

Austin: The Live Music Capital of the World

Austin's musical heritage began in the late 1960s and 1970s when the country music popularised by people such as Willie Nelson was joined by a cornucopia of other styles and sounds brought by the more liberal inhabitants of the city who had moved there during the two decades. A well known local club called the Vulcan Gas Company was integral in the growth of the Austin music scene with seminal acts such as the 13th Floor Elevators and Shiva's Headband playing shows there regularly during the 60s and 70s. After the Vulcan was renamed the Armadillo World Headquarters it became a musical hub, promoting acts of all genres, from bona fide stars such as Bruce Springsteen and Bette Midler to local jazz and blues acts.

Austin's musical progression continued over the next few years, gaining a reputation as a place where struggling musicians could launch their careers in front of a receptive audience. A major influence during this time was Clifford Antone who opened one of the first live music venues on Austin's 6th Street (now widely regarded as the centre of the Austin music scene) in 1975. His venue helped start the career of blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan who went on to become one of the finest guitarists to ever grace the stage. Vaughan is revered so heavily by the Austin population that a statue was erected in his honour following his death in 1990. The Austin Music Foundation was also created around this time - a ground breaking organisation that set out to help independent artists further their career.

More recently, Austin has held its place at the top of the worldwide music scene with the addition of festivals such as 'Austin City Limits Music Festival' and 'Blues on the Green', a series of free blues performances funded by local businesses. Perhaps the most well known of all the Austin festivals is 'South By Southwest', an annual film, music and interactive conference and festival. The festival is regularly attended by most major players in the music industry, on the lookout for new talent from all over the world. Along with live performances the festival also screens ground breaking work by new and independent film makers as well as conferences with guest speakers from the world of music, sharing advice on making it in the music industry. 2007's event saw musical legends including Pete Townshend of the Who and David Byrne of Talking Heads sharing their knowledge of the inner workings of the music business.

Austin's musical heritage grew to be the stuff of legend in a relatively short amount of time. Many see this as a testament to the hard work put in by promoters, bands, artists and local businesses who found success on their own terms by working together and supporting each other's cause, a rare occurrence in the cut throat world of music. This camaraderie still continues today, with clubs, venues and [hotels in Austin](#) regularly packed with industry insiders and fans eager to soak in some of the bustling, creative atmosphere.

With a musical heritage as rich as Austin's, it's not hard to see why the city's official motto is "The Live Music Capital of the World".

About the Author

Andrew Regan is an online, freelance author from Scotland. He is a keen rugby player and enjoys travelling.

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