



▲ *Kanye West and Common*
(AP Photo/Jeff Christensen)

Popular Music

The windy city has been the subject of more than a few songs over the years from “*Sweet Home Chicago*” to “*The Night Chicago Died*.” And wasn’t it from “*Bad, Bad Leroy Brown*” we learned that the South Side of Chicago is the baddest part of town? True the city isn’t mentioned in all songs and not all bands are from Chicago, but if an act is worth their weight in gold or platinum, sooner or later they’ll be playing Chicago.

One of the hardest working rock bands in show business, **Chicago**, was formed around a kitchen table in a small North Side apartment. Their unique sound which combines the power of rock n’ roll with the sophistication of swing and jazz has paid off jaw-droppingly nice with over 120 million records sold. Also formed in the North Side, 60s soulsters **The Impressions**, were led by 2-time Rock n’ Roll Hall of Famer **Curtis Mayfield** who furthermore had a great impact on funk and rap. International fame and heavy radio rotation has also been friendly to other 70s born rock bands that the region produced including **Cheap Trick** and **Styx**.

The most commercially successful rock band to emerge from the city in the 1990s, **The Smashing Pumpkins** played their debut and farewell shows (12 years apart) at Chicago’s **Metro**. In between, the group earned 2 Grammys and headlined the 1994 Lollapalozza and Mayor Daley declared a day in their honor.

With little radio play and even less glam, **Wilco** has flown under the pop-culture radar just low enough to remain less than household names but high enough to attract the ears of a faithful international following. Their alternative-country niche was carved out by **Jeff Tweedy** in the mid-90s in Chicago and they have remained a local favorite. Alternative folk rock crooner **Liz Phair** was raised in Winnetka and r&b badboy **R Kelly** is from the South Side. Rappers **Kanye West** and **Common** both hail from Chicago as well.

If you want to catch the next **Veruca Salt** or **Urge Overkill** or even **Chicago**, there are many music venues to keep your eye on including **The Metro**, **Empty Bottle**, or **Schuba’s**. To stay current on the latest band listings check the *Reader* or *Tribune*.

► *Fallout Boy* (AP Photo/Robert E. Klein)

▼ (Left To Right) *Curtis Mayfield* (AP Photo/Curtom Records), *Jeff Tweedy*, *Wilco* (AP Photo/Tina Fineberg), *Chicago* (AP Photo), *Smashing Pumpkins* (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews), *R. Kelly* (AP Photo/Stuart Ramson), *Liz Phair* (AP Photo/Jim Cooper), *Cheap Trick* (AP Photo/The News Sun, Donnell Collins)

