

# The San Francisco Bay Guardian's BEST OF THE BAY 2004

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## Nightlife & Entertainment

### Signs and spaces

By Lynn Rapoport

One rainy Sunday night last November in the Mission, two small U-Haul trucks appeared outside the old Armory building on the 14th Street side, rear doors hiked all the way open, a slippery ramp extended between them. Shadowy figures in rain slickers clambered in and out of the trucks, guided by affable guards standing at the portals doling out flashlights. Every so often, someone would carefully pick his or her way from one to the other, hunched over to avoid the drizzle.

Inside was just what you'd expect, assuming you'd gotten the e-mail: walls covered with works on paper, photographs, tiny installations — an art gallery encased in metal and ready to roll. Strangers paced the cramped perimeters, politely shrinking to let other visitors pass, trying to avoid tracking in the worst of the outdoors. Taller visitants angled their heads awkwardly in search of perspective. People spoke in murmurs about the provenance of the work, the price range, the materials, the trucks.



And perhaps, if we'd all been characters in some multiplex thriller starring Pierce Brosnan or Catherine Zeta-Jones, the whole thing might have turned out to be the staging area for some shady transaction involving an international art-smuggling ring, or a badly operated, overly complex stakeout. In the real world, it was the weekend of "Crosswalks," a many-venued art show taking place in a small cluster of Mission galleries, as well as a book store, a shoe store, an all-vegan boutique, a multiuse performance space, a clothing boutique and gallery, a bike shop and clothing boutique and gallery, a clothing boutique and zine shop, a tattoo parlor, and yes, a couple of U-Haul trucks rented out by a roving art entity called the Budget Gallery. It was a rainy Sunday night in a city where art makers have learned to leave no possibility unexamined when staking out space.

You could think of "The Armory Show," and the Budget Gallery as a whole, as a fitting scenario for an arts scene that's discovered it's best to be ready to pack up and go when the rent money runs out or the building gets sold out from underneath you. But I for one — among many of my kind — have spent years now mulling over the spaces taken away and am long overdue for pondering the spaces taken back or taken over, like when a grid of streets is reconsidered as a temporary art-pedestrian zone.

The proprietors of the Budget Gallery, whose motto is "high art, low prices, unusual places," are the kind of people who walk around the city and look at the possibilities inherent in blank walls and construction hoardings. And the people who put together and participated in "Crosswalks" are the kind who don't feel like sticking to books or bikes or vegan shoes or tattoos and minding their own business. And when you've got enough people mapping out the city as a place to invest with art and music and theatrics and poetry, not only every underused corner or storefront window or empty wall or rooftop but also every commercial space is invested with possibility and — dare I say it? — hope.

I've lived in the city more than a decade now, and rarely a day has gone by unmarked by such efforts. Naturally, not all of them have involved U-Haul trucks pulled up to the side of the road. Some have taken place at monthly spoken word gatherings at the 16th Street BART Station, or poetry readings at the public library where the organizer serves cookies to audience members, or in the park during DIY screenings of politically themed films, or in the park during more on-the-up-and-up, city-permitted screenings of Barbra Streisand features.

They've surfaced at clubs like El Rio that occasionally turn into movie houses (see *So Tough*, the monthly Brit-film and -music night put on by the Jimmys of After-School Special fame) and at bars like Sadie's Flying Elephant that occasionally turn down the music for a night of poetry (see *K'vetch*, a rowdy party of queer spoken word put on by Tara Jepsen and Lynn Breedlove). They've surfaced in club nights like Harvey's monthly Brownies for My Bitches, when queer girls and their friends trek deep into the heart of man country (a.k.a. the Castro) for one night of dance-floor hysteria and home-baked goods. They surface nightly (and sometimes spill over into the daylight hours) at the rock clubs and jazz clubs and dance clubs and bars, the movie houses and art galleries and performance spaces whose events fill the

listings every week.

We're a city of flyers and postings, fly-by-night parties and long-standing traditions, weeklong noise pop marathons and pan-arts one-night stands. We're a city of almost-weekly film festivals, a city in which a guy loved Virginia the Tamale Lady so much that he made a movie about her, filled it with tribute songs by local musicians, called it "Our Lady of Tamale," and screened it at Zeitgeist in honor of her 50th birthday. We love our Tamale Lady, our Castro organ player, our Live at Leeds shows, our Great American Music Hall. We flock to the multiplexes to watch Spider-Man 2 but feel sick to our stomachs when we learn that another gilded old-time neighborhood theater has gone the way of the bison, to be replaced by a boxing gym. So we rally and sign petitions and stage performative protests, and occasionally it leads as far as the Board of Supervisors or the ballot box, which is why we now have an Entertainment Commission and the New Mission Theatre just became an official San Francisco landmark.

In the meantime, an average week of postings from Squidlist, Flavorpill, Larry Bob's Queer Things to Do in San Francisco, and a random collection of clublife e-mails can fill a person's schedule with such amusements and activities as a Ladyfest Bay Area fundraiser tasked with the genderfucking of the president, a terror-themed art and rock show at a Mission Street gallery, a Sunday-afternoon dance party named after an addiction-recovery program, a film program titled "Smut Shop Cinema," a house music night titled "Hump," a photography show celebrating Mexican wrestling, a sing-along screening of Purple Rain at Peaches Christ's Midnight Mass at the Bridge Theatre, and an electro-techno-breakcore benefit for something called the Autonomous Mutant Festival — all of which seems like signs of plenty, and plenty to do.

I'm amazed and gratified and relieved that people keep trying. Many of us spend our days and nights wandering in and out of galleries, rep houses, performance spaces, and clubs, examining the work on the walls or listening to the bands and the DJs, or both, and barely reflecting on what it takes to turn a labor of love into a way to pay the rent, the artists, and the occasional utility bill. Often the point of the exercise is to make us think of something else — love, traffic, the wars of the world. Then one day you learn that the bar with your favorite jukebox is going out of business, or the art space that fills the sidewalks on Saturday nights can't necessarily pay the rent with pretty people standing around drinking wine.

The longer I've stayed, though, through evictions and takeovers and club promoters moving to Brooklyn or Los Angeles, the more resigned I've become to the notion that the story I went to bed with will have changed in the morning. Life is full of disappointments. The better part is watching what happens next. The sprinklers in the park come on, and the screening is over, and the next week the lights flicker on a wall a few blocks away. The rebel girls call it a night, and another dance fling starts up at the bar down the street. And the U-Hauls drive away after a rainy art party in the Mission, and the rain itself ceases, but the market — or rather, the streets and the storefronts, the movie screens and the sides of buildings, the gallery-café and the bars and the after-hours clubs — remains flooded and probably always will.

#### **PUBLIC ART: Best Flashdance**

The flash mob may not hold the same thrill it once did, but the sight of a group of S.F. hipsters dressed more or less successfully in business drag and gyrating like fiends to the stately strains of "We've Got the Funk" still has the power to draw crowds of office folk to the windows of their respective skyscrapers, as happened one fine spring day at the lunchtime hour at the intersection of Mission and Steuart Streets. Down on the pavement, one woman ripped off her suit jacket to reveal a spangly brassiere; a fellow mobber, rocking the look Lionel Richie would've had if he'd ever guest-starred on Fame, yanked off his striped tie as if releasing the demons of a 60-hour workweek. And just as the mob had lined up and begun gyrating its way toward Market Street, a woman with a red bob doing a herky-jerky dance jumped up on a bench where a blond-tressed office worker sat peacefully eating her lunch, quickly freaked her, then leaped away like a gazelle. It was over in an instant, leaving the stunned woman holding her burrito at half-mast and staring open-mouthed off into the distance.



**Dancin' fools:** They may not have shut down the city, but the group of people in business drag who came downtown one spring day to gyrate to "We've Got the Funk" definitely performed this year's Best Flashdance.

Guardian photos by **Lori Spears**

#### **PUBLIC ART: Best Staircase**

From the outside, Granny's Performance Space looks fairly similar to the other houses on Potrero Hill's Vermont Street. But within the unassuming edifice is one of San Francisco's greatest home-grown art treasures: Jason Mecier's Pencil-vania Mania. Begun as a goof with a bottle of glue and a few odd pencils, the piece gradually enveloped the



three-story building's entire staircase, which aside from the treads and the risers, is now encrusted with, according to Jason, "eleventybillion" pencils and affiliated writing implements — banisters, walls, and all. Nor are these materials arranged willy-nilly. Here, a section is covered with a solid array of yellow No. 2 Ticonderogas; there, with a checkerboard of red and yellow pencils; elsewhere multicolored pencils are collaged into faces and figures. Each trip up- or downstairs reveals a new clever detail, and the overall effect is visually stunning and absolutely mesmerizing, doing honor to the late, lamented Unknown Museum school of assemblage. E-mail Granny for news on the next open house. 702 Vermont, S.F. [jainabeeme@yahoo.com](mailto:jainabeeme@yahoo.com).

### Best Place for Sangria, Revolutionary Talk, and Spontaneous Singing

Quietly holding its own amid the Valencia Street jungle of tapas bars, neo-hipster Thai restaurants, and designer boutiques, Radio Habana Social Club offers a welcome retreat for urbanites looking for a cheap drink, a healthy snack, a friendly encounter, and anything from an impromptu guitar performance to a heated political discussion with the stranger sitting next to you. Artists and hosts Leila and Victor invite you into their personal gallery—living room with open arms, and chances are you'll also get to hang out with the guy whose crusty old paint-covered pants hang from the bathroom door (right next to the Frank Zappa poster). The food is great (Cuban black beans and rice, samosas, and vegetarian plates for under \$5), the sangria is bountiful, the wall art is far-out, and a never-ending flow of multicultural revolutionaries make Radio Habana an excellent place to come for wine, song, and thinking out loud. 1109 Valencia, S.F. (415) 824-7659.

### PUBLIC ART: Best Sidewalk Spit Drawer Departed for Hotter Pavements

OK, granted, Albert Reyes may be the only sidewalk spit drawer we know, but we still think he's the best. Six years ago the Los Angeles-born, San Francisco Art Institute-educated Reyes accidentally spilled water on a Portland, Ore., sidewalk and, convinced it resembled a chicken, set out to do it again using the materials at hand: a mouthful of water. And thus a new genre of art was born. Also known for his drawings of pop culture celebs — a smiling Michael Jackson holding a "Fuck You All" sign, a pimping Ronald McDonald — Reyes now spits one-line portraits of people and animals at street fairs, art openings, and parties. Once, back in the dot-com days, he was even paid to do a rooftop spit in wine. Part performance, part childlike indulgence, his spontaneous acts contain the spirit of Basquiat and attract crowds like the Fisherman Wharf's Bush Man does. A love for conceptual art and graffiti drives Reyes — and just like a graffiti artist, he's been harassed by the law while working: at a street fair, where police asked for his permit. Unlike graffiti, however, spit drawings leave no permanent mark: once dry, they're gone forever. We can only hope that won't be the case with Reyes, who moved back down south in January. To learn more about Reyes and watch a spit art video, go to [artwear.ws](http://artwear.ws).

### Best Place to Record Your Analog Indie Rock Masterpiece

Dying to get your indie rock studio geek on but short on moolah? Tiny Telephone may be able to help. The 1,700-square-foot Mission District studio comes equipped with a 50-input Neve 5316 console, a Studer 827 24-track recorder, and a gear addict's smorgasbord of vintage mics, preamps, oddball compressors, and some prize, working artifacts from owner, manager, and acclaimed musician John Vanderslice's beloved '70s-era monophonic synthesizer collection. "We're really modeled after a small, full-service studio that might have existed in 1976," Vanderslice says. "I'm not sure if the gear ever got better, and I'm sure the standards haven't been raised since that point." There aren't any digital workstations in this proudly "analog-centric" room, though in-house producers and engineers — including Scott Solter (Spoon, Court and Spark), Death Cab for Cutie's Chris Walla (Hot Hot Heat, Nada Surf), Shellac's Bob Weston (Idlewild, Sebadoh), and Steve Fisk (Unwound, Low) — have been known to spit them in. If that situation's good enough for everyone from Mountain Goats and John Doe to Deerhoof, Richard Buckner, and Thinking Fellers Union Local 282, it should be good enough for you. And if



**Walk write in:** There are plenty of nice staircases in this town, but the Best Staircase is Jason Mecier's work of artmode of upward (or downward) mobility, Pencil-vania Mania.

Guardian photo by **Snapcult**



**Spitting image:** Albert Reyes's pavement pieces sometimes dry up and disappear from sight, which makes it seem fitting that he's the Best Sidewalk Spit Drawer Departed for Hotter Pavements.

Guardian photo by **Kristen Krause**



Vanderslice gets his way, some of the studio's more renowned regulars will return the love at Tiny Telephone's seventh-anniversary show at Cafe du Nord in early November. 1458A San Bruno, S.F. (415) 695-9288 (booking), (415) 642-1970 (studio), [www.tinytelephone.com](http://www.tinytelephone.com).

### Best Chanteuse

There's only one word to describe cabaret crooner Veronica Klaus: fabulous. Whether she's letting loose with a bawdy uptempo number or reducing the rapt Plush Room crowd to silence with a sultry lament, Klaus displays the kind of star quality that's earned her a rabidly loyal fan base. And she's not one to stick to tired old standards, as proven by songs like the self-penned "Black Diamond Days" (an examination of her Midwestern upbringing). Still, you haven't lived till you've heard the always impeccably attired Klaus rip into "Pirate Jenny": in her expert hands the haunting ballad takes on a life of its own. Good news for the faithful: Klaus is developing *Family Jewels: The Making of Veronica Klaus*, an autobiographical stage production set to premiere next year. All this, and she plays a mean tuba too. [www.cdbaby.com/cd/vklaus](http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/vklaus).

### Best Horny Unicorns

Ummf! Muummmnggh. Glup! Slup! Aaaaaaaa. Those are just a few of the sounds made by the title creatures in *Those Fucking Unicorns*, a hot and hilarious pocket-size booklet created by local artist Sy, who exhorts "the queers" to "keep up the good work" and provides some great demonstrations in the process. Acrobatic horny couplings, three-ways, four-gies, and fivesomes spill across 20 some stapled-together pages, drawings rendered via strong black-and-white lines that dare readers to crayon-color the action (a children's book-like quality furthered by the "This book belongs to" page on the inside cover). Sy's unicorns possess facial expressions more characterful than those of any commercial porn star, offering proof that the best porn can be made at home instead of bought at a garishly lit capitalist pit. *Those Fucking Unicorns* might be hard to find (they don't call 'em mythical for nothing!), but look out for a follow-up: word has it that kangaroos are next in line for a bone-jumping good time. Look for Sy's work at Needles and Pens, 483 14th St., S.F. (415) 255-1534.



**Best Horny Unicorns:** Ummf! The sound effects alone make local artist Sy's *Those Fucking Unicorns* a shoo-in for Best Horny Unicorns.

### Best Bar Relocation

Once known for its broken furniture, sticky floor, cramped space, and pool table lodged in a side room where you couldn't take your drinks, Connolly's in Oakland always seemed blessed with nice bartenders, a diverse clientele, and the potential for greatness. It's just that the space totally sucked. Now the bar has moved three blocks up the street into the old Birdcage space, and it seems to have a new lease on life. Same staff, same regulars, only now there's plenty of room and, thank god, a new carpet. There are also plenty of working chairs (four legs, backs, and everything!), a new pool table, and some couches clustered around the gas fireplace. And as the final crowning touch, out back a patio awaits that — while not open yet, owing to a probationary liquor license — holds the promise of future barbecues galore. 4822 Telegraph, Oakl. (510) 654-1423.

### Best Pickup Scrabble on a Friday Night

Is nailing a killer triple-word score your idea of a perfect night out? Prepare to reunite with your long-lost tribe, because S.F. Games meets for board and card games every Friday night at a not particularly clean but very-well-lighted place in the Mission District: the Muddy's Coffeehouse on Valencia at 24th Street (where we particularly like the barista's preference for a low-key and somewhat incongruous goth background soundtrack). Buy a snack and then join the friendly, multi-generational crowd of game players as they take over the place between 7 p.m. and midnight. Typically you'll find about 20 to 30 people spread out among four or five tables playing games like Settlers, Kill Doctor Lucky, spades, and chess, but you can always bring your favorite board game or learn someone else's. If you want to meet new game geeks, this is the place. Come early, before the longer games get started. Muddy's Coffeehouse, 1304 Valencia, S.F. [www.sfgames.org](http://www.sfgames.org).



**Game night:** Board and card game enthusiasts head to Muddy's on Valencia, where S.F. Games offers the Best Pickup Scrabble on a Friday Night.

Guardian photo by **Snapcult**

### Best Comeback by an Indie Rocker Who Never Actually Went Away

Where there's a will, there's a way. And that way points straight to the dance floor and the spare but soulful synth pop of Willpower when Imperial Teen's Will Schwartz busts a move alongside his grim but game-faced backup dancers, Chelsea Starr and Donal Mosher. Antics aside, the seriously playful songs and spirit of Willpower are what pull the cute kids and get our booties off those bar stools. Unlike other dance-happy but craft-deficient acts out there, though, Willpower fulfill the dream of waving your hands in the air like you just don't care and enjoying solid pop songwriting (the Aislors Set's Amy Linton and the Boy Explodes' Tomo share writing credits) delivered with conviction and non-indie rock shades of emotion. More willpower to them. [www.willpowermusic.com](http://www.willpowermusic.com).

#### Best Girl Band

Judging from their Web site design theme and the title of their debut album, Don't Tell a Soul, San Francisco's Lipstick Conspiracy are going for something of an incognito vibe. But we've had our eyes on them for a while now, and we think it's about time to blow their cover. The transgendered rock band features five glamour-pusses and harmony-laden power pop songs with infectious hooks like you might have heard while trolling the dial for Top 40 songs back in the early '80s. Frontwomen Sarafina Maraschino, Shawna Love, and Marilyn Mitchell switch off vocal and guitar duties, while Tori Tait handles the keyboards and newest member Emme Yarwood lays down the law on the drums (the group recently retired their two drum machines). Lately the sassy starlets have been spreading their gospel of gender transgression and sexual liberation all over town, with recent performances including a spot on San Francisco Pride's main stage and a July 17 party at Martuni's celebrating their album release. On Wed/28 they perform at El Rio's Gender Pirates.

[www.lipstickconspiracy.com](http://www.lipstickconspiracy.com).



**The band with a plan:** Lipstick Conspiracy, the Best Girl Band, are plotting to rock your world, an undertaking we heartily approve of.

Guardian photo by **Snapcult**

#### Best Art Party on the Web

It started in 1998 with a bunch of photos compiled in a zine. The next issues incorporated the artwork of friends. And in 2000 filmmaker and photographer John Trippe took his growing baby Fecal Face online, where it's developed into a daily art-world pit stop for info on local exhibits, candid features, and juicy gossip. Run by Trippe (wearing the hats of designer, programmer, and editor), editor-at-large Van Edwards, intern-contributor John Groshong, and many other Fecal Pals, FecalFace.com highlights artists from all over the world but is fiercely loyal to those in the Bay Area. The site is easy to navigate, unpretentious, beautifully designed, and art heavy, with lots of artist-on-artist interviews. Check out the calendar to see when your next art crush is showing his or her work, peruse the gallery guide for the lowdown on venues from 111 Minna to Zip Zap Salon, look at photos from opening-night parties, or lurk in the ever amusing Fecal Forum. And watch for Trippe's résumé to expand again this fall, when he opens his own art space off-line, Low Gallery. [www.fecalface.com](http://www.fecalface.com).

#### Best Weirdo Band

Oakland's Experimental Dental School won't drill or extract your teeth by force, but the three-piece rock outfit can churn out sounds strange and loud enough to make your fillings come loose on their own. When singer-guitarist-noisemaker Jesse Hall (with the drawn-on mustache) croons through his echoey, distorted flamingo microphone, keyboardist extraordinaire Shoko Horikawa hammers out the dark, melancholy scales, and drummer Ryan Chittick gets a driving polka beat going, listeners are taken to a scary world that's kind of like the weirdest elements of a David Lynch movie. An old Southern man walks into a room backward holding a Popsicle while conjoined twins listen to books on tape ... in Esperanto. Yeah, it's that weird. If you haven't checked out EDS's debut album, Hideous Dance Attack!!!, do so immediately! And if you haven't seen them play, check out the Web site for their next Bay Area show.

[www.experimental-dental.com](http://www.experimental-dental.com).

#### Best Gorilla

As wee ones, we had a recurring nightmare in which a gorilla chased us relentlessly, inexorably, until a clammy night sweat woke us up from our self-induced horror. So imagine our (fright-tinged) delight nearly 25 years later when we first encountered Gorilla X one dark, stormy night at a Bay Area burlesque show. Much in the vein of our subconscious creation, Mr. X's antics mostly consist of subjugating up onstage, careening through the audience, and just plain terrorizing everyone in sight. Gorilla X plays King Kong to local burlesque dancers' Fay Wray, scooping them up with his primate strength and holding them close to his



furry chest, safe from overenthusiastic spectators. The self-dubbed Gorilla to the Stars has also had the pleasure of stealing the spotlight from celebs ranging from Gwen Stefani and Marilyn Manson to Maury Povich. With a rider that demands Red Bull and bananas, this untamed simian surfaces about once a month anywhere there are go-go girls taking off their clothes. He can also be booked for private events — just contact his handler. [www.gorilla-x.com](http://www.gorilla-x.com).



**Forever untamed:** Striking terror in the hearts of burlesque dancers everywhere, Gorilla X stands head and shoulders above the rest in the contest for Best Gorilla.

Guardian photo by **Snapcult**

### Best DIY Music Venue

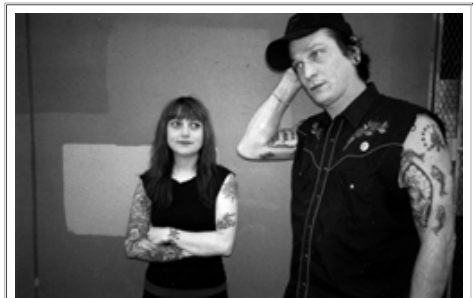
You could try locating all the power outlets along your favorite San Francisco thoroughfare for an unauthorized rush-hour concert. You could try wedging the bass amp up against the damp concrete of your neighbor's semi-excavated basement for a neighborhood block party. Or you could call up the Peacock Lounge, a self-booker's dream in the heart of the Lower Haight with a vibe we can only describe as "groovy, space-age, golden-spangly, late '60s–early '70s." There's plenty of seating, and even more room to dance, which the kids tend to do here, by some modern miracle. The Haight Street foot traffic provides unexpected drop-ins. The bar up front is staffed by the proprietor's family (beer only, usually in cans, with varying prices, depending on how well they like the looks of you). And best of all, the Peacock is quite affordable (the deposit's under a C-note; the room fee isn't much more) and has an open-door policy for every kind of loud, weird, pop, or traditional sound your combo can generate. 552 Haight, S.F. (415) 621-9850.

### Best Hip-Hop Alternative

The story goes that back in 1994, when KUSF-FM DJ Billy Jam went on the air and played the uncensored version of Public Enemy's Muse Sick-N-Hour Mess Age, profanity-laden track by profanity-laden track, he managed to irk management enough to get booted off permanently. It was a big loss, but the void was filled by Beatsauce, whose three-man crew, J-Boogie, Raw-B, and Wisdom, have been reliably delivering conscious, extraordinarily fat-bottomed, high-minded rhymes and rhythms to the listening public since 1994. The best thing about the show is that it eschews the mainstream bitch-slappin' and gun-totin' and provides an alternative without coming across as flabby, flaccid, watered-down, or goody-two-shoes. Beatsauce is at once soulful, intellectually demanding, gritty-streets real, lyrically poetic, and unstoppable groovy. Its hosts are witty on the mic, nimble on the decks, deeply knowledgeable about their sources, and fearless in presenting new sounds. As a live showcase, Beatsauce has featured everyone from Mr. Lif to Dilated Peoples, KRS-One to Latyrx, Mobb Deep to Jay-Z, and that's the tip of the iceberg. Check out the undiscovered treasures they dig up each week, Sundays, 6 to 8 p.m. KUSF, 90.3 FM, [www.kusf.org](http://www.kusf.org).

### Best Punk Rock DJs

The second best thing about Monday nights at the Hemlock Tavern is there's no moshing to prerecorded music. Which would look ridiculous, of course, but with some strong drink in your gut and DJ Tragic and the Duchess of Hazzard (the first best things) at the helm, the temptation to sneak an abbreviated Philly Cheesesteak during the Gorilla Biscuits' "Start Today" is scarily cogent. There's something for everyone here: staples (Ramonés, X, Germs), hippies (Dead Moon), locals (This Bike Is a Pipe Bomb), skate rockers (Big Boys), melodies (Hüsker Dü), Boston hardcore (the Freeze), and even aging emo kids (Rites of Spring). Otherwise known as Skott Cowgill and Nikki Sloate, DJ Tragic and the Duchess keep the jams hot for the hipsters, smokers, Scrabble players, and anyone else hanging around at the Hemlock. Hemlock Tavern, 1131 Polk, S.F. (415) 923-0923.



**Our heroes:** DJ Tragic and the Duchess of Hazzard's Monday-night set at the Hemlock Tavern appeases a disparate crowd, thereby bringing us one step closer to world peace, just as the Best Punk Rock DJs ought to.

Guardian photo by **Snapcult**

### Best Dead Punk Rock Scene

We admit this is more of an obituary than an award, but what's an obit if not a summation of the dearly departed's best qualities? Since the shuttering of Mission Records last year, there've been some valiant efforts to create a new all-ages punk rock space, but to be brutally honest, no one has quite managed to match the spooky, airless quality of the back room where the bands played — or duplicate its stench of rotting corpses. Mission Records operated sans live-music and fire permits for close to six years in the heart of the neighborhood, with all-ages shows nearly every weekend featuring anyone from perennial locals Shotwell and the Bananas to Beijing's Hang on the Box and Brazil's Dominatrix. More unofficial punk clubhouse than music venue, less failed experiment than retired bold venture, Mission Records is missed by many — most of all, perhaps, by the neighboring liquor stores and the bottle recyclers who turned up every weekend at show's end. Location: sorry, it went poof! and disappeared.

### Best Resurrected Haight Street Tradition

Back in the '80s and early '90s, Sunday-afternoon strolls down Haight Street inevitably ended at the Nightbreak's Sushi Sunday. It was a brilliant concept. A sushi chef would set up shop in a corner of the bar while a string of local underground bands blasted away onstage. Admission was free, the sushi good,

and the crowds thick with sake-swilling hipsters winding down from great weekends or trying to salvage bad ones. And with festivities starting in the late afternoon and ending around 10 p.m., even weekend bohemians with nine-to-five jobs could catch the fun. The Nightbreak's long gone, but we're happy to report Sushi Sunday is back, bigger and better than ever at Milk Bar, across the street. Sushi, sake, and beer still feature prominently, but now, thanks to Milk's full liquor license, cocktails are also an option. It's the perfect antidote to the Sunday-evening blahs. Milk Bar, 1840 Haight, S.F. (415) 387-6455.

*Eds. note: We neglected to mention the name of the entity that resurrected and promotes Sushi Sunday, which is Audio Box Studios. For a schedule and more information about the event, go to [www.audioboxstudios.com/events.html](http://www.audioboxstudios.com/events.html).]*

#### **Best Cure for Spanganga Withdrawal**

OK, so the Mission Records space didn't exactly go poof. While some were shaking their heads and getting sick to their stomachs over the loss, others were wailing and gnashing their teeth over the closure of Spanganga, the 19th Street art space that once brought us pitch-black sex parties and onstage adaptations of TV shows. Now at least one of those hurts can be healed. Former Spanganga managers Jim Fourniadis and Erin Ohannesson have reopened the Mission Records space as multigenre performance venue the Dark Room. Thus far, there's been some fantastic fundraisers, some entertaining literary events, and some plays based on board games; we've also learned there's actually a sunny patio out back, incongruous though it may seem; and the proprietors are opening the space up for rehearsal and performance rentals. Can anonymous purblind groping be far behind? 2263 Mission, S.F. (415) 401-7987, [www.darkroomsf.com](http://www.darkroomsf.com).

#### **Best Bar to Clown on Long Island**

You don't have to be from New York City to have a superiority complex toward the isle of suburban mall outlets and seagulls, nor should a cosmopolitan city dweller like yourself be forced to imbibe something named in honor of it. Instead, drink to that bleak eyesore we call a "beach" at the Elbo Room, where the sweet Ocean Beach Iced Teas are likely to make you forget all about Long Island, crappy San Francisco beaches, and, well, just about everything else. While the bartenders tend to prepare these particular beverages with a kick so strong that one might be the magic number, the Elbo Room also considerably boasts the longest happy hour in the city, 5 to 9 p.m. nightly — ample opportunity to toast our fine city and be grateful you don't live in that other one. 647 Valencia, S.F. (415) 552-7788.

#### **Best Strip Mall Lounge Bar**

Actually, the Miraloma Lounge in Twin Peaks might be the only strip mall lounge bar in San Francisco, and therein lies a good percentage of its charm. Places like the 'Loma litter the landscape in Los Angeles's outlying areas, but here it's enough of a novelty to be something of a treat. Plus, we have to say, they pour some decent beer. If you're looking to pick up on Mission hipsters, San Francisco power brokers, or college kids who've just begun experimenting with their sexuality, you're barking up the wrong barstool. And if you're looking for the sorts of barflies who normally haunt strip mall bars in other towns, check the Ha-Ra and the 550 Club. However, if your needs are simple and you're merely interested in the sensation of spending a quiet, beery afternoon in the suburbs, consider knocking a few back here. 749 Portola Dr., S.F. (415) 564-1131.

#### **Best Sign of Gender Equality**

Trannyshack, the long-running Tuesday drag night at the Stud, is more than just a sexy, hilarious, fun, entertaining, and often messy party. It's also far ahead of the curve in terms of drag gender equality. The entertainment, and the crowd, has come a long way from boys in dresses lip-synching torch songs. Drag kings have been sharing the stage with the queens for a while now. But the past couple years have also seen a flowering of faux kings and faux queens, dressed to overblown archetypal excess in the trappings of their own assigned and more or less accepted gender. And the symbolic ringing-in of the new era came last summer with the crowning of Fauxnique as Miss Trannyshack 2003, the first faux queen ever to take the title. This could be the beginning of a new view of gender equality, in which given and expressed gender become completely uncoupled. Because what matters most at Trannyshack isn't how you were born or what form you take on any other given night, but how fabulous (or freaky) you get while working it onstage. Stud, 399 Ninth St., S.F. (415) 252-STUD, [www.heklina.com](http://www.heklina.com).

#### **Best Drag Queen Limousine**

You could go into macho hyperspeed and rent that 20-person SUV for a night of clubbing, or you could arrive in style in Pink Lady Limousine's hot-pink stretch Lincoln Town Car, with a pink, fluffy, shag interior, seating for six, and a fabulous drag queen tour guide along for the ride. Like it's even a choice? For the standard rate the Pink Lady comes equipped with a full bar and a stereo system. And for those interested in the deluxe treatment, owner Freetah B. (hostess of the S.F. public-access show Freetah B. in the City) or one of her charming acquaintances will take you on a drag-club tour of San Francisco, VIP-access privileges included. The business has been up and running for a year, and Freetah says it's especially popular with bachelorette





parties, teenage girls, and gay men who act like them. She expects to add a second car to the fleet this summer to accommodate the high demand for fabulous transportation. (415) 859-0843, [www.pinkladylimo.com](http://www.pinkladylimo.com).

**When only pink will do:** Clubgoers cruise the city with Pink Lady Limousine, the Best Drag Queen Limousine — and are forever changed.

Guardian photo by **Snapcult**

#### Best Alternaqueer Club Night Promoters

Glam couple Adrian and the Mysterious D throw three parties, and each is its own special freak show. At the monthly Bootie, for example, drag queens dress like pirates from outer space, and the soundtrack is entirely driven by bootleg mash-ups (e.g., the unholy union of Madonna and Deep Purple). The Guilty crowd Fridays at the Stud is met with danceable rock and more bootlegs, everybody dances, and half of everybody has taken his or her clothes off by night's end. The Cinch's Saturday-night bar party, Smashed, is a mellower affair whose (ir)regulars are a fifty-fifty mix of dirty gay trendoids and older men from the era when Polk was the hot gay part of town. There, Adrian and the Mysterious D play whatever they frickin' feel like between joining the crowd for shots at the bar. Whatever party the two are promoting, however, is a sure bet for a strange crowd and a good time. Bootie, second Wednesdays, Cherry Bar and Lounge, 917 Folsom, S.F. [www.bootiesf.com](http://www.bootiesf.com); Guilty, Fridays, Stud, 399 Ninth St., S.F. [www.guiltysf.com](http://www.guiltysf.com); Smashed, Saturdays, Cinch, 1723 Polk, S.F. [www.thecinch.com](http://www.thecinch.com).

#### Best Entertainment E-mail Service

Direct e-mail entertainment listings are the Internet city guides of the post-dot-com era. There are several challengers in this field, with companies like Nitevibe, Nitewise, and Illstatic serving up ad-supported weekly doses of music and clubbing info, in addition to the weekend guides mailed out by CitySearch and DigitalCity. Though each of these has its specialty, we feel Flavorpill's 411 offers the perfect combination of San Francisco activities for the hipster on the go. The list includes clubs and DJs, naturally, but also live acts, art openings, film screenings, readings, lectures, and other happenings of note — all in a well-designed graphic e-mail. Take Flavorpill's advice and you'll be busy, and happily so, all week. Plus, the postings are loaded with opportunities to win free tickets to events. Flavorpill serves three other major cities, New York, Los Angeles, and London, so we're quadrupally impressed that it gets things right here. [sf.flavorpill.net](http://sf.flavorpill.net).

#### Best Brand-New, Badass, Superqueer Press

With its wide-open definition of the word queer and fearless publishing choices that ricochet from risky to risqué, San Francisco's Suspect Thoughts Press has made the book world a more interesting place to inhabit. First slammed onto the map by Pulling Taffy, Matt Bernstein Sycamore's experimental memoir, Suspect Thoughts has swiftly become the hot press for connoisseurs of transgressive, intelligent literature. In the coming months we can look forward to works like Bullets and Butterflies, queer spoken word poetry edited by New York City glam-slammer Emanuel Xavier; The Beautifully Worthless, Ali Liebegott's long-awaited epic road poem; and I Do/I Don't: Queers on Marriage, an anthology put together by publisher Greg Wharton and editor Ian Philips. And as if serving a readership of misfit queers weren't enough, Wharton and Philips — stellar writers themselves — have rounded up a gang of authors with good taste in storytelling to judge Suspect Thoughts' queer-novel search, which gives unpublished scribes a shot at a first book with the upstart press. [www.suspectthoughts.com/press.htm](http://www.suspectthoughts.com/press.htm).

#### Best Quintessentially San Franciscan Publisher

The catalog for Manic D Press, run by publisher Jennifer Joseph, reads like a who's who of the San Francisco literary underground. You've got infamous chanteuse Bambi Lake detailing her Cockettes-era glammed-out lifestyle, Jon Longhi's drug-addled tour of the city's low-rent neighborhoods, Beth Lisick's hilariously snarky critiques of yuppie living, Justin Chin's scabrous humor, Alvin Orloff's fantastical, faggoty sci-fi adventures, and Bruce Jackson's grim accounts of being black in America, crackling with a low-burning rage. The list goes on and on, including a gangload of eccentric anthologies like The Sofa Surfing Handbook (a staple for touring artists) and the forthcoming Breaking the Gender Mold, essays from folks occupying spaces along the FTM spectrum. High as a kite and lucid as hell, bitchy and fanciful and rooted in the city's street poetry tradition, Manic D is as close as you'll come to a perfectly bound soul of the city. [www.manicdpress.com](http://www.manicdpress.com).

#### Best Local Children's Book Collaboration

This year's Alternative Press Expo happily introduced us to local duo Michael Perry and Lee Ballard and their children's book Daniel's Ride, a tale of two brothers on a journey to a lowrider competition. The subject matter is compelling — along the way Daniel and Hector visit their muralist cousin Diego and have an unforgettable heart-to-heart talk — but it's the combination of Perry's words and Ballard's illustrations that makes the book (published by Perry and artist Doug Cunningham's Free Will Press) a classic for both children and collectors. Petaluma dweller Ballard illustrates 16 of the book's 32 pages with details like the correct-to-year taillights on the 1963 Impala Hector drives and the hues of dreamy California sunsets. For inspiration Perry draws on the lyrical days of his conscious rap group Down for the Cause, his S.F. childhood, and the desire to write for his own kids. [www.freewillpress.com](http://www.freewillpress.com).

#### Best Oddball Screenings

Over the past 20 years, Oddball Film and Video founder Stephen Parr has amassed an awe-inspiring archive of some 50,000 offbeat and ephemeral films. Everything from unconsciously ironic industrial shorts to decidedly nonmainstream pornographic footage can be found in the towering stacks of film



canisters that fill his Capp Street loft. Parr's main business these days is providing quirky footage for the media industry, but recently he's started sharing the goodness by opening his loft to the public for a series of Saturday-night screenings. Recent programs have ranged from "Black Is Back," an evening of '60s and '70s soul music clips and documentaries, to "Crash Cinema," a program of motorcycle films, police training films, and car crash clips. His most popular program, naturally, is "Smut Shop Cinema," featuring intriguing erotica such as hillbilly porn, cartoon smut, nudie cuties, and, if you're lucky, the U.S. Navy's oh-so-educational training film "How to Give an Enema." Reservations are recommended. 275 Capp, S.F. (415) 558-8112, [www.oddballfilm.com](http://www.oddballfilm.com).

### Best Attempt to Replace the Drive-In

Even as it heroically agitates to save your neighborhood movie theater from extinction, the San Francisco Neighborhood Theater Foundation has been thinking outside the projection box by drawing the crowds to outdoor screenings in local parks (just like in *The Wedding Planner!*). So far it's been a heartwarming, if windy, exercise in community building — the first two screenings, in May, lured some 3,000 people to Dolores and Washington Square Parks. And while sticking to a San Francisco theme sure to please preservationists (*What's Up, Doc?* and *The Maltese Falcon* were the feature films), the SFNTF has also been promoting the city's own, with trailers including "Pie Fight '69," Christian Bruno and Sam Green's peek into some S.F. International Film Festival history, and Georgina Corzine's "Sing Along San Francisco," which had folks clapping in time to that indelible (to Castro Theatre audiences) tune. Weather allowing, we can't think of a better way to watch a movie than wrapped in a blanket under the palm trees of Dolores Park, in the company of friends and hundreds of our closest neighbors. The SFNTF has more screenings planned for September and October. Check the Web site for details.

[www.sfneighborhoodtheater.org](http://www.sfneighborhoodtheater.org).

### Best Film Noir Festival

It's official. 'Noir City' is now the biggest, most heavily attended film noir festival in the country. Head honcho (and author of *Dark City: The Lost World of Film Noir* and other fine titles) Eddie Muller is mum on the details for "Noir City 3" — he wouldn't tell us the theme even after we broke a few of his fingers with a hammer. But we did get him to admit these facts: it will be (where else?) at the Castro Theatre, Jan. 14 through 27; a big-name noir actor will make an appearance opening night; and the program will include a spine-tingling 27 films, undoubtedly an excellent mix of acknowledged classics, quality genre efforts, some genuine obscurities, and a few legitimate rediscoveries. A few "lost" films mysteriously dropped from earlier "Noir City"s are slotted for screening ("Crawford fans rejoice," Muller mutters enigmatically). And this year passes go on sale in December. We know what we want to find in our stockings. [www.noircity.com](http://www.noircity.com).

### Best Free Film Noir

Several times a year a shadowy group of film noir aficionados operating as the Danger and Despair Knitting Circle — a reference, for novices, to *Out of the Past* — surfaces on Thursdays nights to screen classic, offbeat, and plain obscure film noir for everyone's favorite admission price: free! It's strictly an underground operation — reservations are mandatory, and most screenings take place in vacant downtown offices — but we have no complaints. The chairs are comfortable, most prints are 16mm, and the stuff they show ... Many of the titles never even made it to DVD or video: the recent "Poverty Row" series included a few films that survive only in the archives of private 16mm collectors. This summer expect a brace of precode crime films, followed by fall's "Film Noir of 1941: A Look at the Gateway Year" and winter's "The Red Scare: Those Nasty Commies in Film Noir." Looks like our Thursday nights are booked for the year. E-mail [screenings@hotmail.com](mailto:screenings@hotmail.com) or call (415) 552-1533. [www.noirfilm.com](http://www.noirfilm.com).

### Best Place to Vicariously Enjoy Pain

Those who were around for the sideshow revival of the early '90s will remember Zamora the Torture King (a.k.a. Tim Cridland) as a key figure. People are still talking about his breakthrough 1991 gig at the DNA Lounge, which had jaded San Francisco hipsters passing out like vegetarians in a slaughterhouse. Well, Zamora's Sideshow is back with a monthly Wednesday-night gig at the Climate Theater that's resolutely not for the squeamish. And we're happy to report, Zamora's still king. Reprising all his classic bits of fakirism from the golden age of the sideshow — rolling in broken glass, shoving meat skewers through his arms, and getting members of the audience to stand on his chest as he lounges on a bed of nails — he's also expanded into sword swallowing and fire-eating, and several of his fire moves should surprise even the dedicated carnival arts enthusiast. Happily, though, the Torture King climaxes with what he does best: shoving a meat skewer through his tongue and out the bottom of his jaw. It's so hot.



**It's a noir, noir world:** Or at least it will be when Eddie Muller brings his "Noir City," the Best Film Noir Festival, to the Castro in January.

Guardian photo by **Snapcult**

285 Ninth St., S.F. [www.climatetheater.com](http://www.climatetheater.com) or [www.mindandmatter.net/sys-tmpl/door](http://www.mindandmatter.net/sys-tmpl/door).

### **Best Place to Feel Like an Intrepid Traveler When Really You've Just Stepped Out for a Drink**

It may seem odd that one of the best new bars in San Francisco is a temple to the rickshaw, that insubstantial bicycle-cab found all over the streets in places like Thailand and Malaysia but worthless in this hilly town. And while the Rickshaw Stop references another world, it also fills a gaping local hole. Perhaps, what with travel to Asian countries so de rigueur for the urban hip these days, the actual rickshaws dotting this little club conjure memories of days in Bangkok or nights in Kuala Lumpur for the patrons. But besides that, San Francisco just really needed a nightspot such as the Rickshaw — small enough to feel intimate, big enough for a sizable crowd, amenable to scheduled parties, and offering a full bar and small plates of food (think corn dogs and soba noodles, tamales and antipasti) and even a new performance space, as the owners have recently started booking bands. 155 Fell, S.F. (415) 861-2011.

### **Best Tribute to an Institution**

His philosophy may be impenetrable, but zegnatronick crackpot Frank Chu is no loner — he's one of the best-loved guys in town. The suited, sunglassed downtown protester has solicited regular sponsorship of his picket sign (which could read "hextrotroニック oscillating ebullient osculations" or "altralogical subrogated mitigations" or any one of a number of improbable verbally overstimulated permutations, but always includes the phrase "12 galaxies") since at least the Clinton era. He's stimulated dozens of "I don't know what the hell that guy is talking about, but I love him" Web sites. He's been given a Best of the Bay award (for best protester, in 2000). And he's even been known to whoop it up at local clubs (Chu is a sometime presence at 111 Minna's DJ happy hour Qoöl). The obvious next step: a Mission District club that honors his name, or if not his name, his inexplicable game. 12 Galaxies opened in January in the old Club Galia space and now hosts everything from tapings of NPR's West Coast Live and In Bed with Fairy Butch nights to burlesque revues, bands, DJ nights, and even children's workshops. There's also two daily happy hours, video games, a pool table upstairs, and decent pub grub. And yes, Chu is a regular. 565 Mission, S.F. (415) 970-9777, [www.12galaxies.com](http://www.12galaxies.com).

### **Best Living-Room Pub Trivia**

The weekly NPR game show Minds over Matter (Sundays, 7 to 8 p.m.), wherein snarky San Francisco Chronicle columnist Leah Garchik, host Dana Rodriguez, and critic Gerald Nachman pose trivia questions to one another and whoever's listening, is easily as fun as any pub quiz. The attitude ranges from low-key to no-key — there's always at least one period of dead air when the panelists get stumped and start thinking so hard that they forget they're live. Questions reflect whatever the panelists are thinking about that week, with an emphasis on history and showbiz, and can get pretty obscure. (Example: you can even call in your own questions — something that's definitely not encouraged at most bar nights. And of course, the price of beer can't be topped. Cheers to the nonexistent production budget! KALW, 91.7 FM. Call in at (415) 841-4134.

### **Best Poetry That Doesn't Sound Like Poetry**

When hometown impresario (and Bay Guardian columnist) Michelle Tea spotlights local and touring writers in her monthly Radar Readings at the public library, things tend to get way more hyper than at your average library reading, with performers frequently inspiring shouts, hoots, and all sorts of other un-library-like behavior on the part of audience members. Writers have included veterans of Sister Spit, Tea's old punk rock poetry road show; up-and-coming Hollywood screenwriters like Clint Catalyst; and David West, the city's most underappreciated poet, to mention a few. And Tea always throws a curveball or two into the mix, like underground zine writers, music-video slide shows, and hip-hop artists. She also brings home-baked cookies as a reward for anyone who dares pose a question during the post-reading panel discussion. As if that weren't compelling enough, readings start at 6 p.m. — perfect for the happy-hour crowd. San Francisco Main Library, 100 Larkin, S.F. (415) 557-4400.

### **Best Way to Rock Out Against Bush**

It isn't likely that any self-proclaimed rockers from San Francisco would be advocates for George W. Bush (though since we've thought of it, they probably exist), but fighting political apathy in the music community isn't an easy job. Have you ever forcibly tried to get a drunk rocker off his or her ass and down to the polls? Fortunately, the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of Bands Against Bush, run by über-motivated Bay Area musicians and music fans like Bay Guardian contributor Conan Neutron, is there to get the word — and the lead — out. In true DIY fashion, any band can join, but those who do are urged to take an active role, whether by plugging the cause on their Web sites or at shows, playing benefits and rallies, or just urging fans to get Bush the hell out of office. And hopefully, with well-loved and respected local bands like Deerhoof, Evening, and Fields of Gaffney on the roster, impressionable young fans can be saved from the Urban Outfitters political indifference that threatens to leave Bush in the White House next term. [www.bandsagainstabush.org](http://www.bandsagainstabush.org).

### **Best Dub Club**

DJ Sep Ghadishah has been the Bay Area's dubmistress for nigh on a decade, doing time at KUSF-FM before moving on to her current KPFA-FM program, Off the Beaten Path, and showing up at the Elbo Room for her Dub Mission stint every Sunday night since 1996. DJ Sep has led the wave of dub revivalism not only through broadcasts of deep, international, and usually heavily reverbed sounds, but

also through her stellar club showcases of top-shelf music, from dub's archaic roots to today's modern, digitally manipulated innovations. Throw in the occasional touring live act — phenomenally talented, diverse artists like the Mad Professor, Adrian Sherwood, Brooklyn's Dr. Israel, and San Francisco's very own Tino Corporation — and a stellar rotating DJ crew that includes J-Boogie, Vinnie Esparza, Maneesh the Twister, and Ludichris, and you have a solid foundation for all the reggae, dancehall, rocksteady, roots, and tooth-rattling bottom-line dub you'll need. Elbo Room, 647 Valencia, S.F. (415) 552-7788, [www.dubmissionsf.com](http://www.dubmissionsf.com).

#### Best Club Lighting Effect

Lighting is crucial to a club. If it's too bright, you feel like you're drinking in a hospital waiting room. Too dark and it feels sleazy. Lasers and IntelliBeams are must-haves in the superclubs, but the technology is so '90s — the new millennium is all about flat-screen displays and other built-in tricks. One-upping the competition, though, is Fluid's LED computer-controlled light-up walkway and bar, which has more in common with *The Matrix* than Saturday Night Fever, with colors and patterns dancing down the walkway like airport landing lights on acid. The rest of the downtown club is rather sleek and stylish, and the regular crowds tend to match when they pack in for upscale clubbing. But even if you're more Lower Haight than Upper Fillmore, we highly recommend you put on something black and fancy for once and come check this place out. 662 Mission, S.F. (415) 615-6888, [www.fluidsf.com](http://www.fluidsf.com).

#### Best Out-of-the-Spotlight Drag Show

A lone rainbow flag waving in the 16th Street breeze is the only external clue to what goes down at Esta Noche, and that's the barest hint of the party inside. The Latino drag bar presents shows every night of the week, with go-go dancers, mariachi cabaret, and of course, some of the hottest drag queens in town. The productions might not compete with the smoke-and-lasers spectacle of Trannyshack, but the talent make the show their own. As Mark Doty wrote in his poem about the club, "The rippling night pulled down over broad shoulders/And flounced around the hips, liquid,/The black silk of Esta Noche/Proving that perfection and beauty are so alien/They almost never touch." 3079 16th St., S.F. (415) 861-5757.

#### Best Rehab

Anyone who's anyone has been to Rehab at least once. And luckily, for those of us whose insurance won't cover the stiff inpatient fees of the Betty Ford Clinic, there's a local outpatient program in residence at Julie's Supper Club. Brought to you by local impresarios Marcia Gagliardi and Ryan Robles, this alcohol-soaked Sunday brunch draws a rowdy crowd who will do anything to chase away their lingering hangovers. Upon entrance, addicts are asked to fill out intake forms and given medication to counter the negative effects of detox. Other mood setters include photos of celebrity addicts plastering the walls and dolled-up "nurses" cruising from table to table with carts full of Jell-O shots. And if any of your friends get out of hand, you can fill out an intervention card before they do harm to themselves or others. The monthly shenanigans also include DJs playing "deep crates disco," a fashion show featuring local designers, and a full brunch menu. And with free admission and drink specials like \$2 mimosas and \$3 Bloody Marys, even the most down-and-out addict has no excuse not to get help. Second Sundays, 11 a.m.–3 p.m., Julie's Supper Club, 1123 Folsom, S.F. (415) 861-0707, [www.rehabsundays.com](http://www.rehabsundays.com).



**Curtain call:** Galilea performs "Last Dance" at Esta Noche, where you'll find the Best Out-of-the-Spotlight Drag Show.

Guardian photo by **Snapcult**

#### Best Place to Hang Out on Beanbags, Drink Chai, and Take In Internationally Acclaimed Avant-Garde Sound Artists

There's a place in San Francisco where you can experience the sensation of traveling the globe in the space of a few hours, without the aid of psychoactive substances or frequent-flyer miles. A place where you can imagine you're gently floating through the cosmos in some sort of vessel while having your insides adeptly retuned. The place is a pleasant South of Market warehouse at 964 Natoma, where sound artist Aaron Ximm, a.k.a. the Quiet American, curates and hosts a series called Field Effects. Every month or so, sound artists from the Bay Area and well beyond resample and sculpt field recordings into all-encompassing soundscapes, and a very respectful and knowledgeable audience gathers to listen. Lanterns, a small jungle of plants, and the occasional benign tiger (stuffed) greet visitors, as do cozy beanbags and futons on which to recline, escape the bustle and din of everyday noise, and sometimes appreciate the bustle and din of everyday noise recontextualized. The hosts of 964 Natoma have created a welcoming oasis and an unpretentious atmosphere in which to appreciate the latest in avant-garde music. And did we mention the homemade cookies? 964 Natoma, S.F. [www.quietamerican.org](http://www.quietamerican.org).

#### Best Nightmare-Inducing Local Magazine



Fans of tales about at-home surgery, near-death experiences, suburban Satanists, out-of-control ecstasy trips in Fort Lauderdale, and other macabre subjects shriek with glee each year when the new issue of *Morbid Curiosity* is released. Edited by Loren Rhoads (the 2004 issue — the mag's eighth — contains her piece "The Most Morbid Thing I've Ever Done?," about her difficult pregnancy), *Morbid Curiosity* is a particularly thrilling collection of work because all of the stories are completely true, first-person accounts. C'mon, you know you always wondered what it would be like to sleep in a coffin, or hunt ghosts, or have an alien encounter. Pick up a copy of *Morbid Curiosity* for an enjoyable, vaguely voyeuristic read you won't be able to put down until you've finished every page — and for content that'll haunt you for days (and nights). [www.charnel.com/morbidcuriosity](http://www.charnel.com/morbidcuriosity).

#### **Best Up-to-the-Minute Resource for Movie Maniacs**

Local movie and DVD fiends might already be familiar with S.F.-based GreenCine, an online rental oasis for those whose tastes extend far beyond the limited parameters of Netflix. GreenCine's many pleasures include informed commentary for those who browse the site: in place of tiny plotline capsules or a dazed gaze at shelves crammed with discs, it offers essay-length insights about various titles. The standout feature for us, however, is GreenCine Daily, a blog compiled by Berlin-based correspondent David Hudson (or dw hudson, as he tags his entries). If there's a more comprehensive compilation of up-to-the-minute links to passionate and informed online film writings, we've yet to find it. Hudson's efficiency at rounding up current articles is impressive, and his ability to organize, contextualize, and sometimes criticize the many ideas he assembles is truly amazing. [daily.greencine.com](http://daily.greencine.com).

#### **Best Reason to Survive the Holidays**

God bless the San Francisco Sketch Comedy Festival, or Sketchfest, for bringing laughs (like, rolling-around-on-the-floor, tears-running-down-your-cheeks, begging-for-mercy laughs) to January, the gloomiest month of the year. Truth is, though, Sketchfest would be equally welcome if it fell on any other page of the calendar; if we could have our way, the thing'd be year-round. The fest, which started smallish in 2002 and gets exponentially huger every year, mixes talents local (Totally False People, Kaspar Hauser, Killing My Lobster, Will Durst) and national (Upright Citizen's Brigade, Fred Willard's Hollywood Players, the guys from Mystery Science Theater 3000, Amy Sedaris) into a comedy smoothie so thick that you have to eat it with a spoon, lest it squirt through your nose when the next joke connects. Forget about losing 10 pounds or ending that nail-biting habit; do yourself a favor and put making a pilgrimage to Sketchfest 2005 at the top of your list of New Year's resolutions. It'll be one vow that's easy to keep — and repeat. [www.sfsketchfest.com](http://www.sfsketchfest.com).

#### **Best Queer Revolutionary Headquarters**

Dykes, trannies, punks, goths, and pool players gather at El Rio on a semiregular basis to plot the downfall of the patriarchy — and rock out. The bar plays host to various and sundry parties aimed at a queer and trans audience, including Fling (a twice-monthly club night) and monthly cabarets like Gender Pirates and Karma. Frequent fundraisers also let you get your freak on for a worthy cause, from swing-state voter registration to Camp Trans. The typical El Rio event is postmodern and swinging — and crammed with edge-dwelling young queers. Expect to see drag kings jostling angry poets in the wake of burlesque troupes, as well as some of the city's coolest DJs, who spin at El Rio — or so we'd like to think — for the pleasure of joining the revolution. On sunny days you can bask (and smoke!) in the massive patio area, but the club also boasts a mosh-tastic back-room stage and a pool-hustling bar area. 3158 Mission, S.F. (415) 282-3325, [www.elriosf.com](http://www.elriosf.com).

#### **Best Thing to Hit 'Oaksterdam' Since the Pot Club**

When Oakland city officials recently moved to limit the number of pot clubs in the downtown Oakland area known as Oaksterdam, the damages rippled out beyond the medical marijuana community. The filling of some vacant storefronts on that stretch of Telegraph Avenue had stirred thoughts of an emerging economic and cultural revival in the area. However, Oaksterdam fans remain thankful for one thing: at least the city couldn't outlaw Café Van Kleef. A club of the non-pot-selling variety, Van Kleef has already, in its first year of existence, attracted a steady stream of regulars with its live music, fascinating decor (including a painting featuring Jerry Brown, James Brown, and the Dalai Lama), and highly enjoyable e-mail posts regarding upcoming events. If you're on a tight budget, note that cocktails are pricey, and whatever you do, take care requesting advice from the eight ball on the counter. 1621 Telegraph, Oakl. (510) 763-7711.

#### **Best Theatrical Homecoming**

The Shotgun Players' struggles to find a home over the years have been almost but not quite comical. They've been booted out of spaces on the eve of opening night; they've performed in parking lots, parks, you name it; they've been hoodwinked, and they've been hassled. But it's not going to happen again, because the company now owns its own home: the Ashby Stage (formerly the Transparent Theater), at the corner of Ashby Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Way in Berkeley. It's great news for theater fans, because under the leadership of Patrick Dooley, a man as iconoclastic as he is inspired, the Shotgun Players have staged some remarkable work during the past 13 years. The company's new home ensures there will be years more — and that's some of the best news the Bay Area could get. 1901 Ashby, Berk. (510) 841-6500.

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The banner features a red border and contains several elements: on the left, three red Netflix DVD cases are stacked, with a silver DVD disc in front of them; next to the cases is a blue bowl filled with yellow popcorn. The main text is in bold black font, and the 'Try Netflix for FREE' button is a blue pill-shaped button with white text.

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