

THE FIRST WEEK

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RICHARDSON, Texas -- Yes, the name of the 'zine has changed to reflect my new semi-whereabouts.¹

I say "semi" because I'm living out of a motel room at weekly rates on the south side, near the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, because my chosen apartment complex is processing my rental application slower than the traffic on Interstate 35.²

In fact, my whereabouts are more elusive than those of Willie "Eight is Enough" Aames, who has reemerged as a performer in Christian entertainment circles, according to True Believer magazine.³

Advertisers would just about need divine assistance to avoid coming off as foolish as Greg Johnson, president of HomePlace:

"At last, you're all settled in and ready to ad your own special touches that make your house truly your home. You want the best styles at the most affordable prices."⁴

Uh, actually, Greg, the best styles you mention – Pflatzgraff, Mikasa, etc. – are available for far less at the factory outlets along I-35 in Hillsboro and San Marcos.⁵

Then again, I didn't even know about HomePlace until I returned to Richardson⁶ to check my mail after a week of work at IBM's "pink palace" on Burnet Road in Edge City.⁷ If "Star Trek" were about luxury hotels instead of space exploration, it'd look like this place.⁸

Nearby is the apartment complex where the police made a record local cocaine bust this week.⁹ I guess the dealers had to set up their operations in desirable North Austin because of their customers, perfectly willing to consume crack, yet equally unwilling to risk their health by driving to the "dangerous" neighborhoods of East and South Austin.¹⁰

My arrival coincided with the Mardi Gras celebrations, which gave Austinites an excuse to play obscure '50s Crescent City recordings and eat gumbo – a mixture of soup and sand named for the missing Marx Brother. Austin is the westernmost outpost of Louisiana cultures.

Hard on the heels of Mardi Gras, the "Live Music Capital of the World" is hosting the South by Southwest (SXSW) multimedia conference. This means for the next week downtown will be completely impassable as thousands throng to hear scraggly bands emote their angst before industry bigwigs.¹¹ Next time, boys, try emoting with an Em+7.¹² And try substituting some local barbecue¹³ for your regular crack diet. (If you're worried about looking like David Crosby,¹⁴ have some gumbo instead.)

SXSW has spawned a succession of regional imitators, though the music scene that spawned SXSW is in decline, eclipsed by Austin's technology scene that will someday soon also eclipse Silicon Valley.¹⁵

The technology scene is so hot,¹⁶ in fact, employers have been advertising¹⁷ in the "alternative"¹⁸ weekly Austin Chronicle to cope with the severe shortage of workers, something I haven't seen before. The shortage, though has been a reported problem for at least two years.¹⁹ I hammered recruiters about it²⁰ until they swamped my answering machine with prospects while I was deciphering the folkways of IBM.

And even the arts scene, like much in the state, is "... increasingly younger, multiethnic and culturally vibrant"²¹ than SXSW's black-clad artistes, most of whom actually work as bartenders, would suggest.²² And my asides aside, I'm delighted to be on the verge of finally settling in the place I dreamed about for years.

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- ¹ AAA Texas Tour Book. Heathrow, Fla.: AAA Publishing, 1998: 164.
- ² Beal, Chandra. "Living and Learning in a Constant State of Flux." AM June 2000: 6-9+.
- ³ Haley, Lee. "Willie Aames." True Believer Jan./Feb. 2000: 14-17.
- ⁴ Johnson, Greg. Letter to Daniel B. Eisler. 24 Feb. 2000.
- ⁵ Tour Book, 93, 132.
- ⁶ EAD No. 11 (Jan. 11, 2000)
- ⁷ Barnes, Michael. "This Couple is Wired, but Totally Grounded." AAS, 3 Mar. 2000; H6; Garreau, Joel. Edge City: Life on the New Frontier. New York City: Doubleday, 1991: 427.
- ⁸ Okuda, Michael; and Denise Okuda. Star Trek Encyclopedia: A Reference Guide to the Future, rev. ed. New York City: Pocket Books, 1997: passim.
- ⁹ Spencer, Jason. "Police Bust Big Crack Network." AAS, 9 Mar. 2000: A1+.
- ¹⁰ Black, Louis. "Page Two." AC 4 Dec. 1998: 2.
- ¹¹ Black. "Page Two." AC 24 Mar. 2000: 2; Crain, Zac. "Day-tripping." Dallas Observer 23 Mar. 2000: 91+; Corcoran, Michael. "The Afternoon After." XL Xtra (SXSW Music Festival) 18 Mar. 2000: 2; Fitzgerald, Courtney. "Garofalo Storms South by Southwest." DT 21 Mar. 2000: 13; Hsu, Stabler. "Slug SXSW 2000: Does Anyone Have Anything to Say?" Salt for Slugs. Summer 2000: 14; Jackson, Leigh-Ann. "Invasion of the Badge People." XL Xtra (SXSW Music Festival) 17 Mar. 2000: 28; Riemenschneider, Chris. "What's Old is Here Again." XL 16 Mar. 2000: 6; Smith, Anne. "And Everything in Between." XL 16 Mar. 2000: 2.
- ¹² Holdsworth, Allan. Melody Chords for Guitar. Anaheim Hills, Calif.: Centerstream Publishing, 1997: 96.
- ¹³ Laster, Paul. "BBQ: The Tried and True Texas Tradition." AM March 2000: 6-9+.
- ¹⁴ "The Flash." "YSC & N." PNT 24 Feb. 2000: 8.
- ¹⁵ Crain, op. cit.; Riemenschneider. "Salvaging a Music Town, Part I." XL 18 May 2000: 10-11.
- ¹⁶ Bahadur, Gaiutra; MB. Taboada; and Laylan Copelin. "How Growth in Central Texas is Hitting Home." AAS, 9 Mar. 2000: B1-2. Kallenberg, Gregory. "How to Get Heard.org" AAS 3 Mar. 2000: H1+; Pletz, John. "Texas Economic Growth Endures." AAS 9 Mar. 2000: D1+
- ¹⁷ AC, 18 Feb. 2000, advertising supplement; Hepola, Sarah. "Scenes from a Digital Revolution." AC, 3 Mar. 2000: 50+.
- ¹⁸ "Mugger" [Russ Smith Jr.] "Life in the Danny Thomas Suite." NYPR, 2 June 1999, online ed.; Andrey Slivka. "AAN Botches It Again." Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Hawkins, Lori. "Workers Make Leap to High Tech." AAS, 7 Sep. 1998: A1+.
- ²⁰ EAD No. 4 (Mar. 24, 1999).
- ²¹ Silverstein, Stuart. LAT. "U.S. is Moving From Melting Pot to Cluster Culture, Study Reports." Houston Chronicle 10 Mar. 2000: 14A.
- ²² Frum, David. How We Got Here: The 70's--The Decade that Brought You Modern Life--For Better or Worse. New York City: Basic Books, 2000: 68.

For a better understanding of the 1970s, Frum's book should be read in conjunction with Miller, Stephen Paul. The Seventies Now: Culture as Surveillance. Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1999.