them and their parents," said Dr. **Eric Higginbotham**, interim emergency department medical director at **Dell Children's**. "We should be able to trust that the toys we buy are safe," added **Thomas Visco**, **TexPIRG** program associate. "However, until that's the case, parents need to watch out for common hazards when shopping for toys." Key findings from the report include:

- Toys with high levels of toxic substances are still on store shelves, including toys with high lead levels, high levels of the toxic metal antimony, and a child's pencil case with high levels of phthalates and cadmium.
- Despite a ban on small parts in toys for children under 3 years of age, there are toys available in stores that still pose choking hazards.
- Also available for sale are toys – including "play phones" – that are potentially harmful

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times that of the average bill in Congress.

- Republicans sponsored more than 90% of the ALEC bills, Democrats less than 10%.
- The five most common ALEC bill subjects were: 1) **No Sanctuary Cities** for Illegal Immigrants; 2) Disclosure of **Hydraulic Fracturing** Fluid Composition; 3) **Castle Doctrine**; 4) State Withdrawal From Regional **Climate Change** Initiative; 5) Consistency of **Firearm Regulation**.

Some headers (e.g., No Sanctuary Cities) baldly state their intent; others like the Hydraulic Fracturing Fluid Composition Disclosure Act, disguise their actual purpose – in this case, protecting fracking corporations from revealing “trade secrets” and from lawsuits to force disclosure. In Texas, HB 3328 was introduced by then-ALEC member **Jim Keffer**, R-Eastland, and was one of the 12 enacted ALEC bills studied by Jackman.

For more, see Jackman’s “ALEC’s Influence over Lawmaking in State Legislatures” at www.brookings.edu, and also www.alecexposed.org. A good introduction is the video report “**United States of ALEC**” by Moyers & Company, viewable at www.billmoyers.com. – Michael King



TEXAS PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP

to children’s ears and exceed recommended noise standards.

- Small, powerful magnets pose a dangerous threat to children if swallowed.

The full report, including a description of the research, and of toy safety standards that are too lax or often go unenforced, plus lists of specific toys to be avoided or closely monitored for children, is available at www.texpirg.org/reports. – M.K.

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Brigid
Shea



Richard
Jung



Garry
Brown

Commissioners Court Candidates Take On Property Taxes

The three Democratic candidates competing for **Sarah Eckhardt's** vacated seat as the Precinct 2 representative on the **Travis County Commissioners Court** have nuanced takes on many of the important issues facing Travis County – law enforcement and judicial issues, water and environmental policy, wildfire risk abatement, and administrative efficiency. But in one policy area sure to prove important to voters – county finances and property taxes – **Brigid Shea, Richard Jung,** and **Garry Brown** have distinct policy ideas that shed some light on their philosophical approaches to government.

Shea has made property tax reform a big part of her campaign. For years, a loophole in the way commercial properties have their property values assessed has artificially lowered the tax rate on commercial real estate – thus shifting some of the property tax burden to residential homeowners. Shea says filling that loophole would prove a massive boon to homeowners in Travis County, for whom property taxes have been a part of the market forces making the Austin metropolitan area increasingly less affordable.

It's a real problem, says **Dick Lavine**, a senior fiscal analyst and local finance specialist at the **Center for Public Policy Priorities**, the Austin-based liberal-leaning think tank. "The systematic undervaluation of commercial and industrial property is apparently a very real phenomenon, according to chief appraisers," Lavine said. The culprits are "the lack of **sales-price disclosure**" and the ease with which commercial property owners can **appeal appraisals**.

Travis County doesn't have the authority to directly address that issue, but Shea says she'd help build a statewide coalition of counties and municipalities to raise awareness of the issue – and that those jurisdictions, acting in concert, could apply enough pressure to the Legislature to fix it.

Jung and Brown agree the Legislature should be lobbied to fix the problem, but say Shea's plan is a long-term endeavor. Jung says it's "going to be a long time before we've turned the state blue enough for that to happen," while Brown says he's "talked to people at the Legislature who say sales-price disclosure," one of the major features

of the loophole, "is DOA without a change in state leadership."

Brown's major short-term tax mitigation idea is to improve communication between tax-levying authorities in the county to coordinate when and how to raise taxes – and to keep tax increases to a minimum. That's something Lavine says authorities already do – and he says it wouldn't obviate the need for tax increases. But he adds that increased communication "might just smooth the rate of change in necessary tax rate changes."

For his part, Jung emphasizes the need to generate "alternative financing sources," adding that if the county fails to do so, "there's going to be a kind of tax rebellion at some point." To that end, using his knowledge as an immigration attorney, he advocates for the possibility of using mechanisms like the **EB-5 visa program** to fund public infrastructure in

the county without resorting to bond measures or tax increases. The federal program, used by municipalities like Dallas, Seattle, and Baltimore, allows foreign individuals to invest upwards of a million dollars in economic projects in the United States – and receive green cards in return. Local jurisdictions can bundle those investments together into EB-5 "regional centers" – which Jung says can quickly gather tens of millions of dollars. He says the program could be a potentially effective and tax-free way to fund infrastructure programs like future mass transit projects.

Lavine says there are alternative financing sources the county could use – but gives some words of caution when it comes to mixing private money with public infrastructure. "We have tried foreign investment in toll roads, which has met with mixed success," he said.

– Christopher Hooks

THE HIGHTOWER REPORT BY JIM HIGHTOWER

MEASURING CONGRESS BY THE NUMBERS

Never have so few done so little for so many. But at last, they're gone – **Congress** has adjourned for the year.

And what a year it was! A few numbers sum up the sorry story, so let's review them. For example, **16**. That's the number of days that a gaggle of **Tea Party Republicans** shut down our government by throwing an October hissy fit. Oh, add 24 billion to that – \$24 billion is the economic loss America suffered from the Tea Partiers' shutdown stunt.

Speaking of stunts, check out the number of times the **House GOP** has voted to make the political point that it doesn't want **Obamacare** to work. It now totals **47** times.

Now here's a telling number: **239**. That's how many paid days off our Congress critters gave themselves in 2013. Yes, for two-thirds of the year, they were no-shows at their ornate workplace. Hey, stuff like shutting down the government and casting meaning-

less votes is tiring, and you've gotta get your rest to keep up the pace.

And here's a big, angry number that our well-heeled lawmakers can't seem to see: **11 million**. That's how many of our fellow Americans are jobless, some 4 million of whom have been out of work for more than six months. Yet, Congress went AWOL on its duty to respond to this raging **jobs crisis**. However, members did show up to slap America's hardest-hit workers. Just before taking off for their Christmas break, GOP lawmakers pushed a **budget deal** that killed an emergency benefit program for people who're mired in the misery of long-term unemployment.

Yes, in the Season of Joy and Goodwill, Congress – ho-ho-ho! – cut off this essential lifeline for 1.3 million workers and their families. Another 1.9 million will lose their benefits in the first half of next year.

But, hey, who's counting? It's all just a bunch of numbers to Congress.

For more information on Jim Hightower's work – and to subscribe to his award-winning monthly newsletter, "The Hightower Lowdown" – visit www.jimhightower.com. You can hear his radio commentaries on KOOP Radio 91.7FM, weekdays at 10:58am and 12:58pm.

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JASON STOUT

The Capacity to Take It

Persevere. That word has been with us a long time, with little alteration. The Oxford English Dictionary traces it back over 2,000 years, from the Latin *perseverare* (“abide by strictly”), composed of *per* (“thoroughly”) and *severus* (“severe”). It worked its way into Old French, then Middle English, all the way to our English, virtually unchanged. It seems to be a word we really need.

The OED defines “persevere” thusly: “continue in a course of action even in the face of difficulty or with little or no prospect of success.” With little or no prospect. You go on because you go on. Because of what? Faith? Hope? Stubbornness? Not knowing any better? Or just to finally learn how the story, your particular story, turns out? Fill in the blank as to why. You go on. We go on.

My final paper for Mr. Judson’s 12th-grade

English class ended like so: “Thank God, we go on, born to be doomed though we are.”

I was a teen without an ounce of angst, but I’d seen bad trouble up close, lots of it, and I wrote that line in a spirit of defiance at what used to be called “the human condition.” Not “a” human condition, but “the,” because everything changes but the basic stakes of what it means to be a frail human being in whatever jungle we make for ourselves.

These contemplations were stirred recently by a magazine I sometimes write for, *The Sun*. The editors put out a call for essays on perseverance. I drafted one and they passed on it (no hard feelings, guys – ask about another topic and I’ll give it another shot). But the concept stuck because it surprised me – as though I’d been asked to write about water or air, because, like those elements, perseverance is everywhere. The day you’re unable to persevere is your last day.

Just look around. For instance:

Every December, outside the market where I shop, there’s a Salvation Army bell-ringer who looks like Stephen Hawking because he’s in pretty much the same shape. He lives in a motorized chair and speaks with slurred words; his hands and arms are of limited use. Decembers, he’s outside the market’s entrance ringing his bell and saying “Thank you” and “Merry Christmas” when you put money into the Salvation Army kettle. And, no, I don’t feel sorry for him. I admire him. Perseverance? It takes more perseverance to be him for a day than it takes to be me for a year and a day.

Or consider my favorite cashier at the pet store where I buy my cat’s organic eats: That young woman works two full-time jobs and carries a full university course load so that she can earn her master’s and be a public school teacher.

When, on a Friday evening, I see a couple in their mid-20s take their three small children to a “Kids Eat Free on Fridays” *taqueria*, I behold them in quiet awe: Those people have signed up to persevere.

So have the mothers and fathers I see in the supermarket, singly and in couples, with one or two or three or four small children in tow. Sometimes the kids sit in the cart or ride the cart’s undercarriage. Economists who say there’s little inflation don’t seem to notice that the price of basic foods has skyrocketed and working-class parents face the choice of what-to-do-without today with a grinding, it’s-not-likely-to-get-better perseverance that I don’t have to imagine because I remember my mother doing the same.

I live in a Title I neighborhood in the second-most conservative city in America: Lubbock, Texas. “Title I” is educational jargon for “poor,” and the second-place rating is via the nonpartisan Bay Area Center for Voting Research. (The most conservative city is Provo, Utah. Abilene, Texas, down the road from here about 150 miles, comes in third.)

In a place like Lubbock, you’ve got to be made of perseverance to be two small, olive-skinned Muslim women who clearly “ain’t from aroun’ here.” They brave the supermarket veiled in chadors.

Not that my fellow Lubbockians are anything but well-mannered, well-meaning, and well-behaved; they very much are; but let’s admit a slight air of nervy concern as everybody notices the Muslim women while pretending not to.

Lubbock friends who clearly remember the Fifties remember “white” and “colored” water fountains and bath-rooms, and segregated schools and public places. So the other day when I saw a very black, very old woman at the market, I thought of the subject of this essay and said to myself: “Perseverance? I don’t have a good enough imagination to picture what this woman and her family and her people had to go through here to persevere.”

My partner teaches here in a Title I middle school where the National School Lunch Program serves children free and “reduced-price” meals. But there’s a catch. There



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usually is. "School policy" is that if a child is even pennies short, that child must be denied the meal, *even if the meal has already been prepared*. The food goes in the garbage. That's the policy. But, school by school, teachers devise crafty little ways, out of their own pockets, to slip nickels and pennies to kids who need them, even though to do so is against the rules. Talk about perseverance.

Leave the precincts of the privileged, and most of what you see is perseverance.

It is nothing special, in that it is not unusual. It is how we, as a species, survive. Perseverance is the spine of the human condition. There's a lot we can do without, but we can't do without perseverance.

The great poet of perseverance was an American, Carl Sandburg (1878-1967). He's been out of fashion amongst the literati for some time. That's partly his fault: He didn't bother with the difference between his great and his shaky stuff, and he had the misfortune to become fabulously famous, enabling him to publish whatever he pleased (always dangerous for a writer). That said, Sandburg wrote three great books of poetry: *Chicago Poems* (1916), *Cornhuskers* (1918), and *The People, Yes* (1936).

Read these aloud, I suggest, and see how they sound in your voice:

From *Cornhuskers*: "For this man there is no name thought of - he has broken from jungles ... - circled the earth with ships - belted the earth with steel - swung with wings and a drumming motor in the high blue sky - shot his words on a wireless way through shattering sea storms - out from the night and out from the jungles his head keeps singing - there is no road for him but on and on."

From *The People, Yes*: "The people will live on./ The learning and blundering people will live on./ They will be tricked and sold and again sold/ ... The people so peculiar in renewal and comeback./ You can't laugh off their capacity to take it./ ... In the darkness with a great bundle of grief the people march./ In the night, and overhead a shovel of stars for keeps, the people march:/ 'Where to? what next?'"

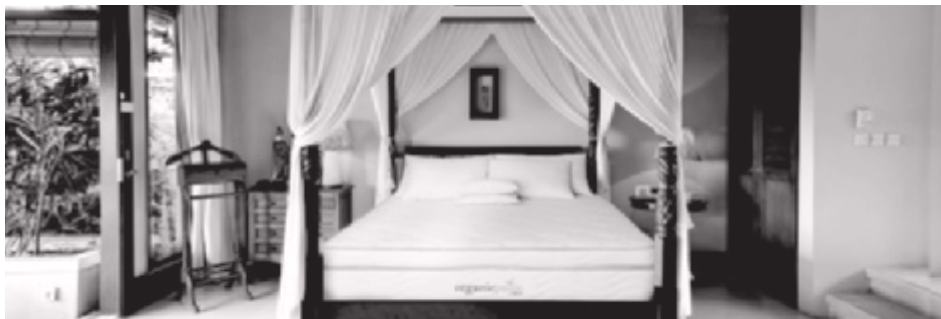
Can your voice carry those words? Can your voice take them from where they come from to where they're going?

Sandburg would say: Keep it up - you'll find the voice in you, the voice that connects to why you are here, for you are here because those who came before you, those who are in your blood and bones, persevered.

Where to? What next?
Happy New Year. ■

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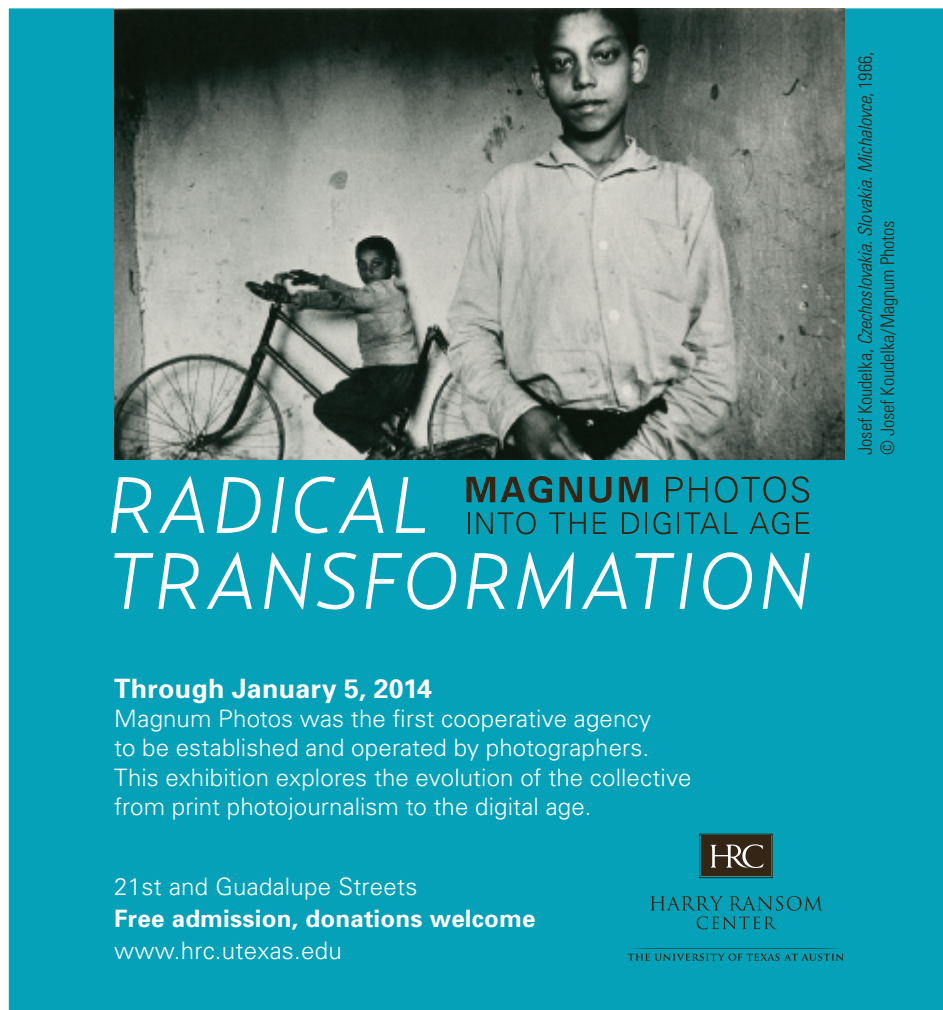
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THE ARTS

The Big Bash

THE HIDEOUT THEATRE EMBIGGENS ITS SCHEDULE WITH A WEEKLY SET FROM AN IMPROV DREAM TEAM

Ask Roy Janik what it takes to be an “all-star” in his book, and you learn quickly that he doesn’t toss that term around lightly. “It’s not just a matter of being the best performer,” says the Hideout Theatre artistic director. “An all-star is at the top of his or her game. But [is] also confident, casual, and completely in control. Like the original Olympic Dream Team, the Three Musketeers, or Robin Hood and his merry men: absolute badasses with a basketball/sword/bow, but joking and leaping around while in action, and having a grand old time along the way.”

The topic’s been raised because the latest addition to the Hideout schedule, *The Big Bash*, is billed as “all-star improv,” and I’m curious as to just what that means. “The great thing about the Austin scene is that there are so many different styles of improv flourishing here. And for each style, there are different people who are better suited for it,” Janik continues. “But the players that really stand out to me are the ones that have a kind of electric personality. They’re charismatic, watchable, and they’re connected to the audience even when they’re not interacting with them directly. In a very Zen-like way, people like that are ‘present.’ With *The Big Bash*, [we’re trying] to select performers who are extremely experienced at playing improv games, sure, but who are also present, playful, and mischievous, and who will have fun trying a bunch of different things out onstage.”

The Big Bash New Year’s Eve Improv Extravaganza will be performed Tuesday, Dec. 31, 8 & 10:30pm, at the Hideout Theatre, 617 Congress. For more information, call 512/443-3688 or visit www.hideouttheatre.com.

In bringing together improvisers with that kind of attitude and level of experience, Janik and *Big Bash* co-director Andy Crouch hope to create a show that’s “professional and accessible,” with perhaps more “polish” than the usual fare. “We want *The Big Bash* to be a ‘sure bet,’” says Janik, “something that you ‘have to do’ when you come to Austin.” Which should not be equated with playing it safe, Janik insists. “The goal is to take everything up a notch. If we have a certain base level of mastery of the games and forms, then we’re really free to mess with them. Break the rules, reach further, and do it all with a glad heart.”

That was the case right out of the gate in the December test drive for *The Big Bash*, which boasted a seasonal theme. In the very first show, says Janik, “Aaron Saenz kept taking the holiday scenes to twisted places. So I, as the host, started admonishing him mid-scene for going too dark. Which only made him go darker, of course. The real joy of the show comes from messing with each other.” The format, with a host (usually Janik or Crouch) directing a cast of four improvisers and a musician, first in a series of games, then an improvised longform story, has proven itself “a good template for the future,” i.e., the show’s weekly slot in 2014.

Better yet, Janik adds, has been the audiences, which have



been large, enthusiastic, and “mostly made up of newcomers to the theatre ... which is exactly what we wanted. Our goal with the show is that it’ll be the perfect choice not only for fans of improv but also for tourists or people new to improv or to Austin, and a good ‘first show’ to recommend to your uninitiated friends.”

The next test is this week’s *Big Bash New Year’s Eve Improv Extravaganza*, with Janik, Crouch, Kareem Badr, Kaci Beeler, Troy Miller, and pianist Ammon Taylor reviewing the year that was in “a more extravagant, bigger, more Champagne-filled version” of the show. (Actually, that’ll be Champagne-filled for the 10:30pm performance Tuesday; the 8pm show will be filled with complimentary chocolates.)

Then, on Jan. 3, *The Big Bash* takes up its 8pm Friday residence – which Janik sees as a payoff a long time coming. “After 15 years of providing improv entertainment and training to Austin, we knew we were capable of something even bigger and better that showcased some of our best performers and our favorite philosophies. Something special, that was simultaneously polished and risky, that combined well-executed games with improvised storytelling, that gave us a chance to cut loose and play.

“That show is *The Big Bash*.”

– Robert Faires

Rebecca Rothfus

THIS SKILLED PAINTER AND WIZARD AT CUTOUTS FEELS AT HOME IN HER NEWLY BUILT STUDIO AT CANOPY



JANA BIRCHUM

Studio spaces in Austin are often visual indexes of the dozens of artists who have worked there over time. Paint marks every surface from ceiling to floor, walls are pockmarked with holes from nails and tacks – “character” accretes. Rarely, then, does an artist get the opportunity to move into a newly built space. Yet this is precisely the situation for painter Rebecca Rothfus, who is among the first occupants of Big

Medium’s studio complex, Canopy. “For me, it was perfect because my artwork has always been clean and neat, and so it was fitting,” says Rothfus.

“There is a door you can close. There are clean walls. It’s a controlled environment, and that’s fantastic for me.” That control shows up in Rothfus’ cutouts and drawings on paper – crystalline landscapes in rolling, vibrant hues. The artist, who teaches art to kids part time,

is demure regarding her skill at making cutouts, yet in a few short cuts of the X-Acto knife, Rothfus creates stunning three-dimensional images.

Rebecca Rothfus: Prior to being in this space, I was in my house, which was great; I could walk around, do laundry, and make art. But also I got lost in the mix of the art community; I felt isolated. When I heard through a friend that Big Medium was creating the space, I went on one of the site visits – when Canopy wasn’t yet built. It was studs and construction workers. We had to wear hard hats. Shea [Little] answered all our questions – talk about visual people trying to communicate! I decided at that moment I wanted to be a part of the community. Especially seeing the people who were involved, people who were serious about their artwork and also a sense of community. Immediately when I moved into the space, people started to have studio visits with one another. We had a little tour, popping into each studio as a group. There’s a lunch group

Austin Chronicle: So it’s become a real self-sustaining community?

RR: Yes. Definitely. Even during EAST [the East Austin Studio Tour], other artists in Canopy were walking around giving compliments. It’s not a competitive space.

AC: Do you think that’s because there are so many of you who have studios in Canopy – it’s

not just, say, five of you, competing for the same set of resources?

RR: That makes sense. And such a variety: Some make prints; others make crafts.

AC: How has this new space influenced your work?

RR: Well, there’s more of it! But I think the relationship to other artists here really makes it more of a place for experimentation. With a swing of a door, I can be open for feedback or be closed off, and I like that option.

AC: What are important things to have in your studio? I see you’ve got books, and your rock collection. I’m sure everyone wants to talk to, about your rock collection.

RR: You can talk to my rock collection if you want!

AC: Whisper sweet things to it!

RR: You know who really likes the mineral collection? Kids, grown men, and hippie ladies! It’s also important for me to have past work up. These works influence me and remind me of where I’ve been. Even if I’m changing, it’s a nice reminder of “Hey, remember? You’re capable of this, too!” It was interesting: During EAST, some people would come into my studio and ask if there were two artists in the space, because my older work looks somewhat different. But some people would come in and connect the dots. It was like an experiment. ■

More of Rebecca Rothfus’ work can be found at www.rebeccarothfus.com.



Keith and Stephanie Peco

A Way Back to Tenderness

Writing workshops serve Austin's aging and their caregivers

BY AMY GENTRY

*Your glasses are on your head.
Your keys are in your other pants.
The mayonnaise is in the refrigerator door.*

My fear is waiting on the bedside table.

— “A Marriage,” by Stephanie Peco

Stephanie Peco first saw Keith in Port Aransas in 1978. He was holding a tray in a cafeteria at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute, where he was getting a marine biology degree. Even though she was with her boyfriend of the time, she couldn't help checking him out. “He was striking,” she says with a laugh. A year later they were dating. For six years they lived together (“Very scandalous for the time,” she says) while Keith, who worked at NASA for a time, got a second degree in electrical engineering; they moved to Houston, then Boston, then finally to Austin, where they got married and have lived ever since. Their 30th anniversary is fast approaching.

Last year, at the age of 59, Keith was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's, a disease that afflicts adults under the age of 65 with symptoms of dementia that worsen over time. As with normal onset Alzheimer's, there is no cure.

Although the news was painful, for Stephanie, it came as more of a relief than a shock. Despite Keith's efforts to hide his

memory loss and strange behavior, she had known for years there was something wrong. After being laid off from his long-term tech job, he had held a succession of short-lived jobs – consulting, substitute teaching, even working for the IRS – and lost them all. “One day at work, he found himself with his fingers on the keyboard, just staring at it, and he literally didn't know what came next.” After a lifetime of always finishing assignments first and waiting for others to catch up, Keith found himself in a perpetual limbo, the script for living having vanished right before his eyes. So, in a way, had Stephanie's. There is no script for becoming your spouse's primary caregiver.

But there is always poetry. In a series of writing workshops that culminated this winter, Badgerdog, a program of the Austin Public Library Friends Foundation, teamed with the Mobile Art Program and Health's Angels, a service group of St. David's Foundation Community Fund, to help Austin residents like Stephanie and Keith Peco cope with one of the most common predicaments faced by aging couples.

Using writing prompts and poems as models, instructors Cara Zimmer and Terri Schexnayder encouraged caregivers to begin expressing themselves. Care recipients worked with artists at Mobile Art to create self-portraits, collages, sculptures, and ceramics to express their own feelings. Badgerdog published the caregivers' writ-

ing alongside the art created by their loved ones in an anthology called *When I Bloom*. Its pages speak of heartbreaking moments in the present as well as glimmers of connection and reconnection to the past. The workshop culminated in a reading event at Mercury Hall.

Many in Austin don't realize just how common the Pecos' situation is. Stephanie and Keith Peco are part of a population that has grown 110% in Austin over the past 10 years. Call it Austin's pre-senior boom: We have the fastest-growing population of 55- to 64-year-olds in the nation. “Austin perceives itself as very young, but we see this growing background of an aging population,” says Michael Wilson, program officer for healthy aging at the St. David's Foundation. This summer, Mayor Lee Leffingwell's Task Force on Aging put out its first report, with recommendations for improving social and economic conditions for Austin's older adults.

Health care is an ongoing need of this population, but many don't realize that annually, \$450 billion worth of care is supplied at home by family caregivers, 90% of whom are spouses. This is a situation that compounds itself quickly, since so many caregivers are themselves older adults, and caregiving can result in health strains that increase mortality risks for caregivers by 63%, according to one 1999 study.

Faith Unger is the program coordinator for CaregiverU, a group that offers resources and support to families providing elder care. She is also, herself, a spousal caregiver. She sums up the situation this way: “Anything we can do to support family caregivers, we should be doing. If they aren't able to provide that care, someone else is going to have to. And it's going to cost a lot.”

Writing may prove one of the most cost-effective means of providing that support. Researchers have long touted the benefits of journaling for cognitive and psychological health. Wilson explains: “If you think about what you have to do, you've got the fine motor skills of either typing or picking up a pen or pencil, and then there's the organizational work that has to take place within the brain, and there's the picking the right word and creating the right description. Writing is a very cognitively intensive process. The more you write, the more you use your brain; the more you use it, the better it works; the better it works, the longer it will continue to be intact. It's one aspect of a lot that go into maintaining cognitive strength, plasticity, and well-being.”

There is also a hefty psychological benefit to writing. “People engaging in writing feel better connected,” says Wilson. “They are less likely to experience the onset of depression, and if they are in depression, writing and journaling can blunt the effects.

It can make people feel more connected even when they are in isolation.”

Moreover, the therapeutic benefits of writing can transcend even verbal storytelling, which has long been acknowledged as a way of helping patients cope psychologically with illness. Zimmer, a writing instructor at Badgerdog for four years who is now pursuing a master's degree in education from Columbia University, explains it this way: “In speaking, you already know what you're going to say; in writing you don't know what's there, and then all of a sudden you get there, and that's kind of the relief.”

But does all that translate to better physical health? Research suggests that it does. The high incidence of chronic, unhealed wounds in older adults suggest that as the body ages, the body's ability to heal itself deteriorates. A recent study at the University of Auckland found that daily expressive writing – that is, writing about emotions and upsetting life events rather than daily tasks and activities – correlated with faster wound healing in healthy adults ages 64 to 97. The writing study corroborates other research showing that reducing the negative impact of stress on the body through positive affect and relaxation techniques can improve the body's ability to heal itself.

Whether and how workshops like Badgerdog's “When I Bloom” series can improve the physical health and longevity of aging caregivers, and, by extension, of their ailing loved ones, is, of course, difficult to say. For both Stephanie and Keith, however, the therapeutic benefits have been obvious. Stephanie wrote poems in high school “because everyone writes poems in high school,” but never pursued writing as an adult; she initially signed up for the workshop because it was something for Keith to do. When she sat down to write,

however, she discovered a well of emotions, images, and memories she hadn't realized were there. Ten minutes later, she had written her first poem: “A Marriage.” “It just came out of me, all at once, like it was already written.” Keith, too, has become inspired; a lifelong artistic dabbler, he is now pursuing his art in earnest.

Cecily Sailer, Badgerdog workshop programmer, says that the APLFF hopes to offer more of the caregiver/care recipient workshops in 2014.

Stephanie, for one, would go back in a heartbeat. After the diagnosis, she says, her relationship with her husband of 29 years turned into a series of appointments, meetings, plans, practical steps. Staring into the future and seeing only a decades-long to-do list, Stephanie was overwhelmed, and her sense of connection with her husband dulled.

But in writing a poem called “The First Time I Saw You,” Stephanie returned to that moment in the cafeteria when she glimpsed Keith holding his cafeteria tray – “so tan you seemed lit from inside.”

Fighting back tears, she says, “It was a way back to tenderness.” ■

For information on how to help support Badgerdog programming, contact Cecily Sailer at 512/542-0076 or csailer@austnlibrary.org. To find out more about CaregiverU, contact Faith Unger at 512/600-9279 or fonger@ageofcentralx.org. Links to all the organizations in this article, (as well as the full text of Stephanie Peco's poem), available online at austinchronicle.com.

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EXHIBITIONISM

'Send Off'

grayDUCK Gallery, 608-C W. Monroe,
www.grayduckgallery.comFrom
Death
Till
Birth,
by
Mark S.
NelsonDuck, duck, duck, duck, duck, *gray duck!*

That's the way the children's game Duck, Duck, Goose was played where grayDUCK Gallery owner Jill Schroeder grew up in Minnesota. She's long since moved to Austin, where – as is probably true for any other sane place in the universe – the game is played the *normal* way, thank you very much. But, all honking aside, who's to say what's normal, especially in the world of art – where the game changes all the time, whether people move elsewhere or not?

GrayDUCK Gallery itself is moving from its well-lit venue on Monroe off South First: That's why the show that just closed, the final one at this location, was called "Send Off." After three and a half years in the Bouldin Creek neighborhood, the gallery's going to be reinventing itself – bigger, better, just as cannily curated – on East Cesar Chavez next spring, meanwhile leaving us with the memory of this exhibition in which grayDUCK regulars teamed up with master printmaker Satch Grimley to produce a group print show of diverse imagery.

We've raved about Katy Horan's work in these pages before – because we adore the intersection of the beautiful and the creepy, especially when it's composed of dark, figurative works that look like somebody's lace-obsessed and schizophrenic Hungarian grandmother might've meticulously painted them during nightmare therapy. Here, Horan's *String Game*, depicting four women creating an arcane entanglement of threads amid the burnt remnants of a forest, could be an illustration from some story the Brothers Grimm neglected to publish; it's an ultrachrome print on (of course!) Hahnemuhle German etching paper. Mark S. Nelson's odd images, also ultrachromes, are riveting in their arrangements of objects in hues of black, white, gray, and red; *Floating With Plant* and *From Death Till Birth* hit the optic nerves like embiggened Boy Scout badges from some macabre alternate universe. A moment in the life of a South First food trailer – the place sits just down the road from the gallery that was – is captured with excellent drafting skills in Pat Snow's charming *Chicken*, rendered as a multicolored silkscreen on archival paper. Another colorful silkscreen, Terrence Payne's *You Might Think You Are Dancing But Really You Are Dying Slowly*, with its pair of fantastically striped bears falling away from a white and overlapping imposition of the title, looks like it could be the album cover for the coolest band in the world that you haven't discovered yet.

And, yeah, the show is already over, more's the pity. But because those artists – as well as the others represented in "Send Off" – are gallery regulars, we'll likely be seeing them among the expanding creative pantheon represented in future grayDUCK shows at the new location, which, Schroeder says, has been bought, "so we're going to be owners, not renters. It's a space that we're going to be able to create on our own." The new gallery will have a slanted ceiling, with one wall a full two feet taller than the Monroe space and three large windows high up, plus a porch out front and a private courtyard in the back.

So running a visual-arts gallery in Austin can be a winnable game? Although certainly not as easy as Duck, Duck, Goose?

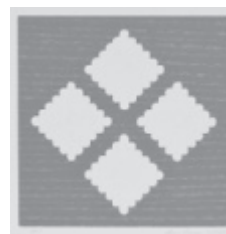
"It's the best job I've ever had," says Schroeder, "so I'm going to figure out a way to *make* it work. I'm not going to buy a yacht – that's not what comes with this career choice."

– Wayne Alan Brenner

'Ann Conner: Suite Symphony'
Flatbed Press and Gallery,
2830 E. MLK Jr. Blvd., 512/477-9328
www.flatbedpress.com
Through Jan. 4

Just where and when I first became aware of wood grain is lost to me, but I like to think it happened at my grandparents' home back when I'd sprawl on the floor with a coloring book and while away the hours filling in outlined shapes with the brightest, lushest colors in my box of crayons. Mom and Pop's big old house boasted some handsome pine flooring, which would've lain just beyond the edges of whatever book I was making my marks on, and surely the beauty of the whorls and knots impressed there were absorbed by my child's eye.

Having now seen Ann Conner's "Suite Symphony" exhibition, I'm inclined to think the printmaker came to her awareness of wood grain through a similar circumstance. The dozen prints that greet you as you enter Flatbed Press and Gallery are marked by the finely textured patterns of wood rippling and surging across the paper, all in exuberant hues – daffodil yellow, royal purple, powder blue, spring green, blood orange, aqua – that seem plucked from Crayola's super-size box. They invite you in with a cheery, childlike vibe, enhanced by the little white shapes with scalloped edges arranged in rows and diamonds across them. The circles and ovals suggest comic-strip cotton balls and thought balloons, and like the snowy voids in coloring books, almost beg to be filled in.



Rosewood I,
by Ann Conner

Moving through the hallways and rooms of the Flatbed complex, you can find samples of Conner's fascination with wood that predate these works from the last few years by a decade or more. In some of the older series, such as the *Madrone* and *Forest* suites of the late Nineties, the hues are often muted – grays, dark greens, and dusky violets – and the shapes – peanuts, jigsaw puzzle pieces – are little more than ghostly outlines over wood grains which loom like moody storm clouds, leaving the viewer in an autumnal world, the light fading and a chill coming on. But as Conner has moved forward in time, it's as if she's regressed to that time in life when we embraced color in all its variety – the brighter, the better – and the boldest of marks. The *Brentwood* and *Rosewood* suites, and the *Bel Air*, with its whimsically curvy shapes in goldenrod, violet, spring green, and aqua, are playful and celebratory in their colors and textures, and looking at them may drop some years off you, too: You may find yourself in search of a coloring book and that old 64 box of crayons. – Robert Faires

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I know from airports. As a former six-year resident of Chicago and hater of winter in the Midwest, the hours I've spent in O'Hare during peak holiday flying times beggar description. Huddled next to a pillar with a Snickers wrapper balled in one fist, cheap earbuds jammed painfully into my ears, and a stern J.M. Coetzee novel balanced on my knee, I would occasionally look up and make little fashion shows in my head, scored to Radiohead's "How to Disappear Completely."

Judging by paparazzi pics, which I know are how most things are measured, we are obsessed with celebrity airport fashion: Victoria Beckham floating down the moving walkways in lizard-skin pants and needle-thin heels, Emma Watson striding to her gate dressed like a 40-year-old French woman. Rihanna wears sweatpants with heels, because she can. And close-ups of Gwyneth Paltrow at LAX always reveal a single, perfect diamond made of a frozen unicorn tear somewhere on her person.

These are the professionals, however. How cute, I wondered, does Austin fly? I set out to Austin-Bergstrom International Airport to find out.

Stylewise, I figured ABIA would start out ahead of the game, inasmuch as it's a live music venue with five stages, and packs in additional free performances at Christmas time to soothe passengers antsy from standing in the security line. But would the calming tones of the Austin Jazz Workshop and local roots-pop vocalist Sherah coax Austinites out of their flip-flops? UT had just let out for the semester. I feared bunny slippers.

The first thing I learned was that the most fashionably dressed folks at the airport spend the whole time talking on cell phones. As I do not take candids and did not want to disturb their business transactions and/or fights with significant others, some of the very best outfits slipped through my fingers. Other women, invariably looking gorgeous, refused to be photographed unless their faces were literally cropped out of the picture, corroborating Beyoncé's assertion that pretty does, indeed, hurt. (Given this trend, I'm surprised the Benefit



AMY GENTRY

THE GOOD EYE
BY AMY GENTRY

cosmetics vending machine, that mysterious pink bus to nowhere, doesn't get more traffic. Maybe it's the mirror.)

My first victim, a black-clad traveler with a sleek blond pixie cut, had no such qualms. She was eager to show off the airport-friendly rubber soles of her simple but sky-high earth-toned wedges from Margiela's MM6 line. With her giant Hervé Chapelier tote and black-and-gold bangles from local antique jewelry store Bell and Bird, I was starting to guess that she was a pro. I told her so, and was surprised to discover my fashionable flyer was in fact Marianne Malina, president of Austin advertising agency GSD&M. "Well," I said, feeling a little relieved, "that explains why you look so put-together."

"Thank you," she said. "I just found a pair of my son's pajamas in my purse." There was no son in sight, so I didn't ask further questions.

As president of GDS&M, Marianne Malina is more or less constantly flying, which explains her sleek, comfortable clothing and expertly packed olive-and-orange Herve Chapelier tote. (She has them, she says, in all colors.)

My next prey stood in line at the gate in a bold zigzag dress accessorized with a shiny aqua belt and knotted-rope necklace. Was she conscious that by queuing up in spike heels, she was making the rest of us look bad? Did she set out to kill it at the airport? "This is just how I dress," she said, looking bewildered. I moved on.

I was relieved to stumble across more casual examples of stylish airport wear farther down the hall. A French exchange student returning to Paris rocked florescent Nikes, an army backpack, and pigtails with a baggy gray sweatshirt, and Kari Shrode, a student headed to her native

Chicago for the holidays, wore stretchy burgundy corduroys, slip-on chukka boots, and a big, fuzzy sweater, eschewing accessories – "They just get in the way," she said. Bright flats with textured socks were another creative way to introduce security line-friendly chic.

By far the most popular style for women, however, was tall boots with tucked-in leggings or jeggings topped by an oversized blouse and a coordinating scarf. Men, always a little in arrears in the fashion-over-comfort department, came through with the occasional natty scarf or crisp, colorful button-down – a little ruffled, perhaps, but then again, it's all about the journey.

My own airport style can be summed up by Katie Presley, a writer for *Bitch* magazine who, while awaiting a flight to Seattle, looked up from the book she was reading long enough to say: "I dress for comfort, but I don't show up in my pajamas anymore. That was more of a college thing."

For a photo gallery of Austin airport couture, see austinchronicle.com/photos.

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FOOD

Better Drinking Through Gadgetry

MUST-HAVE DEVICES FOR OENOPHILES AND LIQUOR LOVERS

This year has been a boom time for useful devices for the drinker. Look at these gadgets as aftermarket devices to make sure your drink is perfect. They boil down to three categories: prep, temperature, and preservation. Here are some of the best we've seen this year.

— Wes Marshall



CapaBunga Reusable Silicone Wine Cap

www.capabunga.com, \$7.95 for two

These flexible, tight wine caps will allow you to set an open bottle on its side, and they are so thin, the bottles will even fit standing up in most refrigerators.

Opus by Soiréehome

www.soireehome.com, \$74.99

A box set of three of the company's greatest hits. The Tempour keeps you from spilling any wine, the Soirée aerates the wine one glass at a time, and the Stopair vacuum pump doubles as a bottle stopper and effectively pulls the air out of the bottle.

Savino Wine Preservation Glassware Glass Carafe and Top

www.savinowine.com, \$59.95

Product of the year! Not everyone finishes a bottle of wine when they open it, but sadly, wine starts going bad soon after opening. This ingenious device has a floating seal that protects the wine from oxidation. We've used it every night since we got it. If you have wine with your meals, but don't finish the bottle, this device will pay for itself almost immediately.



Kikkerland Wine Bottle Thermometer

www.kikkerland.com, \$8

Simplicity itself. Wrap this bracelet-sized device around your wine bottle and it almost instantaneously reads the bottle temperature. And just in case you can't remember what temp is best for Port or Champagne, it tells you on the side.

Skybar Wine Chill Drops

www.skybarhome.com, \$29.99

Freeze these devices and when you need to give wine a quick chill, drop one in your wine glass. The thermal mass and large contact area works amazingly fast. Too many Texans drink their red wines too warm. A few minutes with a Chill Drop fixes everything.

Sparq Vodka Shooters

www.sparqusa.com, \$34.95, set of four

This company seems to be the king of soapstone. Again, don't let the title limit you. These fantastic little shot glasses work a miracle on any liquor you want to drink cold. Store a couple in the freezer and try them with Paula's Texas Lemon, Tito's Vodka, or both!

Sparq Whiskey Rocks

www.sparqusa.com, \$24.95, set of 12

These soapstone rocks will actually work with wine, whiskey, or anything else you want to keep cool without diluting. This particular set comes with different sizes of rocks, so they can fit in various glass sizes. You can also boil them and drop them in tea or cocoa to keep it warm on a cold winter night.

food-o-file

BY VIRGINIA B. WOOD

Okay, I can now say I've had an **In-N-Out** burger. Aside from the sauce, which I liked, and cops directing traffic into a hamburger stand, which made me laugh out loud, the experience was unremarkable.

The year is racing to a close, and I can't help but feel that time seems to be moving faster because in order to have restaurant "news" to report, we spend so much time talking about projects that won't even have a location secured until way out in the future. Actual restaurant openings were once news; now we report on nascent concepts. It used to be that concepts were only announced months in advance when the restaurateurs needed media exposure as chum to raise money. Wonder if that still happens?

Anyway, here is a lightning round of updates on future projects in various stages of development that we've had our eyes on this year: The building at 2406 Manor Rd. has been released to the tenants for build-out, so look for **Sugar Mama's Bakeshop & Dessert Cafe** and **Dai Due Butcher Shop & Supper Club** to be open there in the spring. **John Bates** says they plan to move into the new Northwest location of **Noble Sandwich Company** (12233 RR 620 North) in February and that the opening of the midtown Noble Sandwich (4805 Burnet Rd.) is still caught on a snag in the city permit process, so he's thinking spring for that one. No confirmed location yet on **Jodi Elliott's Bribery**, but **Lauderette** and **Angry Bear**, both from **Rene Ortiz** and **Laura Sawicki**, have found a home at 2115 Holly St. (formerly the KleenWash laundromat).

Midtown Thai food lovers will be happy to know the long-awaited reopening of **Titaya** (5501 N. Lamar Ste. C-101) is scheduled for Jan. 11 and that a second outlet of **Sap's Fine Thai Cuisine** (5800 Burnet Rd.) will open later in the month. Sommelier **Vilma Mazaito** and Executive Chef **Allison Jenkins** hope to have their Provençal-inspired **laV** (1501 E. Seventh) open in time for Valentine's Day with breads, pastries, and sweets from pastry chef **Janina O'Leary**. Pastry chef and Director of Culinary Operations **Philip Speer** reports that April/May is the target date for the opening of the new **St. Philip** (4715 S. Lamar) pizza parlor and pastry shop. Speer and his team of bakers will also be doing some cooking and baking in the wood-fired pizza oven and expect to offer a full line of table and sandwich breads, breakfast pastries and treats, plus retro-inspired, nostalgic desserts with modern twists. Chef **Grae Nonas**, one of the partners in the upcoming Southern eatery **Olamaie** (1610 San Antonio), now says the target opening date is late winter/early spring. Folks at the Radisson Hotel on Lady Bird Lake say they expect **Shawn Cirkiel's** new Southwestern-inspired **Chavez** (111 E. Cesar Chavez) restaurant to open in late January. Denizens of the Second Street District will be able to drop into **Cafe Ruckus** (409 W. Second), the new spot from restaurateur and spoken word performer **Keith Ruckus**, starting in late January. Look for sandwiches, salads, pastries and desserts, tea and coffee, local craft beers, and Texas wines.

Longer-range plans call for the creation of two new restaurants in late 2014 in the currently under construction IBC Bank Tower (500 W. Fifth): **Wu Chow**, a Chinese concept from the Swift's Attic team, and **Fixe**, a Southern roots-inspired eatery from chef **James Robert** and manager **Keith House**, both formerly of Eddie V's. Looking south of the river, the new **East Side King** (2310 S. Lamar) brick and mortar opened yesterday with a menu of ESK "classics" and tacos, plus beer, wine, and sake. The opening of gelateria **Dolce Neve** (1713 S. First) has been pushed to late January. We're told that even if the Lamar Union center developer turns spaces over to the Alamo Drafthouse and the HighBall in January as projected, the ultimate build-out of those two reopenings could take well into the spring. The same is probably true for **Emmett and Lisa Fox's** new **Cantine**, chef **Joe Anguiano's Vox Table**, and the nationally famous **Shake Shack**, also projected for that center.

Meal Times Dec. 28

- > **TOAST TO THE NEW YEAR COOKING DEMO & OPEN HOUSE** Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Austin opens its doors for prospective students to tour the campus, talk to chefs, and learn about scholarships. Sat., Dec. 28, 10:30am-1pm. Le Cordon Bleu, 3110 Esperanza Crossing #100, 512/837-2665. Free, but RSVP required. www.chefs.edu/austin.
- > **PARENT/CHILD COOKING CLASS** Austin's own TV cooking celebrity Brandon Scawthorn will present a cooking class for parents and kids to enjoy together. \$40. Sat., Dec. 28, 11am-1pm. Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts, 6020-B Dillard, 866/552-2433. www.myculinaryadventure.com/farm-to-table.
- > **END OF THE YEAR PIG ROAST** Chefs John Bates and Brandon Martinez will roast a whole pig over hardwood coals and serve up plates with all the fixings for a great lunch until the porky goodness runs out. Regular menu also available. Sat., Dec. 28, 11am-5pm. Noble Sandwich Company, 11815 RR 620 N. #4, 512/382-6248. \$12.
- > **NEW YEAR'S EVE LISTINGS** Looking for fun, festive ways to ring in 2014? Check out our New Year's Eve listings on p.54.

FARMERS' MARKET REPORT

The farmers' markets after Christmas are unpredictable. Some years they are thriving, with folks bringing visiting family to eat and shop, and the farmers ambitiously selling all manner of New Year's Eve provisions. Other years, I have seen them virtually deserted, just a few vendors shivering in Arctic temperatures. Check out the online FMR (austinchronicle.com/daily/food/farmers-market-report) to see which it is going to be this year!

— Kate Thornberry



(l-r) Christopher Lamb, Daniel Barnes, Nate Powell, and Joshua Holland of Treaty Oak Distilling

Age Before Beauty? With Treaty Oak, You Get Both.

Local distiller is making world-class aged spirits

BY WES MARSHALL

We've just had a chance to taste something that could become an iconic Texas product: Treaty Oak Distilling Co.'s Waterloo Antique Barrel Reserve Gin (\$29). How good is it? Ridiculously good, with stunning botanical aromas and multilayered flavors, its complexity actually competes with international whiskeys. Granted, seeing something the color of Maker's Mark married to the aromas of classic gin provides an initial shock to the senses. All

thoughts were gone the second Matt Moody, Treaty Oak's beverage director, offered me a perfectly designed old fashioned that substituted Waterloo Antique Barrel Reserve Gin in place of the whiskey. French distiller Citadelle is the originator of aged gin, a concept that is still rare. That is soon to change. Industry insiders say the aged gin category is poised for explosive growth. If the Treaty Oak version is any indicator, I can see why.

The Waterloo Antique Barrel Reserve Gin is one of three barrel-aged products from Treaty Oak. They are also making Treaty Oak Barrel Reserve Rum (\$29) and Red Handed Bourbon Whiskey (\$34). All share a keenly balanced flavor with just enough of the buttery vanilla aromas from the barrels to add some interest. We sat down with CEO Daniel Barnes in the huge barrel room at their facility off Rutland

Antique Gin Old Fashioned

2 ounces Treaty Oak Distilling's Waterloo Antique Barrel Reserve Gin

¼ to ½ ounce simple syrup

Orange

Angostura Bitters

Into a rocks glass with one large ice cube or a few medium-sized ones, add 2 ounces Waterloo Antique Barrel Reserve Gin, simple syrup, and 2 to 3 dashes of Angostura Bitters. Gently stir your drink so you don't create too many air bubbles. With a vegetable peeler, remove a strip of orange peel and fold the peel in half over the top of the glass to express the orange's essential oils. Rub the rim of the glass with the orange peel and drop into the glass. Serve and enjoy!

Drive to hear about their genesis while sipping Moody's cocktails. Barnes is clearly proud of what he and his tiny team have accomplished. Wandering through the Treaty Oak offices, the obvious camaraderie feels like a cross between a squad of Navy Seals and an eager crew of techies conceiving a Silicon Valley start-up.

"We're all committed to what we're doing. I know it looks like a lot of fun, but we're working hard," Barnes said. "For instance, we've been working on our barrel-aged rum for about five years now. It was always a goal to release them; it just took a while to perfect the recipes." We wondered if he was using the same recipe for his aged gin. "That was the result of some mad experiments and fun discussions with our distilling team. We thought we'd hit a dead end when we tried it after a few weeks in the barrel. However, it completely changed after about 12 months and became something extremely different, and a product we're very, very proud of."

One of the dead ends they hit was when they tried small barrels with different levels of charring. Because their ratio of wood to liquor is higher, these little containers have the benefit of yielding enormous amounts of smoky oak aromas quickly – sometimes too quickly. "Part of our experimentation focused on the various sizes and char levels of barrels," Barnes explained. "We found that the smaller 15-gallon barrels offer a lot of quick wood tannin and color, but don't do much to soften the spirits over the course of

JOHN ANDERSON

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several years. The young harshness was still there, something you expect to dissipate over time. So we moved to the larger 53-gallon barrels. Unfortunately, they take a lot longer to work their magic, but it is definitely worth the wait as they produce sweet and soft flavors that we never got from the 15-gallon barrels."

All this experimentation takes a long time and, between the costs of barrels and the time required for barrel-aging, can be quite expensive. But Treaty Oak also lavishes the same detail on the clear spirits, which have their own difficulties. "All of our spirits are challenging for various reasons," Barnes said. "Waterloo Gin is tricky for the exact amount of each botanical that we distill through. Our Treaty Oak Rum is complicated by the nuances of fermentation and distillation. But overall, I think our Red Handed Bourbon is the most difficult and painstaking." Some of Texas's brightest stars buy pre-made liquors and blend them until they like the taste, like Firestone & Robertson Distilling Co.'s TX Blended Whiskey. Treaty Oak distills all its products except the Red Handed Bourbon. This is a blended product, but Barnes goes a few steps further. "We're not simply bringing in random bourbon and rebottling it as is the common practice," he said. "There was a lot of care and precision put into not just selecting the individual barrels, but also the percentages at which we blend them. After the blending, we re-barrel them in first-use barrels again to further alter the flavor. The process is painstaking, but we're very happy to be showing off the end result now."

A Transformation in Texas Regulations Means You, Too, Can Experience a Texas Liquor Tasting

As I was formulating this story, I was twisting around the FM dial, hoping to find some great music on Austin radio. My first try is usually that beacon of musical diversity, KUTX. When I tuned in, there was good old Michael Martin Murphey reminiscing about himself and folks like Buckwheat Stevenson, Steve Fromholz, Three Faces West, Jerry Jeff Walker, and all the other members of what Fromholz called "the Great Progressive Country Scare of the Seventies." Murph recalled the great clubs and talked about the sea change that occurred in 1972 when the Texas Legislature finally decided the populace would be able to enjoy a mixed drink without having to join a private club. It's hard to imagine, but

just over 40 years ago, most of the music acts either had to play coffee houses or private clubs. Picture going to a music club and not being able to order a drink!

Hopefully, Texans 40 years from now will find it just as odd that there was a time when you couldn't visit a Texas liquor-making enterprise and get a tour and a taste. Thanks to the work of Treaty Oak's Daniel Barnes and the group he co-founded - the Texas Distilled Spirits Association - legislation now allows Texas distillers equity with their brethren in Kentucky and Tennessee. "We've been working on the on-and-off premise sales for distilleries for several sessions," Barnes said. "We were extremely lucky to have Sen. Leticia Van de Putte [D-San Antonio] and Rep. John Kuempel [R-Seguin] support us this session. It was also very rewarding to see the various other stakeholders come out and support the growing Texas craft distiller movement. These changes give Texas distillers the opportunity to grow our industry even further and become leaders at a national level."

Most important to consumers, these new laws allow us to go to a liquor maker and get samples, try cocktails, take tours, and buy directly from the distiller. Anyone who has spent time visiting winery tasting rooms and enjoyed the experience will now be able to do the same at specially licensed distilleries. Treaty Oak is one of those distilleries, and sometime in mid-January, they will open their doors for tours, tastings, and sales at their cozy location at 10109 McKalla Place, just north of Rutland Drive. They're planning on charging \$15 for a tour, a cocktail, and a tasting flight of all their products.

Treaty Oak is just one of a bunch of distillers that will have tasting rooms, and while I love their Waterloo Antique Gin, you can also check my Top 10 Texas Liquors list next week for some other options. Still, just to get an idea of the success Treaty Oak is having with its liquors, go no further than the Great American Distillers Festival Bottle Competition in Portland, Ore., this past October. They only awarded 18 gold medals. I've judged competitions where they give out more than a hundred gold medals, so, believe me when I tell you that this is a tough competition. Treaty Oak won the Gold and Best in Category for their Starlite Vodka, and each of their aged spirits picked up a gold medal, with their Treaty Oak Barrel Reserve Rum also getting Best in Category. That's like UT winning the Bowl Championship Series, the Final Four, and the College World Series, all in one season. Congratulations to their team and do go visit them. You'll love it. ■

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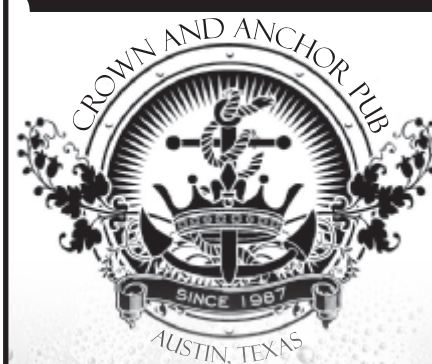
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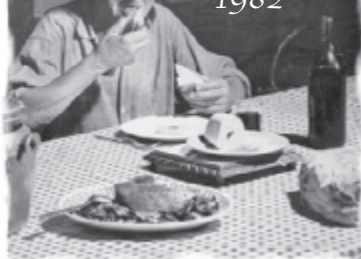
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FOOD REVIEW



JOHN ANDERSON

Elegant but Uneven

THERE'S ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT AT GOODALL'S KITCHEN & BAR AT THE HOTEL ELLA

I have a confession. I've been in love with the stately Goodall Wooten mansion since I lived a block away as a college student in the early Seventies. Even though it was student housing at that point and reflected hard use and neglect, the classy pedigree and fine bone structure were still evident to me. The most recent incarnation of the house is the Hotel Ella, named for Dr. Goodall Wooten's bride, Ella Newsome. They moved into the house as a young married couple in 1900 and lived there until the Forties, always prominent members of Austin society. Though my long-ago fantasy of turning the house into a bed and breakfast was financially unrealistic, I've always wanted someone to succeed at making the charming house a viable and vibrant part of the community again.

Its interior newly renovated by Michael Hsu, the Hotel Ella offers 10 suites in the mansion and another 38 in the annex. The dining room and cozy bar are on opposite ends of the main floor, each with its own working fireplace and tall windows that overlook the wide veranda. Both rooms are tastefully appointed and comfortable, reflecting substance without pretension. The staff is friendly and obviously proud to welcome guests to the lovely facility. But are the food and service up to the task of really bringing the lovingly restored house to life? Based on our experiences this month, I have my doubts.

Two friends joined me at 6:30pm for what we thought would be an early dinner at Goodall's Kitchen & Bar on a recent chilly evening. There was an inviting fire in the din-

ing room fireplace and a few large parties already seated. That unfortunately proved to be a problem. It appeared that in servicing the large tables, our food would get lost in the shuffle: All three of our entrées came out cold or at room temperature, the table wasn't bussed between courses, and our three-course, three-person meal ran until 9pm. While my guests raved about the quality of the cocktails – termed elixirs, tonics, and cures, in a nod to Wooten's profession as a physician – our overall meal was not particularly successful. I found chef Scott Mechura's menu plainly confusing, from the offerings (local heirloom tomatoes *after* the first freeze?) to the descriptions, the portion sizes, and the balance of sweet flavors in savory dishes.

The restaurant offers a \$39 three-course prix fixe dinner (\$55 with wine pairings) with an upcharge for ordering a rib eye (\$9) or lamb chops (\$12). I chose a bacon-wrapped quail appetizer, the half rack of lamb, and the snickerdoodle poppers recommended by my server. One friend requested the brussels sprout fries, the grilled rib eye, and the Texas apple cake with bleu cheese ice cream, while the third member of our party opted for a bowl of bean soup, pasta Amatriciana, and the Nutella crème brûlée. We waited what seemed like a good 30 minutes before our appetizers arrived, and that's when the problems started. Though the

beans in the soup were robust and hearty, the broth was overwhelmingly salty and the wire basket of fries was mostly potatoes with two or three brussels sprout halves thrown in as garnish. However, my quail dish was perfectly done, each half wrapped in crisp bacon, four or five bites of toothsome bird.

After another long wait, our entrées arrived, and none of the food was hot. By the time we'd cut into things and realized the temperatures, our busy server was gone and didn't get back to the table until we had already eaten part of the meal. They generously offered to re-fire our plates, but we had already been there an hour and a half at that point and said no. Our server did delete the upcharge for my cold rack of lamb, which turned out to be two lollipop chops, a total of four little bites of meat nestled against a toothache-sweet parsnip puree and an eggplant dish with no flavor whatsoever. My friend who ordered the rib eye had more meat than she could eat in one sitting, but found the ultra-sweet red wine reduction on her meat unappetizing. The bacon listed on the menu was noticeably absent from my other friend's pasta dish, so we were counting on dessert to save the evening; didn't happen. The Texas apple cake was warm and moist and the crème brûlée velvety, but the bleu cheese ice cream on the cake and the chunks of coarse salt garnishing the crème brûlée both struck discordant notes. The poppers were also disappointing – dense, breadly profiteroles filled with a nondescript pastry cream and rolled in cinnamon sugar.

A return visit for brunch was also beset with problems. This time, we were one of only two tables in the dining room, so kitchen timing should have been less of an issue. My friends raved about the spicy Bloody Marys until I ordered one for myself, without the Tito's. What an excellent eye-opener! However, the kitchen still moved very slowly, our table wasn't bussed between courses, and a couple of really odd things emerged. The house pastry tray with butter and jam (\$8) featured a warm and delicate blueberry

Goodall's Kitchen & Bar

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11:30am-2pm; dinner,
5:30-9:30pm;
weekend brunch,
11:30am-2:30pm

muffin, a hearty and healthy bran muffin, and an ugly, packaged crescent roll that must have fallen off the Sysco truck. The eggs Benedict (\$15), chef's spinach omelet (\$14), and the Pancho & Lefty (\$14) – their take on huevos rancheros – were all truly fine and worth the trip. The buttermilk fried chicken (\$19), on the other hand, was a bizarre concoction served in a wide soup bowl with mashed potatoes on the bottom, and a boneless, skinless chicken breast under a crispy tarp of fried chicken skin. The chicken was paired with grilled asparagus and honey butter poured over the entire dish so that all the savory elements sat in a pool of sweet syrup. While each component of the dish was tasty, the amalgam didn't work for me at all, and I wouldn't order it again. I think my dream house deserves a wonderful restaurant with accomplished service. It doesn't have one quite yet.

– Virginia B. Wood



Bet Raise Fold: The Story of Online Poker

Know When to Hold 'Em

WHEN JAY ROSENKRANTZ'S POKER DOC GOT SHUFFLED UP, HE GOT CREATIVE

by Richard Whittaker

April 14, 2011. Austin-based producer Jay Rosenkrantz was finishing his first feature, *Bet Raise Fold*. It was a straightforward documentary, examining the online poker boom of the Aughties through the ups and downs of three professional players.

April 15, 2011. The poker world explodes as federal prosecutors unseal *United States v. Scheinberg et al.*, an indictment alleging that the world's three biggest online poker sites violated the 2006 Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act. The websites were shut down, gamblers found their online accounts seized, and Rosenkrantz found himself editing yesterday's news. The outlaw days of virtual gambling had ended in lawsuits and fraud. "There was always a creeping fear that this was too good to be true," Rosenkrantz said. Poker's Black Friday changed his film. Now it was a detective drama.

For Rosenkrantz, the poker story began in the early Aughties when he was a film student at Boston University. Like college kids for generations, he played a few friendly hands, but he noticed a new phenomenon. He said, "Somebody would go off on their laptop and they'd be playing for hundreds of dollars more than we were playing at the table." He dabbled in online poker, and then got more serious. "I started winning and losing and going broke and trying it again," he said. As he spent more time at the virtual table, he found "an online poker community, all around the country, all around the world, talking poker strategy fanatically, obsessing about minutiae of how to play this hand, and sharing these amazing, heroic stories that

made me think, 'Maybe there's something to this.'" Finally, with a five-figure bankroll in hand, he said, "I moved to New York City with the idea that I'd write screenplays and play poker." Not exactly a risk-free bet: Both career paths have a bad track record of chewing up amateurs. "Exactly," Rosenkrantz laughed. "I've always been a bit of a risk-taker, and so both of them suited me well."

Rosenkrantz can thank online poker not just for the subject of his movie, but also for its writer and editor – Ryan Firpo, whom he met through an online poker forum. The pair first collaborated on a 30-minute documentary called "From Busto to Robusto: Captain Zeebo." Rosenkrantz described its central character as a "Napoleon Dynamite-esque character, living in this ramshackle house, but he'd made \$2 million playing online poker." After hearing a positive response to their short from the gambling community, and with investment capital from about a dozen of his high-roller friends, they started work on *Bet Raise Fold*. Rosenkrantz wanted to get away from the "shallow representation of poker on television" (something he would know something about: In 2009, he starred in G4's cartoonish gambling reality show *2 Months, \$2 Million*.) He said, "We thought it would be cool to show the evolution of poker from when it was played on a table to how it's played now, of the kind of people that are drawn to it, and the different dreams and motivations they have."

Black Friday didn't just shake up Rosenkrantz's little feel-good doc; in fact, his whole life changed. Many of his serious gam-

bling friends in New York left the U.S. so they could continue playing from Canada or Mexico. His own side business – a poker training website – was now basically worthless, with no newbie players to train. He reckoned: "All I have is the documentary, and it's in complete disarray. All we know is that we need to go shoot the characters and get their reactions. Then we need to figure out what happened and what does this mean."

Plans for a quick coda turned into two years of extra shooting and editing, with new interviews with experts and lawyers. Off-camera, sources from within big sites such as Full Tilt and PokerStars guided him as rumors of fraud and buyouts exploded. Meanwhile, audiences who had seen his original pre-Black Friday teaser trailer were still waiting for the finished product. "Tons of people were getting angry at us, saying, 'When is it going to be out? It's never going to be finished.'"

So just as the poker community gave him the story, the crew, and the money to make his film, Rosenkrantz hopes it will give him a core audience. Inspired by how *Indie Game: The Movie* marketed itself directly to gamers (see "Joystick Joy," March 9, 2012), he launched his feature this year with a seat at the game's biggest table, with a world premiere at the World Series of Poker. But the meat of the story isn't just for insiders: In the rise and fall of online gambling empires, Rosenkrantz sees a story that's about a lot more than a few hands of digital cards. He said, "This is like Enron. This is a multibillion-dollar scandal."

Bet Raise Fold: The Story of Online Poker is available now on VOD and via www.betraisefoldmovie.com.



AND I WOULD WATCH 100 FILMS

And I would watch 100 more ... which is convenient, because Austin film institutions are tallying up lists of must-watch movies for me left and right. Is 2014 the year of the cinematic syllabus?

The Paramount Theatre set the ball rolling, with its Paramount 100: A Century of Cinema: 100 films, screening from January through May, that catalog the history of the silver screen. After three months of silent pictures – e.g., *Intolerance*, *The Thief of Bagdad*, Chaplin's *The Kid* – the Congress Avenue institution will barrel on toward contemporary classics. There's a break during the summer for the annual Paramount Summer Classic Film Series, but then celebrations will recommence in the fall as the theatre approaches its centennial in October 2015. Badges for the first segment are available now.

But then a little ol' chain called the Alamo Drafthouse chimed in, this time with a slightly less conventional – and certainly less chronological – collection. Cribbing from the personal desert-island picks of six of its programmers, the Alamo 100 simply celebrates favorites: From rom-coms like *10 Things I Hate About You* and *You've Got Mail* to such cult classics as *A Clockwork Orange* and *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*, this list has "passion project" written all over it. And while it may be missing some obvious film history – *Citizen Kane*, for example – it's certainly not short on offbeat flavor. Leave it to the Drafthouse to unleash two of the *Star Wars* original trilogy, *Step Up 2: The Streets*, *Joe vs. the Volcano*, and more

than half of Wes Anderson's oeuvre to date on one wild list. These picks, too, will hit theatres in January.

All of which is to say: I'm sorry. Your New Year's resolution to finally learn how to budget your moviegoing expenses like an adult just got way more difficult, but for all the right reasons.

Also, you know, I'm sorry you have the Proclaimers stuck in your head. Except not at all.

– Monica Riese



Pledge Your Allegiance

Austin Film Society lets two iconic filmmakers square off in its new series

BY KIMBERLEY JONES AND MARC SAVLOV

We choose sides because they are an easy signpost to our innermost selves. Think of the title-match scraps that break out whenever film fans linger outside a theatre or head to the nearest coffee shop: Silent vs. sound. Westerns vs. musicals. Hepburn vs. Hepburn. I could tell you my favorite color is blue, but I hang my heart on my sleeve when I say I prefer Keaton to Chaplin.

When our office first heard word of the Austin Film Society's upcoming auteur showdown between François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard – both film-critics-turned-filmmakers and the two god-

heads of the French New Wave – there were no look-into-your-heart hard decisions to be made. That line in the sand was drawn a long time ago, our feet implacably planted with either Truffaut or Godard.

Of course, these either/or arguments demand absolute fealty, when in reality both filmmakers are essential. Pivoting week to week between directors, the AFS series offers an opportunity to reaffirm our case, reconsider the other team, and maybe even find a handshake place in-between. Stick around after the movies: I expect the Marchesa lobby will be lively.

– K.J.

The Austin Film Society's Godard vs. Truffaut series runs Jan. 3-Feb. 23, 2014, at AFS at the Marchesa (6226 Middle Fiskville).

Team Godard

It was Godard who pulled the trigger. The evidence is everywhere. Cinematic shell casings have scattered far and wide across the ensuing years, staccato echoes ricocheting around the mise-en-scène of film history, jagged shreds of shrapnel lodging arterial-deep in everyone, from the morally wounded Quentin Tarantino to less obvious infectees

like Arthur Penn (*Bonnie & Clyde*) and even Errol Morris, whose unending search for truth mirrors in documentary form Godard's own explosive probing into the corkscrewed trajectories of man, woman, love, and death. Face it: You can't spell Godard without g-o-d.

Breathless, released in March 1960, shattered the preexisting template for narrative filmmaking while still keeping a loose grip on Hollywood's iconic gangster/moll iconography. Jean-Paul Belmondo's sexy-tuggish Michel and a pixified and pixelated Jean Seberg as his American girlfriend are archetypes, but Godard's hypnotically spastic editing and subversive use of the camera eye marked a caustically gorgeous subversion of the Hollywood rule book, and everything changed.

Not so much so, however, that the director couldn't indulge himself in the marginally more traditional killing fields of romantic comedy. 1961's *A Woman Is a Woman*, pairing newcomer Anna Karina with Jean-Claude Brialy as a pair of bickering young lovers and Belmondo as the third point on a Godardian isosceles love triangle. The right angles are all wrong here, but true to his emerging form, Godard renders – in color and CinemaScope this time out, forsaking his 16mm black-and-white debut format – an alternately amusing and heavily stylized film unlike anything coming out of America at the time.

"Film is like a battleground: love, hate, action, violence, death ... in one word, emo-

tion," says cameoing director Samuel Fuller in Godard's *Pierrot le Fou*. Godard mirrors Fuller's battle-honed eye but adds Marxist, transgressive touches to one of the most randomly grand love stories ever committed to celluloid. Jean-Paul Belmondo and Godard muse Karina positively ooze *l'amour fou* in this, our favorite of all nouvelle vague explosions.

Weekend's (1967) gallows humor preceded by mere months the real-world French chaos of the May 1968 student riots and general strikes. Duplicitous husband and wife Roland (Jean Yanne) and Corinne (Mireille Darc) venture out into the French countryside only to find themselves trapped in a cyclical series of violently comedic travails that both predict and mirror *Mai '68* itself. Godard serves fair warning (as ever) that the future is unknown, and quite possibly dangerous. Chaos reigns.

Unlike most other French New Wave filmmakers working within the very structure Godard first blew apart (especially François Truffaut), his opening filmic fusillade is nothing short of an achingly wondrous assault and an emotionally turbo-charged battery committed upon the audience. He took Sam Fuller at his word and proceeded to bayonet hearts, minds, and the heretofore hidebound traditions of narrative, form, and function. Proto-punk and daringly DIY, Godard ripped it up and started over – and over and over, something he continues to do to this day.

– M.S.



Breathless

Team Truffaut

A bellow from behind a megaphone vs. a soft word in your ear: Godard wanted to start a revolution, and Truffaut wanted to tell stories. (*Merely* tell stories, Godard sneered to a journalist, just one in a long volley of public and private attacks against his former friend.) The story Truffaut told in *The 400 Blows* – his first film, and an unqualified masterpiece – was his own, inspired by his early truancy and an unhappy home life. After 14-year-old Jean-Pierre Léaud answered a newspaper ad for an open casting call, the story became his, too.

When we first meet Antoine Doinel, he is joyful, resourceful, cagey, and wounded – qualities that would blossom, sometimes brittle, throughout the Doinel cycle. In *The 400 Blows*, Antoine is always on the run: playing hooky, running away from home, and finally taking flight from a juvenile detention center, which ends with that devastating freeze-frame of Antoine on a beach, turning to face the camera. It's a bittersweet conclusion: He's free, but for how long? And would it be so awful to be caught? (Depends on who's doing the catching.)

In 1962, there was the short film "Antoine and Colette," about first love and fatal rejection. In 1968 came *Stolen Kisses*, and a shock – the round-faced imp had aged into a lean, hard-angled man, but still on the run: When he gets his dishonorable discharge from the army (more autobiography), Antoine practically gallops to the nearest bordello. Moving at a bebop beat, *Stolen Kisses* comically positions Antoine as a private eye. Soon enough, he's sleeping with the client's wife – but not before he



The 400 Blows

GODARD VS. TRUFFAUT

The Austin Film Society's Godard vs. Truffaut series runs Fridays and Sundays, Jan. 3-Feb. 23, at AFS at the Marchesa (6226 Middle Fiskville). Visit the AFS website (www.austinfilm.org) for complete details.

Godard: *Breathless*

Jan. 3, 8pm; Jan. 5, 2pm

Truffaut: *The 400 Blows*

Jan. 10, 8pm; Jan. 12, 2pm

Godard: *Pierrot le Fou*

Jan. 17, 8pm; Jan. 19, 2pm

Truffaut: *Stolen Kisses* and "Antoine et Colette"

Jan. 24, 8pm; Jan. 26, 2pm

Godard: *Weekend*

Jan. 31, 9:30pm; Feb. 2, 2pm

Truffaut: *Bed and Board*

Feb. 7, 8pm; Feb. 9, 2pm

Godard: *A Woman Is a Woman*

Feb. 14, 8pm; Feb. 16, 2pm

Truffaut: *Love on the Run*

Feb. 21, 8pm; Feb. 23, 2pm

nervously calls her "sir" by accident, in the film's most prized moment, and bolts out of the room, mortified.

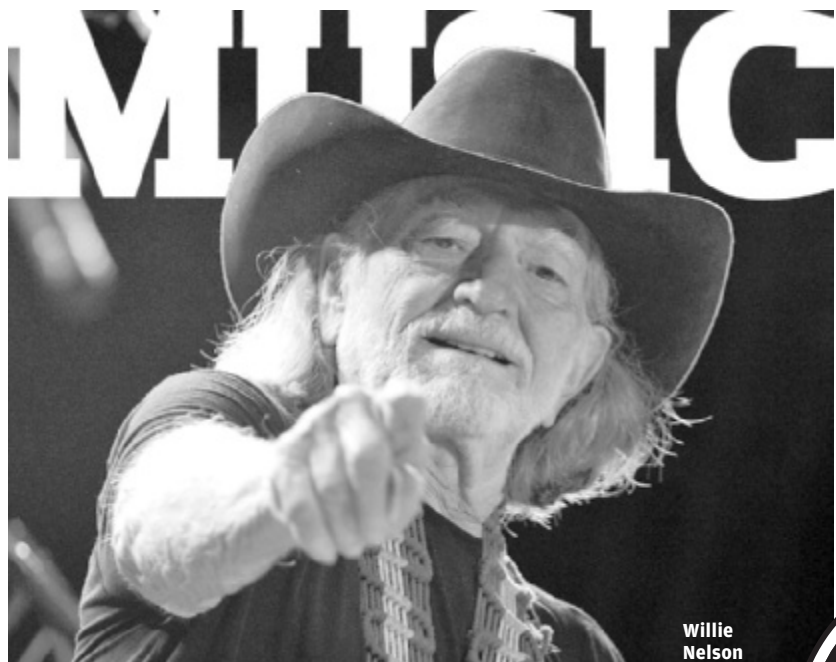
The fleet, *très charmant* *Stolen Kisses* feels thin by comparison to 1970's *Bed and Board*, which introduces Antoine as a husband to Christine (played by Claude Jade) and later a father. The first half is vibrant and bustling and bursting with life, a valentine to domesticity – until Antoine strays, and the viewer wonders if he will ever be comfortable rooted in one place. The movie wends its way back to a happy ending – Truffaut intended that to be the last word – but circumstance convinced him to make a bookend, 1979's *Love on the Run*.

It's a frustrating film. Truffaut was unhappy with it, feeling that Doinel – largely static, allergic to maturing – had become a man out of time ("Mickey Mouse can't grow old," in his own analogy). There are rich rewards in the cycle for regular watchers, with callbacks to characters, monuments, and camera movements. But *Love on the Run*, overloaded with flashbacks, presumes we haven't been paying attention. Still, there's a reason exes Christine and Colette conspire here to reunite him with an estranged girlfriend: Antoine inspires such devotion. Maybe Truffaut would have gone back again, were

it not for the brain tumor that cut his life tragically short in 1984. But *Love on the Run's* final flashback – to Antoine in *The 400 Blows*, fighting pointlessly against gravity in a 'round-we-go carnival ride and grinning all the while – is a poetically apt place to stop.

– K.J.





Willie Nelson

Robert Plant and
Patty Griffin

Shakey Graves

2013: That's a Wrap

I've had the feeling all year that everything in Austin has become unnecessary. The city doesn't need another food trailer, 5K race, tattoo shop, taco restaurant, or one more big hotel scraping the skyline. We keep expanding anyway, because when you live in a boomtown, expanding's what you do.

These ambitions no doubt extend to music – consider our two weekends of **ACL Fest** – yet somehow our cultural appetite supports this ridiculous bounty of live music that affords everyone a life in which they can catch a good show any night.

Austin's musical fabric remains so strong, in fact – grossing an estimated \$1.6 billion each year – that Toronto mayor **Rob Ford** – a man known more for smoking rock than listening to it – came to the city in October during ACL in search of the golden ticket to stimulate his city's recreational economy. Now more than ever, word's getting out.

Change is a given, but the dicey game of musical chairs in Austin's music scene witnessed a lot of shakeups in 2013. The **Circuit of the Americas** opened its unfortunately named **Austin360 Amphitheater** in April, which, except for the fact that it's an open-air venue with no cover in Central Texas, rivals the **Frank Erwin Center** as a place to see arena acts like **Lil Wayne** and **Arcade Fire**. The following month, **UT** unveiled plans to eventually raze the latter to make way for a medical school. Downtown in the DIY arena, **Red River's** club count increased with the **Empire Control Room**, a multi-stage compound with 300-degree video projections that fared well in its first year.

2013 also witnessed several struggling venues get purchased by recognizable figures in the music scene, like **Ginny's Little Longhorn Saloon**, which closed in August and reopened three months later under the guidance of **Dale Watson**. The **Poodle Dog Lounge** shut down in November, though **Beerland** owner **Randall Stockton** bought

the historic dive and will reopen its doors soon. Eastside hopeful **Frontier Bar** never quite found its footing in two years on Webberville Road, so it teamed with former **Lovejoys** booker/bartender **Marcello Murphy** and rebranded as the **Lost Well**, bringing the dingy haunt serious biker-punk cred in the process. The din of hope now eyes Red River's **Club de Ville**, closed since October after its owner racked up more than \$27,000 in unpaid rent.

While queer-friendly hot spot **Cheer Up Charlie's** getting sold out of its East Sixth space in exchange for "dive bar" spin-off **Wonderland** dominated conversation throughout December, no move made more headlines than **Antone's** – twice. The blues joint's owner **Frank Hendrix** followed February's sale of **Emo's** to local promotions giant **C3 Presents** by displacing Austin's "Home of the Blues" from its Downtown location in March (for the incoming **Infest**) and setting up shop in the space previously occu-



ried by the **Beauty Ballroom** on East Riverside. Hendrix put **Antone's** on the market six months later, eventually selling to a group rumored to want the old **Emo's** space on East Sixth. Ultimately, it felt like **Antone's** got passed around like a used Cadillac. What's more, the whole ordeal made it clear that Hendrix, long a fixture on the club circuit, has finally cashed out.

His onetime rivals **Transmission Events** hulked up by partnering with **Stratus Properties**, co-owner of the **ACL Live at the Moody Theater**, which gave the group increased booking opportunities; solid financial backing for its marquee festival, November's **Fun Fun Fun Fest**; and more muscle in Austin's concert promotions cage match against C3. After that announcement, **Stratus** announced another partnership with Latino music jubilee **Pachanga Fest**, cementing status as key behind-the-scenes investors around the city.

Indeed, 2013 proved memorable for Austin's increasingly jam-packed festival network, with **South by Southwest** showcasing

everything from its traditional overflow of unknown bands to exclusive club shows featuring superstars **Justin Timberlake** and **Prince**; **Austin Psych Fest** breaking in **Carson Creek Ranch** on the rural end of East Austin; and, in May, the public learning that **Auditorium Shores** will receive a necessary facelift. The latter, financed by C3 Presents to the tune of \$3.5 million, will in all likelihood displace **Fun Fun Fest**, **Reggae Fest**, and a portion of **SXSW** through 2014.

C3 doubled down in more ways than one, stretching **ACL Fest** into two weekends to meet demand for tickets. The effort was a success, but in an unprecedented display of Texas weather, a rainstorm flooded **Zilker Park** during the final day of weekend two, causing organizers to cancel Sunday's festivities. The rain couldn't stop the music: A spontaneous booking effort dubbed "**Refugee Fest**" displaced fans into club shows featuring headliners like **Atoms for Peace**, **Divine Fits**, and **Franz Ferdinand**. Even headliner **Lionel Richie** performed an intimate piano-only affair in some guy's marbled living room.

Festival, Texas, continued later that month with its hosting of the inaugural **Housecore Horror Fest**, which featured a truly heavy-weight lineup of metal acts – a significant attraction considering Austin's little-brother status to San Antonio regarding metal bookings.

Back on the everyday front, the corner of East Sixth Street and Comal cemented its champion status of live music, following 2012's anointment of the **White Horse** as a breakout venue with the emergence of nearby **Hotel Vegas**. Booker **Jason McNeely** and crew have cultivated a vibrant scene of young bands, and, in just over a year, transformed the space from a forgettable shithole into a staple venue at \$5 every night.

And while talk continues about the wealthy shift in Downtown development into a much-feared **Austin River Walk**, 2013 saw no serious signs of decay. **City Council** even showed it gave some semblance of a rat's ass about the clubs on Red River by naming the corridor an official cultural district, a designation that will hopefully allow the music cultivated there to remain vital.

That this happens is key. Cities, as with their bands, depend on reputation. ■

10 Best Austin Artists of 2013

- Willie Nelson:** 80 years old and still kickin' real ass, with two albums released and a tour bus crash to prove it.
- Patty Griffin: Robert Plant's** better half also unleashed two beautiful albums: *American Kid* and the long-shelved *Silver Bell*.
- League of Extraordinary Gz:** Local rap collective bottled tragedy and hope into two years of hard work with their release of *#LeagueShit*, the finest hip-hop album this city's ever seen.
- Shakey Graves:** One-man band packed every club he dragged his suitcase into, without a standard studio album to his name.
- Dale Watson:** The national spotlight finally shone on Austin's honky-tonk hero, with an appearance on **David Letterman** and his first **Austin City Limits** taping. Locally, the pompadoured 51-year-old also played the role of venue savior, buying ownership in **Ginny's Little Longhorn Saloon** and handling its fees for renovations.
- White Denim:** Onetime garage freaks grew up, teamed with **Jeff Tweedy**, and turned national ears with their musically nimble and creatively complex *Corsicana Lemonade*, then jammed on big stages alongside **Tame Impala** and the **Flaming Lips**.
- Bruce Robison & Kelly Willis:** The married duo, who lands somewhere between **Tammy & George** and **X's Exene & John Doe**, reached peak beauty on their first proper collaborative album, *Cheater's Game*.
- Zorch:** Dynamic experimental duo released a killer debut on **Sargent House** and opened one of the underground scene's most popular off-the-grid venues, the **Museum of Human Achievement**.
- American Sharks:** Heavy trio blasted eardrums on the road all year and restored our faith in rock & roll with a thundering self-titled debut LP.
- Shinyribs:** **Kevin Russell's** restless solo persona danced right out of the hardened larva shell of the **Gourds** and released **KUTX**-favored sophomore disc *Gulf Coast Museum*.



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Tracking the beards

BY TIM STEGALL

Dusty, Frank, and Billy at the Moody Theater, Oct. 9

GARY MILLER

Wednesday, Nov. 20, 2013, 3pm – Nashville, Tenn.: A tan, late-model SUV rolls down Broadway, pulling up in front of the Ernest Tubb Record Shop. Here, the Texas Troubadour hosted his *Midnight Jamboree* over the airwaves on WSM, Saturday nights after *The Grand Ole Opry*.

That's when the *Opry* was broadcast just around the corner in the Ryman Auditorium, “mother church of country music.” Across the street: Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, where a struggling young Willie Nelson sang to settle his bar tab.

The rear passenger door opens. My black, high-top sneakers are about to hit concrete when an impeccably manicured hand from the front seat claps down on my shoulder.

“Have you got enough money?” asks ZZ Top leader Billy F. Gibbons, peeling another \$100 bill off a huge roll.

Minutes earlier, a few blocks away at my Embassy Suites, he disrupted the flow just by walking in and looking like Billy F. Gibbons: green woolen dreadlock hat, Ray-Bans,

immaculately tailored black suit, and the most famous beard in rock & roll. He waves me over and all around gasp. (“Ohmigawd, it's ZZ Top!”) I will come to find that the whole world thinks Gibbons' name is ZZ Top.

Gibbons and I had initially met backstage in Austin's ACL Live at the Moody Theater a month earlier, where he apologized profusely for a last-minute band meeting with management nixing a planned interview. As a make-good, he then offered to fly me to Nashville.

“I'm glad I found you,” he hisses conspiratorially in his clipped, precise drawl. “I have to see a dentist. I'm in a lot of pain. I recommend that you plan some other activities while I get this tooth looked at.

“Say,” he adds, pulling out that roll and extracting an earlier \$100. “Have you got any walkin' around money?”

Gibbons and I had initially met backstage in Austin's ACL Live at the Moody Theater a month earlier, where he apologized profusely for a last-minute band meeting with management nixing a planned interview. As

a make-good, he then offered to fly me to Nashville, where he'd put me up and hang out with me and my recorder before ZZ Top played the Ryman. Now he's dropping me off for a record-shopping spree on his way to the dentist.

The interview doesn't happen in Nashville either.

Frank Beard Has Grown a Beard

“We bought a house in Devil's Cove on Lake Travis, the No. 2 party cove in the United States,” reveals Frank Beard, 64, about him and his family now splitting time between Austin and Houston. “It was excellent, until the lake went half-dry! We bought it in 2007, the lake went dry, then it filled back up in 2009. Then it went down again.

“I got tired of waiting on it, so we bought a second house on the main body. Now we're moving.”

As ZZ Top's laconic drummer speaks, I text my editor the biggest news here: “Frank finally gave in – he now has a small beard.”

Tour manager Pablo Gamboa calls it the “ZZ goatee.” It hardly rivals Billy Gibbons' and Dusty Hill's twin front beards, but it'll kill the endless jokes about the guy named “Beard” not having one.

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Billy and Dusty prepare to take the stage at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, 2013.



Beard likes *La Futura*, ZZ Top's first studio LP in nine years and 15th overall beginning in 1971, co-produced by another iconic beard, Rick Rubin.

"I like the fact that it was made more like the way we used to make records: getting together and jamming and playing. It's not overproduced. It's just pretty much an in-your-face, what-you-see-is-what-you-get record."

Beard's a font of anecdotes – historical, band-related, local.

"The Armadillo World Headquarters was one of the great places. I actually got fired down there, one time. I overindulged during the show, and our manager [Bill Ham] got so mad at me, he fired me. So, Dusty quit, because he fired me."

"[Ham] changed his mind."

Remember September 1, 1974: ZZ Top's First Annual Barn Dance & Barbecue at Memorial Stadium?

"Bill Ham put that whole thing together and did an incredible job," recalls Beard. "He managed to get the five biggest promoters in the United States to work together, which in itself was an incredible feat. He had Barry Fey, Don Fox, Alex Cooley, and Bill Graham. He said, 'We're gonna do this show in Austin,' and we weren't that big yet. We were starting to get big, but I didn't think we were that big. It always seemed like a pie-in-the-sky dream to me, that we could pull off something like that."

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“Then he got Darrell Royal to let us play in the football stadium. I don’t know that it ever happened before, but it certainly never happened afterward! The fans messed up his brand new AstroTurf football field, and he swore, ‘There will never be another show there.’”

Asked if his partner in rhythm gets enough vocal opportunities (only one on *La Futura*), he recalls an earlier ZZ Top event, at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas.

“Fifty thousand people were there, but you could hear this one voice crying out from the crowd, ‘LET DUSTY SING ONE!’ It was his mom! She was about 60 years old at the time. So, we’ve always got to think about that one: ‘Let Dusty sing one!’”

Beard nods. “I like the ones Dusty sings.”

Let Dusty Sing One

“That was my mother, yes!” laughs Dusty Hill, 64. “That’s true! The thing is, my mom, bless her heart, she was my biggest fan all my life. Every band I was in before this one, I did all the singing. So, she wasn’t quite used to the shared responsibility. A good Texas mother. Not everybody’s mother would yell that in front of everybody.”

Hill, besides being ZZ Top’s bassist and the Other Guy With a Beard, is also the member most likely to still look like he’s fresh off the cover of 1975’s *Fandango!*: crisp cowboy hat, Nudie rhinestone Buck Owens suit, boots. His twang perches somewhere between Beard’s elasticated drawl and Gibbons’ enunciation. He mentions that his only daughter once considered making music a family business.

“She’s never known any different. I remember when she was 12 years old, she thought she might want to be a keyboard player, to play in a band. And I didn’t really want her to do that, but whatever she wanted to do was fine by me. She’d only seen me play at the Cotton Bowl, though – places like that. So, the next night, I took her to a real funky blues club and I pointed out to her, ‘See the band there? They’re working. This is what working musicians do. Don’t go into it if you’re thinking about the Cotton Bowl and things like that.’

“I never heard anything about wanting to be a musician after that. She didn’t have a clear view of that, but she was 12. She’d only seen the large shows.”

Among ZZ Top’s landmark accomplishments, the trio created a new identity for Texans. You could wear a Stetson, but you were hipper than the hayseed stereotype.

“All we did was take what we were and brought it forward,” says Hill. “We obviously had a great amount of pride in being from Texas. It all bloomed out of the Seventies. We were bunched up with

Southern bands, and there’s nothing wrong with that at all. We just wanted to make it clear we weren’t a Southern band. That’s more like Georgia, I think. We were a Texas thing.

“In 1976, we did a tour called the Worldwide Texas Tour, taking Texas to the people. You may have heard of it. It was a longhorn steer, a buffalo, six buzzards, a couple of javelinas, and rattlesnakes. It was a really ambitious undertaking, especially at the time. And people, not for the first or the last time, said, ‘Well, you guys are crazy!’ Because we weren’t that well-known outside of certain areas, but we took this massive show out because we wanted to.

“It was a huge deal: The stage was in the shape of Texas, and it was slightly slanted towards the audience so that people could see the shape. Which meant Billy and I had to stand at an angle every night! But there was a huge screen at the back that looked like a desert scene. It started at sunrise, and it was timed to end at sunset. It was a very cool thing.

“I remember somewhere up north, there was a guy from the press we were talking to one afternoon, and he was pretty intimidated by the buffalo. So I got Ralph [Fisher, chief animal wrangler] to take him over and pet it. So, yeah, he was cool with it and everything. Then he got all cocky and was talking with some of his friends after we left, and as he walked by the buffalo, he slapped it on the rump. It took off!

“We didn’t see that guy at the show! In fact, I don’t think we ever saw him again. But you don’t want to get too comfortable around

those critters. Same thing could be said about us, I guess.

“We find ourselves in a nice position,” continues Hill. “Through the career, planned or unplanned – usually unplanned – we’ve taken different turns. And it’s culminated in a worldwide following that’s pretty substantial. It’s much appreciated by us, too. I can remember some people came aboard a few albums ago. A lot of people came aboard with *Eliminator* who didn’t know the stuff before. And some people are hardcore *First Album/Rio Grande Mud/Tres Hombres* fans. So, there’s a place for everybody there.

“When we did *Eliminator*, at the time, it was experimental for us. It obviously turned out real successful, but at the time, we caught crap about it from some of our old fans. They thought we were deserting our roots or our old style or whatever. I never understood it, because what we do in the studio, we don’t do for anyone else. We just do it. And that’s what was created then.

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“Fifty thousand people there, but you could hear this one voice crying out from the crowd, ‘LET DUSTY SING ONE!’

It was his mom!”
– Frank Beard

WATERLOO RECORDS

BEST SELLING ALBUMS OF 2013

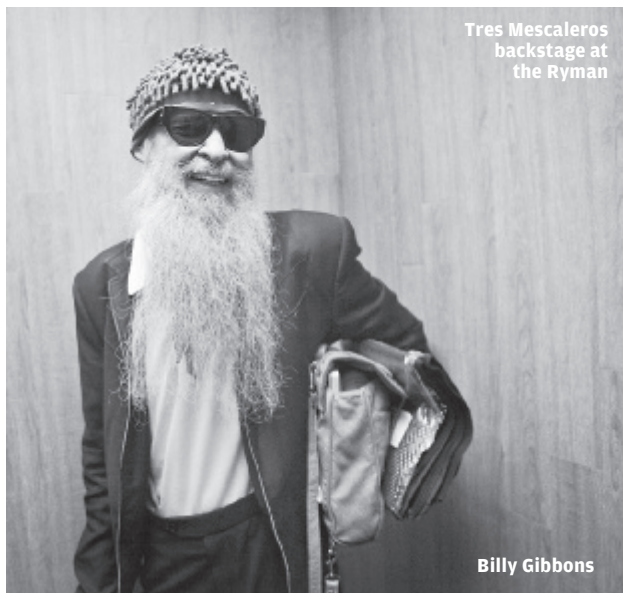
01. **Various Artists** KGSR Broadcasts Volume 21
02. **Gary Clark Jr.** Blak and Blu
03. **Daft Punk** Random Access Memories
04. **Tame Impala** Lonerism
05. **Patty Griffin** American Kid
06. **Bob Schneider** Burden Of Proof
07. **The National** Trouble Will Find Me
08. **Kelly Willis & Bruce Robison** Cheater’s Game
09. **Vampire Weekend** Modern Vampires of The City
10. **Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell** Old Yellow Moon
11. **The Black Angels** Indigo Meadow
12. **Alt-J** An Awesome Wave
13. **The Lumineers** self-titled
14. **Arcade Fire** Reflektor
15. **Alabama Shakes** Boys & Girls
16. **The Mavericks** In Time
17. **Queens Of The Stone Age** Like Clockwork...
18. **Jim James** Regions of Light and Sound of God
19. **Dale Watson** El Rancho Azul
20. **Black Joe Lewis** Electric Slave
21. **Guy Clark** My Favorite Picture of You
22. **Shinyribs** Gulf Coast Museum
23. **Macklemore & Ryan Lewis** The Heist
24. **Phosphorescent** Muchacho
25. **Atoms For Peace** AMOK
26. **Slaid Cleaves** Still Fighting The War
27. **Jason Isbell** Southeastern
28. **Mumford & Sons** Babel
29. **Sarah Jarosz** Build Me Up From Bones
30. **Various Artists** All ATX
31. **Steve Earle** The Low Highway
32. **Phoenix** Bankrupt!
33. **Townes Van Zandt** Sunshine Boy
34. **Foxygen** We Are the 21st Century Abassadors...
35. **Nick Cave** Push the Sky Away
36. **Carrie Rodriguez** Give Me All You Got
37. **Kendrick Lamar** Good Kid: M.A.A.D. City
38. **Arctic Monkeys** AM
39. **Dawes** Stories Don’t End
40. **Iron and Wine** Ghost on Ghost
41. **The Warren Hood Band** self-titled
42. **Chvrches** The Bones of What You Believe
43. **Haim** Days Are Gone
44. **Local Natives** Hummingbird
45. **The Civil Wars** self-titled
46. **Patty Griffin** Silver Bell
47. **Kanye West** Yeezus
48. **MBV** mbv
49. **Washed Out** Paracosm
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WHERE MUSIC STILL MATTERS



Tres Mescaleros backstage at the Ryman

Billy Gibbons



Frank Beard

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ZZ TOP



Dusty Hill

“But tastes change, and some fans want to hear certain things and that’s it. Some fans are open to everything. I assume it’s like that for everyone, but we’ve been very fortunate, even outside the U.S. – in Europe and Australia and South Africa, wherever. To this day, it still surprises me in a great way, like, ‘Damn! That’s cool!’

“It’s amazing that we still draw the way we do.”

BFG

“Yes,” affirms William Frederick Gibbons, 64. “That was the surprise, unannounced.”

“Who?” asks Dusty Hill.

“Jimmy Page showing up with Bad Company,” says Gibbons.

The two are now combing their memories backstage at San Antonio’s Alamodome about the Barn Dance & Barbecue.

“I tell you, that was about the last show we played in Austin for a long time,” points out Hill. “The football coach was really perturbed with us. He acted like we went out there ourselves and cut out that piece of AstroTurf in the shape of Texas. It looked huge in the paper, but it was about this big [indicating a tiny area with his hands].

“Plus, we didn’t do it. We were onstage! But it was very cool. It was a helluva lineup

on that show: Santana, Bad Company, Joe Cocker.”

“They speak of ‘Don’t Mess With Texas?’” laughs Gibbons. “Well, ‘Don’t Mess With Darrell [Royal]!’”

“You’ll never play Austin again!” huffs Hill. “He was damn near right!”

No rock band played in the stadium again until the Eagles in 1995.

“I know!” says Hill. “We were responsible for that! We have to take credit for that.”

Gibbons leans back and smiles at his

bandmate of four-plus decades. An elegant, impeccably groomed, and highly intelligent man with an old-world graciousness, Gibbons master-minded ZZ Top after his Houston garage psych band, the Moving Sidewalks, disbanded in 1969. Jimi Hendrix pronounced him one of the best young guitarists in America on TV, even if Dusty Hill likes to tease that the musical superhero called him “Billy Gibson.” Recently, a man recognized him in France as “ze Bones man!” for his reoccurring role on the Fox TV drama.

A master of pinch harmonics and gloriously distorted guitar tone, Gibbons, too, liked *La Futura*’s raw approach.

“I’d known Rick [Rubin] a couple of decades before I officiated working together,” he explains. “And there was a distinctive change in the dynamic. We were pals and now we’re business associates. But we were kinda happy to be going through the motions and doing it as he would have it. It was different and that was of interest to us, because we had done it from so many different angles. Here was the opportunity to say, ‘Hey! Well, maybe – just maybe – here’s something we haven’t tried yet!’

“Well, sure enough, we were on one tune and we started ... it was gentlemen’s hours. We didn’t get started until noon.

But Dusty leans over about 9pm, and says, ‘Y’know, we’ve done this song now for about nine hours. Do you think we can ask Rick how much better it’s gonna get?’

“So, through the glass, thanks to the microphone between us, I said, ‘Hey, Rick! We’ve been on this number for nine hours! Dusty and I were just wondering ...?’ And Frank was all smiles – he couldn’t hear what we were addressing. Rick says, ‘Oh, yeah! We got it on the second take, right after noon! We just like watching you guys play!’

“Through all this so-called electronica era – *Eliminator* spilling into *Afterburner* – granted, there was some experimentation that went far outside what could be considered rootsy blues. By no stretch of the imagination did it come close to the word tradition. This was experimentation at its zenith. And at the same time, you could stack the room with the latest technological breakthroughs, and we’ve still got one foot in the blues.

“Frank and Dusty have worked together since they were 14,” Gibbons continues. “They’re by no means reduced to just sidemen. Yet, the functionary positioning of sidemen is to lay out a platform that makes it the most beneficial springboard. Dude, I can go just crazy, and there they are, providing that platform. Probably one of the reasons it has worked so well for so long is they enjoy being the chassis, the railbed.

“I get to be the gear grinder.”

ZZ Top, and Gibbons personally, have strong, deep ties with Austin. Moving Sidewalks, whose second of only three reunion performances occurred at Austin Psych Fest in April, were inspired by and associated with Roky Erickson’s 13th Floor Elevators. Gibbons attended UT briefly in 1968, studying art and polit-

Dusty Hill still looks like he's fresh off the cover of 1975's Fandango!

Check out our new style column on page 33.



The Good Eye

Starring you, you sexy thing.

ical science. He credits pioneering KOKE FM as inspiration for *Fandango!*'s "Mexican Blackbird."

"Austin's become very sophisticated, and I think the groundswell that started long ago for it as a cultural and musical destination has solidified and it's become a source of importance for the players and the observers. Look at South by Southwest now. It draws people from all corners of the globe. It's really something to speak of."

"This is a question that comes up from time to time: 'Well, it ain't the Austin it used to be!' Well, it's never gonna be the Austin that it used to be! And that could be 50 years ago or 50 minutes ago. And the complainers can go and stand in that corner, but those who are willing to move forward and go with the flow have my vote. I certainly have no qualms about enjoying the novelty of the way it's progressing."

"You want to complain about traffic? Well, find me any community with any semblance of civic activity. At certain times of day, people are going to be out and about. Do you really want to spend all your time complaining about that?"

**Saturday, Dec. 7, 2013,
11pm – San Antonio**

"Tim, do you have pockets on you?"

Billy Gibbons waves a jar of peanut butter at me, the kind that's natural, which means it must kept refrigerated and stirred before using.

"Man, this is some good-spreadin' peanut butter," he says. "You need to take this home. You're going to need some crackers to spread it on, too."

Gibbons dashes into the next room, where ZZ Top changed into their stage clothes earlier in the evening, before playing to 14,000 people at the Alamodome. He returns with boxes of both Ritz crackers and Premium saltines.

"You need both for that peanut butter, man. And pockets aren't gonna do. We need a bag for you."

I reach into my small briefcase and pull out canvas grocery bags I carry around with me always as an exclusively Capital Metro commuter with erratic food-gathering opportunities.

"Outstanding!" he exclaims, shoveling everything on ZZ Top's dressing room rider into my bags. "Here, you need some Dr Pepper ... and Fanta Orange ... and ginger ale. Oh, man! Do you drink tea? Here, we've got all kinds a tea! Now you need something to sweeten it!"

Gibbons starts stuffing my pocket with packets of Sweet'N Low.

"Here, you need to drink more water! Have some fruit – that can be your breakfast! Peanuts – there's your protein! Mustard, honey ... oh, we've got juice! Here, you need your juice!"

He scoops up handfuls of plastic knives and forks. "You need some silverware, right?" Then he looks at me, profoundly.

"Always take the rider home with you. When you're on the road, you never know when the next meal will be."

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May6

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Bismeaux

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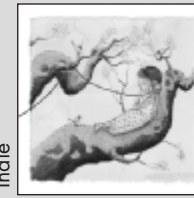
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STRING QUARTET
Whisper Of The Moon
Waterloo exclusive holiday pre-release. Lullabies and lightly-dark fairy tales to lift your spirits and order your mind. The perfect gift.
AVAILABLE 12/3



Indie

JD x MO MONTOYA
Young Impulse
Features a singing/rapping teen duo with styles of Pop, Rap, & R&B music.
\$5.99 CD



Indie

WILD BILL
Honky Tonk Holiday
This is the music from Wild Bill's musical, Honky Tonk Holiday. This collection of sordid songs is sure to please even the grumpiest grinch.
AVAILABLE SOON



Indie

THE WYLDZ
Human Rise
Like a punch in the face, or a gift from the rock n' roll gods, The Wyldz reminds us of the classics and adds a lusty, modern twist.
\$9.99 CD



Indie

PHANTOM LAKES
Half-Light
Somewhere in between Fugazi and Sigur Ros, with clear post-punk, post-rock and pop elements.
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THE NIGHTOWLS
Good As Gold
The Nightowls not only channel the Motor City's classic dancin'-in-the-street beats; they build on them to create an irresistible neo-soul sound that's all their own.
\$7.99 CD



Indie

NATHAN FELIX
The Curse, The Cross & The Lion
A cinematic symphony that explores 6 movements through a story of good vs. evil.
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Music

Browse & search
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events:

austinchronicle.com/calendar

THEATRE:
Shen Yun
The Long Center, 7:30pm



FRIDAY
27

MUSIC: Old 97's Antone's
MUSIC: The Relatives Continental Club
COMEDY: The Doctor Who Theatre Holiday Special Institution Theatre, 8pm
VISUAL ARTS: "Arcadian Rhapsody" Women & Their Work

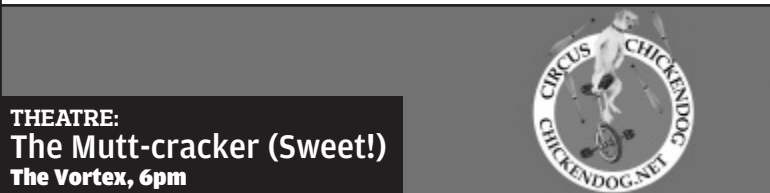
MUSIC:
Mother Falcon & Peter Stopschinski
Central Presbyterian Church



SATURDAY
28

COMEDY: Mike Lawrence w/ Bob Khosravi Cap City, 8 & 10:30pm
COMEDY: Esther's Follies Esther's Pool, 8 & 10pm
THEATRE: This Wonderful Life ZACH Theatre, 2:30 & 7:30pm
MUSIC: ST 37 Fest Carousel Lounge, 7pm
MUSIC: Public Enemy Mohawk

THEATRE:
The Mutt-cracker (Sweet!)
The Vortex, 6pm



SUNDAY
29

THEATRE: Shen Yun The Long Center, 2pm
MUSIC: Hayes Carll Emo's
COMMUNITY: Holiday Light Show Mozart's Coffee Roasters, 6-11pm

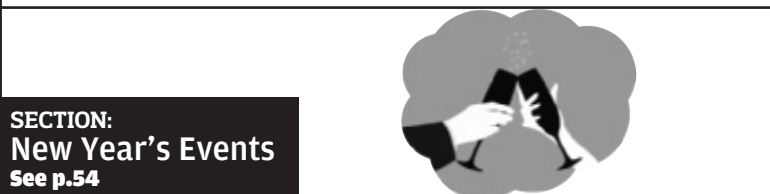
MUSIC:
EYEHATEGOD
Red 7



MONDAY
30

COMEDY: Same Year's Eve The Hideout Theatre, 8pm
COMEDY: Avalanche Stand-up Holy Mountain, 9pm
COMMUNITY: Holiday Lights & Ice Omni Barton Creek, 2-11:30pm

SECTION:
New Year's Events
See p.54



TUESDAY
31

COMEDY: New Year's Eve The Hideout Theatre, 8 & 10:30pm
MUSIC: T-Bird & the Breaks, Marmalakes, Holiday Mountain Spider House

Science

THEATRE:
The Dionysium: Science!
Alamo Drafthouse Village, 7pm



WEDNESDAY
1

MUSIC: The Lorax, the Unmothered, Tia Carrera Holy Mountain
COMMUNITY: Holiday Light Show Mozart's Coffee Roasters, 6-11pm

COMEDY:
Jackie Kashian
Cap City, 8pm



THURSDAY
2

THEATRE: The Mutt-cracker (Sweet!) The Vortex, 6pm
COMEDY: Carlos & Chrissy Are Twins! ColdTowne Theatre, 8:30pm
VISUAL ARTS: West End Gallery Night West Sixth Street, 6-8pm

THEATRE:
Blue Man Group
The Long Center, 8pm



FRIDAY
3

CLASSICAL MUSIC: Bach's Herd of Harpsichords IV First Presbyterian Church, 8pm
COMEDY: Jackie Kashian Cap City, 8 & 10:30pm
THEATRE: The Mutt-cracker (Sweet!) The Vortex, 6pm

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepherd



An already-distinctive man (367 pounds) was arrested in Everett, Wash., for a December grocery store shoplifting because he was also wearing an easily noticed purple sock and over two hours later was still wearing it when police caught up to him and questioned him.

NUCLEAR TRACTOR PULL

Redneck Geek: Edward Teller, the famous theoretical physicist known as the “father of the hydrogen bomb” for his work on the World War II-era Manhattan Project, died in 2003, but his daughter Rene told the *Free Press* of Kinston, N.C., in November that she had recently discovered two of her father’s precious mementos at a thrift shop near Kinston during a road trip to visit relatives. “[Father’s] work was so demanding” she said, that he needed “recreational activities” and tried “the things you’d suspect,” like chess. However, the two mementos were awards Teller had won at tractor-pull competitions. “He’d show up at major tractor pulls” riding just a Cub Cadet mower, Rene said, and “leave the competition in the dust.” (Teller’s secret, she said, was using “nuclear fusion-based engines,” which sponsors ultimately had to ban.)

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

“It will be sort of my unique factor,” said indulgent customer Lucy Luckayanko, describing her then-upcoming \$3,000 eyeball jewelry implant from New York City’s Park Avenue Laser Vision – the insertion of a piece of platinum between the sclera (the white part) and the clear conjunctiva. Actually, said the shop’s medical director, Dr. Emil Chynn, to WNEW-TV in November, it’s “pretty safe.”

Restaurant Start-ups: 1) Japan’s “cat cafes” allow the pet-starved to relax while dining by caressing house kittens that roam the facilities, but similar eateries have opened recently featuring owls (the Fukurou Sabou in Tokyo, Owl Family in Osaka). The owls are not caressable and easily spooked by excessive

noise. 2) Liu Pengfei’s Five Loaves and Two Fish restaurant in Fuzhou, China, is losing money rapidly despite overflow dining crowds, according to a December *China Daily* report, because he allows customers to pay only what they wish. (They must also wash out their bowls.) “I want to continue,” he said, “as I believe the feeling of trust is contagious.”

CUTTING-EDGE SCIENCE

It may be a cliché of domestic conflict, but physicists recently, earnestly, tackled the dynamics of toilet bowl “splash back.” A stream delivered by a standing male, because it travels five times farther than a seated male’s, produces a splash easily reaching seat and floor – even without factoring in the “well-known” Plateau-Rayleigh instability – the inevitable disintegration of a liquid stream “six or seven inches” after its formation. Short of recommending that men be seated, the researchers (speaking to a November conference) suggest “narrowing the angle” by “standing slightly to one side and aiming downwards at a low angle of impact.”

The Human-Rodent Connection: University of British Columbia researchers, intent on judging whether blocking dopamine D4 receptors can reduce the urge to gamble in subjects other than humans, claimed in October to have devised a test that works on the dopamine receptors of rats – especially those with a gambling problem. With a slot machine-like device dispensing sugar pellets, the researchers claimed they offered rats measured risks and even determined that rats are more likely to take risks immediately following a close loss (as are humans).

MEDICAL MARVELS

Seven years ago, Michael Spann, now 29, suddenly doubled over in pain that felt like he “got hit in the head with a sledgehammer,” and began crying blood. Despite consulting doctors, including two visits with extensive lab work at the venerable Cleveland Clinic, the Antioch, Tenn., man told Nashville’s *The Tennessean* in October that he is resigned to an “idiopathic condition” – a disease without apparent cause. Spann’s main wish now is just to hold a job, because fellow workers, and customers, tend not to react well to a man bleeding from the eyes (even though his once-daily episodes have become more sporadic).

THE KINGDOM

The sex life of the anglerfish, according to a Wired Science interview in November with evolutionary biologist Theodore Pietsch, is as dismal as any on planet Earth. According to Wired: “Boy meets girl, boy bites girl, boy’s mouth fuses to girl’s body, boy lives the rest of his life attached to girl, sharing her blood and supplying her with sperm.” Only 1% of males ever hook up with females (because the ocean floor is dark), said Pietsch. The rest starve to death as virgins.

Professor Pietsch may know his anglerfish, but Marlene Zuk of the University of Minnesota knows her insects, including the mating mechanics of damselflies, crickets, and cockroaches, which she described for *The New York Times* in November. The damselfly male’s penis is a Swiss Army knife-like contraption (necessary to access the female’s well-hidden eggs). The cricket easily produces sperm, but then awaits its draining through a “long stem” “for several minutes” to achieve fertilization. Cockroaches, Professor Zuk wrote, mate by “blind trust” as they hook up back-to-back and, with no neck, cannot even glance over a shoulder to check on their work.

Elephant Whisperer: Nirmala Toppo, 14, is apparently the one to call if wild elephants overrun your village, especially in India’s Orissa and Jharkhand states, which are still home to hundreds of marauding pachyderms. Her latest pied-piper act, in June, emptied a herd of 11 out of the industrial city of Rourkela. Said Toppo: “First I pray and then talk to the herd. I tell them, ‘This is not your home. You should return where you belong.’” Somehow, the elephants followed her for miles, away from the town, according to an October BBC News dispatch.

READERS’ CHOICE

In October, an Ohio judge turned down a petition by Donald Miller Jr. asking to be ruled “alive.” “You’re still deceased as far as the law is concerned,” Probate Judge Allan Davis told him, because state law requires challenges to his declaration of death (obtained by Miller’s wife in 1994) to be filed within three years. Said Judge Davis, “I don’t know where that leaves you.”

Visit Chuck Shepherd daily at
www.newssoftheweird.blogspot.com
(or www.newssoftheweird.com).

Send your weird news to: Chuck Shepherd, PO Box 18737, Tampa, FL 33679 or weirdnewstips@yahoo.com.
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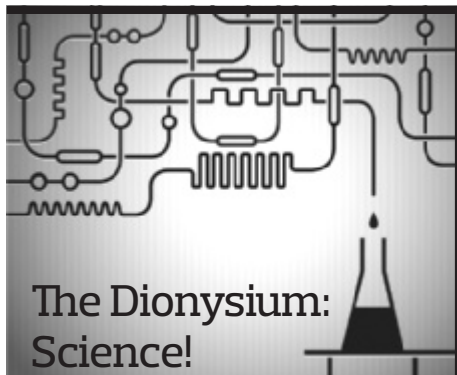
Send your questions to
luvdoc@austinchronicle.com.

AC austinchronicle.com/luvdoc

THEATRE

OPENING

THE JOURNEY OF TAM This is the Austin premier of **Alex Garza's** one-man fantasy adventure about "a hero who goes on a series of journeys in a quest to find his father and his destiny of being the leader he was meant to be." *Jan. 2-4. Thu.-Fri., 8pm; Sat., 11am & 8pm. City Theatre, 3823-D Airport, 512/524-2870. \$8 (\$5, students, ages 12 and younger).* www.citytheatreaustin.org.



The Dionysium: Science!

The monthly conflagration of **intellectual and wine-fueled entertainment** celebrates the current epoch's *true* religion: SCIENCE! With your hosts **L.B. Deyo** and **Buzz Moran** offering a lively program, to be sure; but all we can think about is the empirical shit hitting the fan as **Lance "Fever" Myers** debates **Dr. Eamonn "The Irish Gadfly" Healy**. Bonus: **Graham Reynolds** and his **Golden Arm Trio**, and maybe – O blessed Copernicus, please! – they'll do a version of "Telstar"? *Wed., Jan. 1, 7pm. Alamo Drafthouse Village, 2700 W. Anderson, 512/459-7090. \$10. www.dionysium.com.*

CLOSING

A CHRISTMAS STORY Philip Grecian's version of **Jean Shepherd's** holiday classic gets the full Zach treatment as **Dave Steakley** directs the show for your nostalgic yuletide enjoyment, with **Marco Perella** as the Adult Ralph and the story's narrator, with **Keaton Brandt** as the Young Ralphie, **Meredith McCall** as Mother, and **Chris "Fra-gee-lee" Gibson** as the Old Man. *Through Dec. 29. Tue.-Sat., 7:30pm; Sun., 2:30pm. (Note: no show on Dec. 24; see website for more information). Zach Theatre, 1510 Toomey, 512/476-0541. \$18-65. www.zachtheatre.org.*

THIS WONDERFUL LIFE **Richard Robichaux** directs this **Steve Murray** one-man adaptation of the beloved Capra film *It's a Wonderful Life*, which sounds like a pretty decent holiday treat, y'know? Like, why the hell not? But then you learn that **Martin Burke** will be playing *all 37 characters from the movie himself*



Shen Yun: Reviving Five Thousand Years of Civilization

The New York-based company tours their acclaimed spectacle, a journey into a long-lost world of ancient legends, heavenly palaces, and the dusty plateaus of the Middle Kingdom. Music, dance, animated backdrops – **an incredible show of talent and skill and artistic dedication.** *Dec. 27-29. Fri., 7:30pm; Sat., 2 & 7:30pm; Sun., 2pm. Long Center for the Performing Arts, 701 W. Riverside, 512/457-5100. \$50 and up. www.shenyunperformingarts.org.*

– and you realize it's more like an **OMG-don't-miss-this-show** situation at Zach Scott this holiday season. *Through Dec. 29. Wed.-Sat., 7:30pm; Sun., 2:30pm. (See website for more information.) Zach Theatre, 1510 Toomey, 512/476-0541. \$18-65. www.zachtheatre.org.*

DANCE

AUSTIN BALLROOM DANCERS HOLIDAY GALA Feature live music from the **Nash Hernandez Quintet.** *Sat., Dec. 28, 7:45pm-12mid. Dance Institute, 6612 Sitio Del Rio. 512/989-3939. \$30 (\$25 in advance). www.austinballroomdancers.org.*

LOOKING FOR DANCE CLASSES? Swing? Ballet? Tango? Hip-hop? Pole-dancing? We've got a myriad of classes listed online, all manner of schools waiting to get your feet firmly on the floor to joyful moves.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

GILBERT & SULLIVAN CHORUS SING-ALONG Maestro **Leonard Johnson** leads this afternoon of sing-alongs of classic choruses from some of Gilbert & Sullivan's favorite operettas. Music and lyrics will be provided. *Sun., Jan. 5, 3pm. Westminster Harris Bell Hall, 4100 Jackson. Free. www.gilbertsullivan.org.*

The Mutt-cracker (Sweet!)

Darren Peterson's **Circus Chickendog** presents a fabulously fun show for all ages, featuring brilliant rescue dogs performing circus feats, a talking parrot, world-class juggling, unicycling, live music, and many more magical acts. **We recommend the show highly**, because you can imagine how awesome something like this could be, right? And then you actually see it? And, whoa, it's even better. *Nightly, Dec. 27-Jan. 5, 6pm. The Vortex, 2307 Manor Rd., 512/478-5282. www.chickendog.net.*



CLOSING

02 NORTH GALLERY: WE INVENTED LOVE SOMEHOW AND WITHOUT MERCY OR INSTRUCTION Never mind the music, friend: What **Bob Schneider** does with visual arts is at least equally compelling, and this is a show of the man's newest mixed-media work. Recommended. *Through Jan. 4. 2830 E. MLK, 512/477-9328. www.flatbedpress.com.*

CO-LAB: 1000 YEARS FROM NOW, NOW, NOW, NOW, NOW **Claude van Lingen's** paintings, drawings, and mixed-media constructions portray the linear concepts of space and time and the layering of the physical, conscious, and subconscious experiences we might have as individuals or as a global collective. *Through Jan. 4. Wednesdays, 5:30-8pm, and by appointment. N Space, 905 Congress. www.co-labprojects.org.*

DAVIS GALLERY: HOLIDAY SHOW Reckon we've trumpeted the goodness of the Davis venue so often in these pages that you *know* this show's gonna be a knockout. The best of the best from the gallery's regulars – **David Leonard, Caprice Pierucci, Randall Reid, Susu Meyer, Sam Yeates, Faustinus Deraet**, and more – decking the walls with examples of human-made beauty both intricate and simple. *Through Jan. 4. 837 W. 12th, 512/477-4929. www.davisgalleryaustin.com.*

FLATBED PRESS: SUITE SYMPHONY Witness here the bold color and patterns of **Anne Conner's** woodcuts, with selections from her Brentwood, Park, and Fleetwood suites of prints. *Through Jan. 4. 2830 E. MLK, 512/477-9328. www.flatbedpress.com.*

LAGUNA GLORIA: FURTHEST WEST Artist **Erin Curtis** marries her interests in traditional craft and textiles, gendered labor, and modernist architecture and furniture, to create a colorful, painterly installation for this elegant venue-in-the-woods of the Contemporary Austin. *Through Jan. 5. Laguna Gloria, 3809 W. 35th. 512/458-8191. \$5 (free, Tuesdays). www.thecontemporaryaustin.org.*

PRO-JEX GALLERY: BEAD, BOOK, AND BODY This tripartite show features the beaded jewelry of **Beth McElhaney**, a book signing of **Natalie Flowers'** new book *I Heard What You Weren't Saying*, and photos chosen by **Neil Coleman** representing the human body. *Through Dec. 29. 1710-C S. Lamar, 512/203-2009.*

RADICAL TRANSFORMATION: MAGNUM PHOTOS INTO THE DIGITAL AGE The **Harry Ransom Center** presents this stunning overview of **images that have shaped history** and revolutionized photography's influence on modern culture in the last century. Photographic documents by Magnum founders **Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, David "Chim" Seymour, George Rodger**, and many more – right up to these Internetted times. *Through Jan. 2014. 300 W. 21st, 512/471-8944. www.hrc.utexas.edu.*

SLUGFEST GALLERY: JILL THRASHER Here's a fine display of the acclaimed artist's fresh and immediate prints – produced during life-drawing sessions, **within the duration of each model's pose.** Figurative beauty, impeccably captured and printed; so, of course, recommended. *Through Dec. 29. Saturdays, 2-6pm. 1906 Miriam, 512/477-07204. www.slugfestprints.com.*

SOUTHPOP: THE AUSTIN-SAN FRANCISCO CONNECTION Holy cross-pollination, Sixties-era Batman! Make a beeline to this visually amplified tale of two cities and the art they together and separately wrought. *Through Jan. 4. 1516-B S. Lamar, 512/440-8318. www.southaustincenter.org.*

VISUAL ARTS

EVENTS

WEST END GALLERY NIGHT: FIRST THURSDAY A new year, and new reasons to visit this fine array of West Sixth galleries within walking distance of one another: F8 Gallery, Lotus Gallery, Russell Collection, Stephen L. Clark Gallery, Sterling Images, Wally Workman Gallery. See website for map. *Thu., Jan. 2, 6-8pm. 512/478-4440. www.artaustin.org.*

OPENING

WALLY WORKMAN GALLERY: ANGIE RENFRO You know what's great about Renfro's paintings? Besides how impressively they capture the real world while retaining the rich textures of this-is-an-actual-painting-process-occurring-here? Besides the, ah, Balkanesque color palette so richly brought to bear in these oils? This: the landscapes. The *industrial* landscapes, specifically, capturing scenes of our species' technological additions, once robust and now abandoned, in the nonhuman scheme of things. They're like monuments of something, testaments to something. Stark and beautiful and a little eerie. Reception: *Sat., Jan. 4, 6-8pm. Exhibition: Through Jan. 25. 1202 W. Sixth, 512/472-7428. www.wallyworkmangallery.com.*



Blue Man Group

They're blue. They're men. They're in a group. And of course you're already well aware of the energetic, surprising, amazement-inducing sights and sounds of them, the large-scale technotrickery and cunning they employ, the physical vigor and timing and skill required to accomplish their **beat-happy marvels of motion and arch mindfuckery.** Go see these guys and start your new year off with a big blue bang! *Jan. 3-4. Fri., 8pm; Sat., noon, 4pm, 8pm. Long Center for the Performing Arts, 701 W. Riverside, 512/457-5100. \$29 and up. www.thelongcenter.org.*

NOON YEAR'S EVE Just because midnight is after your under-12 children's bedtime doesn't mean they can't celebrate. Admission gets the kids snacks, \$5 worth of tokens, and a balloon drop at noon. 10:30am. Pinballz Arcade, 8940 Research #100, 512/420-8458. \$7 per child. www.pinballzarcade.com.

WINTER WONDERLAND SOCIAL DANCE Get your formal attire cleaned up and enjoy three rooms of dancing in various styles with instructors on hand to help newbies. Champagne and desserts keep your blood sugar up. 9pm-1am. Go Dance, 2525 W. Anderson, 512/339-9391. \$40 (by Dec. 29). www.godancestudio.com.

Theatre, Art, & Comedy

AUSTIN'S NEW YEAR A performance from Sarah Hickman and fireworks cap off this evening of art, film, and music for the whole family. It's kinda like every other day in Austin only condensed into a few hours of citywide partying. 5-10pm. Auditorium Shores, 920 W. Riverside, 512/974-7700. Free. www.austintexas.gov/any.

BENDING BROADWAY Theatre folk will finally have the chance to sing the songs they love that were written for the opposite sex. Throw in hors d'oeuvres, Champagne, and a silent auction, and you have a stellar benefit for Austin Theatre Project. 9pm. Center Stage Texas, 2826 Real St., 512/391-1800. \$25. www.austintheatreproject.org.

IMPROV EXTRAVAGANZA The Hideout invites you to ring in the new year improv-style, with an evening of games and skits. Candy for the early show and Champagne for the night owls. 8 & 10:30pm. The Hideout Theatre, 617 Congress, 512/476-0473. \$30. www.hideouttheatre.com.

ESTHER'S COMEDY BLOWOUT Laugh in the new year with Austin's go-to troupe for all things timely, funny, and magical. Admission gets you Tex-Mex bites, Champagne toast, and, of course, a show. Two shows, 8 & 10:30pm. Esther's Pool, 525 E. Sixth, 512/320-0198. \$55 (\$65, reserved). www.esthersfollies.com.

RADIO SBCT Four classic radio shows performed live with sound effects. Take a trip back in time as you look to the new year. 8pm. Sam Bass Community Theatre, 600 N. Lee St., Round Rock, 512/244-0440. \$18. www.sambasstheatre.org.

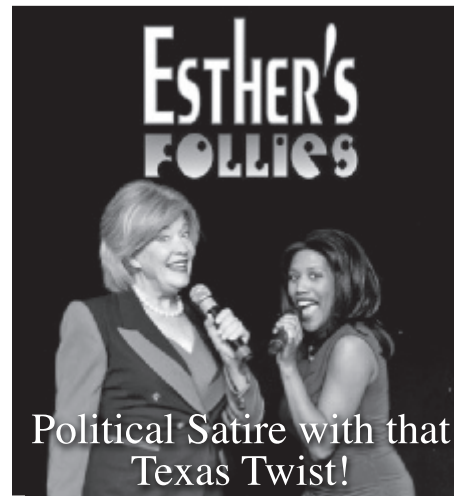


COMMITMENT DAY 5K RUN/WALK Feed a cold, starve a fever, and run through your hangover. That's how the saying goes, right? 10am. Palmer Events Center, 900 Barton Springs Rd. \$25 and up. www.commitmentday.com/austin.

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OPAL DIVINE'S Opal's black-eyed peas are an Austin tradition on New Year's Day, but you can have the eggs Benedict as well. Wash it all down with a Divine Bloody Mary. All locations. 10am-3pm. Opal Divine's.

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NEW REVIEWS

DHOOM: 3

D: Vijay Krishna Acharya; with Aamir Khan, Abhishek Bachchan, Uday Chopra, Katrina Kaif, Jackie Shroff. (NR, 172 min., subtitled)

Not reviewed at press time. In its first few days of release, this third installment in Bollywood's *Dhoom* franchise has reportedly topped the year's box-office record. It's a Hindi action thriller in which a circus entertainer robs a corrupt bank in Chicago. Consequently, two policeman from Mumbai are assigned to the case.

— Marjorie Baumgarten

Tinseltown South

47 RONIN

D: Carl Rinsch; with Keanu Reeves, Hiroyuki Sanada, Kô Shibasaki, Tadanobu Asano, Min Tanaka, Jin Akanishi, Masayoshi Haneda, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Rinko Kikuchi, Gedde Watanabe. (PG-13, 119 min.)

The historically based story of the 47 Ronin is one of the great tales of Japanese history. Two lords are in a power struggle at the royal court. One is finally driven to assault the other. This violates court etiquette, so the offending lord is forced by the shogun to commit seppuku (ritual suicide by disembowelment). The other lord receives no punishment. The death of their lord to whom they have sworn fealty means his samurai become ronin, a position without status and of great shame.

The ronin are cautioned by the shogun not to seek revenge on the other lord. There are a number of reasons that they must delay such plans anyway. It is bad enough that they have been lowered to ronin status, but they are further shunned for not avenging their master. It turns out they were just biding their time. After two years of planning, laying low, and defusing suspicion they finally make their move.

The story has been memorialized in plays, operas, at least six films, and a variety of television shows. The films include a notorious two-part version by Kenji Mizoguchi (*Ugetsu*) and Hiroshi Inagaki's more well-known *Chushingura*. This background is a way of providing context for this modern adaptation that, in classic Hollywood style, jettisons almost everything that is historic, interesting, and noble about the tale. This time out, the story isn't really about honor and obligation, which is relayed through the planning and tension that builds during the two-year wait. Instead, *47 Ronin* is about magic, the fantastic, a witch, and CGI monsters that adorn a muddled and confused plot.

The protagonist is Kai (Reeves), a half-breed waif found and adopted by Lord Asano (Tanaka). The lord's samurai fear and shun Kai, believing that he is half devil child. As he grows up slightly feral in Asano's palace, Kai's ally and developing love interest is Mika (Shibasaki), the lord's only child. Eventually, as in the original tale, the shogun (Tagawa) comes visiting, as does the evil Lord Kira (Asano). In the palace, using magic, his witch companion (the alluring Kikuchi) tricks Asano into assaulting Kira. The shogun not only insists that Asano commit seppuku but also that after a year of mourning, Mika will marry Kira. The evil lord immediately sends Kai off



The Wolf of Wall Street

to be sold into slavery and has Ôishi, the leader of Asano's samurai, thrown into a pit where he languishes for a year.

When Ôishi emerges, seemingly none the worse for wear, he begins to assemble the remaining ronin to finally exact their revenge on Kira, despite the shogun's warning. The very first thing he does is seek out Kai to join their cause. Instead of two years of scheming and planning, this plotting is relatively rushed. There is a premature attempt to murder Kira that turns out to be a carefully laid trap, which almost all the ronin mysteriously survive.

The film moves so slowly that snails pass it, with dialogue so predictable that one could be shouting out lines before they are spoken. The final action sequence, which the whole film builds toward, is relatively brief and abrupt. It's perplexing how this elaborate, multimillion-dollar historical epic ended up assigned to first-time director Carl Rinsch, especially given how clearly overwhelmed he is by the task. The greater mystery is how the 50-year-old Reeves ended up cast as a much younger Japanese half-breed in this mangling of a classic.

(As a side note, Gedde Watanabe plays the leader of a traveling troupe of performers. This was notably and perhaps sadly disappointing at the Alamo Drafthouse where I saw it. The month's coming-attractions trailer features what will always be Watanabe's defining moment as Long Duk Dong falling out of a tree in *Sixteen Candles*, screaming, "Ohhh, sexy girlfriend ... Bonzai!!")

★ — Louis Black
Alamo Lakeline, Alamo Slaughter Lane, Barton Creek Square, CM Cedar Park, Hill Country Galleria, CM Round Rock, Southpark Meadows, CM Stone Hill Town Center, Highland, Gateway, iPic, Lakeline, Metropolitan, Moviehouse, Tinseltown North, Westgate

JUSTIN BIEBER'S BELIEVE

D: Jon M. Chu. (PG, 91 min.)

Dear Biebs,

After seeing this film, I feel more inclined to stage an intervention than write a review. But maybe you're already hip to your need to make some changes in your life. On Tuesday, the day before this film was released on Christmas Day, you sent out a cryptic tweet that said you were "officially retiring." Yet that was followed by another tweet 40 minutes later assuring your fans that you would never leave them because "being a belieber is a lifestyle." Dude, it's that lifestyle that's causing you trouble. Your music isn't half-bad (as this film ably demonstrates); there's no need to retire from the business. But that lifestyle, which has become fodder for tabloid headlines and allowed you to become an international pop idol before you were a fully formed adult, is toxic to your system. What you need to do, with all due respect, is grow up.

It's the rare 19-year-old who's in a position to commission and co-produce a film about himself. Clearly, with this kind of involvement, we can hardly expect *Justin Bieber's Believe* to be an impartial document. This film is just another way to repackage your music and celebrity, couched in the trappings of a holiday gift. Judging from the number of people in the theatre I saw this film in on opening day, it's not going to be a box-office sensation. But I can guarantee your screen surrogate will be invited to lots of girls' pajama parties over the next few years.

Obviously, I am not part of the target audience for this film, but I suspect those who are will enjoy it very much. There is a

lot of performance footage of you singing and dancing, and the hyperactive stage act (designed by your hand-picked film director, who also helmed your first film) swirls around you in true arena-rock style. There's also lots of backstage material and testimonies from your Svengali Scooter Braun and other mentors (Usher and will.i.am), musicians and dancers, and, of course, the fans. At one point, black-and-white footage of Beatlemaniac girls screaming their heads off in another era is intercut into your performance footage — just to show, well, I'm not sure what. Maybe that there's nothing new under the sun, which makes Beliebers seem like nothing more than this season's fad among adolescent girls. Nevertheless, one sequence which is truly scary is that of the wild sound recorded from the inside of a limo of fans thumping on the limo, refusing to let it pass. This kind of celebrity has got to be overwhelming, especially for someone of your tender years. You give a composed answer when the director lobs you a softball question about how you might avoid becoming a train wreck like other young celebrities. Yet appearances and truth are not the same thing, and the incredible media savvy you've developed in a short space of time is only a kind of street smarts and should not be mistaken for wisdom. In the end, seeing is Beliebing.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Viewer

★★ — Marjorie Baumgarten
Barton Creek Square, CM Round Rock, Southpark Meadows, Gateway, Metropolitan, Tinseltown North

★ CAPTAIN PHILLIPS

D: Paul Greengrass; with Tom Hanks, Barkhad Abdi, Barkhad Abdirahman, Faysal Ahmed, Mahat M. Ali, Michael Chernus, Catherine Keener. (PG-13, 134 min.)

A kinetic showcase that whizzes by yet never loses track of its disparate elements, *Captain Phillips* ventures out to high seas and takes the audience along for a tense, claustrophobic ride. Based on true events from 2009 in which the U.S.-flagged cargo ship *Maersk Alabama* was captured for ransom by Somali pirates, the film also draws from Captain Richard Phillips' book on the experience, *A Captain's Duty: Somali Pirates, Navy SEALs, and Dangerous Days at Sea*. Although Phillips – played by Tom Hanks in a commanding, Oscar-courting turn – remains the heart of the film's story, director Paul Greengrass never loses sight of all the event's participants as cogs in a greater social machinery. With *Captain Phillips* we get a viable, multidimensional thriller whose conclusion is already known, and a character who reacts to circumstances rather than a personal, heroic code. And now, it's a story preserved in brine. (10/11/2013)

★★★★ – Marjorie Baumgarten
Tinseltown South

CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF MEATBALLS 2

D: Cody Cameron, Kris Pearn; with the voices of Bill Hader, Anna Faris, Will Forte, James Caan, Andy Samberg, Benjamin Bratt, Neil Patrick Harris, Terry Crews. (PG, 95 min.)

Don't go see *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs 2* on an empty stomach – the smorgasbord of animated food is bound to make you hungry. This lazy, 3-D sequel to the 2009 feature about freakish meteorological events merely reboots the premise of comestibles gone wild with little attention paid to a coherent storyline. Once again, zealous inventor Flint Lockwood's supermutation machine that can transform water into full-course meals is the culprit of the ensuing chaos, this time turning his hometown of Swallow Falls into a world overrun by tacodile supremes, watermelophants, flamangos, and shrim-

panzees, among other monstrous animal victuals. For both kids and adults, *CWCM2* is little more than a vague memory as soon as it's over. The movie is simply trying to cash in on its predecessor's success, and while that's nothing new for a flick primarily aimed at 8-year-olds, it's still enough to give you a tummy ache. (09/27/2013)

★★★ – Steve Davis
Movies 8

★ DALLAS BUYERS CLUB

D: Jean-Marc Vallée; with Matthew McConaughey, Jennifer Garner, Jared Leto, Denis O'Hare, Dallas Roberts, Steve Zahn, Griffin Dunne. (R, 117 min.)

Matthew McConaughey's career resurrection is in full bloom in the true-to-life *Dallas Buyers Club*. Electrician/rodeo rat/Texas good ol' boy Ron Woodroof (McConaughey) – a card-playing, substance-abusing, sexist, and homophobic jerk – is, at the outset in 1985, far from an appealing character. After doctors (Garner and O'Hare) tell him that he is HIV-positive and has only a month to live, Woodroof finds his way to Mexico, where an unlicensed American doctor (Dunne) fortifies him with a cocktail of vitamins and drugs. Soon he is smuggling the Mexican drugs across the border and seizes on the idea of a buyers club to redistribute the drugs to other Texans in need. Thus begins Woodroof's transformation from goner to survivor, and from homophobe to rough-edged humanist. *Dallas Buyers Club* is an indelible story about one man's unwillingness to go gently into that good night, and the personal growth he experiences along the way. (11/15/2013)

★★★★ – Marjorie Baumgarten
Alamo Slaughter Lane, Arbor, Violet Crown

DESPICABLE ME 2

D: Chris Renaud, Pierre Coffin; with the voices of Steve Carell, Kristen Wiig, Benjamin Bratt, Miranda Cosgrove, Russell Brand, Steve Coogan, Ken Jeong, Elsie Fisher, Dana Gaier, Moises Arias. (PG, 98 min.)

In *Despicable Me's* initial installment, former baddie/now daddy Gru (voiced by Steve Carell) exchanged a life of supervillainy for domesticity when three little orphans committed the most heinous

crime of all – stealing his heart. In this animated 3-D sequel, the question is: Can Gru also open his heart to romantic love, while saving the world from a mysterious criminal who possesses a serum that transforms Jekylls into Hydes? You can guess how it all turns out. Like its predecessor, *DM2* caters to the preadolescent crowd, ramping up the fart jokes and emphasizing the saccharine over the smart. That said, the gibberish and slapstick antics of Gru's Minions, those little yellow capsules of chaos, appeal to all ages; they're hugely welcome in a film that's otherwise unexceptional. Rumor is that the franchise's planned spin-off will feature only these unintelligible bundles of id. Now *that's* a movie everyone can get excited about. (07/05/2013)

★★★ – Steve Davis
Movies 8

ENDER'S GAME

D: Gavin Hood; with Asa Butterfield, Harrison Ford, Hailee Steinfeld, Ben Kingsley, Abigail Breslin, Viola Davis, Aramis Knight, Suraj Partha, Moises Arias, Nonso Anozie. (PG-13, 114 min.)

Orson Scott Card's supposedly unfilmable 1985 sci-fi novel *Ender's Game* has finally arrived, with most of its themes intact but much of its story missing in action. The good news? It very nearly works. In the late 21st century, after a catastrophic attack on planet Earth by insectile aliens called Formics (or "Buggers"), the newly allied remnants of humanity have constructed a massive, orbiting "battle school" to house and train the next generation of mankind's laser-blasting saviors. The kick? They're just kids. Among them is Andrew "Ender" Wiggins (Butterfield, earnest and excellent), who, under the tutelage of Colonel Graff (Ford), hones his already genius-level tactical skills and is slowly revealed to be the best of the best. Hood's realization of Card's novel is a tightly constructed, thought-provoking meditation on adolescence trapped by permanent war footing. It's not Card's *Game* anymore, but it is about as close as we'll ever get. (11/01/2013)

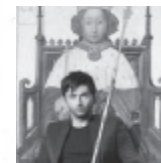
★★★ – Marc Savlov
Movies 8, Tinseltown South



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Action Pack
NEWSIES: THE SING-ALONG
Fri, Dec 27-30 @ Various
We'll have a heel-clicking competition before the movie, free newspapers and newsies caps for everyone, and a theater full of other fans.



Cinema Cocktails
THE HUDSUCKER PROXY
Mon, Dec 30 @ Ritz
This film is perhaps the greatest New Year's Eve film ever made, and this year we're celebrating it with handcrafted themed cocktails courtesy of our own Bill Norris.



The Action Pack
BEST OF 2013 SING-ALONG
Fri, Dec 27 @ Ritz
As we welcome 2014 we will sing-along to all the greatest music videos this past year had to offer.



Zzang!!!
WILLOW
Sun, Dec 29 @ Ritz
Forget all you know, or think you know. Adventure doesn't come any bigger than this. A world where heroes come in all sizes and adventure is the greatest magic of all.



Only At The Alamo
AGFA REEL ONE PARTY
Sun, Dec 29 @ Ritz
Get together and watch several "reel ones" (the first 15-20 minutes) of otherwise unknown or mysterious films. Come share the act of discovery with others and also get drunk if you want.

ALSO SCREENING

New Releases: *The Secret Life Of Walter Mitty*, *The Wolf Of Wall Street*, *47 Ronin* • Alamo Kids Camp: *Lemony Snicket's A Series Of Unfortunate Events* (12/26-1/2) • Alamo Kids Camp: *The Adventures Of Tintin* (12/26-1/2) • Action Pack: *ELF QUOTE-ALONG* (12/26) • *Grudge Match* (12/26) • Action Pack: *The Xmas Pops Sing-Along* (12/26) • Action Pack: *The Big Lebowski Quote-Along* (12/27) • Action Pack: *Totally '80s Sing-Along Dance Party* (12/28) • *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (12/28) • Music Monday: *Get Crazy* (12/30) • Action Pack: *Rockin' New Year's Eve Music Video Dance Party* (12/31)

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FILM LISTINGS

is formulaic and predictable as they come, mindless fluff lent some extra weight by these acting power-houses. (11/01/2013)

★★★ — Marjorie Baumgarten
Movies 8, Tinseltown South

★ **LEE DANIELS' THE BUTLER**

D: Lee Daniels; with Forest Whitaker, Oprah Winfrey, David Oyelowo, Terrence Howard, Cuba Gooding Jr., Lenny Kravitz, John Cusack, James Marsden, Robin Williams, Alan Rickman, Liev Schreiber, Jane Fonda, Minka Kelly, Vanessa Redgrave, Clarence Williams III, Yaya Alafia, Elijah Kelley, Alex Pettyfer. (PG-13, 132 min.)

The sweep of history achieves a grandeur in *Lee Daniels' The Butler*, which displays an overarching perspective that's glued together by a personal narrative. The film is inspired by the experiences of Eugene Allen, an African-American who served as a White House butler – and eventual maître d' – under eight administrations. With *The Butler*, Lee Daniels has fictionalized Allen's life, enlisting powerhouse actor Forest Whitaker to play the butler, now dubbed Cecil Gaines, while also putting the last 90 years of African-American history on display. Though this broadness of scope occasionally carries over to the film's focus, *The Butler* is a remarkable and powerful film, providing a living tableau to those for whom recent history is as remote as ancient times. Boasting several stupendous performances – particularly from Whitaker, Winfrey, and Oyelowo – *Lee Daniels' The Butler* is a straightforward film that puts the recent past in our grasp. (08/16/2013)

★★★ — Marjorie Baumgarten
Movies 8

MANDELA: LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

D: Justin Chadwick; with Idris Elba, Naomie Harris, Tony Kgoroge, Riad Moosa, Jamie Bartlett, Lindiwe Matshikiza, Terry Pheto, Deon Lotz. (PG-13, 139 min.)

The planned December release of this biopic about the universally revered South African leader could not be better timed. This nation-builder and

worldwide face of the anti-apartheid movement died at the beginning of this month at the age of 95, following prolonged illness. It's too bad, then, that Justin Chadwick's film does not offer a more substantial portrait of the man. The film draws from Mandela's autobiography; but 95 years is an awful lot of life to cover. Much of the story is gravely condensed, and the film has many gaps. What cannot be missed, though, is Idris Elba's captivating performance as Mandela. *Long Walk to Freedom* venerates a man, not a movement, often ignoring the contributions of others in favor of more single-minded hero worship. But as the world mourns the loss of a great humanist and visionary, this film can provide a starting place for deepening one's knowledge. (12/20/2013)

★★★ — Marjorie Baumgarten
Arbor, Barton Creek Square, Hill Country Galleria, Highland, Tinseltown North, Tinseltown South

★ **NEBRASKA**

D: Alexander Payne; with Bruce Dern, Will Forte, June Squibb, Bob Odenkirk, Stacy Keach, Mary Louise Wilson, Rance Howard. (R, 115 min.)

Seventysomething Woody Grant (Dern) has the head-first, quick-step dodder of a toddler, dangerously fast and ever on the edge of a tumble. And a tumble is surely coming: It has to be, with Woody fixing all his hopes on the fantasy payout of a Publisher's Clearing House-like scam. His exhausted, crabby wife Kate (Squibb) has no patience for her husband, but son David (Forte) agrees to drive him from their home in Billings, Mont., to Lincoln, Neb., where Woody is convinced a \$1 million prize is waiting for him. A dry and exacting humorist whose films include *About Schmidt* and *Sideways*, Alexander Payne's funny, detached picture of Midwesterners is par for the course, but he gets great work out of his lead actors. SNL alum Forte is a surprising fount of melancholy and frustrated ambition, while Dern masterfully conveys the inner depths of a man who might not be all there. (11/29/2013)

★★★★ — Kimberley Jones
Arbor, Violet Crown



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GIANT SCREEN

SPECIAL SCREENINGS

BY MARJORIE BAUMGARTEN

FRIDAY 27

The Adventures of Tintin (2011) D: Steven Spielberg; with Jamie Bell, Andy Serkis, Daniel Craig. (PG, 107 min.) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** Free. (*) @Alamo Village, 9:30am.

Best of 2013 Sing-Along and Dance Party Action Pack. @Alamo Ritz, 10:20pm.

The Big Lebowski Quote-Along (1998) (R, 117 min.) **Action Pack.** @Alamo Ritz, 10pm.

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004) D: Brad Silberling; with Jim Carrey, Meryl Streep, Jude Law. (PG, 113 min.) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** Free. (*) @Alamo Slaughter Lane, 9:30am.

Newsies: The Sing-Along (1992) D: Kenny Ortega; with Christian Bale, Bill Pullman, Ann-Margret, Robert Duvall, David Moscow. (PG, 121 min.) **Action Pack.** @Alamo Ritz, 7:15pm.

Totally Eighties Sing-Along Dance Party Action Pack. @Alamo Lakeline, 10:15pm.

SPACES

☛ **Alien and Aliens** **Blue Starlite Drive-In: Double Feature.** @Austin Studios, 7:30pm.

SATURDAY 28

The Adventures of Tintin (2011) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Village, 9:30am. (See Friday.)

Best of 2013 Sing-Along and Dance Party Action Pack. @Alamo Ritz, 10:40pm. (See Friday.)

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Slaughter Lane, 10:10am. (See Friday.)

Newsies: The Sing-Along (1992) **Action Pack.** @Alamo Ritz, 7:40pm. (See Friday.)

Richard II (2013) D: Gregory Doran; with David Tennant, Nigel Lindsay, Oliver Ford Davies, Michael Pennington. (NR, 175 min.) **Royal Shakespeare Company.** David Tennant performs the title role. Alamo Slaughter Lane, 4:01pm.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975) (R, 95 min.) Austin fans have been dressing up and doing the "Time Warp" thing live for more than three decades. For more info, see www.austinrocky.org. @Alamo Village, 12mid.

Totally Eighties Sing-Along Dance Party Action Pack. @Alamo Slaughter Lane, 10:25pm. (See Friday.)

SPACES

Best in Show and Waiting for Guffman **Blue Starlite Drive-In: Double Feature.** @Austin Studios, 7:30pm.

SUNDAY 29

The Adventures of Tintin (2011) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Village, 9:30am. (See Friday.)

AGFA Reel One Party D: Various. **American Genre Film Archive.** AGFA regularly watches the first reels of undisclosed prints for identification and inspection purposes. After five selections, the audience will vote on a favorite, which will be screened in full at 11pm that evening at the Ritz. @Alamo Ritz, 11pm.

Hugo (2011) D: Martin Scorsese; with Asa Butterfield, Ben Kingsley, Sacha Baron Cohen, Chloë Grace Moretz. (PG, 126 min.) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** Free. (*) @Alamo Lakeline, 9:40am.

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Slaughter Lane, 9:30am. (See Friday.)

SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

The *Austin Chronicle* is published every Thursday. Info is due the Monday of the week prior to the issue date. **The deadline for the Jan. 9 issue is Monday, Dec. 30.** Include name of event, date, time, location, price, phone number(s), a description, and any available photos or artwork.

Send submissions to the *Chronicle*, PO Box 49066, Austin, TX 78765; fax, 512/458-6910; or email.

Contact Marjorie Baumgarten (Special Screenings): specialscreenings@austinchronicle.com; Wayne Alan Brenner (Offscreen): calendar@austinchronicle.com.

Newsies: The Sing-Along (1992) **Action Pack.** @Alamo Lakeline, 4pm. (See Friday.)

Richard II (2013) **Royal Shakespeare Company.** @Alamo Lakeline, 1pm. (See Saturday.)

☛ **Willow (1988)** See p.62.

SPACES

The Princess Bride (1987) D: Rob Reiner; with Cary Elwes. (PG, 98 min.) **Blue Starlite Drive-In: New Year's Eve Pre-Celebration.** @Austin Studios, 7pm.

MONDAY 30

The Adventures of Tintin (2011) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Village, 9:30am. (See Friday.)

☛ **Get Crazy (1983)** D: Allan Arkush; with Malcolm McDowell, Allen Gooorwitz, Daniel Stern, Gail Edwards, Miles Chapin, Ed Begley Jr., Lou Reed, Howard Kaylan, Mary Woronov, Paul Bartel, Franklyn Ajaye, Lee Ving, John Densmore. (R, 92 min.) **Music Monday.** An eclectic cast shines in this hilarious goof on the backstage and onstage antics and truths surrounding a New Year's Eve rock concert. @Alamo Ritz, 9:45pm.

The Hudsucker Proxy (1994) (*) **Cinema Cocktails.** @Alamo Ritz, 7pm.

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Slaughter Lane, 9:30am. (See Friday.)

Newsies: The Sing-Along (1992) **Action Pack.** @Alamo Village, 7pm. (See Friday.)

TUESDAY 31

The Adventures of Tintin (2011) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Village, 9:30am. (See Friday.)

The Hudsucker Proxy (1994) (*) **Cinema Cocktails.** @Alamo Ritz, 9pm. (See Monday.)

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Slaughter Lane, 9:30am. (See Friday.)

Rockin' New Year's Eve Music Video Dance Party Action Pack. @Alamo Ritz, 10pm.

WEDNESDAY 1

The Adventures of Tintin (2011) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Village, 10am. (See Friday.)

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Slaughter Lane, 9:35am. (See Friday.)

THURSDAY 2

The Adventures of Tintin (2011) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Village, 9:30am. (See Friday.)



The Hudsucker Proxy

Britney Spears Sing-Along and Dance Party Action Pack. @Alamo Ritz, 9:45pm.

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004) **Alamo Kids' Camp.** @Alamo Slaughter Lane, 9:30am. (See Friday.)

Monty Python and the Holy Grail Quote-Along Action Pack. @Alamo Ritz, 7pm.

Vanished Empire (2008) See p.64.

IMAX

Great White Shark (2013) D: Luke Cresswell and Steve McNicholas; narrated by Bill Nighy. (NR, 40 min.) This 3-D film explores the great white's place in our imaginations and fears, while concentrating on key aggregation points in the waters off Mexico, South Africa, Los Angeles, and New Zealand. Fri., 10:30am; Mon.-Tue., 10:30am; Thu. (1/2), 10:30am.

Texas: The Big Picture (2003) D: Scott Swofford; narrated by Colby Donaldson. (NR, 39 min.) Texas is shown to be a land broad enough to produce everything from grapefruit to microchips. Fri., 9:30am; Mon.-Tue., 9:30am; Thu. (1/2), 9:30am.

The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (2013) D: Peter Jackson; with Ian McKellen, Martin Freeman, Richard Armitage, Benedict Cumberbatch, Evangeline Lilly, Lee Pace, Luke Evans, Stephen Fry, Ken Stott, Orlando Bloom, Graham McTavish, William Kircher, Dean O'Gorman. (PG-13, 161 min.) Review on p. 62. (*) Fri.-Thu. (1/2), 12:30, 3:45, 7, 10:15pm.

Titans of the Ice Age (2013) D: David Clark; narrated by Christopher Plummer. (NR, 45 min.) Computer-generated imagery brings to life this mysterious era of the Ice Age. Fri., 11:30am; Mon.-Tue., 11:30am; Thu. (1/2), 11:30am.

OFFSCREEN

Austin FilmWorks: The Film Mind This 12-week course covering **advanced cinematography and directing**, taught by filmmaker **Steve Mims**, blends an in-depth examination of current large-sensor digital cinematography with classic filmmaking techniques. Register now for the spring 2014 schedule. See website for details. www.austinfilmworks.com.

Faces of Austin: Shorts Competition The city of Austin invites Austin-area filmmakers to submit films of less than 10 minutes' length – films shot in Austin or highlighting an Austin topic or organization. Both fiction and nonfiction works are acceptable. Selected films will have a premiere screening during the SXSW Film Conference Community Screenings. See website for details and application. Deadline: Jan. 21, 2014. www.austintexas.gov/facesofaustin.

Screen It Like You Mean It Austin Studios has a state-of-the-art screening room, which is available to the public on a rental basis. Community and indie rates are available for the room, which sports an 18-foot-by-7-foot screen, 28 fixed theatre seats, a surround-sound system, and supports Super 35, 35mm, 16mm, VHS, and DVD formats. Accessibility, restrooms – the works. It also has a break room suitable for presentations, meetings, and general cinematic tomfoolery. 512/322-0145. www.austinstudios.org.

The Screenplay Workshop: Winter Registration Screenwriting Fundamentals Everything you must know to write a screenplay. Tuesdays, Jan. 7-Feb. 4, 7-9:30pm; Saturdays, Jan. 11-Feb. 8, 1:30-4pm. \$225. **Screenwriters Master Class** Write a feature-length screenplay in 10 weeks. Tuesdays, Jan. 7-Mar. 11, 7-9:30pm; Saturdays, Jan. 11-Mar. 15, 1:30-4pm. \$395. **Private Screenwriting Coaching and Consultation, Skype Group Video Workshop** also available. See website for details. www.thescreenplayworkshop.org.

Check Film Listings online or on your mobile device for full-length reviews, up-to-date showtimes, archives, and more!

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The symbol (*) indicates full-length reviews available online: austinchronicle.com/film.



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SATURDAY 12/28

THE TRIBE CLUB 10PM
DJ KENN ROOFTOP

SUNDAY 12/29

ALAN HAYNES

MONDAY 12/30

MONDAY NIGHT BLUES JAM WITH
MIKE MILLIGAN & THE ALTAR BOYZ

TUESDAY, DEC 31

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A TRIBE CALLED QUEST
PENTAGRAM**



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CHURCH SHOES
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CROOKED BANGS
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12AM
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10PM
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 SUSANNA VAN TASSEL • GURF MORLIX
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 BRENNEN LEIGH • ANDREW NAFZIGER
 MARK PATTERSON • RANDY GLINES
 AND LIBBI BOSWORTH

7:30PM
THE WAGONEERS
 10:15PM **HEYBALE**
 WITH REDD VOLKAERT,
 EARL POOLE BALL
 AND DALLAS WAYNE

MON DECEMBER 30
 HAPPY HOUR 6:30PM NO COVER
THE PETERSON BROTHERS

JESSE DAYTON
 10:30PM

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 SAT W/ **FROSTY & SPECIAL GUEST**
 SUN W/ **J. J. JOHNSON & JAKE LANGLEY**
 FRI 8:30 **ROBERT KRAFT**
 SAT 8:30 **SIT DOWN, SERVANT!**
 SUN 8:30 **JON DEE GRAHAM**
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SUN 12-29 NORTH DOOR ARTS & DRAFTS presents: 3P
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1.06 Ghostwholves, Holy Wave, Christian Bland & the Revelators
1.07 Bedpost Confessions "Quickies" in the Lounge
1.08 Nerd Nite (early)/Halaska, My Education (late)

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CLUB LISTINGS

FROM FRIDAY

THE OFFICE LOUNGE
SnakeBoy Johnson (8:00)

PARISH GOBI, Nadis Warriors (10:00) **R**

POODIE'S HILLTOP ROADHOUSE Charlie Pierce (4:00) **A**, Carl Hutchens, Mayeux & Broussard (8:00) **A**

RED 7 Phantom Lakes, Little Wesley, the Fall of Troy (9:00) **R**

RILEY'S TAVERN Joel Hofmann Band (9:00)

ROADHOUSE Henry Crafts (8:00)

THE SAHARA LOUNGE Christmas Wine Down w/ AMU Riding Club (7:00)

SATELLITE BISTRO & BAR Silvie Rider Young & Red Young (7:30)

SAXON PUB Denny Freeman (6:00), Johnny Nicholas, Soulhat (9:00)

SHENANIGANS DJ Red (9:00)

SHERLOCK'S BAKER ST. PUB & GRILL The Max

SHOOTERS BILLIARDS NORTH Suede (9:30)

SPEAKEASY Austin Party Band, DJ Bigface, Austin Party Band

STRANGE BREW LOUNGE **SIDE** George Enslé, David Ducharme-Jones, Lisa Tingle, Lauren Silva (4:00) **A**

STUBB'S Luke Davis, Televangelist, RMRS, Swimming With Bears (8:00) **R**

SWAN DIVE Yum, Sick/Sea, Frederick

TEXAS MIST DJ Joe Hernandez (9:00)

THE THIRSTY NICKEL Sean Evan

TRAILER SPACE RECORDS HBI, the Grundles, Blunt Gutter (7:00) **R**

THE WHITE HORSE Skyline Wranglers, Bo Porter, Roger Wallace (6:30)

!SATURDAY!

311 CLUB Joe Valentine (7:00) **A**

ANDERSON MILL TAVERN Jon Blue Open Mic

ANTONE'S RTB2, Quaker City Night Hawks, Old 97's (9:00) **R**

BAKER ST. PUB & GRILL The Drakes

BEERLAND Afterbirth of the Nazarene Child w/ Krigsgrav Usbm, Lasanche, Burial Shroud, Blood Royale (9:00) **R**

BOURBON GIRL Public Disturbance

BROKEN SPOKE Paula Russell, Dance Lessons, Dale Watson (6:00)

CAROUSEL LOUNGE Abigail und Hansel, Skullcaster, Venison Whirled, Baby Robots, ST 37 (9:00) **R**

CENTRAL MARKET NORTH Wendy Colonna (6:30) **A**

CENTRAL MARKET SOUTH Belltower (6:30) **A**

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Mother Falcon w/ Peter Stopschinski (9:00) **R**

CHEER UP CHARLIE'S Big Bill, Mom Jeans, Borzoi, Hatchet Wound (8:00)

CHUGGIN' MONKEY Tish & Misbehavin' (9:00)

CONTINENTAL CLUB Gallery: Scarlett Olson, Mike Flanigin Trio (8:30); In the Club: Redd Volkaert (3:30), Lou Ann Barton, T.G. BAD w/ Denny Freeman, John X Reed, Speedy Sparks, Rodney Craig (10:00)

DOZZY ROOSTER Sound Advice

DONN'S DEPOT Murphy's Inlaws & Outlaws

EAST SIDE SHOW ROOM Haun's Mill (11:00)

EDDIE V'S EDGEWATER GRILLE George Carver Trio (8:00) **A**

ELEPHANT ROOM Henry Brun & the Latin Playerz (9:30)

FLAMINGO CANTINA Los Texmaniacs, Max Baca, Flaco Jimenez (9:00) **R**

GINNY'S LITTLE LONGHORN SALOON Jesse Jay Harris (6:00), the Clarks (9:00)

GRUENE HALL Flat Top Jones (1:00), Roger Creager (9:00) **A**

HOLY MOUNTAIN Residual Kid, Purple, Thieves, Barely Blind (9:00) **R**

THE LOST WELL Cremalleras, Tercer Mundo, Curb Biters **R**

MOHAWK Outside: Lethal, Chief & the Doomsday Device, Public Enemy (8:00); Inside Later: DJ Charlie, Dieslo, KYDD & LNS Crew (11:30) **R**

THE NOOK Matt Cline

THE NORTH DOOR Ditch Witch, Bad Lovers, the Flesh Lights, Eagle Claw **R**

ONE-2-ONE BAR Forgotten Space w/ Josh Pearson, Buggaboo, Big Britches (7:00)

PARISH DJ Berlin, Hatch, Henry + the Invisibles, Spoonfed Tribe (9:00) **R**

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INFEST

SUN. 1/12 → MR. FISHER AND THE HOSPITALITY, FINGERS CROSSED, AMERICAN VERSE. 8PM

FRI. 1/17 → THE BACKROOM REUNION W/ MELODIC DRIFTERS, JOLLY GAROGERS, THE HIT!, KILLIN' TIME, MADMAN'S PARADE, MATT FURY, BIG BALLS, BREWTALITY INC. 8PM.

SAT. 1/18 → LE STRANGE SOUND OF RAW ART. 9:30PM

SUN. 1/19 → RED CITY RADIO, ELWAY, CLOSET DRAMA. 8PM

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TUE DEC 31 NEW YEARS EVE!
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FRI JAN 17 SAVOY w/ DOTEKE C3CONCERTS.COM

WED JAN 29 INFECTED MUSHROOM w/
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SAT FEB 15 LED ZEPPELIN 2
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SAT FEB 22 DALE EARNHARDT JR. JR.
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THU FEB 27 THE EXPENDABLES
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LOS FEDERALES

FRI 12.27 END OF YEAR REGGAE JAM
DJ JAH FLEX + BABY G

SAT 12.28 \$10 9:00 PM
FLACO JIMENEZ
TEJANO ACCORDION LEGEND
MAX BACA +
LOS TEXMANIACS
GRAMMY AWARD WINNERS

MON 12.30 9:00 PM
KB THE BOO BONIC
ANYA, KAIZEN, MIKE
HENN, DIRTY J

TUE 12.31 9:00 PM
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01.04: Ashes of Babylon Album Release Party,
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01.07: Comedy Show
01.08: Dreadneck Night with Mau Maus
01.09: Frontier Live, Canned Beets, Groove
Metrics
01.10: Cilantro Boombox, Bamako Airlines, DJ
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NIGHT 1 WITH DANNY MALONE

TUE 12/31
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BUGGABOO 9:30PM
BIG BRITCHES 11:30PM

SUN. DEC. 29
THE POSSUM POSSE 7:30PM
AMANDA CEVALLOS 9:30PM

MON. DEC. 30
JAZZ DADDIES 7PM
Motown Monday WITH
The Matchmaker Band 9PM
THE NIGHTOWLS 11:15PM

TUE. DEC. 31
N.Y.E.!! WITH
A LIVE ONE! 9PM-1AM

WED. JAN. 1
THE DRAKES 9:30PM
BLACK RED BLACK 9PM
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8 PM
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FRI JAN 3
7 PM
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SAT JAN 4
6 PM
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FRI 27
CHRISTMAS WINE DOWN WITH AMU RIDING CLUB AND DJ 7P

SAT 28
ANCIENT SOUL 10P ZOUMOUNTCHI 12A

SUN 29
TBA

MON 30
CLOSED

TUE 31
NEW YEARS EVE PARTY ROOT DIMENSION REGGAE 9:30P ZOUMOUNTCHI 11:30P CHAMPAGNE, BUFFET \$15 PERSON, \$25 FOR TWO

WED 1
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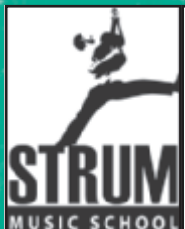
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The LUV DOC

The Luv Doc's New Year's Resolutions for 2014

- 10) Learn how to twerk.
 - 9) No more selfies at funerals.
 - 8) Stop saying "my bad," and instead start saying, "my good."
 - 7) Unfriend anyone who comments "LOL" on a Facebook post. No, not JK.
 - 6) Find out if Perez Hilton and Paris Hilton are the same person.
 - 5) Stop drinking liquids that come in plastic bottles – especially tequila.
 - 4) Give more unnecessarily long and awkward hugs.
 - 3) Listen to people – especially when trying really hard to pretend to listen to them.
- 2) Start walking ... away from people who want to talk about their workouts.
 - 1) Dominate others through compassion, understanding, humility, and forgiveness.

a SHOT in the DARK

360 UNO
We exchanged glances throughout our meals. I missed the opportunity to slip you my card when you smiled at me before leaving, -you took a long time getting toothpicks. :) **When: Monday, December 23, 2013. Where: 360 uno. You: Man. Me: Woman. #900001**

BARTENDER - RUDINO'S
You are brunette, very hot. Recently I told I would be back but never made it. Haven't seen you since. Do you still work there? Let's meet some time. **When: Saturday, November 30, 2013. Where: Rudino's restaurant. You: Woman. Me: Man. #900000**

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COMIX

JEN SORENSEN

SNACK GENTRIFICATION

IT HAPPENED TO DOUGHNUTS AND HOT DOGS. NOW THE HUMBLE CUPCAKE HAS BEEN REBORN AS A HIP URBAN DELICACY.

BEFORE:
KIDDIE FOOD



AFTER:

Call of the
Cupcake
BOUTIQUE
CONFECTIONARY



HOW WILL THE UPSCALE JUNK FOOD TREND CONTINUE?

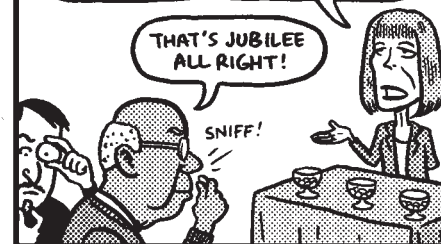
ALT-COUNTRY PORK RINDS



ACOUSTIC SINGER-SONGWRITERS START SELLING PUFFED PIG SKIN ON THE SIDE, LEADING TO WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE AMONG THE LITERATI.

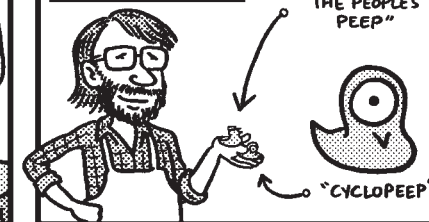
CORN NUT CONNOISSEURSHIP EXPERTS CAN TELL WHAT CORN VARIETY A NUT COMES FROM BY ITS BOUQUET.

TODAY WE'RE TRYING SOME JUBILEE SUPERSWEET, COUNTRY GENTLEMAN, AND XTRA-TENDER 272A.



THE CRAFT PEEP MOVEMENT THE EASTER TREAT GOES YEAR-ROUND, AS LOCAL ARTISANS PRODUCE SIGNATURE BATCHES OF MICROPEEPS.

DIRK JENKINS, PEEPMAS-TER, AND HIS CREATIONS



MR. SMARTY PANTS KNOWS

Legend has it St. Nicholas once broke up a cannibal scam serving kidnapped children to patrons of an inn (they were told it was pork).

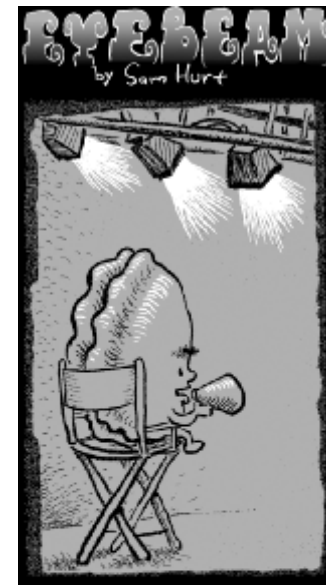
Clement Clarke Moore wrote "A Visit From St. Nicholas," better known as "Twas the Night Before Christmas," first published in December 1823. In 1750, his grandfather bought a Dutch farm called Chelsea in Manhattan. In the 1830s, Moore became its fabulously wealthy developer, selling off lots for residential use.

According to writer Michele Lent Hirsch, experts estimate that 3,054 to 3,176 languages are endangered – 43-46% of all known languages on Earth, in addition to the hundreds that are already extinct.

Electrolux has built five vacuums made in part with plastic reclaimed from trash whirlpools.

The Audubon Society started shooting birds (their Christmas bird hunt). Later they realized counting might be better for the birds.

Above is information that Mr. Smarty Pants read in a book, a magazine, or the newspaper; heard on the radio; saw on television; or overheard at a party. Got facts? Write to Mr. Smarty Pants at the Chronicle, or email mrpants@austinchronicle.com.



OK, IN THIS NEXT SCENE, 2013, YOU'RE GOING TO MOVE A FEW STEPS BACK, INTO THE RECENT PAST THERE, AND 2014, YOU'RE GOING TO BUILD UP TO AN ANGRY OUTBURST BECAUSE OUT OF HABIT, EVERYBODY'S STILL WRITING "2013"

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