THE HISTORY OF MUSIC IN ST. LOUIS

St. Louis: A City That Helped Shape the Sound of America

When people think of America's great music cities, places like Nashville, Memphis, and New Orleans often come to mind. But right alongside them is St. Louis, Missouri, a city whose rich musical history has influenced generations of artists and helped shape American music.

A City Built on Music

Thanks to its location along the Mississippi River, St. Louis became a cultural crossroads in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Musicians traveling through the city brought together influences from across the country, helping blues, jazz, gospel, and early popular music flourish.

One of the city's earliest musical contributions was ragtime, a lively piano style that became wildly popular before the rise of jazz. As ragtime evolved, St. Louis also became an important stop for blues musicians traveling the Mississippi River, while neighborhoods like The Ville became thriving centers for African American culture, music, and entertainment. By the mid-1900s, venues throughout the city helped establish St. Louis as one of the nation's premier destinations for live jazz and blues.

Today, live music remains a defining part of the city's identity, with performances ranging from neighborhood blues clubs to world-class concert venues and festivals.

Carrying the Legacy Forward

For more than a century, St. Louis has been a place where musical innovation thrives. From ragtime and jazz to rock 'n' roll and beyond, the city's influence can still be heard in the music we enjoy today.

At Gateway Studios & Production Services, we're proud to be part of that continuing story. While the sounds of St. Louis have evolved over the decades, the need for talented people behind the scenes has remained constant. Every concert staged, tour supported, production designed, and event executed helps bring music to life for audiences both here in St. Louis and across the world.

Whether we're providing lighting, audio, video, staging, or production support, our team plays a role in creating the live music experiences that become tomorrow's memories. As we celebrate St. Louis' rich musical heritage, we also celebrate the people at Gateway who help carry that tradition forward, one show at a time.

ST. LOUIS LEGENDS

Scott Joplin

Scott Joplin helped put St. Louis on the musical map during the ragtime era. Often called the "King of Ragtime," he lived and worked in St. Louis while composing classics like Maple Leaf Rag and The Entertainer, helping lay the foundation for the jazz movement that followed. His syncopated piano compositions became some of the most recognizable pieces of American music and introduced ragtime to audiences across the country. Today, his influence can still be heard in jazz, classical music, and film scores.

Miles Davis

As jazz continued to evolve, Miles Davis, who grew up in nearby East St. Louis, became one of the most influential musicians of the 20th century. His groundbreaking recordings, including Kind of Blue, transformed modern jazz and continue to inspire artists across countless genres. Never one to stay in the same musical style, Davis constantly reinvented his sound, helping shape cool jazz, modal jazz, and jazz fusion. His willingness to innovate earned him multiple Grammy Awards and a lasting place in music history.

Chuck Berry

In the 1950s, St. Louis native Chuck Berry helped launch the rock 'n' roll era. Hits like Johnny B. Goode and Roll Over Beethoven influenced generations of musicians, including many of rock's biggest stars. Known for his energetic stage presence and signature "duck walk," Berry transformed the role of the electric guitar in popular music. His songwriting and performances helped define what rock 'n' roll would become.

Tina Turner

Although born in Tennessee, Tina Turner launched her music career in the St. Louis music scene after moving to the area as a teenager. It was here that she met Ike Turner, joined his band, and began the journey that would earn her the title "Queen of Rock 'n' Roll." Known for her powerful voice and electrifying stage presence, Turner became one of the best-selling artists of all time. Her resilience, unforgettable performances, and enduring influence continue to inspire artists across generations.