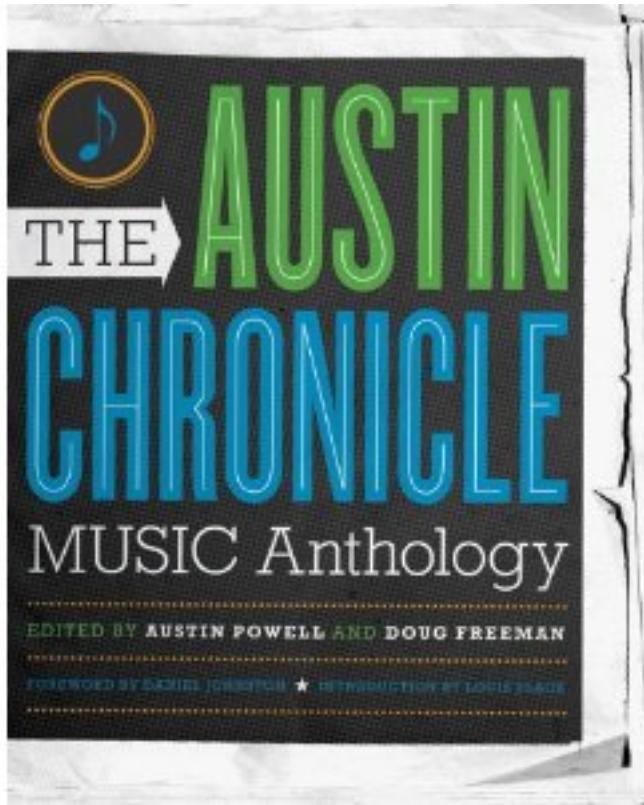


Book Review: *The Austin Chronicle Music Anthology*

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The Austin Chronicle Music Anthology
Edited by **Austin Powell** and **Doug Freeman**
[University of Texas Press (2011), 314 pages]

If you'll excuse the bad joke, this really is a Texas-size book; at more than 300 pages and an oversized hardcover format, it's hefty. The Austin Chronicle, a weekly alternative newspaper, is celebrating its 30th anniversary, and to celebrate, University of Texas Press put together this book, which collects the best music writing and photography from the Chronicle. It's comprehensive but decidedly not scholarly (as in dry and boring).

The book is divided into sections by decades, which allows you to chart the course of musicians, such as rocker Roky Erickson's fog of mental illness to his return to the stage, again singing his horror-movie songs. And in articles that range from reviews of a few paragraphs to features of a half-dozen pages or more, pretty much every Austin musician is covered, or at least mentioned, from biggies like Willie Nelson and Stevie Ray Vaughan to oddballs like the Butthole Surfers and Daniel Johnston, not to mention songwriters like Townes Van Zandt, Nanci Griffith, and Joe Ely, or glory-days hippie bands like Freda and the Firedogs. And hundreds of pages more. The writing styles vary wildly, of course, but most of the writers (and photographers) convey palpable enthusiasm. They're really charged up to be writing about the music.

The one thing the gaggle of newspaper clippings doesn't provide is a sense of context or much background. Each entry in the book was originally designed to be useful in some way for that week. So there are lots of short articles about certain bands that played at specific clubs during that week. They're snapshots in

words, alongside snapshots in pictures, and the best way to read the anthology is to page through until a headline or picture catches your eye (“Look, it’s Joe ‘King’ Carrasco!”), dig that for a bit, then find the next nugget.

—Jeff Lindholm (Montpelier, VT)