

Hot Jazz & Home Runs



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Negro League Baseball Museum

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NLBM.com

American Jazz Museum

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AmericanJazzMuseum.org

**1616 E. 18th St.
Kansas City, Mo.**

Welcome to Kansas City, 1920—a gritty town of about 325,000 people held in the grip of Tom “Boss” Pendergast. The city was blossoming from a frontier town into a cosmopolitan gateway to the west, its growth fueled by the burgeoning African-American population. Many of these recent migrants from the South found prosperity in Kansas City, where they formed a core of middle-class businesses along 18th and Vine streets.

The 18th and Vine district, recently added to the National Register of Historic Places, remains a point of pride for black Americans. Celebrating that pride are two monuments to a distinctly American experience: the American Jazz Museum and the Negro Baseball Leagues Museum.

Housed in the same building at 18th and Vine, the two collections are joined by an open atrium at the entry. From here, enter either museum or buy a combination ticket admitting you to both. You’ll need two to three hours to thoroughly absorb these two amazing collections.

The Negro Leagues Baseball Museum

While jazz musicians jammed on 18th Street, another historic band was forming. The Negro National Baseball League was founded at the Paseo YMCA in 1920. Banned from playing ball on all-white teams, African-American players founded their own leagues and played to multiracial crowds for 40 years. Their legacy is preserved in this unique museum, where fans can read and experience the history of players like Buck O’Neil and Satchel Paige.

The NLBM is not a hall of fame. Rather, these exhibits stress that “they were all stars.” The main gallery takes visitors on a tour beginning in the 1800’s and continuing through the heyday of the leagues between the 1920’s to 1940’s. Artifacts like uniforms, equipment, photographs and of course autographed baseballs line the walls. The Grandstand Theatre offers a 15-minute film narrated by James Earl Jones on the general history of the Negro leagues while other video exhibits give voice to league veterans who tell what it was like to be the rock stars of their day.

The Historic 18th & Vine District



At the end of the circular main gallery, walk onto the Field of Legends, where bronze players stand poised to catch fly balls and tag the next batter. The field is lined with baseball jerseys and other artifacts honoring the league's best players.

entry, the brand-new John Baker Film Collection gives jazz aficionados a chance to see their idols on film at individual viewing kiosks. The exhibit focuses on rotating themes like Big Bands and Women in Jazz.

The American Jazz Museum

Don't let its modest size fool you: The American Jazz Museum's walls and alcoves are jammed with artifacts and interactive exhibits. Near the

The heart of the museum highlights four extraordinary performers: Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Charlie "Bird" Parker and Edward "Duke" Ellington. Each exhibit takes visitors through a different era of jazz history, featuring photographs, original sheet music, instruments

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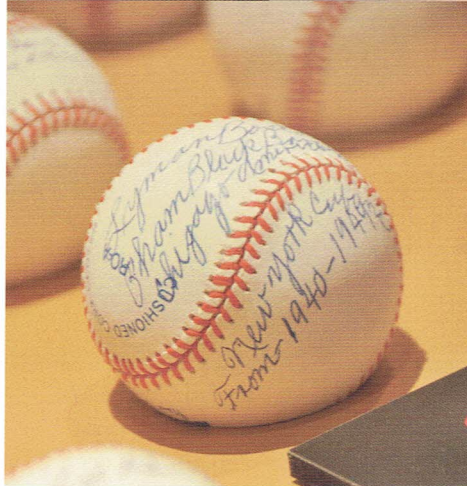
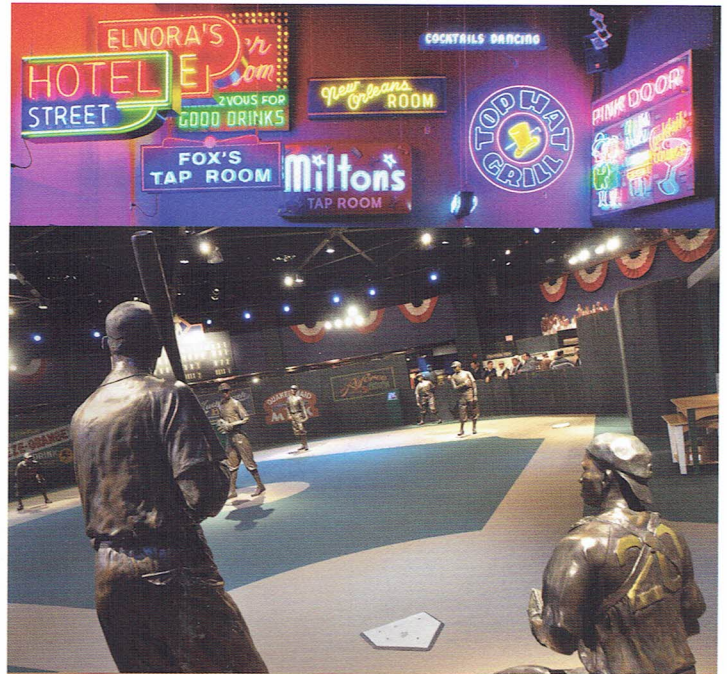
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and costumes. But jazz is a listening experience, and toward that end, listening stations let fans hear examples of each performer's style and how it evolved, from Fitzgerald's pitch-perfect crooning to Ellington's stunningly diverse body of work.

After getting to know some of these jazz greats, take a look at the Jazz and Technology Exhibit. Here you can help mix the audio, choose harmonies and melodies and experiment with rhythm at several listening stations.

Finally, visit the Blue Room, a working jazz club where dozens more artifacts and photos are on display. Come back in the evening for live jam sessions throughout the week. The full schedule of performances here and at the historic Gem Theater across the street is available on the website. LL

Gift Shops & The Blue Room

Both museums feature interesting gift shops: The Swing Shop, in the atrium, has jazz memorabilia and plenty of music for sale; the shop for the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum can be found near the museum exit. The collections themselves are open Tuesday–Saturday, 9 a.m.–6 p.m.; Sunday, noon–6 p.m. and closed Mondays. The Blue Room jazz club is open for performances at 5 p.m. Monday–Friday and 7 p.m. Saturdays (closed Sunday). Cover charge is \$10 unless otherwise noted; minors admitted when accompanied by an adult. Museum admission: ages 12 and up, \$8 per museum or \$10 combination ticket for both; under 12, admission is \$3 for one museum or \$5 for both.