



# Hanks: Austin should expect more from C3 Presents for hosting ACL Fest

## OPINION

By Anna Hanks - Special to the American-Statesman



Updated: 11:01 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2015 | Posted: 12:00 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2015

---

The Austin City Limits Music Festival isn't a place where one usually starts thinking about access, ownership, and corporate privilege, but maybe I have festival act Father John Misty to thank for that

Father John Misty is the project of American songwriter Joshua Tillman. Between his trademark dancing and wry songs, Tillman asked why people were walking back and forth in the "tunnel" in front of his stage, "Is there a single-origin coffee stand at the other end?" the quick-witted songwriter quipped.

As far as I could tell from being a short lady in the cheap seats, the "tunnel" was actually part of a passageway for holders the Platinum viewing pass. The retail price of the Platinum pass was \$3,600. It's just one of the many upper-tier packages that the ACL Festival offers for people both willing and able to pay for increased amenities that don't come with a plain-ole \$250, three-day ACL admission wristband.

It seems that every year more and more of the prime shady spaces of Zilker Park are taken for even more exclusive and restricted uses of the Austin City Limits festival. Looking at this division of the ACL audience, I couldn't help feeling that as an Austin resident, that I'd been stolen from and was having my pilfered goods sold back to me! Even more brazenly, I was being offered better temporary use of my purloined goods if I agreed to pay more money to the corporate entity holding them.

**According to research by the American-Statesman: "The city this year is charging C3 Presents \$97,720 for the use of Zilker Park and other expenses. The city also gets a cut of each ticket**

sold.” That’s chump change for an organization that had gross sales of more than \$124 million in 2013, according to Billboard.



A large crowd waits for Florence + The Machine to take the stage at Austin City Limits Music Festival in Zilker ... [Read More](#)

In return, the Austin-based C3 Presents gets exclusive use of Zilker Park for two weekends a year, plus the time it takes to set up and tear down the festival.

In comparison, as part of a multiyear contract, C3 Presents pays \$1.5 million each year for the use of Grant Park in Chicago, money that’s paid even if the Lollapalooza music festival doesn’t happen!

I acknowledge that C3 Presents has contributed more than \$10 million since the festival started in 2002 to improve Austin’s parks, as well as putting \$5 million dollars towards the Auditorium Shores renovation project. Spread out over a decade, this still isn’t that much money in the high-dollar corporate world. Last year, Billboard reported that the total gross of the 2014 ACL festival was more than \$38 million.

It's ridiculous that the residents of Austin, some of whom are greatly inconvenienced by the festival, get so little in return for giving up use of prime parkland for more than a month. Among the problems the festival brings: neighborhoods near the park have to deal with traffic and noise, traffic around the festival location is much worse during the event, and casual chats with some downtown restaurants over the last few days have revealed that more than one establishment is unusually slow during ACL because their regular patrons don't show up.

Even more painful for many regular Austin folks is that one of the few pools that the financially strapped Austin Parks Department can afford to keep open all year long — the magnificent Barton Springs Pool — is nearly unreachable and unusable for many regular swimmers during the main operation of the festival.

At the very least, we need to take a look at what C3 Presents pays for their exclusive use of the best park in town. C3 Presents has no problem charging other people a premium for use of the best shady spots and amenities during their festival, so why shouldn't we as Austin residents demand more in compensation for the monthlong use of one of our very best public features?

Secondly, if C3 Presents is going to prevent access for many of the regular swimmers at Barton Springs Pool, they ought to bear the financial burden of keeping all of the public pools across Austin open until the festival ends. That's something our underfunded parks department can't afford to do on their own.

For all their feel-good, green-oriented advertising and positioning, C3 Presents isn't a charity — and it shouldn't be treated like one. The ordinary residents of Austin deserve better.

*Hanks is an Austin writer.*

---

---

## ***SIGN UP FOR NEWSLETTERS***

Want more news? [Sign up](#) for free newsletters to get more of the Statesman delivered to your inbox.

---

---

## ***Reader Comments***

---

---

## *Next Up in News*

### **Ex-NFL player's death turns spotlight on road rage**



**Obama to Fox News: No politics in Hillary Clinton email investigation**



**White House talks helped shape Austin principal's vision for new school**



**Saints planned to induct Will Smith into team Hall of Fame**

### **Crash sends motorcyclist to hospital and closes 183A frontage road**

#### **More Stories**

**NEWS ▶**

**CUSTOMER SERVICE ▶**

**MARKETPLACE ▶**

**SOCIAL MEDIA ▶**

© 2016 Cox Media Group. By using this website, you accept the terms of our [Visitor Agreement](#) and [Privacy Policy](#), and understand your options regarding [Ad Choices](#). [Learn about careers at Cox Media Group](#)