



Six Pack: Live Music Venues

Every music scene in the history of the world is fostered first and foremost by its city's venues. Louisville's music history — as a womb for the post-rock/art-rock movement, sparked by bands like Slint, Crain and Rodan — is often betrayed by the city's lack of venues to promote it, particularly for all-ages shows. In truth, most rock clubs cater to the over-21 crowd, or cover bands, although a few courageous ones still bear the optimistic (and non-lucrative) '90s torch.

Louisville's certainly not limited to rock, as evidenced by a decent blues history, and reams of scroll from bluegrass pickers through the years. There's also a thriving hip-hop scene, despite being buried a few inches underground at the moment.

Point is, the live music venues in Louisville run the gamut, over the decades birthing a narrative that will, despite its efforts, never be able to pin the elusive "Louisville Sound." —Stephen George

1) Uncle Pleasant's

2126 S. Preston St., 634-4147.

The history in this building traces what became arguably the most widely-recognized stamp of the Louisville sound. Those artsy rockers mentioned above used to command the stage often, along with countless other hangers-on and imitators who populated the scene then. Antietam actually played the "new" Uncle P's for a homecoming gig last year, the club having reemerged (after a renovation) in 2003 after being closed. (The band also had played at the club's first incarnation nearly 15 years ago.) These days, Uncle P's hosts rock of all stripes, and even opens some shows up to kids 18 and older. Covers are consistently low, and drinks are fairly cheap.

2) Stevie Ray's Blues Bar/Zena's

230 E. Main St., 582-9945,
www.steveraysbluesbar.com
122 W. Main St., 584-3074.

These two stalwarts of the Louisville



Back in the day, Louisville's coolest bands played at Uncle Pleasant's. Lucky for us, the venue is open again and plays host to rock shows of all stripes.

blues scene are equally deserving of praise for their generally underappreciated contributions to River City blues music. On just about any warm, breezy evening, a stroll down Main Street by the waterfront will be greeted with the blues rolling out through the open windows and doors of these clubs. Stevie Ray's has live music Monday through Saturday, while Zena's has something every night but Sunday. Both bring big names to town here and there, but the focus is mostly on local players.

3) The Jazz Factory

815 W. Market St., 992-3242,
www.jazzfactory.us.

When Ken Shapero left the corporate world to open this joint a couple years ago, his vision was for a NYC-style jazz club where the sweet purity of the music could flow from the stage uncorrupted by the typical bar fare. There is no smoking, and the club has a high-class dinner menu and a fully-stocked bar. Shapero installed state-of-the-art sound system and has a house drum kit and piano that are con-

stant stage presences. This surprisingly clean and comfortable club, in the basement of Glassworks, hosts everything from internationally prominent jazz acts to its unique "Jazz & the Spoken Word," essentially a poetry slam with improvised live jazz tunes as soundtrack. Very cool.

4) The St. Matthews Four: Bluegrass Brewing Co./Dutch's Tavern/Gerstle's/Maier's Tavern

3929 Shelbyville Rd., 899-7700,
www.bbcbrew.com
3922 Shelbyville Rd., 895-9004,
www.dutchstavern.com
3801 Frankfort Ave., 899-3609,
www.gerstles.com
3921 Shelbyville Rd., 897-6386,
www.maierstavern.com

The tether among these four is geographical: You can hoove it up and down Shelbyville Road and find some good tunes emanating from any one of these clubs on a given night. BBC is your mecca if you're into bluegrass jams (Monday's "Bluegrass Anonymous" tunefest), or its musical cousin, jam bands. The latter can often be

found at Gerstle's and Maier's as well; Gerstle's hosts live music every night most weeks, while Maier's has its most nights of every week. And Dutch's, buzzing as one of the city's newest viable live music venues, has an MC battle every Monday night. You are sure to find something worth hearing in this corridor.

5) North End Café

1722 Frankfort Ave., 896-8770.

Five words for the newest home for hipster nation: Global Grease with Kim Sorise. The city's darling of world music and good taste (co-ordinator of the Dirty Soul Party and more recently, a frequent LEO contributor) whips out her considerable DJ skills every Friday night at the club's newly renovated bar, a smooth and gorgeous addition to the ultra-hip Frankfort Avenue café. You're sure to hear music that will blow your mind seeping from Sorise's outpost behind a pair of turntables. Pure originality.

6) Portland Festival Building

3329 Northwestern Parkway, 772-3048.

Portland is quite literally the seed from which our city grew. Once the booming cultural and business epicenter of the region, the western burg on the Ohio River has since faded into a low-rent afterthought for much of the city — less seed than merely seedy, if you will. But it's beautiful down there when the sun is right, and this venue (which opened last fall in a partnership between some of the LAVA House purveyors and a Portland neighborhood group) only adds to the natural aesthetic. A two-story abandoned church building with a vaulted ceiling and excellent acoustics, the place has a truly nostalgic vibe. It can also hold several hundred people, which accommodates shows from ultra-loud rock to DJs, experimental free-form troupes to singer-songwriters (For example, Louisville native Bonnie "Prince" Billy performs there tonight). ■

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