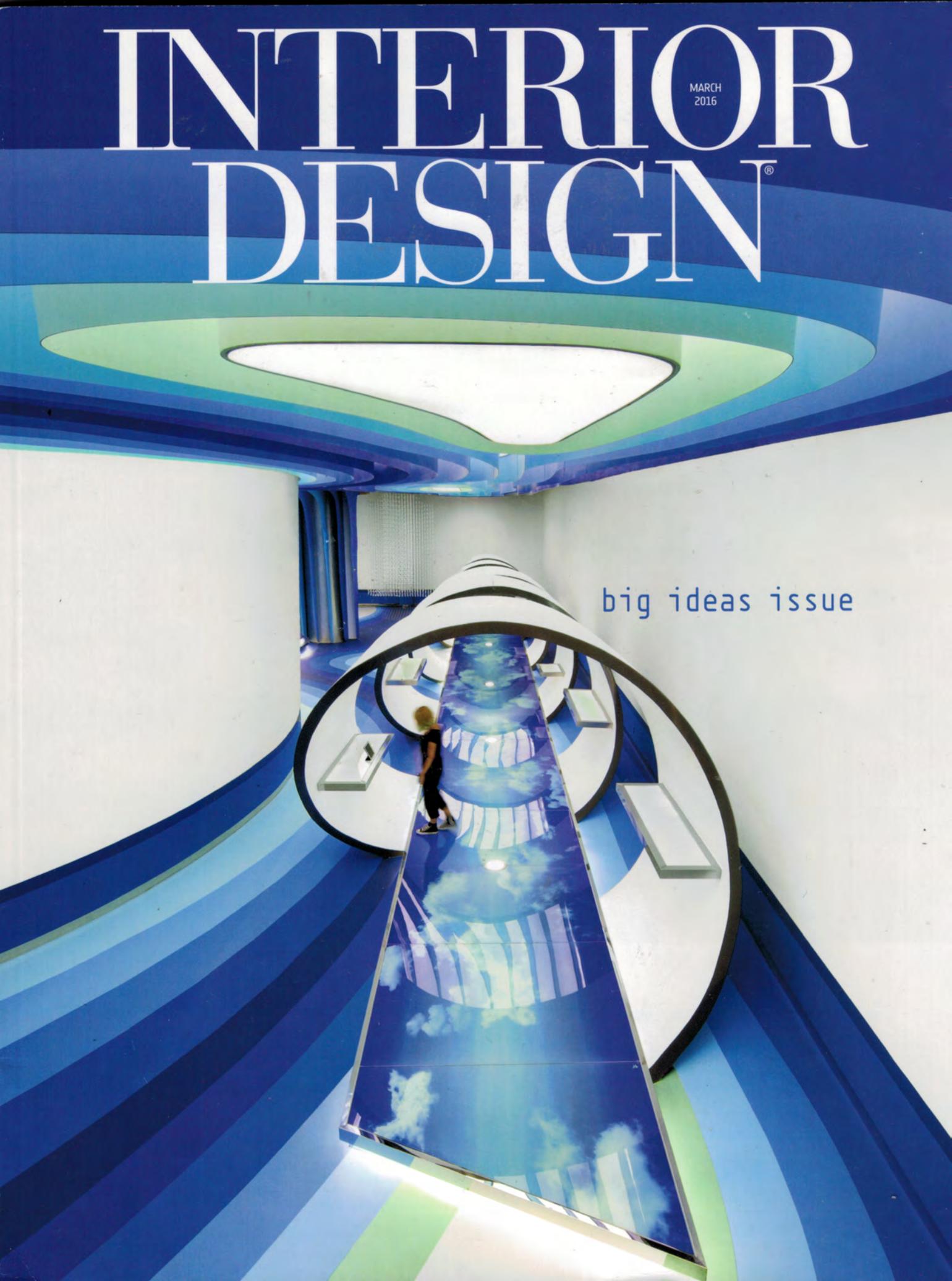


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Tune in to Texas



Mark Zeff riffs on Austin's musical heritage at the Hotel Van Zandt

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Previous spread, left: For the lounge at the Markzeff-designed Hotel Van Zandt in Austin, Texas, Paul Villinski cut up vinyl records to make an installation of birds.

Previous spread, right: They rise from a 1906 phonograph set on a custom credenza in ebonized ash and walnut.

Opposite top, from left: A conference room's oak table and wool-nylon carpet are custom. Cocktail tables in the lounge are by Casamidy. **Opposite bottom:** The hotel name appears stenciled on the entry's white-oak floor.

Top: Floor tile in reception is water-buffalo hide treated with paraffin wax. **Bottom:** In the lounge, a brass chandelier hangs from the ceiling, clad in antiqued mirror.



The soulful folk rock of the late Townes Van Zandt has been an inspiration to Bob Dylan, Neil Young, Norah Jones, Garth Brooks, and scores of other musicians in Van Zandt's native Texas and beyond. His reach has now extended to design—in the form of the Hotel Van Zandt on the shores of Austin's Lady Bird Lake.

As the self-proclaimed Live Music Capital of the World, the booming intersection of hipsters and honky-tonks, techies and tequila, Austin had obvious attractions for the Kimpton Hotel & Restaurant Group, a company that prides itself on letting local ethos drive a design. "Culturally, the city is a great fit for Kimpton, which is also wildly independent with an eclectic mix of our own," creative director Ave Bradley says. The firm chosen to deliver the goods, transforming the interior of a new 16-story gray brick tower, was Markzeff, which had previously worked with Kimpton on restaurant projects but had never tackled a commission in the Lone Star State.

Born in South Africa and based in New York, Mark Zeff sampled barbecue, bought cowboy boots, a classic pair of Lucccheses, and listened to music in some of the city's 200 venues, offering everything from Western swing to alt rock as part of his reconnaissance. "Van Zandt's music is very poetic," Zeff says. "It speaks of freedom." That's certainly something that runs in the family. An ancestor, Isaac Van Zandt, was a founding father of the short-lived Republic of Texas, and Van Zandt County, near Dallas, is also called the Free State of Van Zandt because of a rebellious streak in the citizens, who have twice attempted to secede from the rest of Texas.

Zeff looked to the Austin music scene to lay down the baseline for the hotel. His homage plays out in the lobby lounge with an installation of exuberant birds, made from vinyl records, that flutter out of an old phonograph and, elsewhere, as curated collections of found objects such as vintage radios and microphones. The gig posters in the 319 guest rooms reflect the Austin club scene in the '60's and '70's, when Van Zandt made his name. His final album, *No Deeper Blue*, symbolically thrums through the color palette as a moody teal. Riffs on blue are found everywhere.

