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HURRICANE IKE PARTIES

Austin throws a party for Ike

Hurricane reveling goes well into the weekend.

By [Michael Barnes](#)

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

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Austin threw a giant party for Ike.

The guest of honor didn't show.

Not that the hosts were complaining. As downtown was transformed into a collective hurricane party Friday and Saturday nights, locals and evacuees expressed concern about neighbors stuck on the Texas coast or staying in shelters.

But, as is Austin custom, friends and strangers used the storm as an excuse to revel in cafes, clubs and private homes.

"People are feeling stir-crazy," said Dr. Lucho Rossman, a radiologist from Houston Medical Center. "Especially the Houstonians, who aren't going anywhere."

Sixth Street — East and West, from Lamar Boulevard to Interstate 35 — spilled over with storm-stompers. Especially popular were spots with outdoor service, where sweaty customers warded off the clam before the storm — that barely brushed Central Texas.

"Everywhere is jam-packed," professional model Thomas Urgento said at the Austin Music Hall on Friday.

"I work in a spa, and all everyone keeps talking about is hurricane this and hurricane that," Kat Laurent, an employee at Maximum FX, said Friday.

Some people were drinking hurricanes; others were just drinking. Cabs and pedicabs patrolled the streets, but well into Saturday morning, people refused to leave the streets.

Sarah Fennel, a former Fayetteville, Ark., resident and a University of Texas graduate, had planned her Restore Humanity charity event — raising money for an African orphanage — around the UT-Arkansas game, which was postponed because of Hurricane Ike.

"We turned it into a hurricane party," Fennel said at the Molotov Lounge. "Everybody was already excited, so why not?"

Reed Barrett, a musician and Ole Miss alumnus, chafed at all the extra carousers at the Restore Humanity event because they distracted from one of his favorite bands, Alpha Rev, which played a full set despite the cramped conditions and restless crowd, stage-managed by Molotov's new co-owners Chad and Brad

Womack (yes, of ABC's "The Bachelor" fame).

Robert Kelly and Gina Ceballos had hoped to get out on the lake this weekend but, fearing high winds, switched to watching the Ohio State-University of Southern California game with friends Saturday instead. In preparation, they partied Friday outdoors on the sidewalk patio of the Key Bar on West Sixth Street.

"You gotta get the full effect," Ceballos said.

While joining in the mass revelry, several locals expressed annoyance that so many events were canceled or postponed.

"Everyone was in a mass panic today," marketing consultant Amy Layton said Friday at the jam-packed Tribeza Fashion Show for Candlelight Ranch at the Austin Music Hall. "Schools are out; games are off. Yet after a few glasses of wine, people will be ready to party."

Before the evening's parties, some evacuees opted for retail therapy.

"I've had a lot of people from Houston come into the stores," said Kristi Pruett, owner of Wee and Finch in the Second Street District. "Everything considered, they seemed in pretty high spirits. They're just trying to make the best of it."

Others had already worn themselves out during the pre-storm excitement on the coast.

Benjamin Serrato had just returned from Padre Island and Port Aransas, where the surf was "a little too much," he said with eyes stretched open. "It was 80 percent surfers on the beach."

While Central Texas weather remained comparatively calm Saturday, folks were already arranging for a second round of hurricane parties.

The owners of Pangaea were among the first to announce an official hurricane party for Saturday night, set to the tunes of DJ Kurupt.

"Somebody's got to have one," said co-owner Steven Seymour, whose Florida version of the club has thrown several hurricane parties.

Event planner Jetté Momant turned her birthday party at her Northwest Hills home into an Ike party, with decadent build-your-own-pizza ingredients such as lemon grass chicken sausage and ponzu butter served with lemon grass martinis.


"The idea is that everyone is battening down the hatches," said Momant's caterer, Jesse Bloom of Ecstatic Cuisine. "You make sure you have enough food and drink to keep everybody happy for a long time."

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