



YEAR IN REVIEW | POP MUSIC

Grammy nods for local musicians brightened the usual mix of star turns, hot new faces

## 2014: A playlist

By HUNTER HAUK  
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As the year comes to a close, it's time for our final reflection on the artists, albums and concerts that left lasting impressions.

**Home runs**

Among acts with local ties making waves, St. Vincent (Dallas-raised Annie Clark) hit new levels of art-pop genius. Her fourth album, *St. Vincent*, landed her a Grammy nomination, a musical-guest appearance on *Saturday Night Live* and top slots on a handful of year-end album lists, NPR's and *Entertainment Weekly's* among them. Arlington a cappella group Pentatonix, also nominated for a Grammy, put out the most popular holiday album this year. Another shout-out goes to Denison's SoMo, who made an iTunes splash with his addictive R&B album, *SoMo*.

**The puzzling and captivating** former Dallas musician St. Vincent (top) had a banner year.

**Best show of the year?** It was Jay-Z and Beyoncé's megatour (right) that stopped at AT&T Stadium.

**Living in a digital world**

Garth Brooks' triumphant return to arena stages around the country brought with it his first original album in 13 years, *Man Against Machine*. To mark the release of the new record, Brooks finally put his entire catalog of music online, available exclusively at a new Web music store he founded called Ghost Tunes. It was worth the wait for the greatness of "Midnight Train" and "She's Tired of Boys." Alternately, Taylor Swift's pop blockbuster

*1989* signaled her much publicized pull-back from Spotify. That move caused fewer complaints than U2's controversial and non-optional "gift" to all iTunes users: its Danger

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Photos: Alexandra Olivia/  
Special Contributor (top);  
Chad Batka/New York Times (right)

MUSIC REVIEW

## Lights All Night turns up the flash

40,000 dance around the clock to pulsating colors, beats

By **TINEY RICCIARDI**  
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Like an army, the millennials came by the thousands, dressed in neon and dipped in glitter. They came with one intention — to dance the weekend away at Dallas' Lights All Night music festival.

Lights All Night celebrated its fifth year Friday and Saturday to the tune of the world's most prestigious DJs and a sold-out crowd of 40,000 inside the Kay Bailey Hutchison

**Nine** hospitalized, 38 treated during festival. **7B**

Convention Center.

Whether they were there for a specific artist or to simply indulge in the experience, attendees were not disappointed — Lights All Night is something of a mindless party where the fun is so infectious, you may not realize its effects until your dancing muscles are sore and shaking.

A huge contributing factor is the production, which cost upward of \$2.5 million this year, according to

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THEATER REVIEW

## Twangiest show on Earth

Lone Star Circus embraces Texas ways

By **NANCY CHURNIN**  
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*Oh Là Là!* is a love letter to Texas. For years, Fanny Kerwich, an eighth-generation circus performer turned Texan, has deftly mixed local and international performers for a Lone Star Circus show that can only be seen here.

This year, she further embraces her chosen state with cowboy homages and jokes. Texas singer-songwriter-actor Gary Lynn Floyd sets the tone with Lyle Lovett's "That's Right," as in: "That's right, you're not from Texas/But Texas wants you anyway."

Co-directed by Dimitri Bogatirev, who also plays a clown in a cowboy suit, the acts unfold against a spare, ranch-like fence under a starry sky, designed by H. Bart McGeehon, with a bale of hay and a saddle on one side of the stage and Thiago Nascimento tickling the ivories like a pianist in an old-time saloon on

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Hunter Hauk's favorite albums of 2014 include those by Future Islands, Chromeo, Little Dragon, Mary J. Blige and D'Angelo.

# December wave of good stuff

Continued from Page 1E

Mouse-produced album *Songs of Innocence*. Truthfully, the most satisfying online music strategy came courtesy of Weird Al Yankovic, who earned his very first No. 1 on the album charts for *Mandatory Fun* by releasing eight side-splitting music videos in eight days.

## Screen magic

As expected, the Lorde-curated soundtrack for *Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1* collected artistic accolades and impressive sales. It's just too bad that collection didn't include actress Jennifer Lawrence's eerie "The Hanging Tree" song, which sold like hotcakes online after the movie's debut. The *Awesome Mix Vol. 1* from *Guardians of the Galaxy* got as much buzz as the movie itself and introduced young fans to a host of classic rock and soul radio staples. For smaller-screen fans, no TV show produced a more rewarding body of original music than ABC's country-music soap, *Nashville*. Check out its soundtracks whether you watch or not.

## Old is new again

Not a day went by on pop radio without repeated chances to hear one of three nostalgic pop ditties: Jason Derulo's "Talk a Dirty" and Ariana Grande's "Problem," with their sax-obsessed dance breaks that borrow from the 1980s; and Iggy Azalea's "Fancy," a stripped-down rap smash that hearkened back to the party jams of Salt-N-Pepa.

## Parade of divas

New albums by Jennifer Lopez and Mariah Carey were considered sales duds, even if both produced a fair share of enjoyable tunes. Lady Gaga broke away from her divisive modern music to team

with Tony Bennett on a classy jazz standards album, *Cheek to Cheek*. Barbra Streisand also embraced the two-is-better-than-one formula by singing with John Mayer, Blake Shelton and more on *Partners*. The greatest artistic diva of them all, Prince, blessed his paisley pack with two solid new albums and a super-size performance on *SNL*.

## A December to remember

The final month of 2014 has been one of the most abundant in terms of worthwhile new music. Nicki Minaj crammed many memorable verses into *The Pinkprint*, even if it lacked cohesiveness overall. J. Cole fared even better with the deliciously autobiographical material of *2014 Forest Hills Drive*. D'Angelo's first new album in 14 years reminded us of his authentic R&B brilliance. The queen of pop, Madonna, countered an unceremonious demo leak several days ago by releasing the first six tracks of her forthcoming album, *Rebel Heart*. What we've got so far shows a marked improvement in lyrics and sonic range over her previous album, *MDNA*.

## Favorite albums

My five favorite albums of 2014, in no particular order, are: Future Islands' *Singles* for lyrical earnestness and vocal strangeness; Chromeo's *White Women* for deep and endless grooves; Little Dragon's *Nabuma Rubberband* for a wide array of soulful electro jams; Mary J. Blige's *The London Sessions* for inspired songwriting collaborations; and D'Angelo's *Black Messiah* for undeniably brilliant arrangements and pacing. Honorable mentions go to: Azealia Banks' *Broke With Expensive Taste*; Little Big Town's *Pain Killer*; Swans' *To Be Kind*; Run the Jewels' second eponymous collection; and Jessie Ware's hook-heavy *Tough Love*.

## Favorite songs

Five singles that never became played-out are: Miranda Lambert's nostalgia-themed "Automatic," Michael Jackson's posthumous solo dance tune "Love Never Felt So Good," FKA Twigs' hypnotizing "Give Up," Kiesza's house-influenced dance hit "Hideaway" and the joyful anthem "Uptown Funk" by Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars.

Honorable mentions go to: Pharrell Williams' "Marilyn Monroe," Sam Smith's "Stay With Me," TV on the Radio's "Careful You," St. Vincent's "Birth in Reverse" and "Love Me Harder" by Grande and the Weeknd.

## Make it stop

Of course, there has to be an insufferable list from 2014. Among the worst were the dopey performing style of the lead singer of Magic!, Robin Thicke's unsuccessful album-length apology to his ex, Ed Sheeran's pop-star whining on "Don't," the choreography in Sia's "Chandelier" video and the sleeveless ubiquitousness of Florida Georgia Line.

## Killer shows

My weekend at Austin's South by Southwest was rendered unforgettable by the sublime garage rock of OBN III and a one-of-a-kind set at Stubb's by Lady Gaga. Closer to home, I delighted in the budding pop brilliance of Lorde at South Side Ballroom, the veteran rock moves of Sting and Paul Simon at the American Airlines Center and the country-rock grit of Ryan Bingham at Index Fest.

Nothing could top superstar couple Jay-Z and Beyoncé, "On the Run" at AT&T Stadium. Those two matched the hype surrounding them with a well-thought-out, perfectly delivered production. Watch it on HBO Go if you don't believe me.

Follow Hunter Hauk on Twitter at @hausofhunter.

## A few more favorite shows from The News' critics

### Miley Cyrus, March 12, American Airlines Center

Funny, surreal and surprisingly entertaining, the Miley Cyrus show was a bubbly twerk of art. Aside from Bob Dylan and Allen Toussaint covers, the music was often forgettable but the show was spectacular, like a Salvador Dalí version of a TV cartoon. Give lots of credit to John Kricfalusi (of *The Ren & Stimpy Show* fame) for the bizarre animation and artwork. Cyrus, however, was the true ringmaster, freak-dancing with giant puppets and riding atop a giant hot dog as she showed off strong vocal skills. She also showed plenty of tongue (and naughtier bits) in a concert that was all about joys of living life with your tongue firmly planted in cheek.

Thor Christensen

### Bruce Springsteen, April 6, Reunion Park

I've seen Bruce and the E-Street Band countless times, including twice at Reunion Arena. I can't say for sure whether the April 6 freebie in downtown Dallas was The Best Broooooce Show Ever; if only there were a math equation. It sure felt like it was, though, from a set list that tipped off with a cover of Van Halen's "Jump" to a rain-fallin'-down kind of night to a loose Bruce who snapped selfies with adoring fans who turned a sprawling scene into an intimate hang.

Jeff Tweedy's June 22 show at the Majestic Theatre might have been note-for-note better; I get a little misty thinking about that version of "You Are Not Alone." Paul McCartney at the AAC might have been more — historic, let's say. But Springsteen in the shadow of the neon skyline for three free hours? Nothing. Better.

Robert Wilonsky

### Willie and the Wheel, Feb. 8, Eisemann Center, or Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings, Feb. 27, Granada Theater

Lil Wayne vs. Drake and Enrique Iglesias with Pitbull had the showmanship. Charley Pride and Aerosmith — two shows that couldn't be more different — kept the mood light and the songs lively. I danced my shoes to shreds with Frankie Beverly and Charlie Wilson and danced right out of my boots at New Edition. The waiting was the hardest part for that beautiful show from Lauryn Hill. But the most satisfying dates this year were with Willie and the Wheel and Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings. One was sublime, one incendiary, and both had all the aforementioned attributes. If they would tour together, that would be all she wrote. Promise.

Dawn Burkes

## Coming up

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Jason Janik/Special Contributor

Zedd's *Lights All Night* set captivated the crowd at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center.

# Crowd dives into lights, beats

Continued from Page 1E co-founder Scott Osburn.

Organizers gave the two main stages facelifts to make the festival flashier than ever before. Eleven LED boards sent colors pulsating end-to-end in one area. Another stage set the DJs atop an LED-wrapped pyramid flanked by tiny, mesh-like lights. Lasers pierced the swells of fog as the bass thumped, rattling the entire venue like a wave of rolling thunder.

This year's headliners hit several subgenres of electronic dance music. Skrillex entertained Friday night with a rowdy dub-step set that included a *Star Wars* tribute and energetic showmanship, as the DJ bounced between playing behind the decks and commanding the crowd from on top of his equipment.

Electro-house producer Zedd, contrarily, captivated crowds with a more melodic, though no less

powerful, performance, featuring remixes of popular songs like Magic's "Rude."

Saturday, U.K.-based Disclosure played a techno-heavy hour and a half before Armin Van Buuren closed the night with his hugely popular style of trance.

Perhaps the only letdown was Chromeo's uninspired DJ set Friday, which did little to lure crowds from Skrillex's orbit.

If the lights and lasers weren't enough, people-watching provided ample entertainment. Ravers paraded around the convention center in fluffy boots, fishnets, lingerie, full-body animal costumes, tutus, tights, Indian head-dresses and other homemade costumes.

First-time attendee Raina Culwell, 20, said fashion is one of her favorite things about EDM culture. She wore a skimpy Little Red Riding Hood outfit, and lauded *Lights All Night* as a

"judgment-free zone" where "everyone embraces you."

And that's true — between the inquiries for hugs, high-fives and to share a dance, *Lights All Night* is an easy place to make friends. Attendees also extended gratitude to cops and security at the venue with handshakes and "kandi," beaded bracelets exchanged to symbolize peace, love, unity and respect (PLUR).

The positive energy didn't quell the scene's notorious drug use, however. Taking a breather in the lobby meant likely seeing someone rushed to the medical room in a wheelchair or gurney.

Despite those issues, *Lights All Night* created an immersive two-day dance party unparalleled in the region. If the confetti-strewn floors and beaming faces were any indication, it may be one of the best places to celebrate the end of the year for many more to come.



Ashley Landis/Staff Photographer

Kelli Brown performed on a hoop hung from the ceiling in the lobby of the Rosewood Center for Family Arts before Lone Star Circus' *Oh La La!*

# Circus swaggers with the greatest of ease

Continued from Page 1E

the other.

All the performers walk on with at least a touch of Texas, even if, in the case of elegant contortionist Yana Ryjova, it's to strut on with a cowboy hat. New acts dazzle: Mr. and Mrs. G. (Ottavio Gesmundo and Naomi Brenkman-Gesmundo) could challenge Katniss on their crossbows; Maria Wolf juggles diabolos in the dark; Texan Wes Mathewson weaves a moving dance with a Cyr wheel; and Dallas-based Asaf Mor, originally from Israel, rivets with rope spins.

The many welcome returns include astonishing trick roper AJ Silver; the Pompeyo Family's remarkable rescue dogs; Ursuline Academy of Dallas junior Jesse Patterson's stunning mastery of Hula-Hoops; and the Poema Family Risley Act, with Adrian Poema juggling his four children using his feet. That includes Catherine Hanneford, 18, who makes her Lone Star solo debut with an additional lyrical lyra act.

Floyd infuses the show with warmth as he sings Rascal Flatts' tender "My Wish," while laughs keep coming from married Dallas-based clowns Slappy and Monday (Dick Monday and Tiffany

## Plan your life

Continues through Jan. 4 at Dallas Children's Theater's Rosewood Center for Family Arts, 5938 Skillman St. Performance reviewed was Saturday. Running time: 2 hours. \$20-\$46. 214-740-0051.dct.org.

Riley), who "arrive" as newcomers with too many suitcases and become increasingly Texan, at one point bouncing around on tire horses.

That bit is a nod to Khnum, a black stallion that takes regal command of the stage with one of Kerwich's children, Gitana Doyle, 8, on his back. It's a reminder that while French-born Kerwich isn't from Texas, her children and this circus are. They're among the good things you get when you say to newcomers, "Texas wants you anyway."

Follow Nancy Churnin at @nchurnin.

## Peppard off

Alan Peppard's column will return Jan. 7.