

Antone's

CLUB

HOME SHOWS ABOUT **HISTORY** EVENTS SHOP CONTACT

AUSTIN'S HOME OF THE
BLUES

SINCE 1975

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Billy Bob Thornton
& the Boxmasters -
4/11

Strand of Oaks -
5/27

Kydd Jones Comedy
Jam Hosted by
LaRon Wright and
DJ ulovei - 3/30

Joe Marcinek Band
featuring George
Porter Jr. (of The
Meters) - 5/28



Photo Copyright: Nicholas Russell, 1976

In 1975, Sixth Street in downtown Austin wasn't exactly groover's paradise. There was a sprinkling of bars like the Green Spot and Triple J, a drugstore, some nefarious buildings that possessed their own hidden charms, and even a barbecue shack that catered to the street's working girls. Near Congress Avenue, the aging Driskill Hotel backed up to Sixth, but it had seen better days. Of course, the area was the perfect location for a blues club. And not just any blues club, but Antone's.

It has been said that Clifford Antone didn't choose the blues. The blues chose him. The Port Arthur native opened a sandwich shop in Austin in the early 70s, along the lines of his family's business in Houston. But soon there were guitars and amps in the back of the shop, and before long the blues had taken over. The blues was inside Clifford Antone, and it had to come out. What he did when it was out was open the best nightclub in America, one that would showcase legends like Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Jimmy Reed and dozens more. It would also give to Austin an alternative to the redneck rock renegades' music that was taking over the city.

Antone's on Sixth Street opened on July 15, 1975, with a weekend stint from zydeco king Clifton Chenier & His Red Hot Louisiana Band. Devoted spirits like Angela Strehli and several Port Arthur comrades made sure



CLIFFORD ANTONE'S

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AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701

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6/01

W.C. Clark Blues
Revue (7PM SHOW)
- 3/25

Covet - 5/09

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musicians all around the country were talking about the club, and hoping to find a way to play there. It ran on the premise that if Clifford Antone said something, you could believe it. There was never any doubt. With sisters Susan and Janelle and mother Georgette lending a hand, the bluesman and his family made a stand.

As Sixth Street developed in the late 70s and rents got raised, Antone's lit out for North Austin in the great migration to the far outposts above Burnet Road. Once it was ensconced in a big room there, icons like Ray Charles and James Brown came to town and dazzled sell-out crowds. Still, it was only a matter of time before a more welcoming location was found, and within a year a former pizza parlor on Guadalupe near the University of Texas campus welcomed any and all blues lovers to its extremely comfortable environs. It was like Sixth Street had been loaded onto a flatbed truck and transported 25 blocks north. The club's first year there in 1981 gave notice that the blues was back in town.

This was the Antone's that most Austinites came to know and love. From '81 until 1996, hundreds of thousands of fans found their way to the club. Both the Fabulous Thunderbirds and Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble exploded nationally during the club's Guadalupe era, and the members spread the praises of Antone's to all within earshot. It wasn't odd for any number of nationally-known rockers to find their way to the room to see what all the talk was about, and then do their best to keep the chain unbroken. Even U2 made sure to come in and soak up the sounds. For all those years there it seemed like it couldn't end. But, of course, the blues is all about change too, and the bright lights downtown drew the club back south to Fifth Street and Lavaca.

When that location opened in 1997, Austin was headed toward an explosive building boom, but it hadn't quite happened yet. Antone's was one of the first businesses to place a bet on the area. The crowds came with it, even if not all at once. But slowly and surely downtown Austin became the tilt-a-whirly hotspot it is today, and once again, Antone's was leading the way. The blues itself had taken major losses, with so many of the originals passing on. Different musical styles needed to be explored on the club's stage, but like all things, there's always a new approach for those open enough to try. The club rolled with all kinds of music, always insisting on authenticity. In 2013, after the economic crash and ensuing

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EST. 1971

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nightclub belongs. Clifford Antone, who died in 2006, can be felt in the room. He was a man who loved music and musicians, and Antone's now is his living shrine to all the blues ever created, and to everything the blues continues to give to those who live for the music. As Jimmie Vaughan once tried to explain about the blues, "it's something you either love or don't like at all." At the very beginning of the club all those years ago, Antone's motto was "Home of the Blues." It could just as easily now be "Home of the Blues Lovers."

– Bill Bentley, July 2017

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