

## Athens Music History Walking Tour

Experience Athens' world-renowned musical roots in this self-guided walking tour, developed in 1998 by the Athens Welcome Center and Flagpole Magazine. Take the tour by day, and then discover the future legends by night, in **America's #1 College Music Scene**, according to **Rolling Stone magazine**. "The density and diversity of bands still teeming in downtown Athens keep it the alpha and omega of the college music scene." (Feb. 20, 2003)

- 1 393 Oconee Street** Across the street from the old church re-dedicated to R.E.M. was an empty commercial sewing factory and fiberglass fabrication plant known as **Stitchcraft**, now the parking lot of the Waterford Place Condominiums. Paul Thomas (of The Oracle ) and Chris DeBarr (of Downstairs fame) arranged several shows each month here throughout the early and mid-'80s. The site was later known as **Lunch Paper**. Bands played in a square, cinderblock room under high ceilings in a partial basement with high industrial windows and a courtyard. No bar, no restrooms. Couches came and went. BYOB. This was The Primates' first practice space. It became known for outrageous Halloween parties. Memorable performances include The Replacements, The Primates, The Tragic Dancers, Pylon and R.E.M. Just up Wilkerson Street is the old railroad trestle featured on the cover of R.E.M.'s album *Murmur*.
- 2 394 Oconee Street** Bill Berry, Pete Buck, Mike Mills and Michael Stipe of R.E.M. practiced here in the old St. Mary's Episcopal Church ("**The Church**"), where they played their first-ever gig on Saturday, April 5th, 1980, at a birthday party. (The Side Effects opened.) Only the steeple remains. The church was torn down in 1990 to make way for the Steeplechase Condominiums.
- 3 244 Oconee Street** This large warehouse space served in the early '70s as The **B&L Warehouse**, a cheap-beer watering hole that hosted rock and roll cover bands in a cavernous room. The B&L gradually evolved into a big music club around '79 and turned into The **I&I Club** in 1980. Iggy Pop played in '82. The entrance was up a long staircase on the back side. Pylon practiced upstairs and performed all-ages shows here in '81 and '82. Other memorable gigs included Jason & The Scorchers, Guadalcanal Diary, The Killbillys. After a short comeback as **Buckhead Beach**, it was later utilized as a band practice space, artists' studios and keg-party room. The space was recently shut down by the fire marshal and is now vacant, except for the memories.
- 4 112 S. Foundry Street** World headquarters for Flagpole Magazine, which Jared Bailey founded in October, 1987, as the "Colorbearer of Athens

Alternative Music," shortly after he and Barrie Buck re-opened the 40 Watt Club on Clayton Street. Bailey saw the need for a publication to call attention to the new Athens music scene, and Flagpole has been doing so ever since.

- 5 **1016 E. Broad Street** Just down the hill from downtown, **Weaver D's Fine Foods** serves up soul food. R.E.M. used proprietor Dexter Weaver's slogan "Automatic For The People" (featured on the restaurant's sign) as the title of its 1992 album.
  
- 6 **Corner of Foundry Street and East Broad Street** Facing Foundry, across East Broad from the present Flagpole office, where a parking lot now meets the eye, **Tyrone's O.C.** (Old Chameleon) succeeded **Chameleon**, an earlier club, in late '78. Tyrone's was a fertile hotbed of underground activity in the burgeoning local scene. Pylon made its debut here. R.E.M. played many early shows, as did such local scenesters as Is Ought Gap and Time Toy. Tyrone's burned down in January of 1982. (Legend has it that hefty bar tabs belonging to R.E.M. bassist Mike Mills and Pylon bassist Michael Lachowski burned, too.) A famous bootleg recording of an R.E.M. set at Tyrone's is still floating around on cassette. The crumbling brick at the sidewalk and the caved-in remains of the outside deck at the end of the parking lot are all that remain of this once jumping spot. Lost, o' lost.
  
- 7 **433 E. Hancock Avenue** The **Rockfish Palace** was originally established by local musician Bryan Cook (of Time Toy) in 1986 as a small dive for rock, blues and punk bands. The joint stood adjacent to Wilfong's fish market and had a small bar, small stage and an open-air backstage. Early gigs included Sleepy La Beef, Tinsley Ellis and Time Toy. The venue became more of an established club by the time J. R. Green took over in '88. He booked such acts as Widespread Panic, Bloodkin, Hasil Adkins, Southern Culture On The Skids, GWAR and Five-Eight. The club closed in the early '90s but the beat goes on, since the site is now occupied by the popular dance club/cabaret **Boneshakers**.
  
- 8 **260 N. Jackson Street** Off the beaten path at the time, **Wax Jr. Facts** served as a "junior store" for Atlanta's popular Wax 'n' Facts record shop from 1982-1984. The shop was a focal point of the early Athens music scene. Michael Lachowski (of Pylon) co-managed the store, which was well-known for occasional, extravagant beer parties. **Jackson Street Books** occupies the space now.

- 9 **142 N. Jackson Street** In the early '80s many influential bands practiced in the upstairs space now occupied by the well-known local emporium **Frontier**. R.E.M., The Side Effects, Mystery Date, Love Tractor, Pylon, Roosevelt, Waylaid, Porn Orchard, Clamp and others toted their gear up the stairs here through the '80s and early '90s.
- 10 **382 E. Broad Street** Here was the fourth location of the **40 Watt Club**, billed as "The 40 Watt Uptown." Doug Hoescht opened the club here in early 1984, and he managed it and did the booking. University of Georgia offices occupy the space now. Far more "upscale" than the previous spots, this 40 Watt soon became the largest club in town. The Replacements, The Lyres, Kilkenny Cats, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Time Toy, Dreams So Real, Jason And The Scorchers, The Plague, 10,000 Maniacs, Suicidal Tendencies, Final Frontier, Mantra Factory and Bad Brains played there - need we say more? It was a helluva club through the mid '80s. Club employees Jared Bailey and Barrie Buck continued as managers after Hoescht suddenly left town. This location closed in March, 1987.
- 11 **229 E. Broad Street** An early Athens rock record store, **Foreign Legion** carried hip and hard-to-find underground vinyl and press. The Cramps played upstairs in the Foreign Legion's storage room in December, 1979, (Alex Chilton reportedly ran sound for them) after canceling a sketchy gig down the street at the Carafe And Draft. Businessman/music fan Eric Brown ran the store here as **Chapter 3 Records**, and it is now **Five Star Day Café**.
- 12 **100 College Avenue** Above the Blimpie Base sandwich shop which became Yudy's and is now Starbuck's, Curtis Crowe and Paul Scales opened the second **40 Watt Club** in 1980. The Side Effects and Love Tractor performed the first two nights. Patrons entered on the College Avenue side (sometimes through the sandwich shop) and paid a small cover charge to see up-and-coming local bands. The club had a small P.A. system and no air-conditioning. R.E.M. played a few early gigs shortly after the band's debut at "The Church."
- 13 **128 College Avenue** A large, competitive music shop **Ruthless Records**, became **Downtown Records** in 1989. Both had wide selections of mainstream artists and independent releases. They stocked plenty of local bands' cassettes and discs. **Blue Sky Coffee** is in this location now. Downtown Records became **Big Shot Records** and moved next door to 114

College Avenue, the current Lunch Paper spot. Big Shot is now located at 264 E. Clayton Street and is still supporting local music.

- 14     **171 College Avenue** The space above **The Grill** is the site of the original **40 Watt Club**. In 1979 Curtis Crowe, drummer for Pylon, hosted a Halloween party on the third floor of this building. This floor was a single room where everyone congregated. A guest commented on the one 40-watt light bulb that lit the entire room, calling it a "40-watt club," and thus the 40 Watt name was born. At that time, **Schlotzsky's Deli** occupied the ground floor, and The Grill was located at 229 E. Broad Street.
  
- 15     **197 E. Clayton Street** This small local music shop, **Wuxtry Records**, which is still here, was established in 1975 and became known for its wide selection of mainstream and obscure vinyl, CDs, cassettes and publications. R.E.M.'s Pete Buck worked here and at its sister store **Wuxtry Café** at 510 Baxter Street as a clerk and an enthusiast in the late '70s and very early '80s. Wuxtry owner Dan Wall and his staff have been major supporters of the Athens music scene.
  
- 16     **140 E. Clayton Street** In this very small venue in an old basement storage space below a downtown sidewalk, local musicians Jim Stacey, David Levitt, Mindy Jaques and Chris DeBarr opened **The Downstairs** in mid-1988, as a café with an eclectic schedule of live music. Patrons were free to pick records out of a bin to play on the turntable during the day. Local and national acts such as Smoke, Five-Eight, LaBrea Stompers, No Man, Porn Orchard, The Killbillys, The Woggles, and DQE were normal fare. It closed and then, after extensive renovations, re-opened in 1995 as **DT's Down Under**, a more mainstream music venue featuring folk, rock and jazz acts.
  
- 17     **199 N. Lumpkin Street** A college student and townie hang-out in the mid '80s, **Abbot's Pizza** was popular for its cheap beer and pizza slices. It morphed into the beach-themed **Athens Yacht Club**, which hosted blues and cover bands in the late '80s. After extensive remodeling, **The Globe** opened here in 1990 as a British/European-style pub frequented by academics, internationals, musicians and artists. The Globe occasionally hosts live music and film screenings upstairs.
  
- 18     **215 N. Lumpkin Street** Converted from an old movie theater to a music hall by Hap Harris and Sam Smartt, the **Georgia Theatre** opened January 11,

1978, with Sea Level playing. David Allen Coe followed soon after. The Police played a memorable show here during their first American tour in 1979. The B-52s played the same year, after going out and selling the \$1500 worth of tickets demanded by the owners as a condition for letting the band play. Tyrone Davis, B. B. King, Muddy Waters and Tom Waits all played the Georgia in the early days, but Harris and Smartt were ahead of their time and couldn't make the theater pay for itself. They kept it going around three years and then pulled the plug. The old hall limped along as the **Carafe and Draft** movie theater, with occasional live music, until Kyle Pilgrim and Duck Anderson re-opened it as a live music and movie venue in November, 1989. The two partners have made the Georgia Theatre into a legendary music Mecca hosting the likes of Widespread Panic, David Allen Coe, Wynton Marsalis, Ice-T, Warren Zevon, Rev. Horton Heat, Phish, The Dave Matthews Band, Bela Fleck, Hootie And The Blowfish, GWAR and many, many local bands. Portions of the R.E.M. video for "Shiny Happy People" were filmed here.

19     **159 W. Clayton Street** The **Georgia Bar** opened in 1986 and is still going strong. The small room with a large main bar and a killer popcorn machine has hosted occasional local bands over the years, but is mainly a gathering place and headquarters for the music scene, where anybody might run into anybody. The bar forms part of the "Barmuda Triangle" with The Globe and **The Roadhouse** (and now **El Centro**) around the corner.

20     **184 W. Clayton Street** A music club and bar, **The Last Resort** began in 1966 down the street from three finance companies. It was said that if you were turned down by all three, the bar was your "last resort." This pre-scene bar and music club mostly featured bluegrass, folk, jazz bands and stand-up comedy. It was owned for a while by pioneer Athens musician Terry "Mad Dog" Melton. The B-52s played an awkward show here in 1978. Memorable performers include Steve Martin, Randall Bramblett, the Sunbelt Millionaires, Gamble Rogers and Jimmy Buffett. Guadalcanal Diary played their first Athens show here. The club, under the ownership of Lynn Miller, expanded into the space next door formerly occupied by a garage, and greatly expanded the music hall but couldn't draw the crowds to fill it. The Last Resort closed down in the mid-'80s. The space was occupied by a camera shop briefly and then in August, 1992, **The Last Resort Grill** was reborn as an upscale restaurant. (See the vegetable mural on the side wall by Athens artist Greg Williams which covers an earlier painting by Charlie Gardner).

21     **256 W. Clayton Street** This spot was both the third and the fifth locations of the **40 Watt Club**. Doug Hoescht bought the club and moved it here for a

brief stay from 1982 to 1984. The club was known as a "real dive" with a small stage and dressing rooms off the front entrance. After a brief stay in its fourth location on East Broad Street (see above), Jared Bailey and Barrie Buck re-opened the 40 Watt back in this location in June, 1987, for incarnation number five.

The new club had a decent room with a small bar, small restrooms and a solid stage. Bands loaded in and out from Clayton Street. Patrons entered behind the building off the Pulaski Street parking lot through the "beer garden." Local and national bands played here regularly: Fugazi, Bob Mould, Billy Bragg, The Melvins, Kilkenny Cats, Robyn Hitchcock, Volcano Suns, Porn Orchard, Buffalo Tom, Gypsy Cab Company, Five-Eight, The Jesus Lizard, etc.. This incarnation of the 40 Watt closed in summer, 1990. This building, however, had an even earlier music history. In the late '70s it was briefly the **11:11 Club**, so named because that's what time it opened in the evenings. R.E.M. played their first club performance at the 11:11 on April 19, 1980. The police raided the club during the performance, photographed the patrons drinking and closed the club down for lack of a proper license.

22     **285 W. Washington Street** Jared Bailey and Barrie Buck moved the **40 Watt Club** to its present location in the old **Furniture Mart** building in the first week of April, 1990, with shows by a reunited Pylon and The Flat Duo Jets. The space was plagued by poor acoustics early on, but that deficiency was quickly remedied by a larger P.A. system and decorative acoustic baffling hung by local artist Pattiy Torno. Spacious dressing rooms backstage came later. The club has continuously hosted a wide variety of local bands and such major touring rock acts as Sugar, Jonathan Richman, Pavement, Run DMC, The Cramps, Cracker, Junior Brown, Mike Watt, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Salt 'n' Pepa, Sebadoh, The Fall, Vic Chesnutt, The Black Crows and drivin' n' cryin'.

23     **195 W. Washington Street** Monroe Bowers "Pink" Morton built the Morton Theatre around 1910, and it was one of America's first African-American built, owned and operated Vaudeville theaters. Entertainers including Duke Ellington, Louie Armstrong, Cab Calloway and Bessie Smith performed here through the 1920s, '30s and '40s. Cindy Wilson and Kate Pierson of The B-52's worked in the El Dorado (later The Bluebird) restaurant in the southwest corner of this building in the 1970s. Several Athens rock bands practiced in back rooms through the 1980s and '90s. After extensive renovation in the early '90s, the theater re-opened as a community performing arts center and hosted the first ever Flagpole Athens Music Awards in June, 1999 and The Kudzu Film Festival among many other events.

24     **120 E. Washington Street** This was once a rustic pool hall (and a long time before that- the hangar for Athens aviation pioneer Ben Epps' homemade airplanes, with Washington Street as the landing strip). The restaurants The Hangar and ET's Hangar made a go of it with country and blues bands in the early '90s before Kyle Pilgrim and "Duck" Anderson of The Georgia Theatre stepped in and set up shop as a sports bar/lounge carrying the old moniker The Uptown Lounge.

25     **140 E. Washington Street** Kyle Pilgrim and "Duck" Anderson bought the fledgling **Uptown Lounge** in April, 1984, and gradually built it into a prime live music venue. Early on, many up-and-coming local acts considered this venue a hip alternative to the larger 40 Watt Uptown. Widespread Panic started out here in the mid '80s as a weekly house band. By 1987, the Uptown was the largest club in town and attracted national acts such as The Pixies, Let's Active, Soul Asylum, Jane's Addiction, Dinosaur Jr., Red Hot Chili Peppers, Alex Chilton, Mercyland, Black Flag, and the Meat Puppets. R.E.M. played a few legendary unannounced shows here, as well. The Uptown closed at this location in early 1990.

This room also held various rock clubs and discos (the **Chameleon Club** - not to be confused with Chameleon, The **Shoe Box**, The **Atomic Music Hall**) from 1990 through 1997. The Atomic Music Hall gained recognition as one of the more vital underground rock clubs in town during the mid and late '90s. The Atomic hosted local benefit gigs, "redneck" punk-rock showcases such as "Trash Fest" and "Beef Stock," regularly booked up-and-coming local bands like Harvey Milk, Kincaid, Jucifer, Trinket, Five-Eight, Elf Power, Space Cookie and Buzz Hungry and attracted touring national acts such as Cake, Man Or Astro-Man?, The Oblivians and Kevn Kinney. The space is now occupied by **Burntstone Brewhouse**. The music hall stage was located where the Burntstone brewing vessels now stand.

26     **137 Hoyt Street** This old train depot area called **The Station**, on Hoyt Street between Dougherty Street and College Avenue, was occupied by several bars, music venues and cafés throughout the '70s and '80s. **TK Hardy's Saloon**, located on the south end, opened in 1971 and hosted various classic rock and country bands into the late '80s. **Locomotion** was a short-lived, high-minded coffee house and screening room open in 1975. A jam session held here spawned a noise band called Night Soil that evolved into the Zambo Flirts (with Ricky Wilson and Keith Strickland of the B-52's). In the late '80s and early '90s, the **Flying Buffalo** hosted a weekly series of acoustic shows by such local performers as Nathan Sheppard and Stewart Marshall. **The Grit** opened as a tiny restaurant/coffee-house/performance

space/hangout in 1986 and hosted many underground acts. The annual, beery "Stationfest" featured a plethora of local rock bands through the early '90s.

**Hoyt Street North** booked indie-rock and punk bands in the early '90s. The entire building burned down in 1996. Only the charred remains testify that this was once a center of the Athens demi-monde.

27     **199 Prince Avenue** In a room that is now the kitchen of **The Grit** vegetarian restaurant, Leslie Michelle kept a small late-night café called the **Coffee Club** in the late '70s and early '80s. In this Athens-scene hangout the front rooms were usually filled with junk but were occasionally cleared out for local art shows. Boat Of, a band featuring Mike Greene (The Fans), Michael Stipe and a naked drummer, performed once or twice. Band members and artists tended to hang out, sitting on their cars and drinking after the bars closed. The Grit opened here in May, 1990. The independent film company **C-00**, run by filmmakers Jem Cohen, Jim McKay and Michael Stipe, kept offices upstairs here.

28     **1294 Prince Avenue** In the heart of Normaltown, **Allen's Hamburgers** has been at the center of things since the '50s and was the focal point for a whole musical flowering back in the '70s long before bands like Pylon, the B-52's and R.E.M. got the present downtown scene started. Many Athens musicians such as Randall Bramblett, Harold Williams and Davis Causey were regulars at Allen's, and they're still making good music today. The Normaltown Flyers were a popular band of that period, and with several changes of personnel, are still going strong and still playing at Allen's, along with latter-day counterparts like The Star Room Boys.

Step into Allen's, order a beer or a soda pop and a hamburger; and end this walking tour of Athens music where it all started.

This walking tour of Athens music history was initiated in the summer of 1998 by the Athens Welcome Center under the direction of Laura Straehla, who assigned intern Michelle Williams to work on the project. Flagpole Magazine asked permission to take over the walking tour and develop it for inclusion in this Guide.

Flagpole Music Editor Ballard Lesemann did considerable additional research and conferred with people knowledgeable about the Athens music scene "back in the day." For their help in allowing their memories to be picked, thanks to John Seawright, Kurt Wood, William Orten Carlton, Greg Reece, Michael Lachowski, Jared Bailey, Jeff Walls, Barrie Buck, Tony Eubanks, Curtis Crowe and all the other people Ballard ran into in various bars. Thanks also to musician/artist Jack Logan, whose drawings grace these pages.

To see some of this music history in action and to hear further comment on it, rent the 1987 film *Athens, Ga.: Inside/Out*.