



DESTINATION >>

Austin, Texas

Getting there: Southwest Airlines flies to Austin from cities across the US; www.southwest.com

Stay: For atmosphere, the Austin Motel (www.austintexas.org); it's a favourite with musicians so there's a good chance your room will at some stage have been trashed by a bona fide rock star.

More: www.austintexas.org



is decked out like an East London spiv, another like an escapee from a mariachi band.

The louche wit of lead singer "Guy Fantasy" is spilling over the beer-garden walls, drawing passers-by into The Small Stars' brilliant, frazzled world.

It's past midnight on Friday when I catch up with the Eric Tessmer Band again, this time in a hole-in-the-wall on Red River St.

The band's set is nearly over and Eric is leaning against the bar playing one last searing solo. The guitar geeks are gathered round and I join them for a bit of adolescent adulation, remembering just in time to take a photo of the next generation of Texas guitar heroes.

At the end of a week spent prowling the 60 live venues around 6th Street, I know two

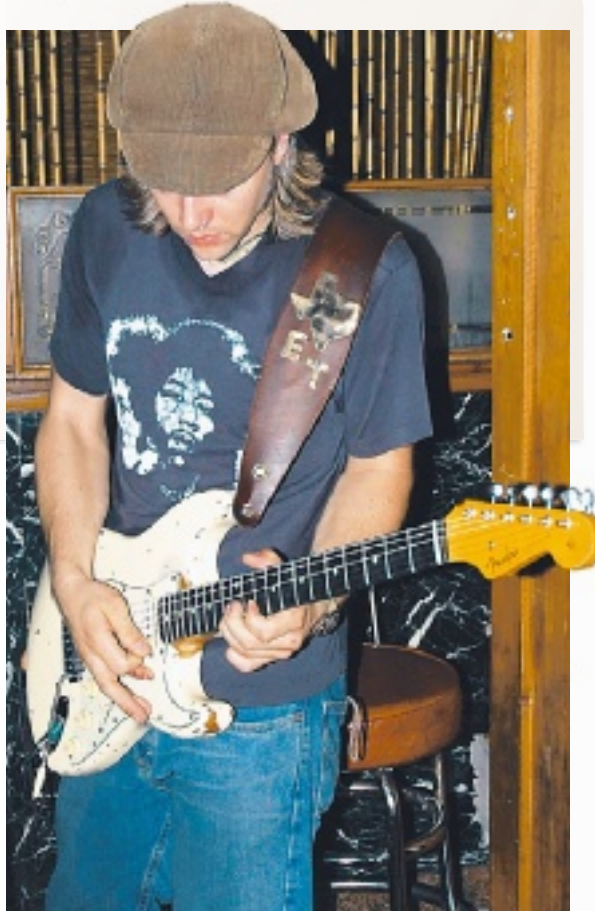
things for certain: Austin has the best frozen margaritas on the planet and, if any city can lay claim to being the Live Music Capital of the World, this is it.

There's just one last piece of unfinished business I need to attend to.

A stroll along the riverbank brings me to the Stevie Ray Vaughan Memorial, where a life-size statue depicts Austin's favourite son draped in his signature Tex-Mex poncho, the Fender guitar he wielded like a weapon resting in his left hand.

A bronze plaque is fixed to the wall behind, but it bears no flowery epitaph and not even the date of his death is recorded.

It strikes me though that this is a tribute the man himself would have wished for. It reads: "Stevie Ray Vaughan, Musician".



City rhythms: Eric Tessmer hits some hot chords; top, vintage Austin clothing store; facing page, Stevie Ray Vaughan's statue
Pictures: Cameron Wilson

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ITINERARY

- Fri: Fly to Darwin. Evening drinks, canapés & buffet dinner
- Sat: Morning Darwin city sights tour, afternoon free
- Sun: Full day Litchfield National Park Tour including lunch
- Mon: Travel to Kakadu for the Jumping Crocodile cruise
- Tue: Morning Yellow Water Billabong cruise, travel to Katherine
- Wed: Katherine Gorge cruise. Depart on The Ghan 6.20 p.m.
- Thu: Arrive Alice, town tour. Red Centre Dreaming dinner show
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