

THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY

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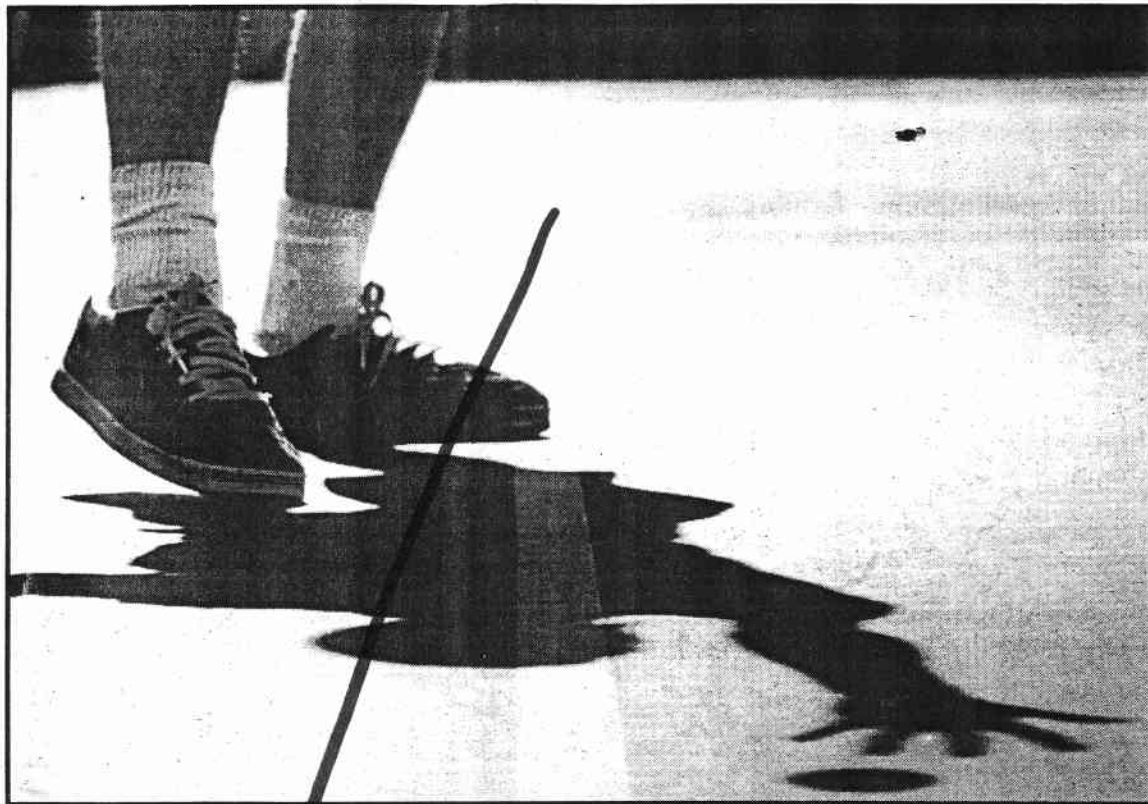
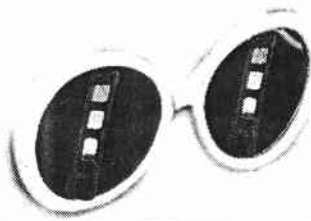
GUIDE

23rd Annual

Best



Best of the Bay



Tennis, anyone? Serving at the Dolores Park courts, the best public tennis courts.

READERS' POLL *from page 29*

Best gay/lesbian bar

They're still lining up on Friday nights to get into the second-story, multi-roomed nightlife hub, the **Cafe**. So what if the dance floor is tiny and the crush level second only to a 5:00'clock BART train? The crowd is mostly gay men, but if you like watching women in white T-shirts and men mopping up pool tables, this is the place to do so. 2367 Market, S.F. (415) 861-3846.

Best local band

While Dick Dale created the mold for surf guitar, emulating the frenetic rolling, curling, and crashing of waves with his double-time picking and roaring glissandos, the **Mermen** envelop their listeners with an even more oceanic sound, characterized by slower tempos and richer colors. Guitarist Jim Thomas can roar, and bassist Allen Whitman and drummer Martyn Jones can churn furiously, but their instrumental rock is more the stuff of psychedelic California dreams (à la Neil Young) and underwater fantasias than of hanging 10.

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OUTDOORS

Bridge, but the escape might as well be to the far Sierra. The trails of **Mount Tamalpais** provide a potent forest fix for the city-weary. Plus, the view from its heights provides far more than fair reward for your labor.

Best place to sit outside and people-watch

Proud new stroller-pushing parents, posturing Frisbee-men, gaga-eyed couples, old men playing chess — this year readers voted **Golden Gate Park** as the best magnet for these and other varieties of folk. Go on a Sunday if you like your voyeuristic idyll unspoiled by automobiles.

Best place to play pick-up basketball

The sweaty, panting hoop dreamers have spoken, and once again it's the **Panhandle** for best pick-up game. It's central, and in a nice setting, but with a touch of that urban grit that the asphalt hero needs.

Best place to jog

Bay Guardian readers tapped **Golden Gate Park** once again this year as the best environment for runners. From the populated eastern part to the relatively wild western

Best bike shop

Why do readers love **Valencia Cyclery** year after year? The place is packed with a brilliant selection of safety and antitheft necessities and always has plenty of blue-shirted staffers on hand to answer questions. Two doors down, an entire other space houses the service department: the place is, very simply, *equipped*. 1077 Valencia, S.F. (415) 550-6600.

Best place to in-line skate

Golden Gate Park — it's the in-liners' paradise. Sweeping, curved boulevards, nearby shops for skate rental and sales, and enough fellow in-liners to launch a roller revolution. Some weekends spontaneous disco parties erupt, complete with sizable sound systems. All this, and a 10th as many stop signs as the rest of the city.

Best place to skateboard

Whether they knew it or not, the designers of the **Embarcadero's** recent facelift created a skate rat's Valhalla in the myriad benches, stepped platforms, and concrete doodads that line the waterfront

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OPPORTUNITIES

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