

SXSW

TRUE /FALSE QUESTIONS

1. SXSW is a large annual event held in Austin Texas to celebrate the filming of "Friday Night Lights"

True / False

2. Patrick and Steven call themselves the National Film Society

True / False

3. SSXW brings together some of the sharpest minds working in IT.

True / False

4. SXSW started as a music festival but now includes film and interactive IT.

True / False

5. SXSW stands for South by South West

True / False

6. Both Patrick and Steven are going to SXSW

True / False

7. Patrick want to do some networking at SXSW

True / False

8. Steven wants to meet some nerdy girls at SXSW

True / False

Austin: Still Weird After All These Years

The capital of down-home cool (and Texas) is growing up fast. But everything that makes it great--the food, the music, the people--is being threatened by high rents, traffic, and the likes of Baja Fresh. Can Austin keep the misfit spirit alive?

By Jason Cohen, 2004-05-18 16:07:00

To call it an ordinary Friday would be only a slight exaggeration. The parking lot next to the Hotel San José is jammed with hot rod gearheads and tattooed girls enjoying their first--okay, second--beers of the day as rush hour commuters rubberneck the custom cars parked on both sides of South Congress Avenue. Among the rebuilt rides are guitar legend Jimmie Vaughan's lime-gold '63 Buick Riviera and a purple '57 Cadillac that is the pride and joy of Continental Club impresario Steve Wertheimer. Inside the Continental, which was born the same year as its current owner's Caddy, the Blues Specialists ("over 200 years of combined blues-playing experience") lug their instruments onto the red-velvet stage for happy hour, after which honky-tonkers Dale Watson and Jesse Dayton will play the hotel parking lot, followed by rockabilly bombshell Marti Brom and yodeler Wayne "the Train" Hancock back at the club. At 2 a.m., many revelers will move to Magnolia Café South, where a short stack of bigger-than-your-head gingerbread pancakes gives all that tequila and Shiner Bock beer a cozy place to spend the night.

This particular bustle comes as part of the third Annual Lonestar Rod & Kustom Round Up, but the thing is, there's always something going on in Austin, which is not just the capital of Texas and self-proclaimed Live Music Capital of the World, but a capital of American cool. A week prior to the car show, the town was commandeered by the four-night, 1,100-band South by Southwest music fest. Tomorrow, 15,000 men and women will run the Capitol 10K. Next weekend is Spamarama, the 26th annual celebration of processed pork. In between, it will be First Thursday once again: On the first Thursday of every month, there is the traditional art-gallery stroll, as well as a half-dozen bands playing various clubs, a drum circle, and the chance to play musical chairs with the local Roller Derby queens. Dancers from the Red Light Burlesque serve as crossing guards--traffic on South Congress can be brutal.

In fact, traffic is a nightmare everywhere. When I moved to Austin in 1990, after four years in Chicago and a year in New York City, it took five minutes to get to anyplace worth going, and you could find a parking space (for free!) within a block or two of any club. Austin was the scruffy college town of Richard Linklater's film *Slacker*--artsy, intellectual, and cheap, with a bit of cowboy culture on the side, a downtown full of empty buildings left over from the busted oil boom, and more hills and green space than anyone had a right to expect. For decades, Austin was where every misfit from Houston, Dallas, and Amarillo came to be themselves.

Imagine their surprise when Whit and Ashley from back home moved in next door, with their dot-com jobs, matching SUVs, and lust for P.F. Chang's. Austin in 2004 reflects Dubya, Michael Dell, and Lance Armstrong as much as Linklater, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and Willie Nelson. It's more of a real city, but also more like other cities. You pay to park downtown (if you can even find an empty lot), and the two University of Texas-area cafés in *Slacker* have been supplanted by a Starbucks and a Diesel shop. "Keep Austin Weird" has become an unofficial slogan--as unofficial as a slogan can be, anyway, once the city council has shoehorned the phrase into an economic white paper (under "Cultural

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Vitality").

It's an unwritten rule that once you've paid rent in Austin for, oh, a month, you can start complaining about how much better everything was when you first got here. But even those who gripe about the city's evolution happily patronize restaurants, shops, and coffeehouses that wouldn't otherwise exist. No one ever leaves, and we're constantly reminded how good we have it by friends from out of town. "I should move here," is the typical refrain, usually uttered by someone from New York or L.A. over a plate of migas (eggs scrambled with salsa, corn tortillas, cheese, and, if you get 'em at El Sol y La Luna, chorizo) or breakfast tacos (my favorites are from Guero's: one stuffed with egg, potato, and cheese, another with refried beans and bacon). Then they marvel at how cheap the bill is. Local institution Tamale House still offers a two-item taco for 85¢, to the delight of broke students and unemployed musicians.

People come to Austin not so much to see the sights as to live the life--coat their arteries in Tex-Mex and barbecue, hear a bunch of bands, spend too much money at Waterloo Records, and maybe take a dip in Barton Springs. In a city with few traditional attractions, you can't beat the naturally fed swimmer's paradise--plus adjacent Zilker Park and the Town Lake hike-and-bike trail. In summer, late in the day, take the trail east along the south shore, past the statue of Stevie Ray Vaughan, and you'll be right on time for the phenomenon that everybody simply calls "the bats." North America's largest colony of Mexican free-tailed fangers--1.5 million of 'em--lives under the Congress Avenue Bridge. If it's not quite sundown, pick up a Día de los Muertos figurine among the handcrafted Mexican and South American tchotchkes at Tesoros or stop in for a margarita at Manuel's, which also has half-price happy hour appetizers and some of the best mole in town. Then join the throng on, around, or underneath the bridge to see the black cloud swarm off into the night.

Not far from the bridge is Threadgill's World Headquarters, a top-notch southern restaurant known for its meat loaf, chicken-fried steak, and garlic cheese grits. It's also something of a museum to Austin history and music. Back in the day, owner Eddie Wilson ran the Armadillo World Headquarters, which was just a block away (the space is now an office building, natch). It was the epicenter of the Austin scene, associated primarily with bluesmen and cosmic cowboys, but everybody from Gram Parsons to the Kinks to the Clash played there. Ironically, TWHQ isn't even the original--that one, simply called Threadgill's, was the home to some of Janis Joplin's first performances in the early '60s, and it's still going strong on the north side of town.

Although Threadgill's has the heritage and atmosphere, I prefer the chicken-fried steak at Hoover's Cooking. Better cut of meat, tastier breading, and they also dish out divine sweet-potato biscuits and above-average barbecue. For the truly authentic Texas-barbecue experience, however, one must leave town. Hard-core gourmands who believe that sauce is an insult to good meat trek 75 miles to Cooper's in Llano (for the pork chop) or 29 miles to Kreuz Market in Lockhart (no sides, no sauce, no forks). Everyone else drives 15 miles to the Salt Lick, the de rigueur place to take out-of-towners. At home, I use its citrusy sauce on everything from pork chops to turkey sandwiches, and the German-style sausage is my favorite in the state. Go family style: Adults pay \$14 for all-you-can-eat ribs, brisket, and sausage with beans, coleslaw, bread, and potato salad.

No place embodies the tension between Austin new and old more than South Congress Avenue. It wasn't long ago that the neighborhood was best known for the New West porno theater and the local streetwalkers--as former State Senator Drew Nixon learned the hard way after offering \$35 to an undercover policewoman. When someone tried to dub the

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burgeoning neighborhood SoCo, Austin American-Statesman wiseacre John Kelso, a fierce protector of the local boho/Bubba spirit, suggested NoMoHo instead.

That one didn't take. SoCo did. Last year Factory People, a designer-clothing store, claimed the space that had been occupied by Just Guns since the '40s. But the street still lives up to the sign on the marquee of the Austin Motel: so close yet so far out. At Allens Boots, you can get \$1,800 alligators, \$50 Ropers, or, if you really want to look like a misfit, a pair decorated with a blue Dallas Cowboys star. Uncommon Objects promises to have "the thing you didn't know you wanted," which for me was a curvy little wood-and-black-vinyl chair. The Yard Dog gallery specializes in southern folk artists, such as 93-year-old Alabaman Jimmy Lee Sudduth, who often works with mud, berries, and soot.

Austin's nighttime claim to fame is 6th Street, where the drinks are strong, the cover bands are generic, and the college girls dress just like the women handing out strip-club coupons. A sprinkle of cool bars (Casino El Camino) and venues (the Parish) don't quite make up for the frat-house vibe, or the fact that there's a Hard Rock Café and a Coyote Ugly. The true heart of Austin music lies elsewhere and includes the Continental, the Broken Spoke (Austin's classic sawdust-on-the-floor country dance hall), and the four-block stretch of mostly punk-rock venues (Emo's, Beerland, Room 710) on Red River that the Austin Chronicle's Christopher Gray aptly described as "the Sunset Strip to Sixth's Bourbon Street." Red River is home to hipster hangout Club DeVille, a good place for a quiet drink or a discreet make-out session. And if you don't feel like boozing on an empty stomach, pop over to the Roaring Fork at the InterContinental Hotel for the best eating deal in town: Every item on the bar menu is \$6, including a giant burger and pork green-chile stew with buttered tortillas.

Off of 11th Street, the red-granite Capitol, which is actually 14 feet taller than Washington, D.C.'s--would Texas have it any other way?--dominates the skyline in tandem with the Texas Tower. Infamous because of Charles Whitman's 1966 shooting spree and also the site of several student suicides, the tower's 28th-floor observation deck was closed for many years, leaving the building with no public purpose other than to glow orange when the Longhorns won. It's now open for tours again, unless another sort of orange--Homeland Security's terror-alert code--is in effect.

The University of Texas campus area is also where you'll find the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, which is ripe with history (Lady Bird's audiotaped diary and Nellie Connally's notes from the JFK assassination) and humor. Specifically, a motion-activated animatronic exhibit in which the 36th president--outfitted in a farm shirt, cowboy hat, and Roper boots--drawls out his folksy wisdom, taken from tapes of his speeches.

Unless you've got tickets for a Horns game, the campus doesn't have much else that's worth a look. Most students live in private housing, which means the Guadalupe Street retail strip (mispronounced "guad-uh-loop," incidentally, but better known as the Drag) is just a place for them to get a smoothie or caffeine fix between lectures. Two doors down from Blue Velvet, one of the city's better vintage-clothing stores, Baja Fresh stands out among the fast-food chains by having the good sense to preserve (in the face of public pressure) a 1993 mural by songwriter Daniel Johnston; the building formerly housed the Sound Exchange record store.

An even bigger corporate concession may end up being made at South Austin's Taco Xpress, where Argentine taco queen Maria Corbalan--a.k.a. Loco Maria--has grown her business from a gift shop to a convenience store to a cooking trailer to a full-fledged, wildly popular restaurant with an outdoor patio. Developers want to replace it and the

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mobile-home park next door with a Walgreen's but, to smooth the way, are promising to, y'know, keep Austin weird by building Maria new digs on the same block.

Meanwhile, a few blocks up the street an old supermarket is set to become the latest location of the Alamo Drafthouse, which some believe will eventually be forced out by the rising rents in a downtown neighborhood--the Warehouse District, centered around 4th and Colorado--of faux pubs and martini bars it helped create. The Alamo is more than your average beer-and-movie palace, with eclectic programming and special events featuring the likes of Quentin Tarantino (who curates an annual festival) and Ain't It Cool film geek Harry Knowles (whose Butt-Numb-A-Thon premiered both *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* and *The Passion of the Christ* weeks before theatrical release).

Was I complaining again? If all this change means one thing--besides higher rents all around--it's that there'll be plenty of opportunity for folks to bemoan the loss of the "original" Alamo Drafthouse or the "old" Taco Xpress. Then again, most people don't even realize that Antone's, currently on 5th Street in the Warehouse District, wasn't always in that spot. Founded in 1975, Austin's most legendary club was the launching pad for Jimmie Vaughan's Fabulous Thunderbirds and his brother Stevie Ray, as well as an obligatory stop for every blues and rock-and-roll great you can think of, from John Lee Hooker to U2. But the "Home of the Blues" has actually had four homes.

Antone's is what it is not because of a particular address, but because of the music and because of owner Clifford Antone's lifelong dedication, even during troubled times (he recently served two-and-a-half years for money laundering and conspiracy to distribute marijuana). Austin may change physically, and "Keep Austin Weird" has already been reduced to something you can buy on a tie-dyed T-shirt at a hotel gift shop. But as long as people like Antone, the Continental's Wertheimer, Threadgill's Wilson, and Taco Xpress's Corbalan keep on doing what they do, the city's spirit will never die.

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MUTI-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Read the article "Austin: Still Weird After All These Years"

and answer the following questions by selecting the best single response.

1. Austin used to be

- ☒ a) a very difficult town to park in
- b) a place where misfits could be themselves
- c) a vibrant business centre

2. People complain about how much better Austin used to be

- ☒ a) after they've paid rent there for about a month
- b) after they've patronized the restaurants
- c) after they've tried a plate of migas or breakfast tacos

3. Austin today reflects

- a) Willie Nelson, Linklater and Bill Gates
- b) Lance Armstrong, Micheal Dell and George Bush Senior
- ☒ c) Willie Nelson, Linklater and Stevie Ray Vaughan

4. State Senator Drew Nixon

- a) lived on South Congress Avenue
- b) offered \$35 to an undercover policewoman
- c) was best known as the owner of the New West porno theatre

5. Austin's Capitol is

- ☒ a) only 14 feet shorter than the one in Washington DC
- b) 14 meters taller than the one in Washington DC
- c) 14 feet taller than the one in Washington DC

6. The Texas Tower

- a) glows orange during a Homeland Security alert
- b) has been closed to the public for many years
- ☒ c) has an observation deck on the 28th floor

7. Students at the University of Texas

- a) mostly live on campus
- b) are very weird
- c) mostly live in private housing

8. The Alamo

- a) is more than your average beer and movie place
- b) is just your average beer and movie place
- c) used to be just an average beer and movie place

CRASHING THE PARTY FOR TECHNOCRATS

A. True / False

1. The slogan of SXSW is "Keep Austin Weird". ~~F~~ T
2. The people attending SSXW believe in technology. T
3. SSXW has been described as "spring break for nerds". T
4. The technocrats tend to ask "how," not "why". T
5. An algorithmic imagination can help solve moral and political problems. T
6. People in the SSXW bubble believe technology has become the new crack. F
7. The transparency of the Internet makes it impossible for outsourcing firms to do harm. T
8. Internet Eyes is a British firm that pays people to watch CCTV footage and to detect crime. T

B. Definitions

1. technocracy	
2. pilgrimage	trip to the pilgrim's father
3. algorithmic	congress of technocrats
4. angsty	

5. sweatshop	
6. coercion	
7. crowdsourcing	
8. luddite	

C. Synonym match

1. aristocracy	A. chant
2. wrath	B. improve
3. Booze	C. responsibility
4. striving	D. argument
5. refine	E. anger
6. disputation	F. alcohol
7. mantra	G. elite
8. liability	I. trying

A crossword puzzle grid with the following words filled in:

- 1 Down:** P, R, I, M, E, R
- 2 Across:** I, N, T, E, R, E, S, T, I, N, G
- 3 Across:** A, L, G, O, R, I, T, H, M, I, C
- 4 Across:** E, D, D, I, T, E
- 5 Down:** N, E, D
- 6 Down:** M, A, R, E
- 7 Down:** T, H, I, M, B, L, E
- 8 Down:** A, L, E
- 9 Down:** R, I, V, E, R
- 10 Down:** S, T, O, N, E
- 11 Down:** W, O, O, D
- 12 Down:** B, A, R, K
- 13 Across:** C, L, O, T, H, E, S
- 14 Across:** S, H, I, R, T
- 15 Down:** T, I, E
- 16 Across:** D, O, D, D, I, T, E

- 2. mental visualisation
- 3. not the place to find your dream job
- 8. mathematical problem solving
- 11. hard to celebrate without it
- 13. when you want something really badly
- 16. someone against technology
- 17. adopters the sort of people who don't have an iphone

Down

1. a religious journey
4. what one has if vexed
5. your typical socially awkward IT geek
6. an article of faith worth repeating
7. bodily
9. elite by virtue of the mastery of technology
10. sometimes people don't always agree
12. the very stuff of life
14. quid pro quo
15. it can only get better
18. most teenagers are supposedly like this

18 of 20 words were placed into the puzzle.

Created by Puzzlemaker at DiscoveryEducation.com



SSXW helps

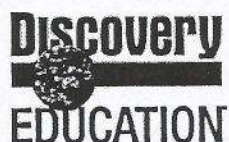
WOTHESSAP	
LIMCTHAORI	
BOEZO	
GATNYS	
GICROWNROUSC	
DETUDLI	
TAMANR	N A N D R A
TNHACCOERYC	
BITYLLAII	
AEGPRIGLIM	P I L G R I M A G E
TIUNOPADTI	
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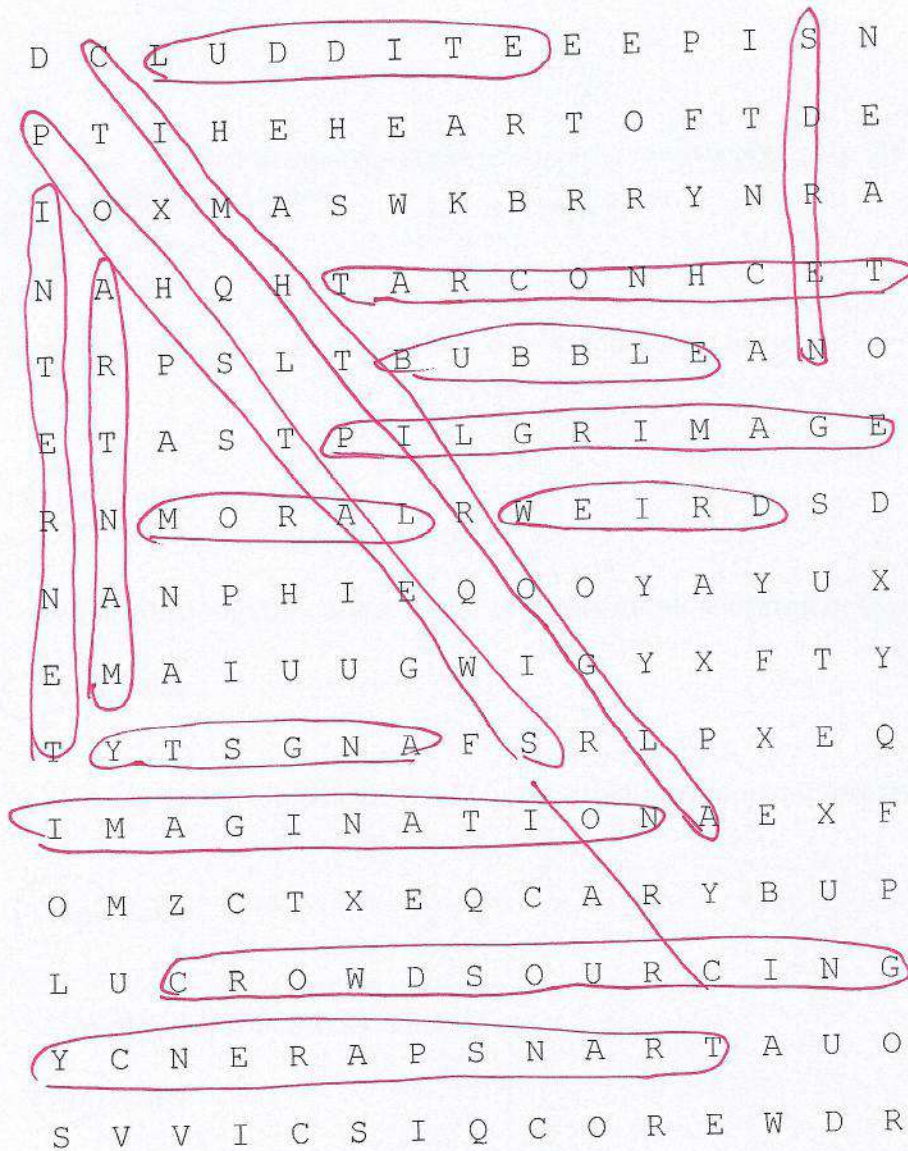
Unscramble each of the clue words.

Take the letters that appear in boxes and unscramble them for the final message.

Created by Puzzlemaker at DiscoveryEducation.com



SXSW



ALGORITHMIC
 CROWDSOURCING
 BUDDITE
 NERDS
 TECHNOCRAT

ANGSTY
 IMAGINATION
 MANTRA
 PILGRIMAGE
 TRANSPARENCY

BUBBLE
 INTERNET
 MORAL
 SWEATSHOP
 WEIRD

DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS

15 of 15 words were placed into the puzzle.

Solution