

During the 2014 LouFest in St. Louis's Forest Park, the venerated New Orleans jazz musician Trombone Shorty played a Sunday evening set with his group Orleans Avenue.



During the Ozark Music Festival held in Sedalia in 1974, people turned out from all over the United States, as the festival had taken out a full-page advertisement in *Rolling Stone* magazine.

FESTIVAL Frenzy

Journey across the state, and discover the best festivals for music fans, from barbecue and bluegrass bashes to hippie havens.

BY JONAS WEIR

COURTESY OF JACK EDINGER

COURTESY OF DAVID MANN

ON JULY 19, 1974, nearly two hundred thousand descended on the state fairgrounds in Sedalia in an event that can only be called the Woodstock of Missouri. People ventured from all over to hear their favorite rock groups: Aerosmith, Blue Öyster Cult, the Eagles, Ted Nugent, and the Show-Me State's own Ozark Mountain Daredevils.

The rock festival culture—the gathering of hippies and dropouts to listen to live music, party, and live free—made its way from California, where the culture was born in 1967 at the Monterey Pop Festival, to the more conservative Missouri. The festival organizers, Kansas City's Musical Productions Inc., assured the Missouri Department of Agriculture and the Sedalia Chamber of Commerce that it would feature bluegrass and soft rock and that no more than fifty thousand tickets would be sold. However, with “no hassles guaranteed,” a venue that could easily accommodate a hundred thousand people, and many hard rock bands set to perform, the Ozark Music Festival quickly turned into what state legislators called a modern Sodom and Gomorrah. By the end, there was an estimated \$100,000 in property damage and several drug overdoses.

Needless to say, there wouldn't be an Ozark Music Festival in 1975. The Missouri State Senate committee that was formed to investigate the festival had scalding remarks: “The Ozark Music Festival can only be described as a disaster.”

Today, festival culture has evolved. Remnants of the bacchanalia that came to life at the Ozark Music Festival in 1974 are still alive in today's festival party culture, but great lessons were learned from that festival and others like it. Modern rock festivals are safe; police, festival security, and medical staff are all on hand, and many are family-friendly environments from the outset.

Even better, the world of music festivals has never been more diverse and vibrant. There are scores of specialized festivals across the country, and across the state, where you find your favorite music and nothing but your favorite music, whether that's bluegrass, blues, classical, electronic dance music, or good old rock 'n' roll. So get out the sunscreen, bring plenty of water, and discover how Missouri does music festivals.



The Big Muddy Folk Festival often brings in some of the best Americana performers from across the country, including jug bands like The Wiyos, who hail from the East Coast.

Big Muddy Folk Festival

On April 10 and 11, the Big Muddy Folk Festival will return to Thespian Hall in Boonville.

This two-day fest is all about the music, but not necessarily just the concerts. The weekend features many workshops and jams for musicians of all types and skill levels. Yet, the concerts will still be great.

The Claire Lynch Band will headline the festival this year. Claire was named the 2013 International Bluegrass Music Association's female vocalist of the year, and in 2012, she was awarded the prestigious United States Artists Walker Fellowship, a fifty thousand dollar award.

The lineup will be rounded out by Atwater-Donnelly, the St. Louis Rivermen, Gloria Attoun, L'Esprit Creole, Phyllis Dale, The Original Sweet Song String Band with Dana Hamilton and David Lindsey, and Boonville's resident balladeers Cathy Barton and Dave Para. Tickets range from \$25 to \$45. Visit bigmuddy.org for more information.



From left, Jeanette, Jack, Jeremiah, Jessica, Jedi, Jennifer, and Jasmine are all siblings and band mates. As the Willis Clan, they perform bluegrass mixed with Irish music, and they'll be returning to Silver Dollar City this May for the Branson BBQ and Bluegrass Festival. Both their mother and father, Brenda and Toby Willis, play music, too, and they have five more siblings—Juliette, Jamie, Joy Anna, Jaeger, and Jada—just waiting to join the band.

Branson BBQ & Bluegrass Festival

If you've never been to Silver Dollar City, May is the time to go.

From May 7 to 25, the Ozarks theme park will be hosting its annual Branson BBQ and Bluegrass Festival, bringing scores of great performers and serving up delicious smoked, grilled, sauced, and charred meats. Every day from 3 PM until the park closes, the park's Reunion Hall will be serving an all-you-can-eat ribs feast. The Bottle Neck Bros. Sauce Shack will offer 150 different sauces, from the spiciest of the spicy to sweet Silver Dollar City originals. And the music, as always, will be excellent.

Highlights this year include the queen of bluegrass, Rhonda Vincent; the Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music of America's entertaining group of the year, Nothin' Fancy; rising star Lorraine Jordan; and more. The festival is included with the price of admission to the park. Visit silverdollarcity.com for more information.

Middle of the Map

Middle of the Map is Missouri's answer to South by Southwest—the music, film, and forum fest in Austin, Texas. However, Middle of the Map is a chance for you to find new bands, rather than an opportunity for bands to be discovered by record labels.

"Going in, you might not know all the bands on the lineup," says Ashley Dowg-willo, one of the festival's organizer, "but you're going to love them coming out of it."

Middle of the Map often books artists before they ever earn wide recognition. Three years ago, the festival booked the relatively unknown band Fun.[sic], only to have them release a platinum album right before the festival.

Technically called Ink's Middle of the Map Festival Curated by The Record Machine, this festival was founded by *Ink Magazine* and record label The Record Machine five years ago to bring in national music talent to Kansas City and showcase what Kansas City has to offer. And much like SXSW, the festival takes place in various indoor venues. Unlike SXSW, one festival pass gets you into all of the concerts. This year, some highlights include Iron & Wine, Ben Kweller, and OK Go. Plus many local acts will perform during the music festival portion—April 22 to 25.

While the music portion of the festival may be the finale, Middle of the Map is holding events starting on April 5. So for the entire month of April, Westport in Kansas won't only be in the middle of a US map, it'll be the center of our attention.



Lead singer of the Kansas City punk rock group The Bad Ideas, Break-A-Dawn, was the center of attention during the band's performance at last year's festival in Westport.

Rock'n Ribs BBQ Festival

What more could you ask of a day than listening to live music and walking around a barbecue competition?

On April 25 and 26, this Kansas City Barbecue Society-sanctioned cook-off at the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds will bring in more than seventy-five teams to compete for the best ribs, and better yet, all of the proceeds benefit local children's charities. During the hoopla of the barbecue competition, the festival will feature music all day long in what the festival organizers call a Mardi Gras-style atmosphere. Regional rock groups—like Springfield's 1980s tribute band Members Only or party band Sequel Dose—usually fill the bill.

For more information, visit rocknribs.com.



At the annual Rock'n Ribs BBQ Festival, the food is just as important as the music. This year, the public barbecue sampling starts on Saturday at 1 PM and ends when the food runs out.



COURTESY OF MISSOURI DIVISION OF TOURISM, TODD ZIMMER, AND MIKE KELLNER

Bring your own lawn chair to the Arcadia Valley Music Festival if you want to be comfortable, you can always sit on the provided straw bales to get that real old-time feeling.

Arcadia Valley Music Festival

The Arcadia Valley Music Festival isn't technically a summer festival. But with one in spring—May 15 to 17—and one in the fall—October—The Arcadia Valley Music Festivals really book-end the summer. One kicks it off toward the end of the school year, and the other says a solemn goodbye just before those northerly winds blow in.

About eighty miles south of St. Louis, this free music festival brings top-notch bluegrass and gospel musicians to the heart of the Ozarks. While this festival is a chance to get out and hear great music, it's also an opportunity to appreciate the majesty of nature and experience a slice of small-town life. The activities center on Main Street in Ironton and the Iron City Courthouse, and there are plenty of places to camp nearby in the Arcadia Valley Region and Black River Recreation Area.

This spring festival's lineup features The Dalton Gang, a group of young bluegrass players and a thirty-seven-year music industry veteran based in Lamar; Nashville's award-winning bluegrass group The Bankesters; an Old Testament-inspired gospel group from Ste. Genevieve, The Book of Ruth; and more.

Visit mountainmusicfestival.net for more information.

Back Forty Bluegrass Festival

What sets the Back Forty Bluegrass Festival in Curryville apart from your typical music festival are two strict rules: no drugs or alcohol and absolutely no electronic instruments.

Like Pete Seeger trying to take an axe to the soundboard when Bob Dylan went electric, this festival is taking things back to the roots of Americana. And for two long weekends—May 21 to 24 and September 3 to 6—you can get a down-home bluegrass experience in a family-friendly setting. As long as you bring your own chairs and shade, you're bound to have a good time watching artists that range from the Clay Hess Band in May to Marty Raybon and Full Circle in September.

Tickets range from \$20 for one day to \$45 for a weekend pass. Rides are available from the camping area nearby. Call 573-324-5437 or visit backfortybluegrasspark.com for more information.



With a total of twelve full-length albums, Rhonda Vincent—the Queen of Bluegrass—is returning to the Back Forty Bluegrass Festival this May with her band, The Rage. Rhonda is a Missouri native. She was born in Kirksville on July 13, 1962, and was raised in nearby Greentop.

Cosmic Reunion

If Missouri has an equivalent to Burning Man—a weeklong music festival known for its scenic location in the state of Nevada, large public art installation, and bohemian spirit—it would be Cosmic Reunion.

Held in the beautiful Astral Valley, about forty-five minutes south of St. Louis, this camping and music festival will give you a chance to live like a free spirit from May 22 to 24. The festival is truly a hippie haven with the infamous Grateful Dead tribute band The Schwag headlining both weekend nights. Plus, there will be a Pink Floyd tribute band, a Sublime tribute band, a Led Zeppelin cover band, and many musicians performing original music, like self-described hillbilly band Mountain Sprout. However fun the music may be, what makes Cosmic Reunion worth it is the art.

The festival offers grants to ten artists to come and set up installations. The best part is you can interact with most of the pieces. Giant art sculptures will populate the grounds. Puppeteers will launch a thirty-five-foot long octopus across the crowd. You'll be able to climb on a life-sized replica of a Viking ship.

"We're doing something that I think hasn't been done before at a Midwest music festival," says Sheena Cox, one of the festival's key organizers.

What also sets this festival apart from other large rock festivals is its laid-back attitude. There's nothing to worry about at Cosmic Reunion. The organizers are relaxed. The fans are chilled-out hippies. And if the crowds do get to you, there are 230 acres of beautiful Ozark nature to explore at Astral Valley.

So for three days, you can explore caves, hike trails, see theater performances, climb on giant art installations, camp, and listen to music. And tickets only cost \$55. Visit cosmicreunion.com for more information.



Besides the massive puppets, like these aliens, The Schwag—a Grateful Dead tribute band that has been around since 1991—is the main attraction at the Cosmic Reunion.

COURTESY OF COSMIC REUNION AND BACK FORTY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

Rockfest

Many rock festivals have a hard time finding a niche. A vague genre like rock—which could cover everything from prog to alternative to heavy metal to bubblegum—is hard to hold as a guiding principle, but KQRC 98.9's Rockfest knows what its fans want. That's why more than fifty thousand people come out for the day-long festival each year at Liberty Memorial in Downtown Kansas City.

Organized by KQRC 98.9 The Rock, Kansas City's biggest hard rock station, the festival is in its twenty-third year—the twelfth at Liberty Memorial. This year's festival on May 30 is bringing in Rob Zombie, Anthrax, Kansas City native Tech N9ne, and more.

Visit krockfest.com for more information.



The DJs of 98.9 The Rock introduce Korn, the headliner of last year's festival.

Bluegrass and Gospel Festival at Excelsior Springs

On May 31, from noon until 5 PM, Downtown Excelsior Springs will be alive with music.

From the opening band to the closing act, you'll hear everything from old country standards to true blue gospel to finger-pickin' bluegrass. The day of music is a perfect opportunity to bring a lawn chair and picnic basket, enjoy the weather, and visit the great restaurants and shops in the town's historic district.

Check visitexcelsior.com or call 816-637-2811 for more information.

COURTESY OF KQRC 98.9 THE ROCK



Pillars of Truth Ministries perform at the Bluegrass and Gospel Festival in downtown Excelsior Springs.

Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival

Each year, Sedalia pays tribute to Missouri's arguably greatest contribution to the world—ragtime music.

In the city where the legendary composer wrote "The Maple Leaf Rag," The Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival is returning from June 3 to 6. Presented by the Scott Joplin Foundation, this festival offers both free and paid concerts at a variety of venues throughout town.

Keeping alive the spirit of the music that paved the way for jazz, the festival is the perfect venue for traditional dancing, tapping your foot to the same music that was played in nineteenth-century saloons, and passing along generations of Missouri traditions to new generations. Visit scottjoplin.org for more information.

Jacob Adams is a Minneapolis-based pianist and composer whose specialty is ragtime music. Last year, he performed at the Scott Joplin Maple Leaf site.



Old Time Music Ozark Heritage Festival

The Old Time Music, Ozark Heritage Festival is much more than just a music festival. It's a chance to pass on the traditions of southern Missouri and discover the favorite pastimes of the nineteenth century.

The two-day event—June 19 and 20 in West Plains—features blacksmithing demonstrations, square dancing, a dutch-oven cook-off, a mule jumping demonstration, quilting demonstrations, a jig dance competition, living history performers, plenty of activities for children, and much more. However, music is the main attraction.

The festival offers a plethora of workshops if you want to work on your skills on banjo, guitar, or mandolin. The Fiddlers' Frolic is a chance to witness a real open jam with scores of talented musicians. And of course, bands will be performing on two stages. Many great Missouri artists will perform, but this year's highlight is definitely Dr. Ralph Stanley—the noted, Grammy-winning eighty-seven-year old Appalachian bluegrass singer who was featured on the soundtrack for *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, singing the Virginia dirge "O Death."

Visit oldtimemusic.org or call 888-256-8835 for more information.



Music isn't the only thing that's center stage at the Old Time Music, Ozark Heritage Festival in West Plains. Pie-making was featured on the cooking stage at last year's event.

The Brumley Gospel Sing

The Brumley Gospel Sing has become a music institution.

Since its inception in 1969, this festival has featured scores of the most authentic gospel singers in the nation. For its tenth year in Lebanon, Missouri, the sing is bringing in more than twenty-five performers for two shows a day at Cowan Civic Center from August 5 to 8.

Called the Granddaddy of Gospel Sings, the Brumley Gospel Sing brings in more than twenty thousand fans of gospel each year. Tickets range from \$20 for one night to \$55 for all four nights. There are discount prices for children. Visit brumleymusic.com or call 800-435-3725 for more information.



From left, Jeff Hawes, Karen Peck, and Susan Peck make up Karen Peck and the New River, who have performed at the sing for the past fifteen years. Karen's daughter Kari is also on stage.

COURTESY OF BRUCE CONKLIN, WEST PLAINS COUNCIL ON THE ARTS, AND RANDY KIRBY

Mizzou International Composers Festival

The Mizzou International Composers Festival is a one-of-a-kind experience and one of the true gems that Missouri has to offer.

Inside the Missouri Theatre in downtown Columbia, this festival brings in the internationally respected chamber ensemble Alarm Will Sound, two of the world's best contemporary composers, and eight aspiring composers for a full week of new music. But what does new music mean?

"People say 'new music,' but anything is new," says William Lackey, who has been the director of the new music initiative at Mizzou since the festival got its start in 2009. "I guess we're talking about concert pieces written by what some people call fine arts composers, but they are really just people who are passionate about music and sound and who continue a conversation from the lineage of Bach and Beethoven."

Yes, so string and wind instruments, a conductor, and pages upon pages of sheet music being performed in an ornate theater to a crowd of seated people, politely clapping at the end of each piece. However highfalutin this may sound, it's not supposed to be. The festival is truly for

anyone who wants to experience and learn about a whole new world of sound.

To that end, Monday, July 20, through Friday, July 24, there will be free rehearsals open to the public. Plus, two guest composers, American composer Andrew Norman and Danish composer Hans Abrahamsen, will be giving lectures on Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively. On the other hand, the truly great events are the performances on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights.

On Thursday, the musicians of Alarm Will Sound will pick the pieces that they want to perform, so they really hit their stride during these performances.

"Alarm Will Sound is the closest a chamber ensemble could be to a rock band," William says. "What you will see is passionate musicians on stage, working their hardest to express what the composer put on the page."

Next, on Friday night, Alarm Will Sound will take on pieces from the guest composers. Hans Abrahamsen, one guest composer, is best known for *Schnee*—a minimalist score that's already considered a modern masterpiece. Andrew Norman,

the other guest composer, gained international attention when he unveiled a piece inspired by architect Frank Gehry's house.

Finally, on Saturday night, Alarm Will Sound will perform eight world premieres from eight aspiring composers from around the world. The pieces are chosen by an open-call contest for composers. This past year, 231 composers submitted pieces, creating stiff competition for the eight open spots.

In the end, though, the festival is an amazing opportunity, especially for Mid-Missouri, to see one of the nation's greatest ensembles of classically trained musicians perform music by the best composers of our lifetimes, plus eight concert pieces that no one has ever heard before. And it's all done in a somewhat relaxed setting where great composers are totally accessible to the audience. The key is to have an open mind.

"I want people to come take an adventure and listen to what's going on," William says. "If you don't like something, ask the composer about it."

Visit newmusicsummerfestival.missouri.edu for more information.



Alarm Will Sound performs annually at the Mizzou International Composers Festival. The group has been called "one of the most vital and original ensembles" in America by *The New York Times*.

COURTESY OF PUREEXPOSURE@ME.COM

Last year, Concertmaster David Halen celebrated ten years with the festival and brought musicians from the St. Louis Symphony and other orchestras.



Missouri River Festival of the Arts

Although Thespians Hall in Boonville plays host to a very different type of music festival in April, the venue gets a little more highbrow in August for the Missouri River Festival of the Arts.

Since 1976, this festival, with support from the Kemper Foundations and the Missouri Arts Council, has put together three nights of classical music featuring nationally recognized performers. Since 2005, David Halen, concertmaster of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, has acted as the director of the festival. Under his direction, the festival has flourished into one of the best nights of concert music Mid-Missouri has to offer.

Tickets range from \$25 to \$65. Visit freindsofhistoricboonvillemo.org for more information.

Capital Jazz Festival

The people who organize the Capital Jazz Festival in Jefferson City have no ulterior motive. The Jazz Forward Initiative's mission is plain and simple: to support, preserve, and continue America's national treasure, jazz music.

That's why, for the twenty-fourth year in a row, the non-profit will present a full day of free outdoor jazz concerts down the street from the Missouri State Capitol building. This year's lineup hasn't been announced, but if it continues in the tradition of past years, it will surely be an enlightening day of concert jazz.

Visit capjazz.org or call 573-635-6866 for more information.

Angie Ward plays and arranges music for the Kansas City-based James Ward Band, who have played the Capital Jazz Festival for the past two years.



Dancefestopia

From September 11 to 14, Berkley Riverfront Park will become Kansas City's largest dance floor. For the fourth year in a row, Dancefestopia will bring in more than eighty electronic dance artists and forty-five thousand people for the four days of music and camping.

The sixty-five acres of beautiful parkland along the Missouri River offer a stunning view of Kansas City. To add to the fun, the festival features light-shows on three stages, a beer garden, and music zones outside of the concerts.

With all the dancing, music, beer, and camping, it's an amazing feat that the festival staff keep it safe. In fact, the Kansas City Police Department commented that it had one of the lowest incident rates for any event of any kind in recent memory.

Past headliners have included artists that range from rapper Wiz Khalifa to electronic dance fusion band Beats Antique. Tickets range from \$35 to \$250, and for the past two years, camping passes have sold out completely. Visit dancefestopia.com for more information.

COURTESY OF MISS N SCENE, CAPITAL JAZZ FEST, AND MIKE KELLNER



Canadian duo DVBS—brothers Alex and Chris van den Hoef—performed at last year's Dancefestopia.



Outkast—known for the platinum-selling singles "Hey Ya!" and "Ms. Jackson"—headline the 2014 LouFest in Forest Park and played for more than an hour and a half on Sunday night.

LouFest

LouFest is the closest Missouri comes to having a music festival on the scale of Coachella, Lollapalooza, Bonnaroo, Sasquatch, or any of the other much-talked-about, nationally recognized rock and pop festivals.

Inhabiting the same grounds where the 1904 Olympics and 1904 World's Fair were held, LouFest has turned Forest Park into a two-day festival where you can see some of the best new artists in the world. Since the festival started in 2010, LouFest has grown, from having up-and-coming artists, such as She & Him, to having Outkast—one of the most well-repected hip-hop bands and best-selling artists of all time—as the headliners.

This year, the festival is returning on September 12 and 13. Although, the lineup will not be announced until May, it is sure to be one of the best weekends for fans of new music; that's why the festival sold out

COURTESY OF REAGAN HACKLEMAN

completely last year, bringing in about 36,000 people.

And bringing in national talent isn't the only reason LouFest stands as a titan among Missouri's other music festivals. It also spotlights some of the best regional cuisine with the Noshpit, curated by *FEAST* magazine; last year's Noshpit featured booths from the excellent Strange Doughnuts and one of St. Louis's best Mexican restaurants, Mission Taco Joint. Plus, the festival features a market where local artists, artisans, and boutiques sell everything from vintage clothing to screen-printed posters. Plus, there's a kids' area, which makes taking the whole family easy. To top it all off, there are autograph tents set up, so you can meet your favorite bands of the weekend.

Last year, single day passes sold for \$60 and VIP packages went for \$350. Keep an eye out for more details at loufest.com.

Roots N Blues N BBQ Festival

The Roots N Blues N BBQ Festival combines two quintessential Missouri pastimes—barbecue and the blues—to create the perfect combination for a late-summer's weekend in Columbia.

For the ninth year, this festival will bring in more than thirty national and regional artists and scores of saucy barbecue vendors. In the past, the festival has featured everyone from legendary artists—Taj Mahal, Al Green, Jimmy Cliff, Roseanne Cash—to local favorites, like The Hooten Hollers, Vulvete, and Chump Change.

This year, the festival will be held at Stephens Lake Park, just a stone's throw from Downtown Columbia, during the last weekend of September. The festival will also feature a 10K and half-marathon on Saturday morning and a gospel revue on Sunday morning. Tickets range \$45 for a Friday pass to \$525 for the Platinum Pig VIP pass, which includes artist meet-and-greets, backstage access, gourmet barbecue, and more. Visit rootsnbluesnbbq.com for more information.

