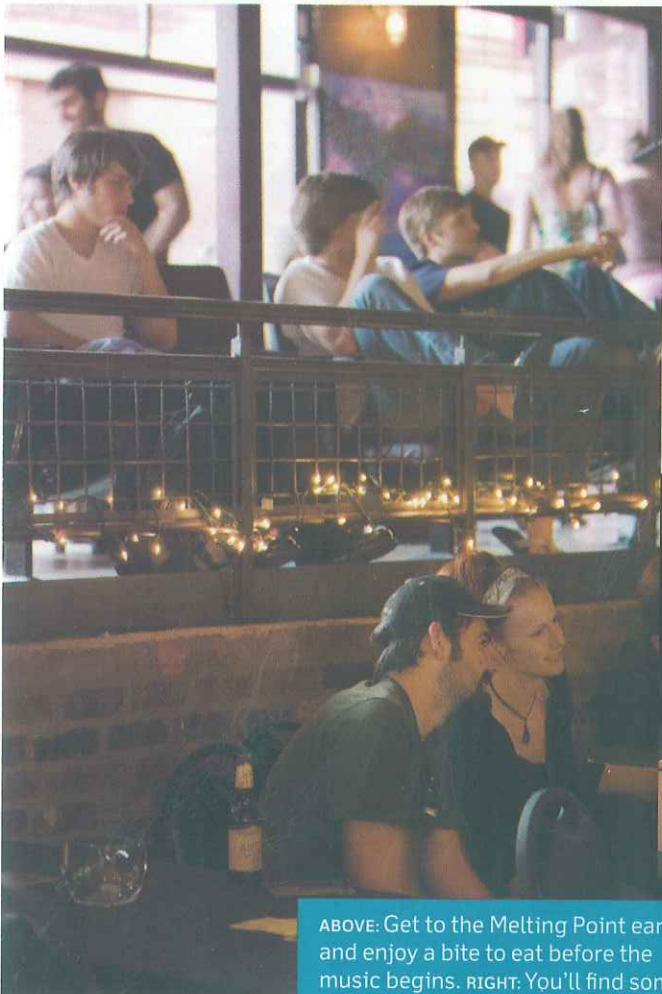


Athens Rocks

It's no secret that Athens, Georgia, has fostered one of the country's cutting-edge music scenes since the 1970s. (R.E.M. and The B-52's hail from here.) From acoustic guitar-strumming singer-songwriters to indie rock bands to alternative country acts, you can walk into numerous venues and find what you like. What's happening now? We take a look at some of the places to catch great live music in town. By **Tanner C. Latham**



ABOVE: Get to the Melting Point early, and enjoy a bite to eat before the music begins. RIGHT: You'll find some great balcony seats here (the upstairs bar is less busy than the one downstairs).

The Venues

• THE CLASSICS

40 Watt Club: An Athens legend since 1978. The bigger bands play this smaller venue when they seek a closer audience connection. The quality of music you hear here will be high. *285 West Washington Street; www.40watt.com or (706) 549-7871.*

Georgia Theatre: The iconic marquee remains the flashiest thing in this big, smoky club, but major national acts land here when they're passing through. *215 North Lumpkin Street; www.georgiatheatre.com or (706) 549-9918.*

• THE NEWCOMERS

Melting Point: Housed in an old foundry, this intimate performance space features weeknight shows including jazz and bluegrass.

295 East Dougherty Street; www.meltingpointathens.com or (706) 254-6909.

Farm 255: Small outdoor stage and excellent organic food. Regular jazz trios and songwriters perform here throughout the week.

255 West Washington Street; www.farm255.com or (706) 549-4660.



Three Things You Need To Know

Pick up a *Flagpole*. This free rag found all over town lists weekly performance schedules. www.flagpole.com.

Think college-town casual for dress. Truly, the town's diversity means you'll fit in wearing anything.

Catch an afternoon snooze. Many places don't get really cranking until 10 p.m. at the earliest. That's the biz, man. Did we mention this was a college town?

When You Want To Buy

Wuxtry Records: The best little indie music store in town features rare vinyl and an excellent Athens music section. *197 East Clayton Street; www.wuxtryrecords.com or (706) 369-9428.* ●

The Athens Sound

We ask Steve LaBate, associate editor for national entertainment magazine *Paste*, about the town's music.

"There isn't really an 'Athens Sound' these days," he says. "Stylistically, the bands are all over the map. The sound of Athens, I suppose, is the musical diversity." Steve recommends five area bands to watch.

• UP-AND-COMERS

Modern Skirts—indie pop/rock

Hope for Agoldensummer—acoustic/experimental folk

Venice Is Sinking—orchestral rock/ballads

Still Small Voice and the Joyful Noise—roots rock

Don Chambers and Goat—roots/Americana

• BEST-KNOWN ATHENS BANDS

R.E.M.

The B-52's

Widespread Panic

Drive-By Truckers

Of Montreal