

# 25 Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time (and 40 Honorable Mentions)

by Michael Corcoran

1. Armadillo World Headquarters
2. Liberty Lunch
3. Charlie's Playhouse
4. Continental Club
5. Skyline Club
6. Antone's
7. Soap Creek
8. Black Cat Lounge
9. Club Foot
10. Raul's
11. Rome Inn
12. Cactus Cafe

13. Emo's

14. Hole In the Wall

15. Vulcan Gas Company

16. Austin Opera House and 17. Mohawk

18. One Knite

19. Victory Grill

20. Electric Lounge

21. Steamboat

22 Beach Cabaret and 23. Castle Creek

24. Broken Spoke 25. (tie) Saxon Pub, Backroom

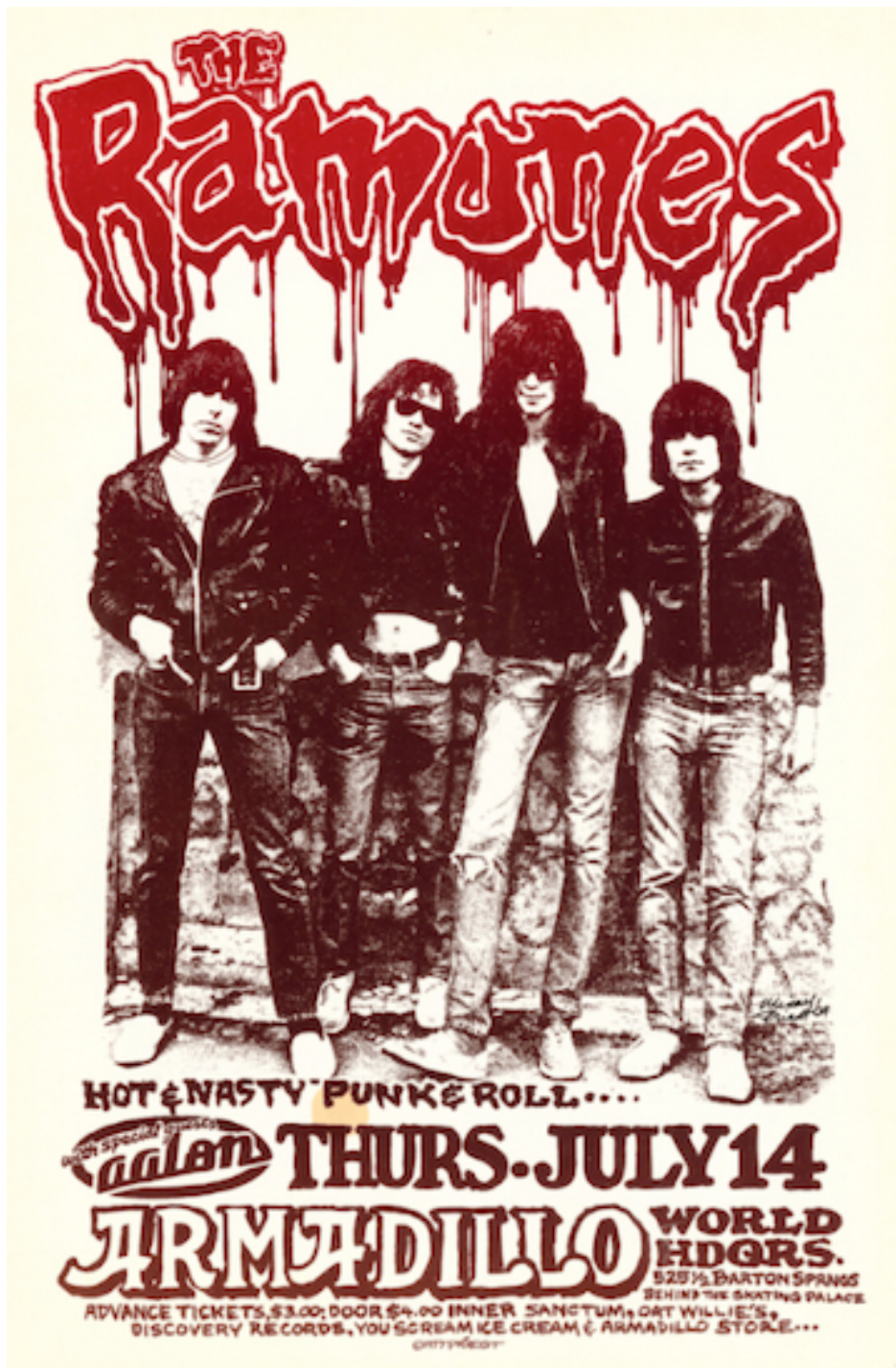
**HONORABLE MENTION:** Momo's, Henry's Bar & Grill, Backyard, Black Queen, Beerland, Split Rail, Parish, Austex Lounge, Blue Flamingo, Chicago House, Spellman's, Catfish Station, Elephant Room, Alamo Lounge, emmajoe's, Hungry Horse, La Zona Rosa, Cannibal Club, Cave Club, T.C.'s/ Sahara, Jade Room, I.L. Club, La Polkita, The Ritz, Ego's, Ginny's Little Longhorn, Chequered Flag. New Orleans Club, Eleventh Door, Club Saracen, Sam's Showplace, The Green Spot, Carousel Lounge, Jovita's, Austin Outhouse, Flamingo Cantina, Mercado Caribe, Mother Earth, Chances.

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #1 Armadillo World HQs



1970- 1980

It was “the coldest, ugliest building in town,” according to Eddie Wilson, the manager of Shiva’s Head Band, who went out the back door of Cactus Club at Riverside and Barton Springs to take a leak and found the Texas Fillmore. The Armadillo was a bare bones place with a big soul, a 1,500-capacity room that was both the world’s largest nightclub and smallest arena. Born during Vietnam, the ‘Dillo was the greatest place ever to come of age in.



San Francisco ruled the counterculture nationally, but in Austin the Armadillo crew did it their own way. The club's mascot, drawn by its Michaelangelo, Jim Franklin, was a misunderstood nocturnal creature with his nose in the grass. The armadillo wore armor and 525 ½ Barton Springs

Road was once a National Guard armory. But now the walls held paintings of the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers (created by former Vulcan art director Gilbert Shelton) and Rikke, the Guacamole Queen.

The first show was Tracy Nelson and Mother Earth on July 7, 1970, but that was more like a dressed rehearsal. The venue officially opened on Aug. 7, 1970 with Shiva's Head Band, Hub City Movers and Ramon Ramon and the 4 Daddios.

The national acts that played the 'Dillo's first year, when the capacity was only 750 (and the stage was on the south end, not the north), include Fats Domino, Ravi Shankar, ZZ Top, Lightnin' Hopkins, New Riders of the Purple Stage, Flying Burrito Brothers and especially Freddie King. Sometimes Leon Russell, who was then the biggest thing in the rock world, would sit in on piano as King scorched all those flower children who didn't know how much they loved the blues.

Rather than name some of the acts who played the Armadillo, let's hear your favorites from the place that they almost named Uncle Zeke's Rock Emporium (thank you, Lord.)

There was a big gap in the country, between those who supported the war and those who protested it, as you can imagine. But they all came together to listen to Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings at the Armadillo. That's what the club, which was ground zero for the "progressive country" movement, is best known for today. Chet Flippo was living in Austin when the 'Dillo started and he let the world know about this groovy longhaired cowboy scene in Texas via dispatches in Rolling Stone.

There were no boundaries in the bookings and when punk broke, the Armadillo hosted the Clash with Joe Ely, Patti Smith, Talking Heads, B-52s, Elvis Costello, the Ramones and so on. This was also where AC/DC played their first first show on American soil, in July '76.

Rent for the 30,000 square foot building was \$1,500 a month, but even at that rate, Wilson and his partners, including lawyer Mike Tolleson, were often months behind on the rent. The 'Dillo booked about 200 shows a year at its peak, and it would only take a couple of bombs to set everything back.

The club declared bankruptcy in 1977, but was bailed out by Hank Alrich, who put up \$25,000.



*Backstage at the Armadillo. Photo by Burton Wilson. By the end of the night, Springsteen had completely sweated away the design.*

Ask Bruce Springsteen or Van Morrison or Bette Midler or hundreds of other acts which was the most magical place they ever played in Texas and they'd say the 'Dillo, whose building next to the Skate Palace used to house the Sportscenter in the 1950s, so Elvis Presley played there as well. This was a counterculture dream of outlaw country singers and

Commander Cody and everybody ripped to the tits except the old man with the big glasses and the camera. Everybody just loving music so much.

But music isn't money and by 1980 that property was worth a lot more torn down and resold. The final night of the most legendary of all Austin clubs was Dec. 31, 1980 and it all ended with everybody onstage singing "Goodnight, Irene." The last line of the "Dillo swan song was "I'll see you in my dreams."

Musical revolution, like pot smoke, was always in the air at the club that opened in August 1970 and closed on the last night of 1980. That's almost too perfect, 1970- 1980, but it fits a venue with the most-charmed existence of any in Texas. Frank Zappa summated the scene as a state of mind when he famously announced on a live album recorded at the Armadillo, "Good night, Austin, Texas, wherever you are."



# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time:

## #2 Liberty Lunch



*Jimmy Buffett photo by Scott Newton.*

To those of us who moved to Austin in the '80s and had to hear about how we missed the Armadillo World Headquarters: think of how much worse that would have been if we didn't have our own 'Dillo in Liberty Lunch! This sacred venue was bulldozed in 1999 to make room for Computer Sciences Corp. headquarters and I still remember everything about the Lunch.

I'm not talking about the lineups, like the triple bill of My Bloody Valentine, Dinosaur Jr. and Babes In Toyland, which were unforgettable. I remember how the floor was more like ground and how the best place to see the band was stage right, where the pot smoke from the patio hit the jetstream of sound.





Physically, there wasn't much too it. A big stage so flimsy that Run-DMC had to perform like statues because every time they moved in '86 the record skipped. No place to sit. Gross bathrooms that the acts had to use because there wasn't running water backstage. But what made the Lunch was the people who worked there. They treated you like you were guests at their home. And on the way out, the audience would say "thank you!"

Besides great roadshows, the Lunch nurtured several local scenes, including the funk-rap with Bad Mutha Goose, Do Dat, Bouffant Jellyfish and Retarded Elf. Any kind of live dance music worked there. Any kind of music really.

You felt safe at Liberty Lunch, which was all-ages, that parents just dropped their kids off for shows to go out and have a quiet dinner.

Mark Pratz and J-Net Ward were the couple, now married, who ran things from '83- '99, but let's not forget the Austin couple that

founded Liberty Lunch. Before Esther's Follies, Shannon Sedwick and Michael Shelton took



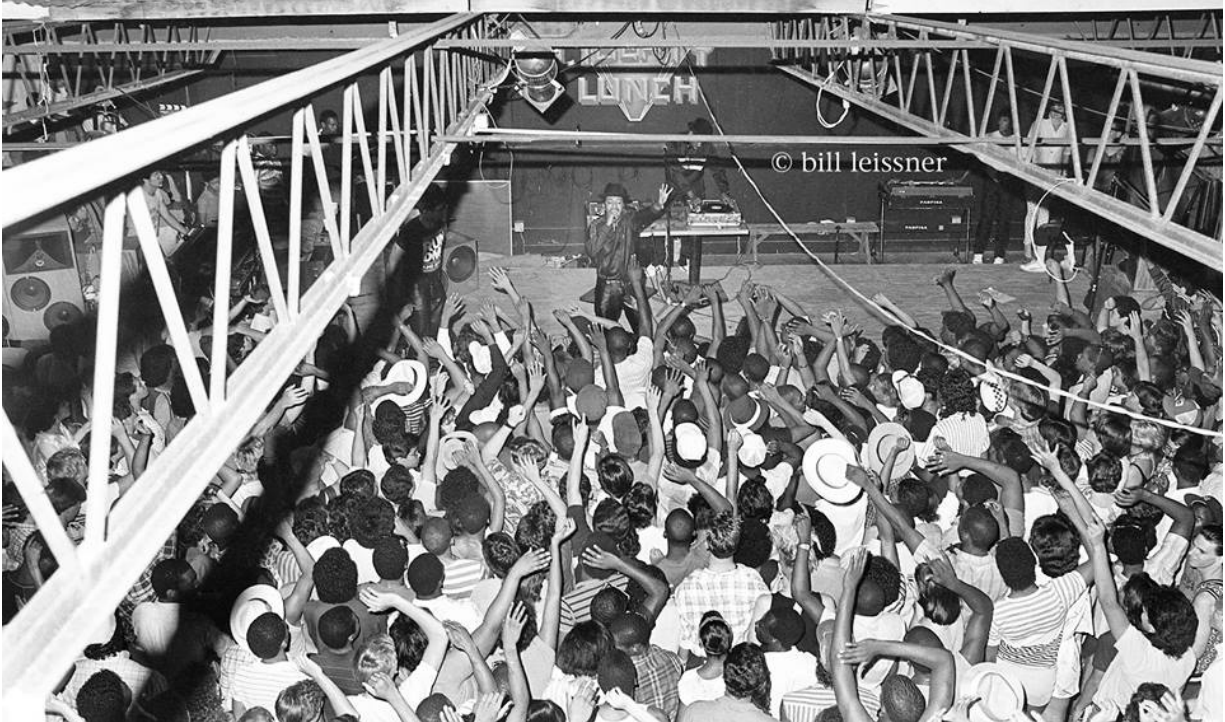
*Mark Pratz and J-Net Ward. Photo by Dayna Blackwell.*

over the site of a former lumberyard, which had been used as a ratty ass flea market, on Dec. 9, 1975. They planned to call this food/ performance space Progressive Grocery, but while scraping the paint off the front of the building they saw the name Liberty Lunch from when the Texas Lighthouse for the Blind served lunches there after WWII. During the patriotism of 1976, they decided Liberty Lunch was the name.

Soon after opening, the club's Cajun-influenced restaurant got a rave in Texas Monthly and the staff struggled to keep up with the demand. The first bands to really take off were Beto y Los Fairlanes (salsa), the Lotions (reggae) and Extreme Heat (soul/ funk), each inspiring dancing on the gravel floor that covered the whole place in dust. This was around when that dopey tropical mural was painted. The city owned the property and wanted to shut down Liberty Lunch and all those half-naked stoned hippies from the very beginning.

Charlie Tesar took over in 1980 and built a roof over Liberty Lunch made of materials from the Armadillo, which closed on the last day of 1980. The torch had been passed, but the old Lunch crowd hated it not being open-air. The old standbys started eating

it at the door and a new era was about to begin.



Run-DMC Photo by Bill Leissner

Pratz, the doorman since '78, started booking the club around '81, then joined with Louis Meyers, manager of Killer Bees, to bring in bands from Jamaica and Africa and, of course, the Neville Brothers from New Orleans.

At 1,200 capacity, the Lunch was the perfect launching pad for bands like Nirvana, Replacements, Pavement and Alanis Morrissette who'd outgrown the Continental Club, which Lunch Money also booked. You'd see k.d. lang, when she was a rockabilly singer, and then the next night would be Fugazi and then the Count Basie Orchestra.



In 1998 city council voted to end Pratz's lease and rent the land to a high-tech company. The club had six months and when Greg Dulli of Afghan Whigs called out a stage hand in Dec. '98 and ended with a fractured skull, everyone kinda knew there'd be no reprieve this time.

The last year of the century was the last year of not only Liberty Lunch, but Steamboat, Electric Lounge and the Bates Motel. Things were changing as fast as local hero Lance Armstrong on the Tour De France.

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #3 Charlie's Playhouse

**Charlie's Playhouse/ Ernie's Chicken Shack**



You can be in any club during any era seeing any act. That's the game. Some might wish they were at the Armadillo when Bruce Springsteen or Van Morrison played all night. Maybe Nirvana at Liberty Lunch, Iggy at Club Foot, James Brown at the Austin Opera House, Sonic Youth at the Continental Club.

My fantasy gig is catching Freddie King at Charlie's Playhouse on E. 11th, then following after midnight to Charlie Gildon's afterhours joint on Webberville Road. Put me in a ripped vinyl booth at Ernie's Chicken Shack (called Lou Ann's until 1960) with a bootleg bottle of hooch on the table and Freddie ripping "Have You Ever Loved a Woman" on his cherry red Gibson guitar. Put me there in 1962 and I'll have lived a full life.

Ernest Charles Gildon was a businessman who didn't just buy a building, he bought the 1200 E. 11th Street block from Tony Von, the DJ/promoter who'd moved to Taylor, in 1955. Gildon replaced Von's Show Bar at 1206 E. 11th Street with Charlie's Playhouse, which he'd originally opened in a tiny joint at 12th and Chicon. The new room was made for live music and dancing, so Gildon hired Blues Boy Hubbard and the Jets (so named because Hubbard had worked on planes at Bergstrom AFB) as his house band. Local bluesman Major Burkes, who had a minor hit with "Break These Chains," and Jean and the Rollettes were also regulars. During this time, the Victory Grill was thriving a block down E. 11th and Charlie's would compete to bring in name acts like Johnny Taylor, Ike & Tina Turner, Etta

James, Albert Collins, Joe Tex, Tyrone Davis and Al “TNT” Braggs.

Clubs had to close at midnight back then, but that’s when the party was really cooking, so Gildon opened his afterhours joint disguised as an all-night chicken restaurant, in 1960. The Playhouse had been experiencing a quite lucrative problem for Gildon when UT fraternities, turned onto the East Side bands by Cactus Pryor’s Saturday TV show Now Dig This on KTCB, flocked to Charlie’s every weekend and took 90% of the chairs and tables. Charlie designated Monday “Soul Night,” but Huston-Tillotson students thought that was a slap in the face and picketed Charlie’s because they were allowed to go only to East Side clubs, while the white kids could go anywhere in town. And they took over the black club, because they spent more money.



.Charlie Gildon.



Jean of Jean and the Rollettes

But Ernie's Chicken Shack at 1167 Webberville Road was immune to gentrification. That place, which had gambling around the clock, was a bit too real, though if you wanted to get UT quarterback legend Bobby Layne's autograph he was usually in the back room throwing dice. Gildon was a hardcore gambler himself. The bands who played Charlie's that night always moved on over to Ernie's. It was a set break with a 5-minute drive. Then the bands played 'til 5 a.m. In the segregated 19'60s, East Austin was its own world with its own laws. Probably some grease going around, too, but if it didn't impact life on the other side of East Avenue (now I-35), it didn't seem to matter to the cops.

Charlie's Playhouse, so popular that clubs such as IL Club, Hideaway, Alabama Club, Good Daddy's and Sam's Showplace thrived on the overflow, is really where the downtown Austin club scene as we know it was born. East met West at that joint where blacks and whites danced together (though seating was segregated) to that Negro rock n' roll. Jimmie and Stevie Ray Vaughan came out of Charlie's Playhouse, mentored by guitarist Bill Campbell, a white man from Smithville, who the black bands accepted as a brother. If you want to learn how to cook Creole cuisine you go to New Orleans. If you wanted to play the blues, you went to the East Side.

Charlie's closed in 1972 and became a succession of other clubs- Tink's Playhouse, Jackson 4 Club, etc.- before it was torn down. It's now just an empty lot, unless a condo came up in the two months since I checked. Ernie's Chicken Shack closed soon after Gildon was shot to death in his liquor store in 1979.





# Greatest Austin Clubs of All-Time: #4 Continental Club



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This is how you know this list isn't based on my personal preferences, but, rather a host of considerations including influence, goodtimes-ability, schedule and historical importance. The Continental Club of the '80s is my favorite spot on Earth. The CC of Mark Pratz and J-Net Ward was a perfect place to hear rock bands- intimate, yet powerful enough to hit me on the back wall. The bookings, with Louis Meyers, brought in so many great acts: Minutemen, Sonic Youth, Johnny Thunders, Bad Brains, Replacements and so on. But the core was the local acts, especially True Believers and their crowd, and LeRoi Brothers and the roots pack. Lou Ann Barton, Dino Lee, Glass Eye, Poi Dog Pondering- so many of the greatest sets were from folks we knew from Wheatsville or wherever.

When M&J closed the club in '87 to concentrate on Liberty Lunch, it was taken over by Steve Wertheimer of Ski Shores, who tried a rock n' roll diner at first, then allowed Junior Brown to show the way to the next glory land. Junior's Sunday residency started slow, but once word got out that there was this Ernest Tubb guy in a cowboy hat who could play like Link Wray, the lines were down the street. It was also the best place to see Alejandro Escovedo in all his configurations.

The Continental Club rocks on like Clara Que Si', the go-go bartender who started going to the Continental as a teenager from Mexico. I've been in Austin over 35 years and it's always felt like family at the Continental, which was built in 1947 as a Laundromat. The Continental opened as a private club in 1955, owned by Morin Scott, with Bill Turner's jazz trio as the house band. The Sunday night jam session brought out some of the area's best musicians, but after the club was sold, the jazz moved to Club Unique on Guadalupe St., just north of the Drag.

The club hit some down time in the '60s, when it was an

alcoholics' dive with Happy Hour from 6 a.m.- 8 a.m. That's not a misprint. It looks to have also been a disco for a bit in the '60s and also, reportedly, was a topless bar for a few months.

Tuesday.

In a report by the IOCC's im-ports study committee at the an- according to the National Geo-graphic Magazine. It used to be a spot near Lebanon, Kansas.

★ ★

# DANCE TONIGHT

# DESSAU HALL

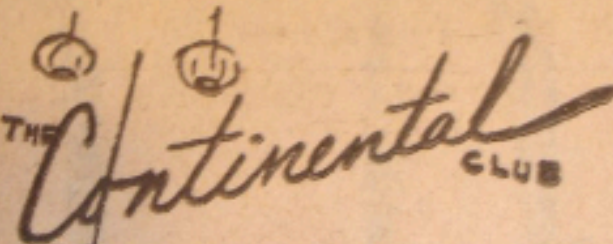
Music by one of Texas' most outstanding Western bands.

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★ ★

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 **DANCING**

*THE Continental CLUB*

Walter Green Combo  
featuring  
ALBERT DURST  
Vocalist

1315 S. Congress.  
GR 6-3364

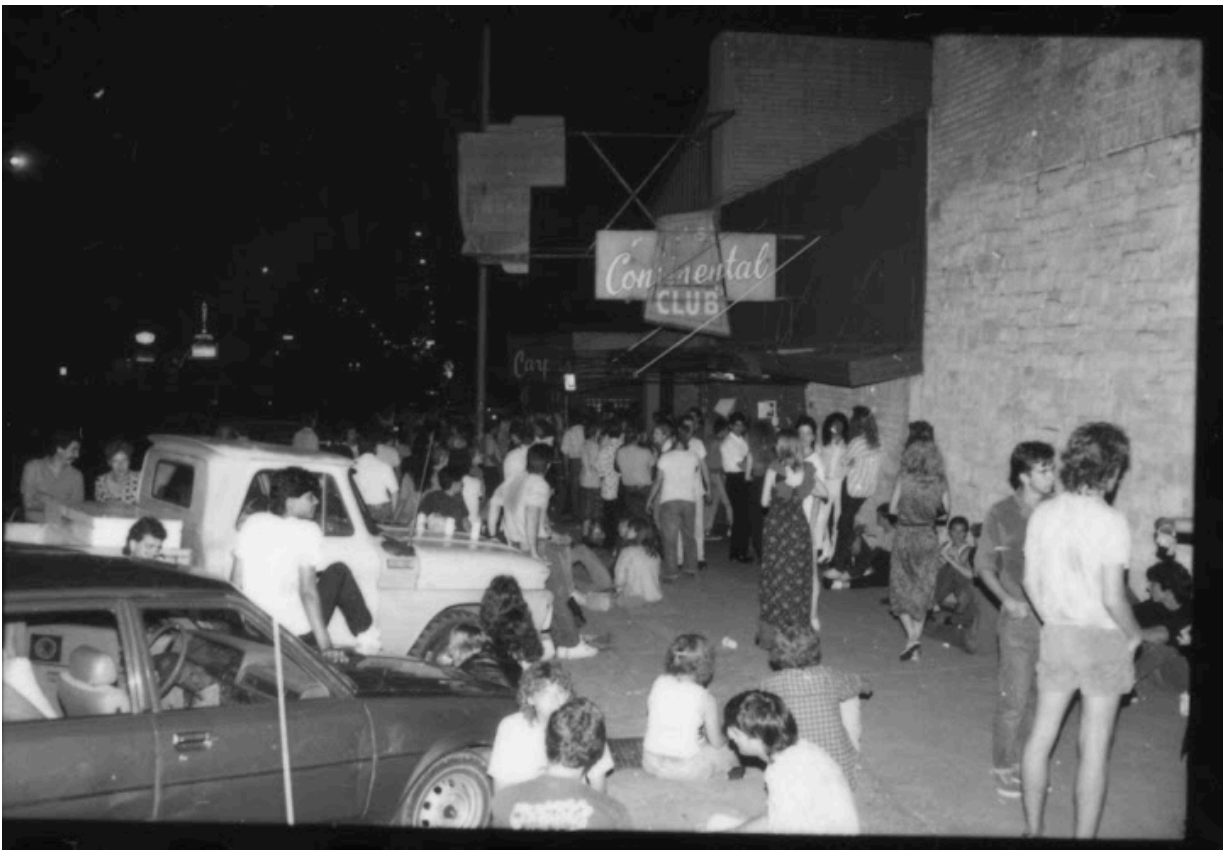
... COOKED

The turnaround came in 1979, when some of the former One

Knite owners teamed with Wayne Nagel and Summerdog to bring the blues-rock to the black box. Pratz, Ward and soundman Terry Pearson took over in '83.

Wertheimer has grown the club since 1988, adding the Continental Gallery listening room almost 10 years ago. Wertheimer is a special kind of club owner, which is why he keeps waitresses and bartenders for decades- and musical residencies even longer. Toni Price, Jon Dee Graham, James McMurtry and the members of Heybale! were assured at least one payday a week for years thanks to Wertheimer's loyalty.

It's a rare thing, indeed, for a club to have two golden eras with different owners, but the Continental was all that and continues to bring much-needed soul to South Congress.



Last night of the Mark and J-Net Continental August 1987

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All-Time: #5 The Skyline



Between the time it was built in July 1946 until its demolition in the expansion of Braker Lane in 1989, the Skyline held more musical history than any club in Austin. Best known today for being the site of the final concerts by both Hank Williams (Dec. '52) and Johnny Horton (Nov. '60)- both men married to the former Billie Jean Jones at the times of their deaths- this 250-capacity roadhouse on the old Dallas Highway out of Austin is also where Austin punk legends Scratch Acid played its first show. Elvis Presley packed the club in 1955, after previous appearances at Dessau Hall and the Sportcenter (later site of the Armadillo World Headquarters.) The Skyline was also the second location of Soap Creek Saloon for a year.

During its honky tonk heyday, such acts as Johnny Cash, George Jones and Ernest Tubb played the Skyline. Loretta Lynn was so impressed by the house band (which backed many touring country acts), that she tried to take them on the road with her. A couple went, but Henry “Poochy” Hill, the bass player stayed in Austin because he had a good job with the city.



Dec. 19, 1952

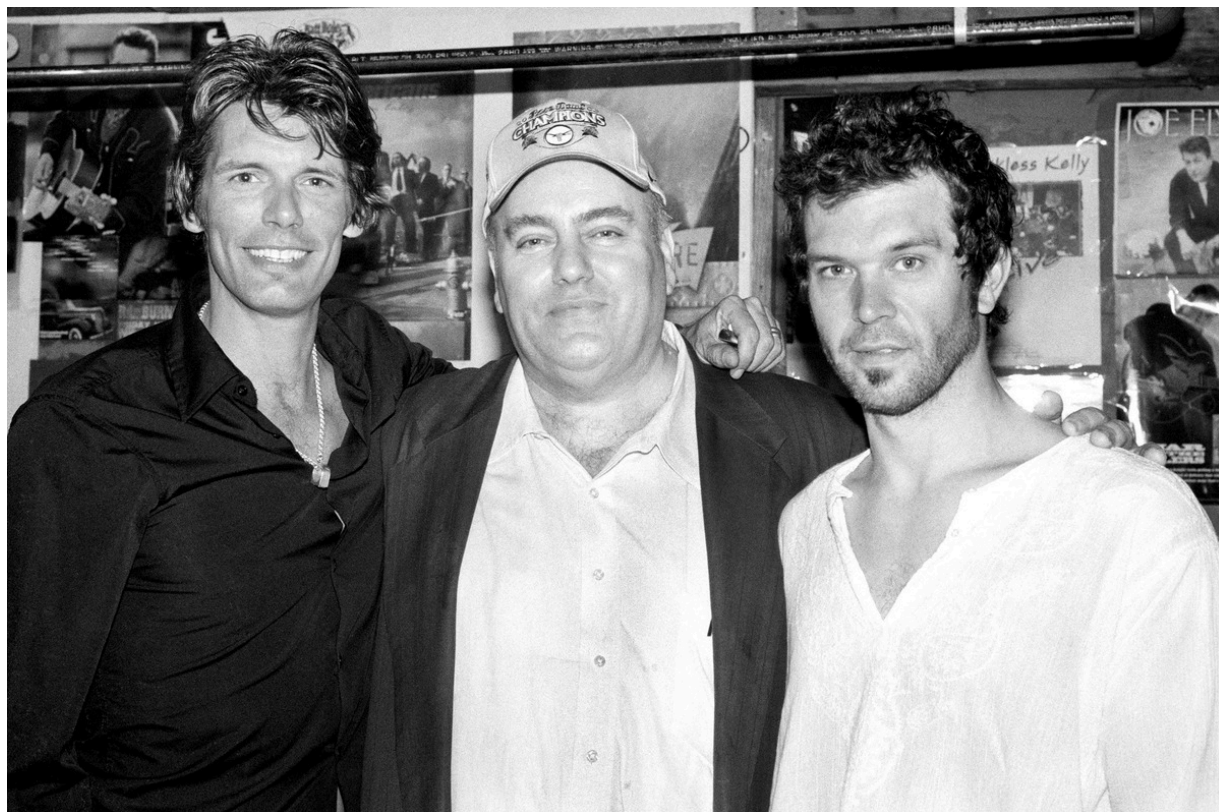
The Skyline was hardcore country, but such local acts as Dolores and the Blue Bonnet Boys, Jimmy Heap and the Melody Masters and Grouchy and the Texans always threw in a couple polka numbers each night to get the old Germans and Czechs on the dancefloor. Wednesday was 10-cent beer night and every night was don't-give-Maybell-Crumbley-any-lip night. The waitress was as well known as owner Warren Stark, who personally picked up Hank Williams in Dallas and drove him to the Skyline for his Dec.

19, 1952 swan song. Ol' Hank did sing a few songs at a party for the musicians union in Alabama a few days later, but the Skyline was his final concert. Hank Williams' heart broke for the final time on New Year's Day 1953.



# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #6 Antone's

*Kill it again, it's not dead yet*



*Sexton, Antone, Bramhall. Photo by Tracy Anne Hart*

Clifford Antone was a blues fanatic who wanted to meet his idols. He also wanted to turn others onto the music of all those Chicago greats nicknamed after their size. His club would book the legends for five nights in a row, to give them a break from hard travel for a week and a nice payday in a town that treated them like royalty. They all came to Antone's to play- Muddy Waters, Sunnyland Slim, Eddie Taylor, Koko Taylor, Buddy Guy & Junior Wells, Albert King, Big Joe Turner and on and on. Everybody but Howlin' Wolf, who was in ill health when Antone's opened and died in Jan. 1976. The Antone's that opened on Sixth Street in July 1975 was a classroom for such blues musicians as the Vaughan brothers, Lou Ann Barton, Derek

O'Brien, the Thunderbirds and Charlie Sexton. But it was leveled in 1979 and the Home of the Blues moved to Great Northern Boulevard, near Anderson Lane. Bigger room, bigger shows, with B.B. King, Ray Charles and Jerry Lee Lewis, but Clifford wanted to be closer to downtown. He had some Lebanese relatives looking out for him and they helped get him the place at 2915 Guadalupe St. across the street from their Centennial Liquors.



Antone's #3 on Guadalupe.

Now, scene oldtimers will tell you that the greatest location of Antone's was the first one, in an old used furniture store across from the Driskill Hotel. But I don't see how it could've been better than the one on Guadalupe. That place, a former Shakey's Pizza Parlor, was pure magic. It's where U2 jammed with Stevie Ray Vaughan and T Bone Burnett after their sold-out show at the Erwin Center in '87. It's where Buddy Guy, who'd been semi-retired, came back hard to show everyone where Jimi Hendrix got some of his licks.

Every celebrity passing through the ATX had to pop in at Antone's and if

they thought they could play a little they jumped onstage. My favorite night was when Bruce Willis jammed with the house band. Not that part, the next, when Snooky Pryor followed and shoved that weak harp shit right up “Bruno”’s tailpipe.

Antone’s long “Cliffipedia” intros were legendary and he especially loved to rattle off the resumes of little known sidemen like Wayne Bennett and Matt “Guitar” Murphy. Howlin’ Wolf’s guitarist Hubert Sumlin practically lived at Antone’s.



Let’s see if we can name all the Antone’s locations: 1) Sixth Street 2) North Austin 3) 2915 4) West Fifth and Lavaca 5) East Riverside Hell and now 6) on East Fifth. The new location seems committed to following the initial vision of Clifford, who passed away from a heart attack in 2006, of honoring the blues musicians who gave birth to rock n’ roll.

Six seems like a good number for Antone’s, a club that has had its share of dead nights, but continues to represent a quality live music experience to the rest of the world.

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #7 Soap Creek (three locations)



The Cobras with Stevie Vaughan and Paul Ray

There was nothing like #1, which they called it “the Honky Tonk In the Hills” and “Dope Creek.” The first Soap Creek, opened in 1973 by a hippie/biker couple from the Vulcan and the ‘Dillo named George and Carlyne Majewski. The roadhouse used to be a dude ranch bunkhouse and then was the Elm Grove Club. Alex Napier of the Cobras had it for a few months before it was Soap Creek, but it couldn’t make it because at that time, Westlake Hills was way out of town. And that drive up the hill!

Doug Sahm was smart. He rented a house 100 yards away, but let’s just say a lot of people slept in their cars after a night of partying. Freddy Fender remembered that long, rugged drive up from Bee Caves Road and entering a parking lot where longhairs in cowboy hats were smoking weed. “I thought, ‘man, what has Doug gotten me into?!’” he laughed. On parole after a marijuana

bust, Fender was working as a mechanic in Corpus Christi, but after Sahm covered “Wasted Days, Wasted Nights” in ’74, he reconnected with Fender and brought him up to play Soap Creek. It was the show that made Freddy quit his job at the garage. The next year Fender had the #1 song in the country with “Til the Next Teardrop Falls” and it all started at Soap Creek.



Last show at #1.

The Majewskis fostered a family environment amidst all the dope smoke and tequila shots (40 cents!), raising their own kids, as well as those Sexton boys, pretty much. Because it was so isolated, the club had a communal feel you didn't get downtown. And a great sense of humor, billing itself "Home of the Stars" and hosting the annual Spamarama.

"When Soap Creek opened, the Armadillo was king, but they only served beer over there, whereas Soap Creek served liquor, so you had a slightly more mature crowd at Soap Creek," said Kerry Awn, who designed the club's posters and performed with the Uranium Savages. "Plus, that was where all the musicians hung out. The Armadillo had a lot of tourists and frat boys, but because Soap Creek was out of the way, with this winding, pothole-filled road to get there, you had to really want to be there."

"The one night that sticks out the most was when the Grateful Dead was in town and their roadies dosed everyone in the place. I remember Johnny Winter was there and he was jamming with Doug Sahm, who was always there because he lived practically next door. You had to stop selling alcohol at midnight, so when five or six cops busted in at around 5 a.m. they thought they'd find all these people still drinking and they'd haul us all in. But nobody was drinking. Everybody was just tripping and so the cops had to leave."

A luxury housing project knocked Soap Creek #1 out of the Eanes school district in 1979, but they found a new home at the old Skyline club at North Lamar and Braker Lane. The third Soap Creek location was in the former Backstage Club at South Congress and Academy Drive. All three locations had some great shows. Seeing Doc Watson at #3 in '84 was the closest I've ever sat to a musical genius doing his thing.

The Majewskis sold the business and Carlyne went into band management (Lone Justice, Marcia Ball, the Wagoneers, Kelly Willis). Soap Creek closed in 1985.

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #8 Black Cat Lounge



*L-R Grissom, Mudcatt, Holt, Curly, Benny. Paul Sessums on motorcycle.*

Austin has had some quite remarkable club owners, but there's never been



one like Paul Sessums, a biker who grew up in Austin, married an artist and raised their children in a raging nightclub in the heart of Sixth Street. Sessums didn't like anybody telling him what to do, whether it was his neighbors or city code enforcers, so he'd draft these incredibly angry and graphic screeds and post them in front of his club. In one I remember, he said the city was trying to turn Sixth Street into "a gay Disneyland." He wanted it to keep rocking.

Bands that played the Black Cat had to do 3-4 hour sets, no breaks, and for that they were paid handsomely. Paul gave them all the door, which for top acts like Soulhat, Joe Rockhead, Little Sister, Johnny Law, and Ian Moore, could be as much as \$3,000 a night if they turned the house. (Which isn't hard to do when you're playing for four hours.)



*Roberta and Paul Sessums*

The first real sensation was Two Hoots and a Holler, who packed the place every Monday night, starting around '89. One night, leader Rick Broussard decided to take a break and Sessums was in his face. "What's the matter, is your pussy sore?" the club owner said and the pair had to be separated.

The lucrative residency, for both club and band, was over. But that was Paul. He didn't seem to care about money.

After Paul and his wife Roberta opened the bar in 1985, the crowd was mostly bikers. Some of the early acts were Evan Johns and Donnie Ray Ford, at the tiny first location, when the tip jar flew over the crowd on wires and pulleys. If you'd been there awhile and didn't tip the bands, the bartender would make the tip jar dance over your head until you threw in a buck.

The 313 E. Sixth Street location, from '88 until the club burned down in 2002, was bigger, but still a supreme dive. There was no phone and the club never advertised. But if you were into rock bands, especially ones with great guitar players, you knew about the Black Cat. There was no heat, so the Sessums family (Martian and Sasha were the kids) would start a fire pit out back on cold winter nights. They also served free hot dogs for a few years until the health department shut that down.

Martian drew up the Black Cat t-shirts that everyone halfway cool wore, even Timbuk 3 on the *Tonight Show*, and left the club around '95. With her parents living in Palacios, TX, Sasha pretty much ran the place after that. Paul Sr. died in a car accident near Bastrop in 1998.

The Black Cat nurtured many different scenes in its 17-year-run. It was the home of country, rockabilly, funk, jam band, blues and even rap and metal at times. There was really only one rule: if Paul is beaming, then we're having one helluva party!

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #9 Club Foot

Located at E. 4th and Brazos, Club Foot took over the Club 110 disco in late 1980. After the Armadillo closed on the last day of that year, the hippies moved on to Liberty Lunch on 2nd Street or Soap Creek #2 at the old Skyline Club on North Lamar, and the Foot got most of the alternative/punk acts, like U2, New Order, REM, X, Gang of Four and a young Metallica. Soul bands like Sam & Dave and James Brown packed the 950-capacity club, which also started Austin's love affair with African music with an appearance by King Sunny Ade that folks are still talking about.

When I visited Austin in the summer of '83, the club was called Nightlife, though it had most of the key people in place. The owner was John Bird (brother of Austin author Sarah) and when he bought into the Golden Chick food franchise, that's where his attention- and financial backing- went.



Trouble Funk at Club Foot.

It was a Monday night and the place was empty when I went there, but you could see what made the club so great. The live room was a perfect size, with balcony viewing. And there were all these other rooms to kinda pop your head into. I could picture the first night a band was booked- the Stranglers- and see the Raul's/Armadillo crowd discover a club like they'd never seen before. They knew it couldn't last, that's how perfect it was, and so they ate it up and now have memories you can't touch.

A year before the Red Hot Chili Peppers released their first album, punk rock and funk rhythm gloriously collided in Austin when the Big Boys, thrashers who had added a horn section, opened for Washington D.C. "go-go" powerhouse Trouble Funk at the Club Foot location at 4th and Brazos which had just changed names to Nightlife.

Although the genres sounded nothing alike, go-go and punk came from the same mindset of jumping off the pedestal and onto the dancefloor/moshpit. Both are people's music. In an era when top R&B acts like the Commodores and Earth, Wind and Fire dressed like pimp spacemen, the members of Trouble Funk wore cut-offs and tank tops, "dropping the bomb" on pompousness in order to connect deeper. Using "call and response" from the church, TF roamed the soundscape in search of the original groove and once they found it, they didn't let go. Repetition became hypnotic, with no breaks between songs. The most self-conscious people during the Trouble Funk set at Nightlife were the handful not dancing.

This monumental night came about because a critic for the *Village Voice* called the Big Boys a cross between ZZ Top and Trouble Funk. Roland Swenson, now director of SXSW, then the co-owner of Moment Productions, had a booth at New Music Seminar in NYC and met the members of Trouble Funk. Swenson showed them the Voice review and said that they should play a show with the Big Boys (a Moment client) in Austin. A couple months later, the "Don't Touch That Stereo" tour was routed right through Texas. A call to Club Foot/ Nightlife brought the opinion that such a double bill was insane. "Club Foot said 'You don't understand. That band is a hardcore band and their crowd is NOT your crowd,'" recalls Tim Kerr of the Big Boys. But Trouble Funk stood their ground. The club called the Big Boys, who said they were fans and could

see the bill working, so the show was booked. The Big Boys had been turned onto D.C. go-go, which never really caught on nationally, by Ian MacKaye of Minor Threat, who stayed at Kerr's house whenever he came through on tour.

Opening for Trouble Funk, the Big Boys brought the horns out more than usual and debuted their raucous version of marching band fave "The Horse," which brilliantly set up Trouble Funk's seamless feet-jack. "There were definitely people there to see Trouble Funk, not us, but the crowd was more than half Big Boys fans and Club Foot regulars," Kerr says. After the show, members of the two divergent bands toasted the triumph.

"We told them there was a great scene in their hometown that loved go-go and when Trouble Funk got back to DC, they should get a hold of Ian at Dischord and do a show together." The next month, Trouble Funk played a sold-out concert with Minor Threat, and the Big Boys, who instigated the whole thing, were brought in to open.

"It was a pretty big deal because it was the first time they had ever mixed the mostly white DC hardcore scene with the mostly black DC go-go scene," Kerr says. "We were pretty honored to be asked, and it also turned out to be Minor Threat's last show." Folks in D.C. still talk about that historic night. But the pioneer performance happened in Austin a month earlier.



On the night of November 4, 1980, Ronald Reagan was declared the winner of the Presidential election and the politically-radical Gang of Four took the stage at the jam-packed club on 4th and Congress. The juxtaposition of these two events made for two hours that no one there would ever forget. After reminding the crowd of the world in trouble they were in with Reagan in charge, Gang of Four firehosed the room with danceable punk rock that left everyone dripping. "It was one of those great rock shows that crosses the line into pandemonium," said photographer David C. Fox. "You know that saying about how 'rock and roll saved my life'? That's how that night felt." This list is not a ranking of the greatest concerts the town's ever seen. We're not counting encores, this was one of those truly musical intense shows that came out of a big moment. Context. The lines were becoming clearer that night and the Gang of Four made their side the one to be on.

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #10 Raul's.

Three Years That Changed Austin Music Forever.



Caroline Estes Dances To Sally Norvell's Gator Family.

On Dec. 31, 1977, Roy "Raul" Gomez, Joseph Gonzales and Bobby Morales opened a bar at 2610 Guadalupe Street where they wanted to feature Chicano music. But the Sex Pistols made for other plans. Nine days after Raul's opened, the British punk rock sensation played Randy's Rodeo in San Antonio and every cutting edge music fan from Austin was in the crowd thinking "I could do that, if I only had the guts."

Four who did were Kathy Valentine, Carla Olson, Marilyn Dean and Jesse

Sublett, who formed a band called the Violators. Joe King Carrasco, who played Raul's in a Tex-Mex band called El Molino, had told them about the dive on the Drag, which actually wasn't doing so well. Hispanic employees in the area, especially construction workers, just wanted to go home after the whistle blew.

The kids approached Gonzales, who figured what the hell and put them on a bill with Bill Maddox's art-rock band Project Terror in March '78. It didn't take long before Austin had its very own CBGBs. This sort of thing was happening all over the country, but because Austin was already a live music city where the unconventional flocked, the bands were really good, not just drunks stumbling around onstage and taunting the audience. The Big Boys and the Dicks, lead by overweight queens, were like no other bands in the country. Then you had the art rock of Terminal Mind and F Systems, the melodic quirkiness of Standing Waves, D-Day and the Jitters, and the flamboyant singer- focused bands like the Next with Ty Gavin and the Jitters of Billy Pringle.



Mike Laur, Daily Texas Staff

A policeman handcuffs rock singer Phil Tolstead during a performance and disturbance at Raul's.



The Raul's scene started getting a national rep with "The Huns Bust" of Sept. 1978, when cops, who had targeted the punk club, mistook staged chaos onstage for real violence, and started busting heads and dragged in six clubgoers (including Austin Chronicle publisher Nick Barbaro.) Touring acts like Patti Smith and Elvis Costello popped in to jam, then up-and-coming acts like Psychedelic Furs and the Cramps started getting booked.

"The thing about Raul's was that when it took off, it turned all notions of what passed for cool in Austin upside down," said Roland Swenson, the SXSW director whose entree into show biz was managing Standing Waves. "The social order was disrupted... If you cut your hair short, wore black and hung out at Raul's you became a target for frat boys and hippie rednecks alike. That bonded the kids in the 'scene' in a way I've not seen since." Punk rock was a gang, a family, for those who felt left out.

When I was living in Hawaii, "the Rock," looking for a town to move to, I got a photo in the mail from my friend Andrella, who was doing lights for the Cramps on tour. It showed shirtless singer Lux Interior in the middle of a delirious packed crowd in full-on punk and rockabilly regalia. "This is TEXAS!" she wrote on the back. But by the time I moved to Austin, Raul's was gone, closing in '81.

Perhaps the worst group of musicians to ever play Raul's was responsible for the club's most notorious night. On Sept. 19, 1978, a group of Radio-Television-Film students, led by flamboyant singer Phil Tolstead, debuted their band the Huns at Raul's with great anticipation. "The stage was set for theater," Louis Black recalled in the Austin Chronicle nearly 30 years later. The Huns certainly weren't going to wow people with their musical ability. "We sounded like the Sex Pistols with Sid on every instrument," Huns drummer Tom Huckabee wrote in the liner notes of a 1995 reissue of *The Huns Live At The Palladium 1979*.

Someone threw a trash can onstage to start the chaos that became the riot of 9/19/79. It was getting crazy, with band and audience both part of the show, when beat cop Steve Bridgewater sauntered in, just to check out what was going on. Tolstead spotted him and started directing the lyrics of "Eat Death Scum" at the man in blue: "I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!" Tolstead pointed at the cop and the cop pointed back. Some naughty

words were said and the officer took the stage to arrest the singer for obscenity. And then he kissed him: Tolstead full on the lips of the cop, as he was being handcuffed. When officer Bridgewater put in a frantic officer-in-distress call, his radio was knocked out of his hand by the Huns guitarist and a melee ensued. But within minutes there were 10 police cars outside. There had also been a couple of plainclothes cops in the audience, according to a report in the Daily Texan, and when they started shoving people, someone poured a pitcher of beer over an undercover cop's head and all hell broke loose. SXSW co-founder Nick Barbaro said "Are you proud of yourself, asshole?" to one cop, and he was arrested. Inner Sanctum manager Richard Dorsett was also singled out as an instigator and he shared a cell with Barbaro that night. In all, six Raul's patrons spent the night in the slammer, but then were released without charges.

Tolstead went to trial and was fined \$53.50, but "The Huns Bust" has become such an exaggerated part of Austin clubbie lore that the six arrested grew into the "Huns 11" and 120 people on hand have multiplied to thousands through the years. But that night put Austin on the map as a place where other types of music besides "progressive country" was played. It also established the Austin as a town that doesn't take itself too seriously. "I saw a cop walk onstage and I couldn't believe it," Huckabee said in the Daily Texan. "We said on posters, 'No Police.'"

# Rock club raid leads to 6 arrests

Six persons were arrested early Wednesday morning when police broke up the debut performance of Austin punk rock band the Huns at Raul's, 2610 Guadalupe St.

Charged in Municipal Court with participating in a riot were Phil Tolstead, the band's lead singer; Richard Jones, a spectator; Bobby Morales, a Raul's bouncer; Nick Barbaro, a spectator; Richard Dorsett, a spectator and manager of Inner Sanctum records; and Bob Goss, who was arrested later at police headquarters.

According to eyewitness accounts, two policemen, one uniformed at the door and the other a plainclothesman inside, were present before an altercation occurred during the performance watched by approximately 120 persons.

Tony Browning of Austin said Phil Tolstead, the lead singer, was pointing at the uniformed officer, singing a song titled, "Eat Death Scum," which included the lyrics, "I hate you, I hate you," and the officer approached the stage.

Larry Osier, a University communication student, who was present, said that when the singer responded by trying to kiss the officer, the officer

handcuffed Tolstead, and the audience then rushed the stage.

Joe Gonzales, the manager, said, "Our security was trying to break it up, and they (police) clubbed him. That guy (the plainclothesman) never identified himself.

"Nobody here was fighting, it was part of the act. But they (police) didn't wait to find out," Gonzales said.

Tom Huckabee, drummer of the band and a University RTF student, said, "I saw a cop walk on (stage) and I couldn't believe it. We said on posters, 'No Police'."

The band included as part of its act several taunts and acts of mock violence, including items being thrown onstage and off to emulate the onstage shenanigans of the Sex Pistols in their San Antonio concert last January.

"I didn't see any real violence until well after the police arrived," one member of the audience noted afterward.

Several people dressed in plainclothes who had been mingling with the crowd earlier and were among the first to rush onstage when the police arrived later displayed police badges.

The Daily Texan article was picked up all over the country and led to stories in Rolling Stone and NME. Riots at punk shows were big news, as

America wondering what the hell happened to white kids. One of those who read the Rolling Stone story was a high school kid named David Yow, who joined the growing number of Raul's regulars after the bust. "It changed the way I thought about music," Yow has said. There was something going on with rock and roll and lines were being drawn. Many stepped over to the Raul's side 36 years ago and never came back. Or they went the other way.

Tolstead became a born again Christian, a soldier in Jerry Falwell's religious right crusade, in the mid-'80s and appeared on The 700 Club, denouncing his past as a punk rock provocateur. That's the strangest part of the whole story.



*Patti Smith joins the Skunks' (l-r) Jesse Sublett, Billy Blackmon, and "Fazz" Eddie Muñoz onstage at Raul's (Photo by Ken Hoge)*

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #11 Rome Inn

Antone's is Austin's internationally renowned "Home of the Blues," but from 1978 until its final blowout on April 20, 1980, the Rome Inn had the hottest blues scene in town. SRV played every Sunday and Paul Ray's Cobras had Tuesdays, but the hottest night was "Blue Monday," with the Fabulous Thunderbirds.

Billy Gibbons would take a busload of Houston friends to the Rome Inn on Mondays and immortalized the "fiend scene" on "Lowdown in the Street" from ZZ Top's 1979 album *Degüello*: "So roam on in, it ain't no sin to get low down in the street." That same year, the T-Birds paid tribute to the lovable man in the sweat-stained blue T-shirt with slow harp instrumental "C-Boy's Blues" from their debut LP *Girls Go Wild*.

C-Boy Parks, a hard-working old black cook with a love in his heart for people, is what made the Rome Inn special. His protégé was a white accounting student who lived in the neighborhood named Steve Wertheimer. Parks didn't own the Rome Inn, where he came to work in the kitchen in 1967 when it was an Italian restaurant. But after it changed to a live music venue, he was promoted to manager because all the musicians loved him.

The blues scene integrated Austin like nothing before it, with UT students going to Charlie's Playhouse on East 11th and bands like Clarence Smith & the Daylighters backing white singer Joyce Harris. White blues musicians like Bill Campbell, the Vaughan brothers, and Angela Strehli sought out obscure Eastside blues players. Running the place, C-Boy gave the music a lift of authenticity.

Parks died in 1991 at age 66, but not before he saw his student flourish in the club business with the Continental. Then, in 2014, Wertheimer fulfilled a longtime promise to himself by opening a soul-themed bar seven blocks up South Congress from the Continental. It's called "C-Boy's," of course, after the man who worked two fulltime jobs a day (including fry cook at the

Nighthawk), but always came from back behind the bar, no matter how busy he was, to dance to “Mathilda.”

After the Rome Inn closed, the club on 29th Street had a brief resurrection as punk club Studio 29. But since the mid-'80s it's been Texas French Bread.

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #12 Cactus Cafe



*Griff and Butch Hancock. Photo by Jay Janner AAS*

When the Texas Union reopened in 1979 after extensive renovations, it featured a new coffeehouse called the Cactus Café. But long before that, going back to the '30s, the space was known as the Chuckwagon. It's where a UT student named Janis Joplin first performed in front of an audience in 1962, with a folk trio called the Waller Creek Boys.

What made the Cactus special at the beginning was a bartender named Griff Luneburg, finishing up his degree in Government. A Bob Dylan fanatic, Luneberg ran the club's open mike night on Thursday and started booking the club fulltime in 1982. The first act to charge a cover (\$2) was Nanci Griffith, who told her friend Lyle Lovett about the Cactus, and his career was built there in '84, '85.

Think of anybody who's written a song in the past 30 years that's made you cry- they almost all played the Cactus. Townes Van Zandt, Doc Watson, Gillian Welch, Bill Monroe, Todd Snider, Iris Dement, Jimmy Webb, Kasey Chambers... It's really kinda ridiculous to try to list the nights of songwriting magic there. I'll point out two.



*Janis played the Cactus in 1962 when it was the Chuckwagon*

The first was when an Austin High School basketball player named Suzanna Choffel saw Patty Griffin at the Cactus and saw the person she most wanted to be like. Nights at that little 100-capacity club have changed many in the audience. But they've also changed lives of those onstage. Bruce Robison and Slaid Cleaves are just two of many popular acts who didn't know for sure that they could do this until they bowled 'em over at the Cactus. Distance and volume are things that keep performers safe from revealing too much, but there's no place to hide at the Cactus.





*Suzanna Choffel participated in Carrie Rodriguez's 2018 residency.*

After an outraged public beat some sense into UT, which had announced they were closing the Cactus in 2011 (and ended firing Luneburg to save face), it seems to be cruising along. But the Cactus was Griff. I have no real idea of what went on behind the scenes, but UT shouldn't have done Griff like that. He's the only reason there's not still cover bands playing the

Cactus, as in the beginning.

I said I was going to tell you about two specific shows to add some flesh around the thumbnail. This second one was my favorite show ever at the Cactus. I remember because we were among only about 10 people to see John Hiatt. This was right before *Bring the Family*. Across town that night, the Backroom was packed for Richard Thompson's solo show. Glass Eye and Brent Grulke and all the other people who told you about music were always raving about Richard Thompson. Meanwhile, John Hiatt had spent a few years getting unfogged from various addictions and nobody knew if he was still any good. I just wanted to hear "She Loves the Jerk" and head on over to the Back Room.

Hiatt, also solo, was playing all these brilliant new songs like "Memphis In the Meantime" and "Stood Up," and singing with such soul. It was a pure connection with the few of us. At the end he went to the piano and played a song I've heard hundreds of times since, but on that night it was new. "Have a Little Faith In Me." I mean, come on! Here was this artist starting over, playing to nobody, being overcome with this real sense of personal fulfillment that only comes with humility. One man, one stage, one song. That was the night for me.

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #13 Emo's



(Not to be confused with the club at 2015 E. Riverside.)

It's 1992 and the alternative rock world of hardened white kids is looking for a place to show off their tattoos and listen to loud music. They had no reason to go to Red River Street until Eric "Emo" Hartman opened with a bang. A "no cover" policy will make you popular in a hurry. Emo's rush-opened with a catering license for SXSW 1992, then made it official in May. Before Emo's, the only rock at Sixth and Red River cost about \$20 a pebble. If you were walking down Sixth Street and you saw the Red River street sign it was time to head back.

There was stuff happening on Red River before Emo's. There was the Chances lesbian bar that became Club DeVille. The Cavity Club was the only skeezy shithole that G.G. Allin couldn't mess up. Brad First introduced industrial rock to Austin at the Cave Club with Skinny Puppy and Ministry. It was a gay bar before the Cave, around 1986, so for the first few months there was a long horizontal mirror above the urine trough so you could see everybody's chode. That's where Elysium is now. Before that it was the Atomic Café, Paul Sessums' Split Rail, the Sanitarium, Kilimanjaro, Hip-

Hop City, I'm forgetting one or two.

But mostly, Red River was dominated by junk shops like Snooper's Paradise and Hurt's Hunting Ground before Emo's made it the place to be.

When Hartman and his manager David Thomson (who came from the original Emo's in Houston) entered 601 Red River for the first time, the walls held stuffed animal heads and wagon wheels, décor left over from when the club was C&W with Raven's and Poodie's. When Emo's hired Don Walser to its first and only residency, it wasn't as an homage to its past, but what its customers wanted. Henry's on Burnet Road had been attracting punks and rockers to see Walser, Junior Brown, High Noon and other country acts.



Emo's March 1994.

Then there was the time Johnny Cash turned Emo's into the Grand Ol' Dump during SXSW '94. "There was a knock on the back door that

afternoon,” said Thomson, “and when I asked who it was, he said ‘John Cash.’ He said, ‘I’ll be working for you tonight, so I was wondering if I could come inside and see the place.” Thomson said it was the only time he was embarrassed by how Emo’s looked. Johnny Cash (followed by Beck) put Emo’s on the map and bookings got easier, though regulars were outraged when a cover charge of \$1 for over 21, \$2 for 18-21, was implemented. “Freemo’s” was no more.

Thomson laughed when he recalled overhearing Robin Zander of Cheap Trick walking into Emo’s for the first time, around ’95. “I can’t believe we’re playing this shithole!” he said. Neither could the 1,100 or so who packed the place.

“Emo’s was the home away from home for misfits,” said Thomson. “I think we brought a whole different crowd to Sixth Street.”

Emo’s closed in Dec. 2011 and opened a bigger, nicer version of the rock box at the former location of the Back Room on Riverside. Owner Frank Hendrix, who bought the club from Hartman in 2000, sold Emo’s East, as it had been called, to C3 Presents in Feb. 2013 and it is now part of the Live Nation empire.

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #14 Hole In the Wall 1974 to present

My theory is that the mob buried some bodies under the building in the '50s. How else could you explain that the Hole In the Wall is still there on the Drag, unlevelled in this era when "mixed use" throttles mixed drinks? This nightlife warhorse has had more false farewells than the Who.



Hole in the Wall men's room. Photo by Steve Hopson.

We thought we lost the beloved Austin *Cheers*, where everybody slurs your name, in June 2002, when the closing made front page news. But the Hole came back a few months later, all cleaned up and catering to a broader audience than the daytime stool-flatteners and the younger people who had to order over them.

It's true that Steve Earle and Nanci Griffith played at the Hole in its early years, but the club at 2538 Guadalupe St. didn't really build its reputation as a live venue until the roots rockers of the '80s, including the Commandos, Two Hoots and a Holler, LeRoi Brothers and Buick MacKane.

Playing in the picture window, like some Lower East Side Esther's Follies, bands came to embrace the Hole as a stage to pull themselves out of with the sheer force of their performance. Spoon, Fastball, Timbuk 3, Damnations, Sincola, Carper Family and the White Horse Saloon all came

out of there. “This place was the litmus test for bands,” musician Jacob Schulze told me in 2002, on a night when Kathy McCarty raised goosebumps on leather jackets by belting “Living Life.”

“You couldn’t move onstage or hear yourself, and chances were pretty good there wouldn’t be much of an audience,” Schulze continued. “But if you couldn’t get up there and rock out and have fun, then you had no business playing music.” Those who couldn’t pull it off onstage were often scathed in instant reviews on the men’s room wall, the closest thing Austin had to a second daily paper.

It’s been a long time since Don Henley, hidden in a dark corner, jumped onstage to sing “Don Henley Must Die” with a stunned Mojo Nixon. Or since Courtney Love commandeered the men’s room for a sniffing session the night before her rambling SXSW interview. But the spirit’s still there, even as the Hole is now run with rare efficiency by Will Tanner.



*Emmylou Harris sits in with Rosie Flores after her ACL taping. Photo by Roscoe Shoemaker.*

# Greatest Austin Clubs of All Time: #15 Vulcan Gas Company 1967- 1970



*Big Mama Thornton at the Vulcan Gas Company*

Let's look at Austin music in the '60s. There were folkie clubs like the Cliché in West Campus, the Eleventh Door on Red River (where Janis Joplin played) and the Chequered Flag, which had an auto racing theme in reflection of co-owner Rod Kennedy's obsession. There was the New Orleans Club, which took its name from the preferred Dixieland jazz, but then started booking rock acts like the 13th Floor Elevators to fill the club. The Jade Room on San Jacinto was another '60s club, but they never committed to original rock music and booked cover bands on the weekends. Club Saracen was one of the first clubs to mix beatniks and



frats, then there was The Fred, a short-lived club that had light shows to rock music, and over on the East Side, the I.L. was booking longhairs. But all this early psych-rock activity was scattered until the hippies got their musical hangout.



*Jimmy Reed backstage at the Vulcan. Photo by Burton Wilson.*

The Electric Grandmother collective, which booked psychedelic shows at Doris Miller and the September 1967 “Love-In at Zilker,” rented out a storefront with a big, square room at 316 Congress Avenue and called it the Vulcan Gas Company. There was a war between dope-smoking longhairs and law enforcement in Austin (even though it was an ex-Marine with a crewcut who killed all those people from the Tower in 1966), so the Vulcan didn’t even try to get a liquor license. Instead, the city hassled them relentlessly over code violations, especially having to do with the Vulcan’s electrical set-up. The Statesman refused to advertise shows at the Vulcan,

so the club's 23" x 28" posters were of great importance and such artists as Gilbert Shelton, Jack Jackson and Jim Franklin blew minds and sold tickets.

The counterculture pleasure dome was a shithole, with inconsistent sound and no air conditioning. But 900 heads would pack in there to see acts like Big Mama Thornton, the Velvet Underground, Jimmy Reed, Moby Grape, Mance Lipscomb and local faves Conqueroo and Shiva's Head Band play to a backdrop of exposed pipes. Club favorite Johnny Winter met his hero Muddy Waters in '68 when he opened for the legend at the Vulcan. Waters couldn't believe the authentic sound coming from Winter's guitar and so he held up a phone for a friend to hear. "He white," Muddy said into the receiver. "I mean, he REALLY white!"

Janis Joplin and Big Brother were too big for the Vulcan and so the owners, including Don Hyde and Houston White, booked them at the Hemisfair Theater in San Antonio on Nov. 21, 1968. But after Joplin canceled the sold-out concert due to illness, promoters lost \$3,500 and a disgusted Hyde dumped 3,000 posters he had made-one for each ticketholder, into the trash.

The Vulcan tried selling membership cards- at \$1 a year- to stay afloat, but the club finally sunk in the summer of 1970. That was a few weeks before the manager of Shiva's Headband found an abandoned National Guard Armory near the intersection of Barton Springs Road and Riverside that was just about the same size as the Fillmore in San Francisco.



Otis Spann and Muddy Waters. *Photo by Burton Wilson.*

316 Congress later became the location of Duke's Royal Coach Inn, a short-lived, yet beloved punk/new wave club that opened after Raul's closed.