

Special Supplemental Edition

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Readers Poll

We asked, you picked.

The **Knickerbocker Ledger** is proud to announce the winners of its first ever Readers Poll. Readers of our online and print editions were asked to name their choices for the **Best in New York's Capital Region**. Some of the categories were blow outs, others close calls.

What we do know is our readership is diverse - from picking longtime Albany landmark Jack's Oyster House as 'Best Restaurant' to new establishments such as the Hudson River Coffee House and Center Square Pub as 'Best Coffee House' and 'Best Bar,' considering the latter two have been open for less than a year.

Even though we didn't win any of our categories ("always a bridesmaid, never a bride"), it's good to know of the choices readers made - especially for the media section. Best of all? The "fill in" categories had a number of the same things for the "Best and Worst" of the Capital Region (funny to see "small" on both the Best and Worst).

Here's what you picked:

Best Restaurant: Jack's Oyster House, 42 State Street, Albany

With the hustle and bustle of big government and business in Downtown Albany, there's only one name synonymous with power brokers - Jack's. Nearing a century in business (they opened in 1913), the family-owned and operated landmark has French Certified Master Chef Luc Pasquier under its roof and under the management of Brad Rosenstein, Jack's aims to impress all.



Rockers rocking out at Hudson River Coffee House on Quail Street.

Best Coffee House: Hudson River Coffee House, 227 Quail Street, Albany

Right in the heart of Albany's midtown at the corner of Quail and Hudson, the Hudson River Coffee House is one part cafe, one part 'House of Blues', and one part community center. Inside a former telephone building, the shop fills a void left by Pepper Jack's (now on North Allen Street) by serving sandwiches, wraps, and baked goods - including bagels from Rockland Bakery. Owner Anton Pasquill is Pine Hills's version of Georges Danton - not only defends the eastern portion of Pine Hills from rowdy students but serves a consistent and affordable cup of Joe.



It looks like they have movies to show.

Best Movie Theater: Spectrum 8 Theaters, 290 Delaware Avenue, Albany

Independent film has a friend in Albany and its name is the Spectrum. Since 1983, the Spectrum 8 has been a mecca for independent film patrons in the Capital Region. Owned and operated by two couples, the theater has expanded its reach on Delaware Avenue to include Ultraviolet Cafe and New World Bistro.

Best Artist/Comedian/Actor: Matt Kelly, mattkellycomedy.com

Music, theatre, and comedy have been growing in the Capital Region at a rapid pace. Relative newcomer Matt Kelly has been making a name for himself in Albany as being part of "Laughs on Lark" at Elda's on Lark.

Best Daily Newspaper: Times Union, timesunion.com

The venerable Hearst publication remains the area's preeminent source for news and events. Their investigations have uncovered the endless layers of government in Green Island, introduced Poppy, and prodded Betty Barnette about those little "ghost" parking tickets. In an era where print is in decline, the Times Union has found ways through social media to remain on top.



Metroland, circa 1985. Tim Burton guest edited.

Best Weekly Newspaper: Metroland, metroland.net

Yes - they may be our "rival" per se and we've been considered "a rag" by one of their writers, but we'll give that the Metroland fills a very important void in the life of Albany. There's no better publication that has more events listed in the Capital Region and their columns are almost too in-depth, a testament to being the area's alternative newsweekly. Best cover they ever had? The week Gov. Eliot Spitzer resigned.

Best News Reporter (TV/Radio): Al Roney, Talk 1300 AM

Tea Party darling Al Roney made a comeback in the past year by anchoring WGDJ's afternoon block Monday through Friday. He was with WGY-AM, then cut to provide space for Glenn Beck.

Best Columnist (Print): Steve Barnes, Times Union

We remain in awe of Steve Barnes. Covering the area's restaurant and arts scene is no easy task, but with both "Table Hopping" (his primary outlet) and the assist on "Arts Talk," Barnes provides a perspective unmatched by anyone in the Capital Region.

Best Columnist (Online): Don Rittner, Times Union

As Schenectady County Historian and a member of the area's film community, Don Rittner has done quite a bit over his career, including writing numerous books on a variety of topics (computers, history), being an extra in "Ironweed," among other films, and writing for the Times Union's City Brights section.



Neil telling it like it is at ROCKS.

Best Elected Official: Sen. Neil Breslin (D-Delmar)

Incumbents don't typically age like a fine wine, but Neil has buckled the trend quite well. Being at the forefront of state's same-sex marriage movement and in his position as Deputy Minority Leader of the Democratic conference, Breslin remains a force in progressive politics in the Capital Region.



The band, apparently in purgatory (cue the white background).

Best Local Celebrity: MIRK, mirkmusic.com

"I love you more than I love my hometown" - apparently Albany heard MIRK. A unique sound, full of soul, enufused with rock, the seven-member band has grown to open up for Third Eye Blind at UAlbany last year and to have headlined this year's Rose Rock at the College of St. Rose.

Best Local Website: KeepAlbanyBoring.com

Albany post-25 years old has AllOverAlbany.com, but the college set has KeepAlbanyBoring.com, run by a group of (according to Twitter) "twenty-somethings living in albany. sometimes its about whats going on, or what's happened, or something else. who knows." The site went viral this past March with its compilation of Kegs and Eggs videos.

Best Bar: Center Square Pub, 32 Dove Street, Albany

Housed in the former State and Dove location of niche pub Pinto & Hobbs (don't worry - they move around the corner on Washington Avenue), Center Square Pub has become a hot spot for legislative members, their staffers, lobbyists, and Lark Street residents due to its location only one block away from the State Capitol. With its Dove Street patio and sizable dining room, the place can fill out quite nicely.

Best Venue (Large): Palace Theater, 19 Clinton Avenue, Albany

It may have large stage house like its Schenectady rival Proctors, but the Palace Theater is uniquely Albany. Relatively recently renovated with 2,844 seats, the Palace Theater has seen Jerry Seinfeld, the Rolling Stones, and Tony Bennett grace its stage. Turning 80 this October, the Palace isn't showing its age at all.



Is it illegal to paint on it? The answer should be "optional."

Best Venue (Medium): The Egg, Empire State Plaza, Albany

The Egg somewhat cheats here, as it houses two theaters (the 982-seat Kitty Carlisle Hart and 450-seat Lewis Swyer). Nonetheless, the Egg recently presented the Capital Region's premiere run of the Jonathan Larson-penned RENT and has been a national touring stop for ballet, dance, and comedy.

Best Venue (Small): Valentine's, 17 New Scotland Avenue, Albany

Park South may be changing and Albany Medical Center may be buying up the whole neighborhood, but Valentine's ain't changing for anything. Unabashedly punk and not needing to conform to the rest of lower New Scotland Avenue, Valentine's is a staple in the Albany music scene just like CBGB was in Manhattan. Recently, Valentine's had been the home of local metal band Amalgama's last show ever.

Best Theatre Organization: Capital Rep, 111 North Pearl Street, Albany

It's tough out there for theatre. With declining municipal budgets and corporate purses closing, any theatre company that can make it now can make it anywhere. Capital Rep, housed in a brutalist-style parking garage/performing arts complex, provides an intimate atmosphere for theatregoers who want a piece of off-Broadway in Albany.

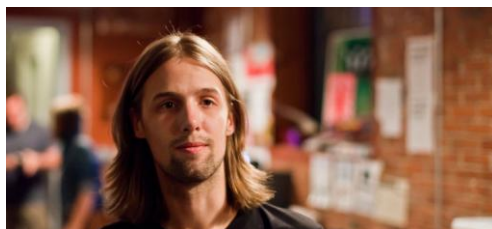
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Best Local Television Station: WNYT NBC-13, wnyt.com

For a local station that has lost one anchor to MSNBC (Chris Jansing) and two to other local rivals (John Gray to Fox 23, Lydia Kulbida to WTEN), WNYT remains consistent with Jim Kambrich, Bob Kovachick, Benita Zahn, and Rodger Wyland.

Best News Reporter (Print): Jimmy Vielkind, Times Union

Covering news out of the State Capitol is no easy task, especially when you have competition from outlets from the New York Times on down. Jimmy, along with partner in crime Casey Seiler, makes it look easy with their in-depth analysis of action taken by the state legislature.



Don't look at him the wrong way. He may yell "Ahoy Matey."

Best Local Business Owner: Anton Pasquill, Hudson River Coffee House

There has been no other business that has opened up on the Quail Street corridor in the last year that has had the impact of the Hudson River Coffee House, no doubt to the vision and energy of its owner, Anton Pasquill. The "Captain" of Quail Street, Anton has kept a vigilante eye on the neighborhood, which recently saw a string of car break-ins occur. It's only a matter of time before "have no fear, Pine Hills, Anton's here," becomes the next Dana Owens's "Smallbany" panel.

Best Outdoor Festival: LarkFEST, Lark Street, Albany

Albany has its fair share of outdoor events - from St. Patrick's Day, Tulip Festival, Pride Parade and Festival, and Art on Lark. None of them matches to the power and success of what has been billed New York State's largest outdoor street festival with over 80,000 attendees last year. National touring acts such as Moby and Thom Yorke has headlined the festival, now in its 30th year.

Best Supermarket: Price Chopper, everywhere

Rochester has Wegmans, New York has Pathmark, but the Capital Region has Price Chopper. Since the Great Depression, the Golub family has been the grocery choice for residents of Upstate New York.

Best Local Business: All Good Bakers, 160A Quail Street, Albany

People like their bread. Britin and Nick Foster have made their new storefront part of the Quail Street renaissance that includes the Albany Sunspot Cafe and the Hudson River Coffee House.

Best Neighborhood: Center Square

What's not to love about Center Square? The housing stock, the restaurants, the people, the Mayor of Lark Street - the list goes on. Albany's core urban neighborhood, Center Square remains the closest to city living as it gets.

Best Diner: Latham 76 Diner, 722 New Loudon Road. Latham

The sole non-Albany winner, Latham 76 Diner - in the heart of Albany County suburbia - doesn't disappoint. With over 200 items on their menu and the doors remaining open 24/7, move aside Moons Over My Hammy from Denny's - Latham 76 is worth the drive.

Best Hospital: Albany Medical Center, 43 New Scotland Avenue, Albany

A hospital so expansive, they have their own colored-coded maps! Albany Medical Center not only provides world-class medical care for the Capital Region, but they've been the anchor of turning Park South around.

The following submissions were selected out of the best from what we felt. It's the only staff-moderated portion - don't blame the messenger - blame the failure of spell check.

Best Thing About the Capital Region

Small, the Parks/Reserve Areas, summer entertainment, colleges, proximity to other places, the amount of artists and talent, wide range of things to do in a small space, be somewhere cool in just a few hours.

Worst Thing About the Capital Region

Small, traffic lights on Washington Avenue and Western Avenue, public transit sucks, size, the people, winter entertainment, how run down so many part of the area are, much needs to be bulldozed.

Best (Insert Your Own)

Best Street - Lark Street; Best Microbrew - Pump Station/Evans Ale; Best Radio Station - WCDB 90.9 FM; Best Ice Cream - Snowman Ice Cream (Troy)

Poll was conducted from July 15, 2011 through July 31, 2011 at knickledger.com. Poll is reflective of the readership of the Knickerbocker Ledger.

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↑ **That doesn't make any sense.** ↓ This does though.

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