



Atlanta: On the Town

<http://www.airtranmagazine.com/features/2013/03/atlanta-march-2013/index>

In Brief

Jackson Perry, <http://www.airtranmagazine.com/features/2013/03/atlanta>



Spotted

Allison Weiss Entrekin, <http://www.airtranmagazine.com/features/2013/03/spotted>

STK (www.stkhouse.com) According to Jennifer Brett, who writes The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's gossip column, STK is "the mother ship" for celebrities when they're in town. Kim Kardashian, who was in Atlanta filming a small role in *Temptation: Confessions of a Marriage Counselor*, dined there with Atlanta Real Housewife NeNe Leakes. "It caused a real commotion," Brett says. Arnold Schwarzenegger, *True Blood*'s Joe Manganiello and low-profile couple John Mellencamp and Meg Ryan have also recently been recent customers.

Davio's Northern Italian Steakhouse (www.davios.com) While shooting *Last Vegas*, Morgan Freeman noshed on Brussels sprouts at this swanky eatery in Phipps Plaza. He recommended it to costar Michael Douglas, who was subsequently seen chowing down while catching up on his *USA Today*.

South City Kitchen Midtown (www.southcitykitchen.com) With its celeb-friendly location near the Four Seasons, this nouveau Southern restaurant played host to Cameron Diaz twice in one day (not sure where she puts all those biscuits). One night, Cam Cam, Chris Rock and Charles Barkley all happened to be there at the same time—and, according to Brett, Barkley wanted to be the biggest star. "He gets offended if people don't ask for his autograph," she says.

Nightspots

Sister Louisa's Church of the Living Room & Ping Pong Emporium (www.sisterlouisaschurch.com) This highly irreverent bar filled with religious trinkets has hosted many a star-filled ping-pong tournament (Lady Gaga, Ben Stiller and Jonah Hill have all picked up a paddle). Most recently, Owen Wilson, wearing a Honolulu trucker hat, challenged the bar's gregarious owner, Grant Henry, to a match. Henry agreed, on the condition that the winner take the other person's headwear. (They downed Fireball shots to seal the deal.) Henry is now the proud owner of a Honolulu trucker hat once owned by Owen Wilson.

Gyms

Life Time Fitness Johns Creek (www.lifetimefitness.com) How does Justin Bieber get his, um, bulge-free biceps when on-again girlfriend Selena Gomez is in town promoting a film? By working out at this Life Time Fitness.

Flywheel (www.flywheelsports.com) When Tim Tebow is in the ATL, he turns up at this hip-spinning studio, where participants can read their "power numbers" (a measurement of how hard they're working) on a big screen. Word is, people almost collapse trying to beat Superman—and none succeed.

Attractions

Atlanta Botanical Garden (www.atlantabotanicalgarden.org) Aw, there's Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner taking their kids to Atlanta's 30-acre plant paradise. (The couple has an annual membership.)

Aw, there's Billy Bob Thornton hanging out for hours at the garden's frog pond... wait, that's just weird.

Georgia Aquarium (www.georgiaaquarium.org) About the best chance you have of seeing Jennifer Lawrence in a bathing suit is at the world's largest aquarium. Not too long ago, when she was in town filming *Catching Fire*, she swam with the dolphins. Lucky mammals.

Local Faces

Allison Weiss Entekin, <http://www.airtranmagazine.com/features/2013/03/local-faces-feb-2013-feb-2013>

One of these locals helps bring film and TV productions to Atlanta, another gives tours of the places those productions shoot and one of them shines in front of the camera. All three say they've never been busier.

Lee Thomas

Lee Thomas, director of the Georgia Film, Music and Digital Entertainment Division, recalls the days when her phone rarely rang. In 2007, a paltry five feature films and one television show were filmed in the state, generating a yawn-worthy \$244 million for Georgia. But state legislators passed a 30% entertainment tax credit in 2008, signaling that Atlanta was ready to make movies with the big boys. Now Thomas' phone rings all day long.

In 2012, 333 productions were filmed in Georgia, which had a \$3.1 billion impact on the state. Do you expect the growth to continue?

"We see no signs of slowing down at all. 2013 is going to be a huge year for us. The next *Hunger Games* movie is coming in November and it has a big buzz. It's going to be great for all the areas around Georgia where they shoot."

What's made Georgia so competitive in terms of reeling in TV shows and movies?

"It's a combination of things: the great [tax] incentive, the ease of coming into the airport, and we have mountains, coastline, a big city and a temperate climate where you can shoot all year."

How has Georgia's movie making infrastructure improved to keep up with the growth?

"In the last four years, we've seen five new soundstages locate or expand in the state. We used to say we were two crews deep, meaning we could crew two full shows; now we're nine or 10 crews deep. A lot of people who come here from other states to shoot a show decide to stay because they love it."

Mehcad Brooks

On USA's *Necessary Roughness*, Mehcad Brooks plays a New York pro football player who's in therapy to tame his reckless ways. But in real life, Brooks is an Atlanta-based actor who's thankful to be on a hit show— and loving his adopted hometown. "There's a really nice sort of Southern hospitality in Atlanta, mixed with a big-city vibe," he says.

Any hot hangouts you can recommend for us non-celebs?

"STK is great. I helped create a drink there called 'Green Intensity'—order it Mehcad Brooks-style, they'll know exactly that it is. It's vodka, muddled mint, muddled lime and muddled jalapeño with a splash of simple syrup. Normally it's kind of sweet, but my style is spicy."

What do you do when the cameras are off?

"I used to think the Georgia Aquarium was fish prison, but I went there and I like the amount of space the aquatic life has... I'm telling you, they know how to take care of the animals there. And the dolphin show is amazing. I changed my mind!"

Any perks to filming in Atlanta?

"The [film] crew I met in Atlanta was the crew I needed to meet for my life. They're helping me achieve a lifelong dream: I'm doing my first album. I've been doing music privately for a few years, and they heard it and were like, 'Why aren't you doing this?' I said, 'I don't know how to do it.'

And because this is Atlanta, they were like, 'Well, we do—let's go.' I've been recording in LA and Atlanta, and the album should be out this summer."

Patti Davis

Patti Davis is obsessed with *The Walking Dead*, the popular AMC zombie television series filmed in Atlanta. So obsessed that she created a tour last spring that takes fellow fans of the show to its most recognizable locations. To date, more than 1,000 people have gone on the three-hour, \$45 tour. www.atlantamovietours.com

Tell us about The Big Zombie Tour.

"Our guides are all 'walkers' [zombies] from the show. They have behind-the-scenes info and do trivia with prizes. We ride around in a luxury coach and get out at a lot of filming locations people can't normally access."

In July, you launched the Big Southern Hollywood Tour for people who, perhaps, aren't as fanatic about zombies as you are.

"It's a more general tour and so much fun. We go to Margaret Mitchell Square; past the temple from *Driving Miss Daisy* and to the 14th Street Playhouse, where Tyler Perry had his very first production in 1992. We also go to Virginia Highland, a neighborhood where *Trouble with the Curve* was filmed. We go by The Shed at Glenwood, which was prominent in *The Blind Side* and to Cynthia Bailey's modeling agency from *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*."

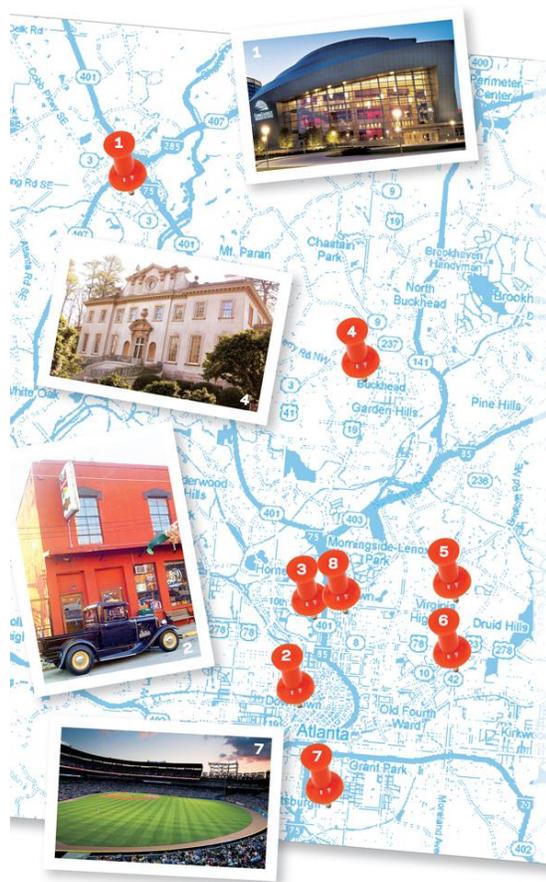
Aren't you starting another tour about those notorious housewives?

"Yep, the Keeping It Real Experience—we'll go where the Real Housewives eat, drink, shop and fight. And we're working on a Catching Fire tour to coincide with the movie's opening in November, which will be a whole experience, where guests will learn survival skills like archery."

Lights, Camera, Atlanta!

Karina Timmel, <http://www.airtranzmagazine.com/features/2013/03/lights-camera-atlanta>

The South's most dynamic city shares its scene-ery with Hollywood—since the entertainment tax credit was upped to 30% in 2008, more and more big-budget TV shows and movie productions have been heading to A-town to shoot throughout the city's diverse landscapes. Lee Cuthbert, location specialist for the Georgia Department of Economic Development's film, music and digital entertainment office and a 20-plus year resident of Atlanta, is responsible for finding, sharing and showing sites for film, TV and commercial production. Here's her scouting report.



What: The Walking Dead

Where: Cobb Energy Centre (1)

Who: Andrew Lincoln, Jon Bernthal and Sarah Wayne Callies

* Typically filmed just south of Atlanta in small-town Senoia, the AMC zombie apocalypse TV series chose Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre in Smyrna as its Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Ironically, the real CDC is also in Atlanta.

What: The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Where: Elliot Street Deli & Pub (2)

Who: Kate Hudson, Liev Schreiber and Kiefer Sutherland

* Set to release in April, this thriller focuses on a young Pakistani man pursuing the American dream only to become ensnared in a hostage crisis. A vital flashback scene was shot at this tiny, best-kept-secret pub in Castleberry Hill.

What: The Internship

Where: Clough Commons (3)

Who: Vince Vaughn, Owen Wilson and Will Ferrell

* In this movie, hitting theaters in June, comedic dynamic duo (Wilson and Vaughn) interns at Google. Georgia Tech's library atrium in West Midtown was transformed into the tech company's shiny headquarters, complete with a replica of SpaceShipOne (which made the first privately funded spaceflight).

What: The Hunger Games: Catching Fire

Where: Swan House at Atlanta History Center (4)

Who: Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson and Liam Hemsworth

* The second installment of this cult trilogy is rumored to have filmed a "Capitol" party scene at this majestic Buckhead estate and mansion. The movie is set to release in November.

What: Life as We Know It

Where: Belly General Store (5)

Who: Josh Duhamel, Katherine Heigl

* This rom-com's production team transformed hipster spot Belly in Virginia Highland into Fraiche, a gourmet food store and café owned by Heigl's character.

What: What to Expect When You're Expecting

Where: Rag-O-Rama (6)

Who: Cameron Diaz, Jennifer Lopez, Chace Crawford and Matthew Morrison

* The production for this comedy bounced all over the city. Locations included Piedmont

Park in Midtown, events venue Ventanas in downtown's Luckie Marietta District and in front of Rag-O-Rama consignment store in Little Five Points.

What: Trouble with the Curve

Where: Turner Field (7)

Who: Amy Adams, Clint Eastwood, Justin Timberlake and John Goodman

* This sports-drama's storyline is based around a retirement-age Atlanta Braves baseball scout (Eastwood). So naturally, the movie's major-league lenses were turned to Turner Field in downtown Atlanta for several scenes.

What: The Change-Up

Where: Ecco (8)

Who: Jason Bateman, Ryan Reynolds and Olivia Wilde

* The comedy captured a date scene with Reynolds and Wilde's characters at this Midtown restaurant hotspot. (Off-screen, the locale also has a celeb following, having hosted the likes of Virginia Madsen, Owen Wilson and Elizabeth Banks).

Red Carpet Ready

Allison Weiss Entekin, <http://www.airtranmagazine.com/features/2013/03/red-carpet-ready>

A movie theater as epic as the films it plays, the historic Plaza Theatre—home to this month's Atlanta Film Festival—will unveil a new look for a new era.



The Plaza Theatre (www.plazaatlanta.com) in Poncey-Highland has always been fiercely independent. In 1939, the first movie it ever showed was the boundary-pushing *The Women*; today, it screens cult classic *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* Fridays at midnight, complete with a live cast acting out the story on stage in front of the film. Problem is, being independent doesn't always make you profitable. Enter the Atlanta Film Festival, which has long used the theater as a screening venue. Last spring, the festival took over the theater's management and marketing. Thanks to the festival's large database and its success in

luring sponsors, the theater's finally making money. That's when Michael Furlinger, who successfully renovated the historic Terrace Theatre in Charleston, bought the Plaza, promising more than \$150,000 in improvements, retaining the Atlanta Film Festival to help.

The 37-year-old film fest, held March 15-24, is one of only 27 festivals in the country that's Academy Award-qualifying. "This means we tend to garner a higher quality and quantity of submissions. And in the last few years, we've made sure that the places we show the films in are just as much of an experience for our guests as the movies themselves," Atlanta Film Festival Executive Director Christopher Escobar says. And, increasingly, these submissions are becoming more local. "Filmmakers are relocating here because of the job opportunities, plus, production equipment is cheaper and more accessible. In 2011, we showed 55 films with Georgia connections. In 2012, we had 80 that were made by Georgians or shot in Georgia," he says.

On the eve of this month's festival, the theater will celebrate its grand reopening. According to Escobar, "We're excited because it's still the same movie palace, the same community hub, but we're entering a new chapter."

The Programming: Furlinger forked over \$50,000 to convert the Plaza into a digital cinema, which means it can now show a wider range of films. And since Furlinger has strong relationships with movie distributors, the theater can access films when they're first released. "We'll still show classic and cult films, but also great new art house movies, foreign films and engaging documentaries," Escobar promises. Look out for live standup comedy too (Whitest Kids U'Know will perform during this month's Atlanta Film Festival), and don't worry—The Rocky Horror Picture Show isn't going anywhere.

The Experience: Faux-leather recliners with headrests replace decades-old rockers. The rows are also set farther apart so no one has to stare at the back of a bad haircut for two hours.

The Lobby: Guests are greeted by a brand-new red carpet and Ralph Lauren light fixtures straight from the heydays of Hollywood. But the theater's famous collage of movie posters is still up, showcasing everything from Casablanca and Star Wars to Citizen Kane and Kill Bill.

The Concessions: "The Plaza Theatre has the best popcorn in Atlanta," Escobar says. "It's a claim we make easily." That's been the assertion for years, thanks to a 30-year-old vintage popcorn machine with a seasoned kettle. "I liken it to an old seasoned barbecue pit that just makes things taste better as it ages and picks up more flavors," Escobar says. He also says they'll try to appeal the ban on alcohol at the theater (according to local law, it's too close to churches to sell booze); he envisions having 80 beers on tap in the not-so-distant future.