



Austin's Hot Attractions

The Texas capital is primed for South by Southwest with a slew of acclaimed new restaurants, the opening of the W Austin and a new Austin City Limits music venue *By Jessica Dupuy*

THE ENTERTAINMENT world's love affair with Austin keeps heating up: **Drew Barrymore** is rumored to have just bought a house in the city, whose full- and part-time residents include director **Richard Linklater**, **Sandra Bullock** and **Matthew McConaughey**. *True Grit*, *The Tree of Life* and *Spy Kids 4: All the Time in the World* have recently filmed here. And this month, the Texas capital becomes the industry's No. 1 destination as South by Southwest takes over the city from March 11-20. Between the hundreds if not thousands of showcases and screenings, here are some of the best new spots to check out in the self-proclaimed Live Music Capital of the World.

WHERE TO EAT Austin has risen to the top of culinary critics' lists as one of the best U.S. cities for dining. One of the best new restaurants is Uchiko (4200 N. Lamar Blvd., uchiaustin.com), the second

iteration of chef **Tyson Cole**'s homage to Japan. A four-time James Beard Award semifinalist, Cole won star status in 2005 for his sexy and innovative sushi as one of *Food & Wine*'s "best new chefs" in America. His 8-month-old Uchiko is every bit as provocative, with less of an emphasis on "just sushi" and more of a focus on Japanese farmhouse fare. Cole, who recently published *Uchi: The Cookbook*, has attracted such diners as **Lance**



Handler

Armstrong, **Chelsea Handler** and **Robert Rodriguez**. "The food is really unique and very cool," says actress-model **Brooklyn Decker**, who moved to the city in 2009 with husband **Andy Roddick**.

Perhaps the restaurant/bar addition to receive the most buzz is Haddingtons (601 W. 6th St., thehaddington.com), which has deemed itself a modern tavern serving up British-influenced cuisine and specialty handcrafted

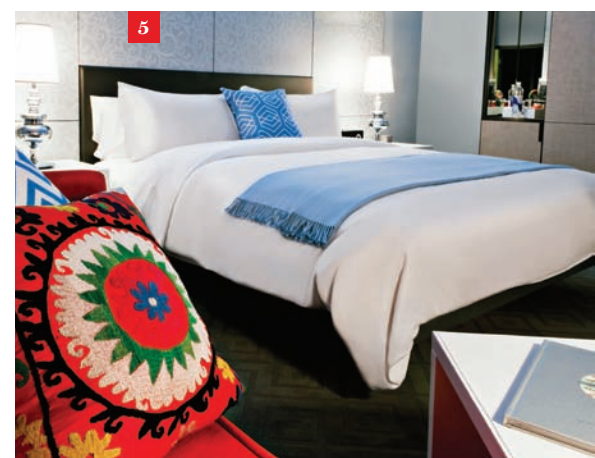
cocktails. The decor calls to mind an upscale British pub with its long wooden bar and myriad whimsical paintings of the British countryside along the walls. On most nights, it's hard to elbow your way up to



Rodriguez

the bar, and Sunday brunch is borderline mayhem — but well worth it with a dish of delectable bangers and mash. Fans include Rodriguez, part-time resident **Mike Judge** and Spoon drummer **Jim Eno**.

The latest additions to the downtown scene are Congress and Second Bar + Kitchen (200 Congress Ave., congressaustin.com), two concepts designed by chef-owner **David Bull**, a celebrity in his own right. A James Beard nominee, Bull has battled the formidable Bobby Flay on the Food Network hit *Iron Chef America*. Throughout Texas, Bull is known for his innovative-yet-classic New American cuisine. Congress is his intimate fine-dining outlet, while Second



Bar + Kitchen is his diner concept, featuring an array of great beers, one of the best burgers in town and an elevated yet laid-back feel.

On the east side of 6th Street, the side that has given Austin much of its Bourbon Street-like fame, chef **Shawn Cirkiel** has opened his second concept, Backspace (507 San Jacinto Blvd., thebackspaceaustin.com), a 30-seat trattoria serving thin-crust Neapolitan pizzas from an Italian brick oven and hand-made charcuterie. It's located in



AUSTIN UNLIMITED
1. The dining room at the new Uchiko restaurant. 2. The contemporary art space Arthouse at the Jones Center. 3. The dining terrace on the upstairs patio at Second Bar + Kitchen. 4. The lobby-level library at the new W Austin. 5. A room at the W.



WHERE TO GO The 2,750-capacity Moody Theater (310 W. Willie Nelson Blvd., acl-live.com), the new home of PBS' *Austin City Limits*, had its grand opening in mid-February, and it's where **Perez Hilton** is hosting his annual SXSW party March 19; last year, the bash featured performances by Snoop Dogg, Macy Gray and Michael Posner. And the renovated Arthouse at the Jones Center (700 Congress Ave., arthousetexas.org) provides sanctuary for modern art lovers. The three-story art space's \$6.6 million makeover was completed in October, and its new exhibit, "Rehearsals at the Astoria," is a scaffolding reincarnation of the now-demolished Astoria, the iconic music venue in London; the sculpture is serving as a free rehearsal space for bands during the exhibit's 10-week run.

WHERE TO STAY There's almost no chance of nabbing a hotel room during this year's SXSW. The Four Seasons — which has hosted **Brad Pitt** and **Angelina Jolie** and underwent a renovation of all 291 of its rooms two years ago — has a waiting list of more than 60 people (from \$440 a night, 98 San Jacinto Blvd., fourseasons.com/austin). Also fully booked are hip hotelier **Liz Lambert's** boutique

sister properties. Hotel Saint Cecilia (from \$295, 112 Academy Drive, hotelstcecilia.com) is a Victorian mansion updated with a rock 'n' roll vibe; **Amy Poehler** recently booked a super-private bungalow there. And Lambert's Hotel San Jose (from \$160 a night, 1316 S. Congress Ave., sanjosehotel.com) is a vintage, cool redo of a 1930s motor-court motel.

The big new entrant is the W Austin (from \$279, 200 Lavaca St., starwoodhotels.com). Opened in December, the hotel, where



Poehler

Krasinski and wife **Emily Blunt** have stayed, has 251 rooms and suites; Trace, a contemporary farm-to-table restaurant concept; and state-of-the-art workout and spa facilities. The rooms feature plush bedding, photos of acts that have played *Austin City Limits* and clever "postcard"-shaped windows with views of Lady Bird Lake or the downtown skyline.

"Austin embraces different cultures and languages and music and food, but you still sort of have that Southern charm you get from being in Texas," Decker says. "I love those perfect marriages in a place like this." **THR**



LAKE AUSTIN | AUSTIN

FOR SALE: RODDICK/DECKER HOUSE

Brooklyn Decker and **Andy Roddick's** four-bedroom Austin house, where they married in 2009, is under contract after being listed most recently for \$3.6 million. Roddick bought the house, which is on Lake Austin

and includes a home theater and fitness center, for \$1.46 million in 2003. "It's close to downtown and has a boat slip, so it's great in-and-out access," says Lauren Powell of Sotheby's International, which has the listing.



Decker ▲

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PAUL BARBAGLI/COURTESY OF UCHIKO; MICHAEL MORAN/COURTESY OF ARTHOUSE; CASEY DIANN/COURTESY OF SECOND BAR + KITCHEN; COURTESY OF W HOTEL AUSTIN; ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF SOTHEBY'S REALTY; ANDREAS RENTZ/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF W HOTEL AUSTIN; AMANDA EDWARDS/GETTY IMAGES (2)