

2015 Best Of Our Valley Winners: Arts & Entertainment

Written by Suzanne Koch

Tuesday, 12 May 2015 11:16 - Last Updated Tuesday, 12 May 2015 11:48

Arts & Entertainment

From improv shows to haunted houses, museums to annual galas, the Valley certainly isn't short on ways for locals to get their fill of arts, culture and good times.

BY DAVID M. BROWN



2014 WINNER

BEST AUTOMOBILE AUCTION

>>BARRETT-JACKSON COLLECTOR CAR AUCTION

The 2015 Barrett-Jackson Scottsdale auction was the biggest auction in history. During the nine-day auction, Barrett-Jackson resulted in more than \$131 million in sales of 1,612 vehicles and a world-record \$6.55 million in sales of automobilia, making

it the highest sales result to date. The highly regarded Ron Pratte Collection of more than 140 incredible vehicles and 1,600 outstanding pieces of automobilia brought in \$40.44 million alone. Barrett-Jackson's strong commitment to philanthropy has resulted in more than \$83 million raised over the years, the majority of which was brought in through the auction of cars for charity, with 100 percent of the hammer price going straight to the beneficiaries. Barrett-Jackson's 45th Anniversary Scottsdale auction will be held at WestWorld, Jan. 24-31, 2016. barrett-jackson.com.



2014 WINNER

BEST ANNUAL FASHION EVENT

>>XAVIER SCHOLARSHIP FASHION SHOW

More than 1,300 guests attended the 2014 event, with another sellout anticipated this year. All proceeds benefit the Xavier Scholarship Fund and the 40-plus percent of Xavier College Preparatory students who receive financial assistance. Xavier's fashion show event began in the 1950's as an alumnae event, became a Girls Athletic Association (GAA) activity in the 1960's and evolved into today's spring tradition. Xavier partners with Saks Fifth Avenue, which brings professional models showcasing spring fashions, and 300-plus Xavier and Brophy seniors walk the runway in a choreographed student show. xcp.maestroweb.com.

BEST LOCAL ART STUDIO

>>EYE LOUNGE: A CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

In the historic East Roosevelt neighborhood of Downtown Phoenix, this leading-edge gallery is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year as a contemporary artist-run collective. Since its beginning in 2000, eye lounge has included 120-plus artists who extend the boundaries of contemporary art through the avant-garde. For instance, this year four students of David L. Bradley, professor of art at Paradise Valley Community College, will show their work. eyelounge.com.

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2014 WINNER

BEST MUSEUM

>>MUSICAL

INSTRUMENT MUSEUM

Celebrating its fifth anniversary this April in Phoenix, Musical Instrument Museum is the world's largest global musical instrument museum, with more than 6,000 instruments and associated objects on display. For the past five years, the museum has been engaging audiences with its extensive collection, dynamic programs and exceptional musical performances. Guests can explore and experience the rich diversity of the world's music in the 200,000-sq.-ft. building, which includes two floors of galleries, MIM Music Theater, Café Allegro and the Museum Store. MIM.org.

BEST ANNUAL VALLEY EVENT: LARGE SCALE

>>SCOTTSDALE

CULINARY FESTIVAL

A weeklong event of food, chefs, music and must-see events, the Scottsdale Culinary Festival benefits the arts and arts education programs across Arizona. The perfect go-to for foodies, philanthropists, chefs, restaurateurs, music enthusiasts and festive revelers, it's best known for the Great Arizona Picnic event, featuring 50 food booths, entertainment and family fun. Expected to attract as many as 35,000, the 37th annual Scottsdale Culinary Festival, April 7-12, held in different locations throughout Scottsdale, will present 120 restaurants, A to Z, Arcadia Farms to ZuZu. scottsdalefest.org.

BEST THEATER

>>BRELBY

THEATRE COMPANY

Quality live theatre in an intimate storefront location in historic Downtown Glendale: Brelby Theatre Company produces year-round theatrical productions. Founded in 2009 when Executive Director Brian Maticic and Artistic Director Shelby (Brimhall) Maticic were finishing up their bachelor's degrees in Theatre Performance at Northern Arizona University, the company has a core ensemble of eight artists and a family of collaborative artists that helps to develop the season of shows—a total that has reached approximately 150. brelby.com.

2014 WINNER

BEST IMPROV GROUP

>>CHAOS

COMEDY IMPROV

Founded Jan. 1, 2007, by Matthew Dearing, Leeann Dearing and Brian Sweeney, Chaos Comedy Improv comprises an ever-growing cast, today including 30 members. With a location in Phoenix, the troupe performs family-friendly improvisational shows, corporate entertainment and seminars, birthday parties and more. Winner of the Chicken Bowl Improv- Fest in Albuquerque, the group also provides instructional camps, workshops and classes. chaoscomedy.com.

2014 WINNER

BEST CONCERT VENUE

>>CRESCENT BALLROOM

Crescent Ballroom, one block west of the Van Buren Light Rail station, is three venues: It's a mid-size music venue in vibrant Downtown Phoenix with a capacity for 500 people and live music every day; a lounge open daily with full bar service; and Cocina 10, a kitchen serving a one-of-a-kind locally sourced menu developed by Chef Chris Bianco. Cocina 10 and the lounge are open weekdays for lunch and serve food and drinks until midnight all week.

crescentphx.com.

2014 WINNER

BEST CIVIC ORGANIZATION

>>THE THUNDERBIRDS

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Formed in 1932 by Barry Goldwater's brother, Bob Goldwater, The Thunderbirds is a philanthropic, volunteer organization that promotes the Valley of the Sun through sports, in particular, golf. The 331 members of The Thunderbirds support numerous golf tournaments, the most notable the Waste Management Phoenix Open, the world's largest-attended PGA TOUR golf tournament. The Thunderbirds' philanthropic and volunteer efforts also support the annual Arizona Special Olympics Summer Games. Not only does the group bring enormous media exposure for the Valley, but the monies raised help hundreds of local charities, to date, \$100 million. wmphoenixopen.com.

BEST ANNUAL CHARITY EVENT

>>COMPASSION WITH FASHION, ARIZONA HUMANE SOCIETY

This year's 17th Annual Compassion with Fashion: Once Upon a Tail will help raise money to care for thousands of homeless animals. Last year's sold-out event helped find homes for 20 pets and generated \$533,000— enough to help care for more than 1,600 homeless animals. The luncheon event includes a bubbly Champagne raffle, a storybook silent auction and a seated lunch accompanied by a fairytale fashion show. Guests meet and greet more than a dozen adoptable pets who have been given a second chance at life through Arizona Humane Society's unique programs and services. azhumane.org.



BEST CHILDREN'S T H E A T E R

>>GREASEPAINT YOUTHEATRE

Thirty years serving the Valley from Old Town Scottsdale in the historic Stagebrush Theatre, the group teaches classes in voice, dance and acting, holds summer, spring break and fall break camps and produces between four and six mainstage productions each season. This season, Valley dwellers can attend Disney's "The Beauty and The Beast." New is an acting showcase, comprising a company of teens, ages 13 to 19, who are producing the work themselves, designing, acting and directing, with oversight by two professional directors. greasepaint.org.



B E S T A N N U A L G A L A

>>CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF PHOENIX GALA

2014 WINNER

An annual springtime event, the 2015 gala, Havana Nights, continues a tradition begun in 2003. Each year, 500 participants enjoy an evening of live entertainment, great food and the presentation of the Children's Museum of Phoenix's annual Kids at Heart Award to an individual (this year, Sandi Perez) and organization (Dignity Health) for their commitment to children and learning through play. All proceeds benefit Children's Museum of Phoenix's Every Child Program, which provides free or reduced admission to families facing financial, emotional or circumstantial challenges and ensures that all Arizona residents have the opportunity to visit the museum. childrensmuseumgala.org.

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BEST LOCAL BAND/ MUSICIAN

>>JEFFREY HATTRICK & NICOLE PESCE

Resident entertainers at bistro 24 in The Ritz-Carlton, Phoenix, Jeffrey Hattrick sings and Nicole Pesce accompanies with the Steinway Grand Piano. Performing together since 1999, the duo offers a broad style. Vocally, they're primarily jazz, but when Pesce solos, it can be classical, pop, rock, country, jazz— everything from Bach to Lady Gaga. With a repertoire of 12,000-plus memorized songs, she has been called "the human iPod." nicolepesce.com.



BEST ANNUAL VALLEY EVENT

>>TRUE MUSIC FESTIVAL

True Music Festival is a multi-stage music festival experience held annually in December in Scottsdale. Although the 2014 event was incorporated into the DTPHX festivities of the 2015 Pro Bowl, it will return to its own dates in December 2015. TMF crosses multiple genres, giving fans the opportunity to enjoy world-class talent. The 2013 inaugural event at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick included Bassnectar, the Flaming Lips, Wiz Khalifa, Lord Huron, GRiZ, Hellogoodbye, He's My Brother She's My Sister, Kopecky Family Band, Chevy Woods, Berner, and the Black Moods. truemusicfestival.com.

PHOTO BY IWALLY PHOTOGRAPHY

BEST SPECIAL E V E N T V E N U E

>>THE FARM AT

SOUTH MOUNTAIN

Opened in 1997 as a special-event venue, the tranquil 10-acre pecan grove in Phoenix near landmark South Mountain Park offers three premier event locations overseen by more than 200 staff members. As they enter the expansive grove, with large grassy spaces, bright blooming flowers and enchanting rustic elegance, guests enjoy their celebration in Phoenix as

if it were more than a century ago.

thefarmatsouthmountain.com.

BEST ACTING STUDIO

>>DEARING

ACTING STUDIO

This Phoenix-based professional acting school has acting programs available for adults, teens and youth and schedules movie-making camps, castings and video production. Founded in 2007,

by Matthew Dearing, Leeann Dearing and Brian Sweeney, the school has more than 100 current students and has trained thousands since its opening. Winner of the Nickelodeon Parent's Pick Award, the studio also provides services like on-set coaching, professional speaking, corporate training, video production, red carpet birthday parties, studio rental, theater production and improv shows. dearingstudio.com.

BEST WORSHIP

TEAM

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>>SCOTTSDALE

BIBLE CHURCH

With a 52-year history serving Scottsdale and surrounding areas, the nondenominational church strives to be a community of Christ-followers marked by unwavering faith and unconditional love. Led by an elder board, senior pastor and pastors for various areas of ministry, including children, students, worship, global outreach, the church is devoted to core values of transformational Bible teaching, engaging worship, community and service-based outreach, each supported by grace. scottsdalebible.com.

BEST HAUNTED HOUSE

>>CHAMBERS OF FEAR HAUNTED HOUSE

Thousands every year trek at Halloween to Surprise to be surprised out of their wits. Infamously known for delivering "The Fright of Your Life," Chambers of Fear is Arizona's ultimate haunted house and features three spine-chilling attractions: Chambers of Fear, Darkness: Industrial Nightmare and Scary Tales. The 25,000-plus square feet of Extreme Terror!!! has been featured nationally on the Travel Channel and truTV and replays regularly in the bewitching hours of early dawn, when you awake in splendid fear from your bewitching visit. chambersoffear.com.



BEST ROOFTOP FOR EVENTS

>>THE CLARENDON HOTEL AND SPA

"Where life just keeps getting better and better". . . especially up on the roof at the boutique midtown hotel, with 360-degree views of the Phoenix skyline and surrounding mountain ranges. Open daily, unless closed for a private event, the event space, rooftop bar and viewing deck is one of the Valley's must go-tos. Not exclusive to its guests, the hotel invites the community to also participate in Rooftop Yoga by Sutra Midtown, live music evenings, ARTELPHX and the annual Halloween and New Year's Eve parties. goclarendon.com.

PHOTO BY JEFFREY NORTH WILSON