



AUSTIN DAZE

STERIL THIS PAPER

ISSUE # 80

WARREN HOOD * TIM LEAGUE * STEVE WERTHEIMER
WWW.AUSTINDAZE.COM



Welcome back! You know, I like me some print. Print may be dead or dying, as they say, but I would say, ALOHA! This is issue #80 for those of you counting. We have seen our little

city grow and change a heck of a lot since we began 11 years ago. Underneath it all it is still a place I wanna be. Austin is still a place where you can make anything happen. You need a few things: First, you need to have a dream, plan and vision. Then you need to have solid follow through. The kind that means never giving up even when it seems like you can't make it any further. This sounds crazy, I know, but if you dig a little about town, you will discover this mantra in all different shapes and sizes. DREAM IT, DON'T GIVE UP AND LIVE IT FULLY. I love that I can say this about the place where I live.

We have been busy with everything Austin. Our website features great stories, photos, reviews and video interviews from all the great gigs, events and festivals that never seem to stop. Music, films, performances, art events and whatever else happens around town, there is usually a DAZE member there. For that I am so grateful. On many sides I can feel the love for the publication: the overflowing support from staff, the ongoing interest from the community, the tremendous assistance from local businesses, and the continued involvement with promoters and festivals. Since the Austin Daze represents a shared dream, I feel truly blessed. I only hope to be able to share that feeling with y'all. Thanks for reading. This is a special issue. We talk with one of my favorite musicians and two very esteemed local business owners. Magnus Opus tells us all about the Soup Peddler. The mantra shines in each of them. This is a smaller paper. There is more stuff online.

The web content changes almost daily. Christine Thompson keeps the video interviews and reviews flowing. Much help has been given by the online staff. I thank each of you and am so grateful you are on board. I had forgotten how much I dig this part of the process. We will see you again in print form in February or sooner. We are so lucky to be in this amazing place called Austin. Get out there and dive in. I'll be out there also. Say hi if ya see me. RocknRoll & Namaste, Russ

HAPPY HOLIDAZE!!!!

AUSTIN DAZE STAFF (NAMES & JUST THE NAMES)

Russ Hartman, John Grubbs, Christine Thompson, Sandra Dahdah, Magnus Opus, Bill Baker, Hux Mccrippock, Eric Swanson, Fabrizio Darold, Kyle Woods, Michael Balderama, Boz Brothers, Bertha!, BigDave, Ashley Nunley, Stretchy Baddy, CC Bonney & so many more.....

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WARREN HOOD

WARREN HOOD TO ME IS AN AWESOME REPRESENTATION OF THE ENDLESS AND CONTINUING TALENT THAT IS AUSTIN. I WAS SHOOK BY HIS GIFT WITH THE FIDDLE WHEN I FIRST SAW HIM SIT IN WITH HIS FATHER, CHAMP HOOD, TONI PRICE & CASPER RAWLS. SINCE THEN, I HAVE SEEN HIM EVOLVE INTO A WORLD CLASS MUSICIAN. NOW HE ALSO DONS THE MANDOLIN AND IS AN ESTABLISHED SONGWRITER. I AM PROUD TO WATCH HIM SHINE AND TO CALL HIM A FRIEND. HIS OUTFIT, WARREN HOOD & THE GOODS, PUTS ON A MESMERIZING SHOW. I RECOMMEND SEEING THEM SOON.

AUSTIN DAZE: Please tell me the difference between playing a gig outside of Austin versus in Austin.

WARREN HOOD: I find playing in Austin versus the rest of the country very interesting. Austin is so saturated with talented musicians that people here are musically spoiled and most of them don't even know it. There's good music every night of the week and sometimes it's hard to choose. As a result of this the bar is set very high. It's hard to impress an Austin audience and show them something they haven't seen before. Austin still appreciates music as much or more than anywhere else but they do seem to have a more refined pallet that requires a little something extra to get them excited. Austin audiences only respond to real music made by real people with genuine motives. They see right through the phony stuff which is probably why the main stream doesn't get too far here. When I play elsewhere, with the exception of a few major cities, people seemed to be starved for music. They just aren't exposed to it as often and when they get a taste they freak out! This of course is just my observation and some folks may disagree. To see it from my perspective, you must understand that when I play in Austin, I'm playing for many people that have seen me many times before and probably see me at least once a month if not more, so naturally they're not going to go as crazy as an entire room of people that have never seen our band before. It's definitely a different mind set when you play for a full house of your friends and family versus a full house of strangers. They both have their ups and downs. Austin is still my favorite town to play.

AD: Where do you find inspiration to do what you do?

WH: I find inspiration in other artists. If I'm not playing, I'm going out to hear somebody else. Some of my favorite local bands include Little Elmore Reed, Gary Clark Jr., Seth Walker, Mike Flanigin, Bruce Robison, Erik Hokkanen, Heybale, and of course all of the folks I play with too. I usually leave a show wanting to do what ever it was I just heard. When I hear Redd play guitar I want to do more country. When I hear Seth sing I want to do more blues and soul, etc. I don't stop there...the next step is to listen to who they listened to and then who that person listened to. For all the young guitar slingers out there that want to sound like Stevie Ray Vaughan, you have to listen to his brother Jimmy, and Albert King too. Then you have to listen to who those guys listened to, and so on. Steal from the as many different sources as you can. I play fiddle, but I listen to great pianists, horn players, harmonica players, guitar players, singers, etc. I believe you have to soak it all in before you find your sound. Usually, if I'm in a "writers block" it's because I have not been listening.

AD: What do you think about the changes in Austin the past 11 years? 11 years have really changed the city in many ways, from a musicians standpoint, what do you feel the future of Austin holds?

WH: I was born and raised in Austin and I've seen it go through a lot of changes. Anyone who's been here for a while can gauge the change in our town just by looking to the Austin skyline. Austin is no longer that cool little secret spot. The word is out. We do still have a very unique town with a quality of life that you can't find anywhere else. Yes, Austin is bigger, traffic is terrible. But as long as we have Barton Springs, The Continental Club, great Mexican food and barbeque, I'm staying right here. I know the future of music is bright with a lot new young talent coming up. We also have great club owners, like Steve at the Continental and Paul at Momo's, who are doing a great job of keeping the music scene thriving.

AD: We heard that you not only have a song in an upcoming movie, but the Goods have a cameo spot performing the song.

WH: It is true that I have a song featured in an upcoming movie. It is a song from my first album called "Carolina," which is one of the first songs I ever wrote. The movie is called Seven Days in Utopia, and it stars Robert Duval. The whole band got to be extras in the movie and we filmed from 6pm until 6am. That was a long night...we "fake played" with no sound all night long while they filmed the scene in which we may not be visible. It was pretty cool to see all of the behind the scenes action. Watching Robert Duval improvise each take was very exciting. He didn't do it the same way twice. I can't wait to see the finished picture and how they edit that 12 hours of filming into one short scene.

AD: What is your process for writing a song?

WH: There's a saying in Nashville that there are three things that make a hit song...and nobody knows what they are. I'm asked a lot about my writing process and it's got me thinking that maybe it's time to get a process. It's pretty random with me. Sometimes the words are first and sometimes the melody is. Sometimes they come together.



I can spend 20 minutes on a song or two years. Sometimes songs are never done and you tweak them for a life time. If you hear Willis Alan Ramsey do a song now that he wrote 20 years ago, chances are it's different now. I guess my process is never forcing it and never taking a break. I couldn't take a break if I tried. My brain composes all day long whether I'm driving, taking a shower, or eating, it doesn't matter. If I sit down at a desk with a notebook, that book will stay blank. I think I have to be doing some mindless task to occupy most of brain for the songs to come out. I keep pen in paper everywhere in case inspiration strikes. I've got a notebook in my car, kitchen, bedroom, and office. I think driving alone at night is when my best ideas come, and I'd better have a notebook to jot it down right there and then. I'll even pull over to jot it down right there and then.

I've been writing a lot lately with my band mate, Willie Pipkin. We have three co-writes on this next album and two of them will be sung by our pianist, Emily Gimble. All three songs came about differently. We wrote a song called, "Where Have You Gone," that Emily, and now Toni Price, sings. Willie wrote the words and music to most of it. I took his first verse and wrote a second verse, and I wrote the bridge. This one took about two days. The other two took longer. With the song, "Song Bird," Willie had written a finger picking melody with no words. Months later he told me about a concept for a song about a bird, but he had no lines or melody. I took the old melody and married it with the new concept, and that's what we came up with. It's been a good pairing so far, but you never know when the well will run dry. Hopefully we get a lot more out of it while it's flowing.

AD: What were the highlights of the summer tour ?

WH: I had a great summer of touring this year between The Goods and The Waybacks. The highlight of The Goods summer was playing at the Strawberry Festival in California. It was the first major festival gig for the band and it was very successful. We've all played big stages with other bands, but it nice to do it with our unit. I wound up sitting in that night with Lyle Lovett, which was a perfect way to end the weekend. Lyle has been very good to me as far back as I can remember. He's allowed me to open shows to reach a bigger audience and mentions my name when he can in interviews. He remembers how folks helped him along the way, including my father Champ Hood, David Ball, and Walter Hyatt, and Lyle embraces the opportunity to do the same for the next generation.

AD: When will The Goods record?

WH: The Goods will be recording a new album this winter, to be released in the spring. The songs are there and ready to go, it's a matter of selecting a producer and just doing it. I'm more excited to record this record than I've ever been for any other project. I think we have a great line-up of players and some good songs and that's all you need.

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TIM LEAGUE

WE SPOKE WITH TIM LEAGUE ABOUT THE NEW PROJECT, DRAFTHOUSE FILMS & ITS FIRST FILM RELEASE, FOUR LIONS. TIM & KERRI STARTED THE ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE JUST BEFORE I CAME TO TOWN. IT IS THE ONLY WAY TO SEE MOVIES. A THEATER CHAIN, FANTASTIC FEST, THE HIGHBALL. WHAT COULD BE NEXT? THE ANSWER: DRAFTHOUSE FILMS.

AUSTIN DAZE: Tell me a little bit about the movie first of all.

Tim: Well I could probably sum it up pretty quickly, it's a slapstick comedy about Jihadi suicide bombers, and the new film by Chris Morris. Chris is something of a TV legend in the UK and this is his first feature film.

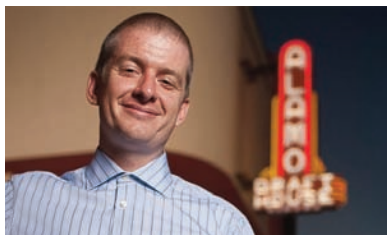
AD: And it's very very funny. I saw it, I loved the ending but there's a serious note to it as well. It left me wondering the whole day, and oftentimes when you're watching a comedy that doesn't happen.

Tim: Yeah, I mean it starts out being very slapstick and the guys are being fairly goofy. It's four Pakistani guys who have banded together and become a would-be suicide bomber cell in the UK, and I think what Chris is basically trying to say is: the guys who get lured into this type of lifestyle are just regular guys and they are not the shiniest pennies, they're actually fairly stupid, and maybe that's

why they've entered into this in the first place. I think what he's trying to do is take a little of the mystique and the James Bond aspect out of it for those types of folks who might be encouraged to go into this line of work.

AD: It's also humanizing.

Tim: Yeah, it's a strange reaction, you're laughing and you're getting to know these characters and you are, sort of, feeling for them. You don't necessarily want them to succeed, obviously, because they're trying to blow themselves up, but you do feel sorry for them in a way, and you get to know them. That's almost off-putting, in a way, because you don't know how to process these feelings. It goes right from comedy right into very interesting political commentary.



AD: Tell us about Draffhouse Films.

Tim: Sure, this is our first feature film that we're launching out there, and the idea is we're going to pick up films that we come across, either through Fantastic Fest or just operating through the theater, and where we're passionate about the films, yet they don't find a home in the United States.

So we're going to try to nurture and shepherd films that we love and try to get them a wider audience.

AD: Has this been released in Europe yet?

Tim: Yes, it's been released in several countries, it was released in the UK and was actually a huge success there. It made over 4 and a half million dollars, which is a big release for such a small country. It's starting to roll out in other countries now, it's been released in Denmark, it's been sold in all the territories in Europe and definitely will be released everywhere in Europe.

AD: I wonder, is there going to be a backlash against this sort of thing do you think, the content of the movie? Are you anticipating anything?

Tim: I don't think so, there were questions about that before it got released in the UK, and there was no backlash there. And yes, it is potentially controversial subject material, but it's handled really well.

AD: It's told with kindness.

Tim: It's very smart, and very well researched as well. Chris spent three years on the road doing extensive research, he didn't want to make something that was inflammatory. He wanted to make something that made people think and made people laugh.

STEVE WERTHEIMER

STEVE, OR "UNCLE STEVE" AS HE IS KNOWN BY REGULARS AT HIS CLUB, IS TRULY OLD SCHOOL AUSTIN. STEVE RUNS ONE OF THE COOLEST CLUBS IN THE WORLD. THE CONTINENTAL CLUB IS AT THE HEART OF WHY AUSTIN IS THE LIVE MUSIC CAPITAL OF THE WORLD. I AM A REGULAR ON TUESDAZE AND HAVE BEEN SINCE THIS PAPER STARTED. IF YOU ARE READING THIS, I AM SURE YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CONTINENTAL CLUB. IF NOT, PLEASE GET YOURSELF OVER THERE, IT IS "A TRUE LEGENDARY SPOT!"

AUSTIN DAZE: When, how and why did you decide that you could run one of the most successful clubs in the world?

STEVE WERTHEIMER: Sometime in mid-1987, some folks came across the lake to Ski Shores Café, which I owned at the time, and said their family had a club space down in South Austin that was available and wanted to see if I was interested in making a go of it. It was the Continental Club and it had been closed for a few months.

At the time I was still working downtown as a CPA/Controller for a large downtown development company, but knew that my passion and dream was to leave accounting and run a nightclub. It is something I had always dreamt of from the time I arrived in Austin and starting hanging out at the Rome Inn in 1976.

As they say "be careful what you wish for....."

AD: How did you get involved in the music business. Are you musically inclined at all? Play any instruments?

SW: Because I am not musically inclined other than being a huge fan and supporter, this was the only way I could make a contribution to the music scene. Maintaining a place where music could be played and heard. I had no idea that The Continental Club would turn into the historical landmark with all the world class talent that it is today.

Perseverance and persistence has paid off.

AD: How have you been able to pick out the talent that seems to last in Austin?

SW: Once again I have been very lucky to align the club with some really world class entertainers with a ton of talent. I think the fact that we do not give up easily on what we believe in, and give these bands a chance to really develop: it's a win-win for all of us. I try to focus on the music that reminds me of the early days on the Austin music scene and many of these performers have been honing their skills for many years. Much of their music is timeless just like the club.

AD: On the other side of that, what bands have you passed on booking that have made a name for themselves?

I do remember the Old 97's trying to get a gig at the club in the early days and also a very early version of the Dixie Chicks.....man what was I thinking? Can't get it right all the time.

AD : When did you become a car aficionado? Was it before the club or did it happen at the same time?

SW: I was always into stuff from the 40's and 50's, be it clothing, memorabilia, music and of course cars. I feel like those were the best years from a design standpoint and the birth of cool. I had an '59 Ford pickup while in college, but once I got into the club business and met guys like Charlie Sexton, Mercury Charlie, and Jimmie Vaughan, it was all over. After meeting Mercury Charlie, he came in my office one night and said, "Steve, you know what you need? You need a Mercury!" And the rest is history. He helped me, or rather I helped him, build my first real custom 20 years ago, a '51 Mercury which I still proudly own and drive.

AD: Austin has changed a lot as a city in the last 10 years, what do you think of it? As a club owner, how do you picture the future of Austin?

SW: It has changed dramatically and I am holding on tight. I am so glad I am on South Congress, which in my opinion, is kinda the vestige of what old Austin used to be like. I know there are more restaurants to eat at down here, but other than that, there are a lot of the same places that been here for years.

Many are owner-occupied, and that's what makes the difference. We need more of that around town. South Congress was not some developer's wet dream, it just happened at a very grassroots level and that's what so cool about it. I do miss JUST GUNS though, I have to tell you.

I really try hard along with others down here to keep it real and down home. As far as the future of Austin, I really concentrate on what's in my neighborhood down here on South Congress. We can't solve all the problems around the entire city, but we sure are trying down here. Just trying to find that happy medium between business and neighborhood down here is a real challenge and something we are working on constantly.



AD: Tell me about your initial plan for the gallery. Did you anticipate it being so successful? I know it has very limited capacity, but I feel it is one of the most intimate listening rooms in Austin.

SW: After being neighbors with the gallery for so many years and watching three or four places move in and out of it over the years, I just figured that before a got a neighbor that did not get along with me, maybe I should give the space a go. Some of the reasoning was to protect my interests at the club, and I knew it was a super cool space, just not sure what I was going to do with it when I first got it.

I knew the room was perfect to showcase art and I know a ton of great lowbrow artists that really did need a space in town to show their work. It took me about 6 months to kinda think about what I wanted up there, and to have a room that I could feature the B-3 Organ was something I had always had in the back of my mind. Well, I convinced Mike Flanigin, one of the premier B-3 players in the

world, to haul his organ up the stairs (and after we did that once, I decided it would never leave that space...that thing weighs about 500 lbs. and I told him I wasn't carrying that beast back downstairs). It took off kinda slow and we really kept it our little secret and still kinda do. Very little signage, very little advertising, and that's the way I like it. It feels like a house party up there, kinda like having world class blues, soul and jazz in your living room with some of your closest friends.

Because of Mike's talent, you never know who you will find sitting in with him, could be Derek O'Brien, Jimmie Vaughan, Johnny Moeller, Gary Clark Jr., Jake Langley, or even Billy F. Gibbons. And to get see Frosty up there on drums two or three times a week is heaven sent. We also get to experience the great jazz stylings of Ephraim Owens, the raucous funk of The Greyhounds, and the Gypsy Swing of Continental Graffiti, on a weekly basis.

AD: What do you feel people in Austin should do to preserve and cultivate the live music that we have?

SW: I think the best thing they can do first of all is try and get out and support live music. It is so great and so abundant here. We are so lucky. I travel all around the country and talk to people from all parts of the world that come to Austin, and they all say the same thing. And I also realize how lucky we really are to have this much live entertainment every night of the week. It is just mind blowing. Any fan of music can also join AMP, Austin Music People, a new organization that we have formed here in town to support the music industry and give people involved in all aspect of music a voice. It easy, just go to www.austinmusicpeople.org.

AD: How has becoming a state historic venue helped the club?

SW: Love the plaque on the front door of the club. I am very humbled by the fact that we were considered and granted Historical Landmark status. It just big feather in our cap and hopefully a good photo op for all our fans. I mean we're right up there with the Capitol now. Just goes to show you if you hang around long enough, people will start to notice. We are very proud to be part of the historical fabric of Austin...

A true legendary spot.

It's A Small Good Thing After All - magnus opus

The front door bell clangs and in walks a man. His face wrinkles with confusion, thinking he's found the restaurant he's searching for, but there must be some mistake. He's looking for a hostess. But there's none. He's looking for tables and a wait staff. There aren't any. A bar, maybe? Not here. What does he see? A bare metal table plays host to a laptop, a phone, and a clipboard. Guitars -for the playing- are hung at odd intervals along the walls. There are a number of laminated, high profile restaurant reviews haphazardly strewn across the walls, too, singing various praises and hallelujahs about this Austin, Texas phenomenon, "The Soup Peddler," the only visible proof there might be an actual restaurant lurking nearby.

Already having heard the clang, Pat Brown, the Soup Peddler's major domo, is en route, floating over bare concrete floors, a genie ready to grant wishes. "What can I do for you?" he asks, emerging from a back room, a perennial smile greeting the man stood in front of him.

The man continues to look around, noticeably perplexed, "Well, I heard from some friends about how good your soup is here and I was passing by, saw the sign, had some time, thought I'd pop in."

An old hand at this by now, Pat grabs a brochure, hands it to the man, and says, "You have a computer, right?"

"Yes," the man says.

Okay, that pamphlet will serve as a reminder. Basically our process is super simple. All you have to do is go to our website, sign-up -free of charge- and every Sunday you'll receive a menu by e-mail. We offer unique foods from all over the world, soups and entrees now, as well as side dishes, greens and grains, salads, quiche, and desserts, too, a totally new menu each week."

"Really?"

BOULDIN CREEK COFFEEHOUSE

NEW DIGS
(A FEW BLOCKS
SOUTH)
OPENING
SOON

FULL MENU
BEER/WINE
Happy Hour
Daily 5pm - 8pm



Veggie food
Organic, fair trade coffee

"Yes, and once you receive your menu on Sunday, you have until the following Saturday to place your order. You pay when your order is submitted, all done securely online. If you live within our delivery area, we will deliver to your door the following week on the day of your choosing. If not, you can come by and pick up your order when you want, too. It's that easy."

"Dang," the man says, "that's perfect for my situation. I just don't have time to cook anymore, and with the cost of everything rising as it is, eating out is proving to be unaffordable. And y'all deliver, too?"

"Hand delivered if you're home, or leave a cooler outside and we'll put your order in there for upon your return."

"Wow, sounds great," the man says. He opens the door and gives a hearty nod, "Appreciate your time."

"Sure thing. Thanks for stopping by!"

As it turns out this scene will replay itself many times a day: males, females, singles, families, all ages, walking, biking, skateboarding, driving, to either pick up their orders, or curious. They wander in, happy to be here, as if they sense something different, something profound is occurring and they're included, they're actively taking part. In fact, devotees' -who number in the thousands- are all known by their adopted tribal name, "Soupies."

Pat sits down and begins to answer, in real time, one by one, e-mails coming in from customers with a veritable grab bag of questions and comments. Eventually the phone rings, breaking the reverie. Pat stops typing, snags the handset and says, "The Soup Peddler... oh yes, thanks for getting right back with me. I need to talk to you about the red rice order for next week..." as he hits a key and pulls up his order screen.

This nondescript, 1800 sq. ft. orange stucco building festooned with painted vines in bloom has bright yellow, hand painted letters on the front bay window that read, "Soup Is Love." Inside, the building is stark, bare, awash in a quiet, Zen like atmosphere: very little movement, no audible hubbub save for the faint strains of Radiohead beginning to emanate from the back office, the darkened lair of David Ansel, the Soup Peddler himself.

Acoustic guitar in his lap, his newborn daughter coos from her crib by the rumped couch that serves as his desk, a laptop on a coffee table in front of him, fingers gliding across the keys, flickering images bathing his lit face.

David momentarily stops checking a spreadsheet to redirect his i-Pod to a specific song. He smiles, picks up the guitar and absently plucks the strings. Upon hearing the music, his daughter's face grows animated, her arms flailing, her bare feet kicking.

Still plucking the guitar, closely watching his newborn, David says, "Even though it doesn't

look like much going on around here right now, once we put our week into motion, the systems I designed are managing logistical facets of this business virtually 'round the clock. Pat and I spend a goodly portion of our days monitoring and verifying all incoming data, tweaking where needed on the fly. And each week, we tear it all down and start all over again." He shakes his curly head incredulously, before adding, "It's safe to say, without these programs in place, functioning as they are, this business doesn't exist."

The phone rings a couple of times. David sits up and sees Pat is away from his desk. A customer stands patiently, obviously waiting for Pat who's retrieving her order from the holding area. Without hesitation David grabs the handset and says, "Soup Peddler... Uh-huh." He lays down the guitar, fingers fluttering across his laptop. A different spreadsheet springs to life. "There, I see you. The delivery date you chose is officially tomorrow. Yeah. Oh... thanks. Glad you enjoyed it. That recipe is one of my favorites, too. Okay. Bye-bye."

David picks up the guitar again, "The fact we, as a team, create a wide variety of -in my humble opinion- damn good international foods, week in week, week out, while maximizing our employee's time by giving them a large degree of flexibility they wouldn't find in any other restaurant work, are hallmarks of this new business model." A sheepish grin appears briefly across a preternaturally young face, "I tell you, I'm one blessed mofo." His daughter coos in agreement.

However, life for the Soup Peddler was not always filled with such atavistic bliss. Hardly...

One only has to look around these days, and not very far either, to notice the tremendous, sweeping changes occurring all over our planet. Businesses, industries, institutions, traditions, ways of life that have remained unchanged for decades are proving to be ill-equipped to adapt to the changes that are demanded of them to survive in this, the 21st Century. And instead of a beacon for this change, which the Soup Peddler phenomenon clearly represents, all could have gone south as David recalls narrowly avoiding the toxicity of a 20th Century corporate mindset, the antithesis of the basic tenets of 21st Century change.

"In the beginning I took on a partner," David explains with a shudder, "who I thought would be a good balance for me and my idealistic tendencies. I mean, almost from the beginning I heard alarms going off all around me, but I wanted to give this partnership time to adjust.

"Right from the start we secured loans for -what I considered- rather exorbitant salaries, all the while running up massive legal bills for organizing our corporate structure. There was talk of franchising at one point: creating a brand, some "two Jewish guy" thing, selling our stuff in supermarkets and specialty stores. One of his ideas was for a Soup Peddler television show... I'm not kidding!

We actually discussed displaying an employee board where we would grade our staff every week based on a star system... ugh...

"The mood in our little shop got pretty grim at one point, and this was in the middle of us switching from soups delivered on a bike to complete meals delivered by trucks, a change I implemented only after polling the Soupies directly, as well as countless hours of fevered soul searching. Let me tell you, that was not an easy decision. That move proved to be more than a little scary. For a while there I thought we'd screwed the pooch. Eventually though, due to the perseverance of our great staff and our customer's loyalty, we found our groove, but, by and large, much of the behind the scenes stuff felt so wrong.

"One day I just couldn't take it anymore and was like, dude, this isn't going to work, what's it gonna take? And then it got even more bizarre, but bottom line? We eventually came to terms. We parted company, and almost immediately our collective mood changed, and since, we've not looked back."

The front door bell clangs again.

A woman, lilting like a schoolgirl, has given her name to Pat who's busy retrieving her order. She wastes no time in extolling the Soup Peddler's virtues.

"This place is a literal Godsend for me and my family. I have three kids, all under age 10. Because of the economy my husband and I are both forced to have jobs now, so there isn't any time for shopping, much less cooking. I see what other mothers in my position are doing, beating a steady path to drive thru at all the fast food places while their children get horribly obese, incredibly unhealthy. It's all so hard to believe. Makes me so sad... but I was determined not to follow their lead. Then out of nowhere appears the Soup Peddler. Now my family eats quality food, a well balanced diet, plus we get to try foods we otherwise would not, and the most incredible thing is...". Here the woman's voice trails off, her face suddenly overcome with emotion, then the tears begin to flow. After a few seconds she regains her composure

AUSTIN DAZE



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and continues, "the most amazing thing is, since I've been coming here my monthly grocery bill has actually dropped. Without The Soup Peddler I don't know what I would do. I really don't..."

Back in the lair, David is searching his recipe database, formulating next week's menu when a young man sticks his head in the doorway. David lights up with a smile, "Hey there. How's the noodle business?"

The man, clad in the South Austin uniform of rag tag shorts, t-shirt, sandals, and prerequisite beard, says, "Things are coming together, yeah, thanks for asking. I got your message."

"Oh yeah? Good. Joe was extremely helpful to me when I was starting out. He's a really smart guy. He'd left town for a while but when he showed up again I immediately thought of you and your new venture. I thought on the off chance he might be of help to you."

A woman, noticeably pregnant, appears by the bearded man's side, her arm draped around his shoulders. "The timing couldn't be any better." The bearded man spoke again, "Yeah, I remember you telling me about Joe. We could really use someone like him right now."

"He's a special guy. I couldn't recommend anyone who could be of more help. He has amazing instincts, really insightful."

The man and the woman both give a heartfelt, "Thanks."

David beams, a trifle embarrassed, then adds, "Well, I'll be sure and put him in touch. I hope it works out."

"Thanks, David", the man says, "I really really appreciate your help." The man touches the woman's belly. "Gotta run to our class, but we'll be in touch. G'bye."

"Bye." The couple leaves and David adjusts his i-Pod. Within seconds some sprightly African music fills the air. (Author's note: the connection worked.) David and Pat convene in the front office with their three chefs for the weekly evaluation and planning session.

Pat, the ringleader, diligently types during the exchange, entering all the recommendations from their creative discourse, a firm grasp on the meeting's rudder. David, gently omniscient, sits on a table directly across from him, very quietly adding his thoughts, his overview; a man of highly elevated taste buds and sensibilities is he.

The meeting resembles an aural ballet, more like a music rehearsal than a business meeting. The participants grab guitars off the wall and go to strumming while they make their points. There is a flow, a natural rhythmic exchange between them. Like skilled musicians, they eagerly dissect their individual parts. "We could substitute this for that, the consistency, the texture could benefit by one less step, the spice could be more subtle, we can chop those into finer bits, we could add this, we could add that, we can distill the process," on and

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on and on. Sometimes the talk builds to a frenzied crescendo, at other times thought processes allow for space in between the notes, an interlude, if you will, but always a continual flow, a verbal cantata of shared ideals through common experiences. And always... always the overriding mantra was, "How can we make this better?" Never a, "How can we cut corners to make more money?" Always, "How can we make the product better for the customer, even if it costs us a little more money?"

Having girded themselves for next weeks symphony, the artisans eventually disperse. Time to feed the people. Time to take care of the people. Time to feed and nourish the soul...

With big business continuing to deceive and punish its customers, as well as its workers, with a brutish "bottom line/conquer the world" mentality, the Soup Peddler continues to take a moral and ethical stand in the face of the current carnage. When many of those all too familiar names have disappeared from the landscape, there's a better than good chance the Soup Peddler will still be happily serving its growing legion of Soupies, as it should. David Ansel has given his community something in which they haven't received from either the political spectrum or the business sector for quite some time. Donning the guise of his alter ego, the Soup Peddler, David followed his bliss to create a sustainable, community based business by first making soup in his own kitchen, delivering it to his community on his bicycle, neighborhood by neighborhood, block by block, door by door, face by face, handshake by handshake, no less. David and his band of Merry Men continue to go the extra mile, paving an all-new road in this, the 21st Century, to give the people something in which they can truly believe and rely. Back in his lair, David leans over the crib and arpeggiates a cascade of notes. His daughter wildly swings her arms, squealing with peals of laughter, her face the very picture of happiness. She doesn't yet know, but she feels it...

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Wednesday 12/15

Sahara Smith 12:00-2:30
 Cienfuegos 3:30-6:00
 Jimmy LaFave 8:00-11:00

Thursday 12/16

Uncle Lucius 12:00-2:30
 Kalu James 3:30-6:00
 The Gourds 8:00-11:00

Friday 12/17

The Marshall Ford Swing Band 12:00-2:30
 Hank & Shaidri Alrich with Doug Harman 3:30-6:00
 Cody Canada 8:00-11:00

Saturday 12/18

Terri Hendrix 12:00-2:30
 Eliza Gilkyson 3:30-6:00
 Ian McLagan & the Bump Band 8:00-11:00

Sunday 12/19

Ray Wylie Hubbard 12:00-2:30
 The Derailers 3:30-6:00
 The Band of Heathens 8:00-11:00

Monday 12/20

Biscuit Brothers 12:00-2:30
 Mary Hattersley's Blazing Bows 2:30-3:00
 Sara Hickman's Family Time Rocks 3:30-6:00
 The Eggmen 8:00-11:00

Tuesday 12/21

Patricia Vonne 12:00-2:30
 Suzanna Choffel 3:30-6:00
 Marcia Ball/Ruthie Foster 8:00-11:00

Wednesday 12/22

Deadman 12:00-2:30
 Albert & Gage 3:30-6:00
 Asleep At the Wheel Quartet 8:00-11:00

Thursday 12/23

Hot Club of Cowtown 12:00-2:30
 The Trishas 3:30-6:00
 Carolyn Wonderland/Shelley King 8:00-11:00

Friday 12/24

Warren Hood 12:00-2:30
 Slim Richey 3:30-6:00
 Texana Dames 8:00-11:00



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