

Connecting the Dots: Georgia's Music Trails



It's a cultural tapestry as rich as any could possibly be. Those wanting to wrap themselves in and rock themselves to the rhythms of America's root music will find no place better for such a magical experience than the Peach State — Georgia. In the foothills that trail off the southern Appalachian Mountains, the melodic sounds brought to the new world centuries ago still resonate today in America's mountain and bluegrass music. Alive and well in places like Dahlonega and Hiawassee, these places are unique portions of Georgia's patch-work musical quilt.

At the opposite end of the Peach State, down in the southeast corner, it's Albany that awaits discovery. This is the birthplace and boyhood home of none other than Ray Charles. A

musical genius in every sense of the word, Ray Charles' career took his fans places never imagined. And where the Atlantic Ocean breaks onto and washes along the South Coast of Georgia, Country Music as it was enjoyed back in the 1960s, '70s and '80s is alive and well. It continues to be enjoyed every Saturday night at the Woodbine Opry in the rural backwater town of Woodbine. Pay a nominal fee (about five bucks), and enjoy a smorgasbord supper of Southern comfort foods before the Country Music begins. As it has been for many years, on Saturday nights this mid-century style of country music is once again celebrated.

Yes, the scope and variety of notes, sounds, syncopations, styles, and lyrics that lace Georgia's unique musical pockets do nothing less than "please." In the middle

of all of this musical pleasure are three very special venues where music and its history stand toe to toe with any place in the world, the cities of Macon, Augusta, and Athens — all easy drives to the east and southeast of Atlanta. The birthplaces of Georgia's provincial root music artists, Macon, August, and Athens continue to attract cross generational music aficionados. It is from here that the waft and warp of America's musical fabric emerges; it's the fount from which new sounds continue to flow. Read On!

MACON

This is where the Allman Brothers, Little Richard, and Otis Redding found their beginnings. The list of legendary recording artists reads like a who's who in "Southern Rock." Tour the Big House where Duane and Gregg

Allman assembled a musical commune and where they, their band and their families lived and wrote music. Their old Victorian house has been completely rehabbed, offering those who visit the opportunity to poke around inside the nooks and crannies, the rooms where creative genius flowed. The museum on the first floor houses their original guitars, basses, amps, and concert posters from “back in the day.”

A must-see in Macon is the Tic Toc, today a dinner house downtown where Little Richard worked as busboy and where, between loads of shuffling dishes, he performed and launched his career. Little Richard was born in Macon, and the pink shotgun house where he grew up is well worth the drive-by. There’s Capricorn Studios, where so many future stars recorded, and, of course, Macon is home to the Otis Redding Foundation. The foundation is located downtown, and often, his charming daughter and handsome grandson can be seen running the day-to-day foundation business. These folks sponsor gifted musicians, including artists whose passion is Classical music. Yes, Macon “must be” at the head of your list



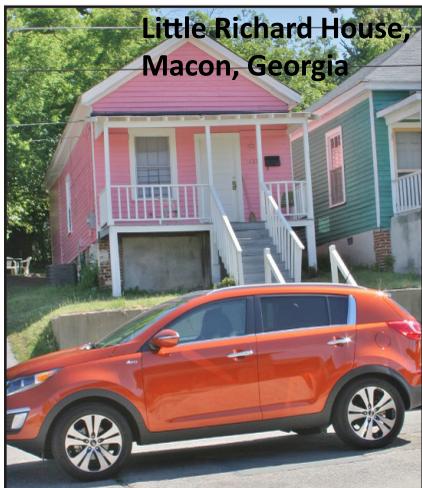
of places to visit; at a minimum you need to spend at least a day soaking it in.

AUGUSTA

No music star associated with “rock and funk” has more equity in their own name than that of icon James Brown, aka the “Godfather of Soul.” Born in South Carolina in the early 1930s, James Brown lived his life across the Savannah River in Augusta, Georgia. Today, the City of Augusta celebrates this man, his musical genius, and his astounding career that spanned six decades. A life-size bronze

statue of Mr. Brown wearing one of his performance capes is an excellent downtown photo-op. At the Augusta Museum of History (just a block from the Savannah River), visitors find the second floor of this huge state-of-the-art building to be like taking a sentimental journey back through time to the heady days of the “Godfather of Soul.”

Begin inside the theater where clips from Mr. Brown’s magical career primes and prepares guests for the exhibits and displays that follow. He was called the “hardest working man in music,”



Little Richard House, Macon, Georgia



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GA Theatre Marquee
by Elliot Anderson

and the concert posters and record albums lining the gallery underscore this was, in fact, the truth. The elaborate capes he wore during his performances makes it obvious the visual magic and the attention to detail of his costumes were as important to him as was the overall presentation of his art-form.

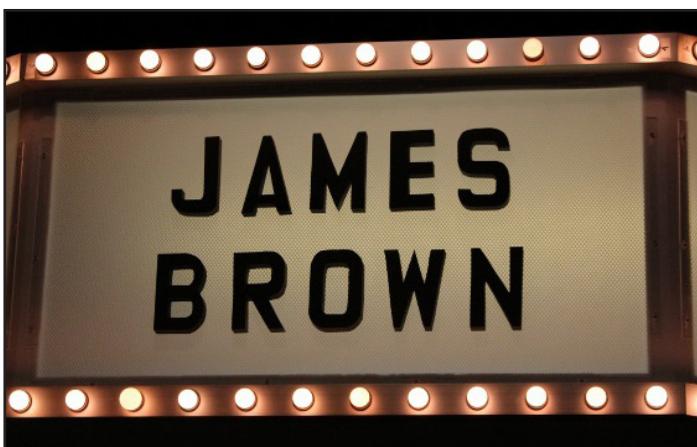
ATHENS

This university town, without a doubt, is a place that sits on the cusp, the cutting edge of today's

music scene. It's as if the creative juices that flow here are in part the result of Athens being a center for higher learning. There seems to be a continuous cross pollination between the academic world and other genres of creativity that include dining, the visual and performing arts, and especially music. The state of affairs for a very long time, a vibrant and eclectic music scene found in Athens harbors and attracts like a giant magnet creative types in the world of music. Mountain,

Country, Funk, Do Op, Rock-n-roll, Classical along with New-age and immerging Avant-garde sounds live here easily alongside one another. The music genres seem to draw energy from one another -- often morphing into new sub-set genres. Athens is a place that incubates new sounds, where groups and styles morph, merge, and go on to test their mettle on the world stage. Famous notables like R.E.M., the B-52s, Widespread Panic, Of Montreal, Pylon and others got their musical legs in Athens.

But Athens does not live in the past. Groups today continue to grow and groom their music. Down the road as they begin to reach the pinnacle of their success, they will likely peek into the rear-view mirror at their trip through time and reminisce about how Athens was the launch pad on their road to success." Music venues that host local up-and-coming as well as established groups include the Georgia Theatre, the 40 Watt





Club, Caledonia Lounge, and The Foundry at Graduate Athens. Groups like Family & Friends, Roadkill Ghost Choir, Wrenn, and New Madrid are well on their way and regularly perform here.

Athens also hosts music festivals such as Wildwood Revival, a setting that celebrates music that spans the spectrum. Held on a 30-acre farm nestled in rolling hills outside Athens, music-goers can camp and enjoy freshly prepared locally grown seasonal fare and hand-crafted beer served in Mason jars. An artisan's market also offers creations of every kind — many one of a kind. Another

festival is North Georgia Folk Festival held in one of Athens' beautiful city parks. Fun-filled family events include children's activities, traditional arts, crafts demonstrations, and local foods that all together insure everyone has "the experience of a lifetime."

The Athens Welcome Center offers a Walking Tour that explains Athens Music History roots. The focus of this tour is on the past with attention paid to iconic music spots both past and present. Yes,

music history in Athens continues to be made in real-time — in its clubs, restaurants, practice spaces, and in the jam sessions that spontaneously break-out across the city.

