

## **Discover the Stories Behind Tourism** **Rock & Roll Hall of Fame: Behind the Music**

When a friend or family member asks, “What can we do when we’re in Ohio?” or when your spouse asks, “Where can we go on a day trip?” do you have a good answer? The “Stories Behind Tourism” series will help you answer that question and discover the wonderful stories behind some of Ohio’s richest historical, cultural and popular attractions. From the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and the Macy’s Music Festival in Cincinnati, keep a lookout for upcoming installments in the series that will intrigue you, challenge you and enrich your visit to some of Ohio’s top tourism destinations.

### ***Making the Band: The O’Jays***

In 1958, five high school students in Canton, Ohio, were inspired by political turmoil, the battle for civil rights and the power of gospel music. Together, they formed a band, born of the generation that coined the term “Rock and Roll” and the state that would become home to its Hall of Fame. They would later become known for hit songs such as “Livin’ for the Weekend” and the party-favorite “Love Train.”

Those high school students are now known as the O’Jays. Original members Eddie Levert, Walter Williams, William Powell, Bill Isles, and Bobby Massey took on a world that was bogged down with racial tension and strife and created full, flowing harmonies infused with contemporary funk, an abundant accompaniment and a comment on the times. The road was long and winding for the band, whose hard work and perseverance would push them to the top of the charts. They became an iconic band, whose music would bridge and unite generations. Before they would have a chance to become Rock and Roll icons, they started as a small homegrown group.

The band first came together as The Triumphs and performed on local radio stations, singing songs of worship and praise. In 1961, they changed their name to the Mascots. It was when they recorded their first single, “Miracles,” that they began to come into their own. Their gospel-like vocals resonated with hope for African-Americans amidst a struggling era and perked the ears of well-known and influential Cleveland Disc Jockey Eddie O’Jay. He took them under his wing, guiding their career and helping them to reach an audience. They changed their name to The O’Jays, paying homage to their friend, and it stuck.

The O’Jays would spend most of the ‘60s making music they loved, but struggling to reach their full potential. They recorded with several producers, under a number of different record labels, but had yet to find their niche. Isles and Massey left the group around this time—redefining the O’Jays as a trio. In 1972, they signed with legendary songwriters and producers, Gamble and Huff. Crossing over from gospel to R&B with their first album, “Back Stabbers,” they were able to show the world and the industry what they were really made of. The album was a landmark for soul music.

With more than 40 singles and nearly a dozen No. 1 hits, The O’Jays had found their rhythm.

They recorded a series of successful pop albums with the self-satisfaction that they had remained true to their hearts, and their culture was evident in their sultry grooves. Sammy Strain joined the group after they lost original member William Powell in 1977 to a battle with cancer, and the group forged ahead to capture new listeners. The O'Jays would become known as a legendary Philadelphia soul trio, but would never forget their hometown or their roots. In 2005, their success came full-circle when they were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, the place where their careers had begun.

### ***One Rock and Rollin' Town***

The vibrant and multicultural city of Cleveland has been known for more than 50 years as the birthplace of Rock and Roll. Cleveland Disc Jockey Alan Freed is credited not only with coining and popularizing the phrase, but also for pioneering racial integration in American youth and music. He used the term, "Rock and Roll" to describe the upbeat R&B records, written and performed by black artists that he played in the '50s on Cleveland radio stations. Freed was known as "the Moondog" and his courageous influence helped pave the way for bands like The O'Jays across the nation. Freed also helped attract the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum to Cleveland.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum was established in 1983, but had yet to find a home. Many U.S. cities fought for it, but it was the legacy of Alan Freed at the heart of Cleveland's lobbying efforts that made the choice easy – the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum belonged in Cleveland. Recognizing Freed as defining the musical genre of Rock and Roll and because of him, Cleveland as the venue for the first Rock and Roll concert, the Rock and Roll Foundation chose the green city by a blue lake to build its Hall of Fame. The museum is home to a permanent collection of iconic artifacts from generations of outstanding musicians, many of whom had a hand in the fight for civil rights, giving African-Americans a loud, clear and powerful voice. With two incredible exhibits that speak to African-American culture and music, and an exhibit on inductees the O'Jays, now is the time if you've been meaning to visit the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

### ***Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum Sepia Exhibit***

*Sepia* magazine was a publication that often exposed the obstacles facing African-Americans, and more importantly, it celebrated their accomplishments. By way of its popular photojournalistic style, the magazine closely focused on various aspects of the culture including politics, lifestyle and music. Especially during the civil rights era, *Sepia* was a clear and steady outlet of the African-American community to express its views and highlight its accomplishments. The *Sepia* exhibition at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (through April 12), showcases a history of African-American musical figures through sepia-toned photographs originally published in the magazine that helped to define black culture.

### ***50 Years of Motown Exhibit***

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum is also honoring 50 years of Motown this spring with its exciting exhibition, "MOTOWN." The exhibit features a number of iconic items on display including Stevie Wonder's glasses and Superbowl 1999 "African American" outfit; "Red Hot," an outfit worn by Mary Wilson of the Supremes on the Ed Sullivan Show; and James Jamerson's upright bass, played on all of his Motown recording sessions until 1963. Joining these items are instruments, clothing, posters, sheet music, original music scores, recordings and other artifacts representing Motown's biggest stars from Marvin Gaye to the Four Tops.

### ***2009 Rock Hall Induction Week***

As if these two exhibits aren't exciting enough to make you want to head to Ohio this weekend, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum is also preparing for its Induction Ceremony on Saturday, April 4. Induction week will be celebrated with free admission to the museum and the induction event on Saturday night will attract a star-studded audience. Artists who will be inducted include Jeff Beck, Little Anthony & the Imperials, Metallica, Run-DMC and Bobby Womack. Excited about the events at the Rock Hall, but wondering how to learn more about the O'Jays? Well, you're in luck.

The O'Jays, are set to headline a free concert on April 2, at Cleveland State University's Wolstein Center as part of the grand kick off for a week-long series of induction ceremonial events that promise the weekend to be worth the wait. If you're "Livin' for the Weekend," there has never been a better time to turn up the radio, let the music take over and explore all the possibilities that a weekend in Ohio can offer.

### ***O'Jays Celebration Weekend – Canton***

Join the O'Jays in Canton for their 5th Annual Celebration Weekend, a three-day celebration that features a Scholarship Banquet, a Family Reunion-style gathering, a performance by the O'Jays, food, family and fun. The weekend celebration pays a special tribute to The O'Jays who have paved the way for many artists in the music industry. Look for more details about this mid-July event on [www.DiscoverOhio.com](http://www.DiscoverOhio.com). And, while you're visiting Canton, be sure to plan a visit to the world-famous Pro Football Hall of Fame where you can experience the history of the pigskin and the players that have made the game great.

To learn more, view upcoming events and plan your visit to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, or to view a list of the 2009 inductees, please visit <http://www.rockhall.com/>. You can find more information on historical destinations and free travel information by visiting [www.DiscoverOhio.com](http://www.DiscoverOhio.com) and clicking on the "Multicultural" tab or by calling 1-800-BUCKEYE from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. and weekends from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

### ***About the Ohio Tourism Division***

The Ohio Tourism Division is the premier source of information for travelers and media about Ohio's vibrant tourism experiences, attractions, and economy. Division marketing programs contributed to an estimated \$38 billion in visitor sales in 2007 and 454,000 jobs sustained by visitors to the state. A part of the Ohio Department of Development, the Division's mission is to promote and celebrate Ohio's unique travel opportunities and market the state's outstanding quality of life.