

## PARTY LINES

**ORGANIZING** your next large get-together has been made easier by the creators of **evite.com**, a free online service that walks you through the process and acts as a repository for invitees' responses and suggestions.

After registering, you can begin designing your personal email invitations. Choose the type of gathering—from choices like dinner party, day trip, and online event—indicate the time, place (which can include a map), and duration. You can also leave these details up to the guests. Once you've filled out the form and created a guest list, evite.com mails the invitations. Your guests will then be able to RSVP, add comments, and select dates and locations for the event if those have been left open for debate.

Simply visit the site to determine who will be attending and to read their responses. An easy-to-read tally gives the status of guests' responses, with green dots indicating acceptances and red meaning declines.

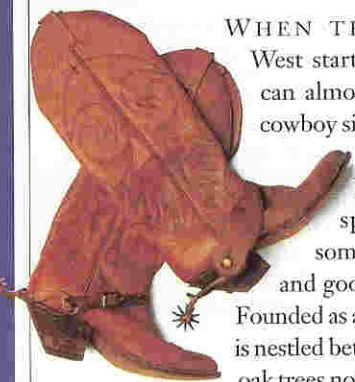
—Kendra Gemma



ELIZABETH SIMPSON/IFPG

## WESTERN PRESERVE

Writer MELANIE RADZICKI MCMANUS discovers an old Texas **GHOST TOWN** that captures a modern spirit.



WHEN THE SPIRIT OF THE OLD West starts stirring in your soul, and you can almost hear the lonesome notes of a cowboy singing to his herd, it's time to head to Luckenbach, Texas. Luckenbach, population three, is a mere speck on the Texas sprawl. Yet it somehow embodies everything pure and good about the American West.

Founded as a trading post in 1849, Luckenbach is nestled between two creeks and a stand of old oak trees not far from San Antonio and Austin. It sports its original dance hall, beer joint, and general store. In 1970, the late folk humorist Hondo Crouch bought Luckenbach, and the town quickly became a mecca for Texas entertainers such as Jerry Jeff Walker, who recorded two albums there. But the town achieved its ultimate fame when a visitor from Nashville raved about it to some songwriters, who penned the hit song "Luckenbach, Texas" (aka "Back to the Basics"), recorded by Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings.

Since then the town has attracted millions of people yearning to soak up its folksy, down-home atmosphere. And Luckenbach never disappoints. Miz VelAnne, the town's unofficial mayor, welcomes visitors to Luckenbach's monthly dances, and encourages folks to rent the dance hall (\$500 to \$750) or even the entire town (\$1,500). If you do, Miz VelAnne will be happy to arrange a catered barbecue, Mexican, or gourmet meal for your gathering. She'll even find a band, and it just may be Willie. Honest.

When you arrive, grab a bottle of Lone Star or Luckenbach amber from the bar. Then, as the band picks up its guitars and begins picking, head over to the dance hall. The hall's wooden floor is worn smooth from the endless shuffle of people doing the Texas Two-Step. Don't resist the urge to dance. The spirit of Luckenbach is infectious. When the night is over, you'll head home with the memory of Luckenbach tucked in your back pocket. And don't worry—Miz VelAnne will turn out the lights. ★

MELANIE RADZICKI MCMANUS attended Luckenbach's famous Bluebonnet Ball this year and danced to her heart's content.

PHOTO FEST

### STEP LIVELY

Like Jimmy Stewart in the 1939 classic *Destry Rides Again*, you can kick up your heels in Luckenbach, Texas.

### THE TICKET

To rent the city of Luckenbach, Texas, or its dance hall, call 830/997-3224.



# THE BEST OF THE WORLD



**22** *Ruminate on the poems of a mystic.*



**24** *Cue up for some playful geometry.*



**26** *Discover the best speech never heard.*



FRANK ZULLO/PHOTO RESEARCHERS INC.

## OBJECT OF DESIRE HEAVEN SENT

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and get one. The Royale Stellar Society will name a star in honor of anyone you choose: a favorite family member, a newlywed couple, a mentor, a beloved pet, or yourself. The Society will send you a certificate and a detailed map with your star circled, and the name will be officially recorded in a Library of Congress book. At just \$19.95, hitching your wagon to a star has never been easier. For more information, call 800/637-4823.

### [EPITOME]



It is necessary to try to surpass oneself always; this occupation ought to last as long as life.

**CHRISTINA,  
QUEEN  
OF SWEDEN**

COBBIS