

Oakland Musical Heritage Timeline

1910s-1920s

Black railroad employees brought jazz and blues recordings home from their travels.

1914

Until the 1960s, the Oakland Auditorium was the only major venue in Oakland open to African Americans and mixed audiences.

1917

Jelly Roll Morton played at the Creole Café on 7th Street.

1920s-1940s

Lined with packed clubs every Friday and Saturday night, Oakland's 7th Street was a major entertainment center for the African American community.

1924

One of four Sweet's Ballrooms opened, hosting many national headlines.

1928

The Fox Oakland Theatre opened, one of the era's movie palaces.

1931

When it opened, the Paramount Theatre was the largest theater on the West Coast.

1933

The foremost West Oakland venue, the Slim Jenkins Club, opened on the day Prohibition ended.

1943

Louis H. "King" Narcisse founded Mount Zion Spiritual Temple, which was known for its strong gospel program.

1945

Oakland-based blues artist Saunders King scored big on his first album, *SK Blues*.

1946

Renaissance man Bob Geddins composed and produced music and actual records in West Oakland.

1947

Ivory Joe Hunter's song "Pretty Mama Blues" rose to #1 on two charts.

1948

Bob Geddins had his first national hit: "Three O'clock Blues" with Lowell Fulson.

1950s

The distinct Oakland blues sound evolved, rooted in the African American musical traditions.

1950s- 1960s

Oakland was the center of gospel music in the Bay Area.

1951

Roy Hawkins, Jimmy McCracklin, and Bob Geddins wrote the blues standard "The Thrill is Gone."

1956

Elvis Presley played the Bay Area for the first time, performing at the Oakland Auditorium.

1958

Jimmy McCracklin's song "The Walk" went Top Ten on the R&B and pop charts.

1960

White and black Oakland chapters of American Federation of Musicians union agree to merge.

1962

Percussionist Sheila Escovedo (Sheila E) made her concert "debut" at the Sands Ballroom (now Sweet's).

1963

Having evolved from a breakfast place in 1950, Esther's Orbit Room was eventually the last club on 7th Street.

1966

John Handy received a Grammy nomination for "John Handy Live at the Monterey Jazz Festival."

1967

Larry Graham joined Sly and the Family Stone and the group released its debut album, A Whole New Thing.

1969

Marvin Holmes & the Uptights gained national recognition with the hit "The Funky Mule."

The cover of Creedence Clearwater Revival's Willie and the Poor Boys album was shot at West Oakland's Duck Kee Market.

1972

The Edwin Hawkins Singers won a Grammy for "Every Man Wants to Be Free."

1973

Tower of Power releases its eponymous third album, which went gold.

Chris James, lead singer with The Natural Four, released "Can This Be Real," which soared to #10 on the R&B chart.

Promoter Bill Graham put on the first Day on the Green concert at the Oakland Coliseum.

1976

Sheila E made her recording debut with jazz bassist Alphonso Johnson on "Yesterday's Dream."

1977

Led Zeppelin played its last U.S. concert at the Oakland Coliseum.

Yoshi's moved to Claremont Avenue in Oakland.

1978

The Pointer Sisters had the #2 pop single, "Fire."

Calvin Simmons took on musical directorship of the Oakland Symphony Orchestra.

Soulbeat TV went on the air, one of a handful of black owned TV networks in the nation.

1979

R&B guitarist and singer Saunders King played on son-in-law Carlos Santana's album *Oneness*.

1980

Blues soloist Troyce Key and his wife Margaret bought Eli's Mile High Club.

The Whispers' self-titled album was their most successful selling album and went double platinum.

1981

Walter Hawkins won a Grammy for "The Lord's Prayer." He has had 116 songs on the Billboard Gospel chart.

The Pointer Sisters had #2 pop single with "Slow Hand."

1983

Oakland label HighTone Records released Robert Cray's album, *Bad Influence*.

Too \$hort, one of the founding fathers of West Coast gangsta rap, released his first album, *Don't Stop Rappin'*.

1984

Oakland Auditorium was renovated and renamed Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center.

Pete Escovedo won Latin Musician of the Year award at the Bammies.

1985-1989

The Grateful Dead performed at Kaiser Convention Center 34 times, typically performing several shows over the course of three to four days.

1986

Terrance Kelly founded the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir, which has performed on three Grammy-winning albums.

1988

MC Hammer's second album Let's Get It Started went double platinum.

"Little Walter" by Oakland R&B group Tony! Toni! Toné! was the first of the group's five #1 singles on the R&B chart.

The Oakland East Bay Symphony was incorporated, led by Michael Morgan.

Neil Young's second annual Bridge School Benefit concert was held at the Oakland Arena. The lineup includes Bob Dylan and Tom Petty.

1989

En Vogue launched, going onto win seven MTV Video Music Awards.

Pete Escovedo was nominated for a Grammy for his Mr. E album.

1990

MC Hammer's album Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em became the best-selling rap album of all time.

MC Hammer's "U Can't Touch This" won two Grammys.

On her Always album, Perri "Pebbles" McKissack had two #1 singles on the R&B chart.

Tony! Toni! Toné! had three #1 R&B singles: "The Blues," "Feels Good" and "It Never Rains..."

Walter Hawkins and Love Center Choir's album "Love Alive IV" was #1 on the Gospel chart.

1991

Zakiya Hooker-Bell, daughter of John Lee Hooker, made her debut performance.

Pianist Edwin Kelly was inducted into the Northern California Blues Hall of Fame.

1992

En Vogue released its second album, Funky Divas, which eventually went multi-platinum.

Since releasing his first EP, E-A-SKI went on to perform on or produce 10 million albums.

The Gospel Hummingbirds' Steppin' Out album was nominated for a Grammy.

Vicki Randle debuted as the first and only known female member of the Tonight Show Band.

1993

Larry Graham was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a member of Sly and the Family Stone.

1994

Khalil Shaheed founded the Oaktown Jazz Workshop which teaches jazz performance and history.

The term "hyphy" was coined by Oakland-reared rapper Keak Da Sneak.

Green Day's major label album debut, Dookie, garnered a Grammy and sold 15+ million copies.

1995

Lady Bianca's solo debut album was Best Kept Secret.

1997

John Handy received Bay Area Music Bill Graham Lifetime Achievement Award.

1997

John Lucasey opened Studio 880 where Iggy Pop, Smashmouth, Chris Isaak, Kronos Quartet and more have recorded.

1997

Yoshi's relocated to Jack London Square creating an award-winning 330-seat jazz club.

1999

iMusicast began broadcasting live shows via the internet using streaming video.

2000

Ledisi released her debut album. Soulsinger.

2001

Persephone's Bees garnered the San Francisco Weekly Award for Best Pop Band.

Goapele broke onto the Bay Area music scene with her EP, *Closer*, and the follow-up full length album, *Even Closer*.

Edwin Hawkins' 1969 arrangement of "Oh Happy Day" was included on the RIAA Songs of the Century list.

Mystic's first solo album was one of the most critically acclaimed hip-hop records of the year.

2002

Womens' ensemble Kitka joined Le Mystere des Voix Bulgares for the choir's 50th Anniversary Gala.

2003

The John Santos Quintet was formed in Oakland.

The Grateful Dead released two albums that were recorded at concerts in Oakland.

2004

The Pacific Boychoir won a Grammy for Best Classical Album and founded the only full-time West Coast boys' chorus school.

2005

Lenny Williams won the BMI Urban Award for co-writing "Overnight Celebrity," recorded by rapper Twista.

The Lovemakers landed a deal with a major label, releasing *Times of Romance*.

The Oakland Ballet commissioned Marcus Shelby to arrange a ballet suite, "Ella."

2006

Too \$hort's album *Blow the Whistle*, peaked at #14 on the Billboard Hot 200.

Miko Marks won Best Country Album of the Year at the Independent Music Awards.

2007

Having produced his own music and serving as keyboardist for a number of headliners, Kev Choice founded the Kev Choice Ensemble.

2008

The Oakland-based Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir won three gold medals at the Grand Prix St. Petersburg (Russia) Choral Festival.

2009

After many years dark and neglected, followed by mammoth renovations, the Fox Oakland Theatre reopened.

CAKE is one of the first bands to play in the renovated Fox Theater Oakland.

Michael Franti & Spearhead's single "Say Hey (I Love You) peaked at #18 on the Billboard Hot 100.

"Hammertime" launched on the A&E Network, featuring an inside look at Hammer's life.

Revolutionary Internet music provider Pandora announced that an agreement had been reached regarding royalties, making it possible to stay in business.

D'Wayne Wiggins held a Haiti relief event at Sweet's Ballroom featuring several Oakland groups.

2010

Well-known nightclub owner and promoter "Sweet Jimmie" Ward died.

Green Day's American Idiot musical opened on Broadway.

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Did we miss someone or something notable? Email kwilliams@oaklandnet.com.

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Compiled by City of Oakland Cultural Arts & Marketing staff with help from Cultural Heritage Survey staff. Sources include: "Oakland Blues" by Lee Hildebrand and "The California Black Gospel Music Tradition—A Confluence of Musical Styles and Cultures" by Jacqueline Cogdell Djedje in *California Soul—Music of African Americans in the West*, 1998, edited by Jacqueline Cogdell Djedje and Eddie S. Meadows; "Jazzing Up Seventh Street—Musicians, Venues and Their Social Implications," by Willie R. Collins in *Sights and Sounds—Essays in Celebration of West Oakland*, 1997, edited by Suzanne Stewart and Mary Praetzellis; Bay Area Blues Society; Wikipedia.