

TORONTO JAZZ: VENUES AND ENVIRONMENT

Saul Fisher, with thanks to Jeanette Bicknell for kind counsel.
September, 2018

Toronto features as prominently in jazz history as do many other North American cities. Among other highlights, Toronto is the birthplace of Gil Evans (1912) and Kenny Wheeler (1930), site of perhaps the most storied jazz concert ever (Massey Hall, May 15, 1953), and home to a cherished jazz magazine, *Coda*, published from 1958 to 2009. And, since the end of the second World War, Toronto has played host to a vibrant jazz scene, including artists as diverse in style as Oscar Peterson, the free-jazz Artists' Jazz Band and Michael Bublé. Today's jazz scene in Toronto remains greatly diverse, featuring homegrown talent and welcoming jazz performers from around the world.

TORONTO JAZZ CLUBS AND PERFORMANCE SPACES

The Array Space, 155 Walnut Avenue, (416) 532-3019

<https://www.arraymusic.ca/>

Shows second Sundays of the month, 8 pm; cover varies.

Burdock Brewery-Bar-Music Hall, 1184 Bloor Street West, (416) 546-4033

<http://burdockto.com/shows/>

Shows various days/week; cover varies.

Gallery 345, 345 Sorauren Avenue, (416) 822-9781

<http://www.gallery345.com/performances.php>

Shows and cover vary.

Grossman's Tavern, 379 Spadina Avenue, (416) 977-7000

<http://grossmanstavern.com>

Open since 1943; quite seedy. In the middle of Chinatown, so it is easy to get dinner before or after. Shows nightly; no cover.

Hugh's Room, 2261 Dundas Street West, (416) 531-6604

<http://www.hughsroom.com/>

Mostly folk music in a concert-hall setting, with candlelit tables. Shows most nights, at 8:30 pm.

Jazz Bistro, 251 Victoria Street, (416) 363-5299

<http://www.jazzbistro.ca/>

Jazz Bistro is in the former location of Top O' the Senator, a jazz club open from 1990 to 2005. Shows most nights, at 9 pm; cover expensive; dress code formal.

May Café, 876 Dundas Street West, west of Manning Avenue, (416) 607-2032

<http://www.maytoronto.com/happenings/>

Shows on occasional evenings; cover varies.

The Music Gallery, Centre for Culture, Arts, Media and Education, 918 Bathurst, (416) 204-1080
<https://musicgallery.org/all-events/>

This space plays host to performances in experimental jazz and other avant-garde genres.
Shows on occasional evenings.

Orbit Room, 580a College Street, (416) 535-0613
<http://www.orbitroom.ca/>

Small venue founded by Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson, presenting popular music and jazz. Shows several nights a week, at 10 pm.

Poetry Jazz Café, 224 Augusta Avenue, in Kensington Market, (416) 599-5299
<http://poetryjazzcafe.com>

Shows most nights, at 9pm; cover \$10. (Be cautious after dark & stick with a group.)

Reservoir Lounge, 52 Wellington Street East, west of Church, (416) 955-0887
<http://www.reservoirlounge.com/>

Intimate space in Old Town area. Shows five nights a week, Tuesday-Saturday, 9.45 pm; cover \$15; dress code casual or semi-formal.

The Rex Hotel Jazz & Blues Bar, 194 Queen Street West @ Simcoe, (416) 598-2475
<http://www.therex.ca/>

Prominent jazz venue for over 40 years. If you go to only one place, make it this one. They also serve a decent breakfast. It is a 20 minute walk from the hotel, or take the University subway line 2 stops north to Osgoode, and walk west when you exit the station.

Shows every day and night; Monday-Friday, 9 am-midnight; Saturday & Sunday, 11am-midnight; cover varies, with evening (9:30) shows on weekends generally \$5-10; casual dress code.

The Tranzac, 292 Brunswick Ave, just south of Bloor, (416) 923-8137
<http://www.tranzac.org/simplecalendar/>

Nonprofit community organization with a focus on arts, music and theatre. Shows various evenings; pay-what-you-can.

TORONTO RESTAURANTS WITH OCCASIONAL JAZZ

120 Diner, 120 Church Street, just south of Queen Street East, (416) 792-7725

<http://120diner.com/jazz-music-events/>

Shows Tuesdays thru Sundays, various times and cover.

The Black Dog, 87 Island Rd (just east of Port Union Rd, south of Hwy 401), (416) 286-4544

<http://blackdogpub.ca/entertainment/>

Shows Thursdays 8 pm.

Bloom Restaurant, 2315 Bloor Street West, (416) 767-1315

<http://bloomrestaurant.com/live-music-calendar/>

Shows monthly Thursdays/Fridays, 7pm; \$45 prix fixe dinner and show.

C'est What, 67 Front Street East, (416) 867-9499

<http://www.cestwhat.com/>

Live performances Fridays/Saturdays/Sundays; mostly PWYC. 5 minute walk from the hotel.

Chalkers Pub, 247 Marlee Avenue, at Glencairn, (416) 789-2531

<http://www.chalkerspub.ca/events.html>

Shows every Sunday 7 pm to 10 pm; no cover; dress code is casual.

The Emmet Ray, 924 College Street, (416) 792-4497

<http://theemmetray.com>

Shows third Sundays of the month, 6 pm; pay-what-you-can.

Harlem Underground, 745 Queen Street West, 2 blocks west of Bathurst (416) 366-4743

<http://www.harlemrestaurant.com/livemusic/>

Shows Mondays, 8:30 pm - 11 pm.

Hirut Restaurant, 2050 Danforth Avenue, one block west of Woodbine, (416) 551-7560

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/hirutcafe/events/>

Shows Thursdays and Fridays, 8 pm; pay-what-you-can.

Lula Lounge, 1585 Dundas Street West, (416) 588-0307

<http://www.lula.ca/calendar>

Shows Thursday-Fridays; dates & cover vary.

Mezzetta Restaurant & Tapas Bar, 681 St Clair Avenue West, west of Christie, (416) 658-5687

<http://www.mezzettareastaurant.com/events.php>

Locals judge the food as pretty good overall, and particularly good for mixed (vegetarian/non-vegetarian) options. Shows Wednesdays, 9 pm; \$12 cover.

Nawlins, 299 King Street West, (416) 595-1958

<http://www.nawlins.ca>

Cajun restaurant with New Orleans feel. Shows nightly until 1 am.

Old Mill Inn and Spa (Home Smith Bar), 21 Old Mill Road, (416) 236-2641

<http://www.oldmilltoronto.com/>

Intimate performance space at Humber Valley hotel that celebrated its centennial in 2014. Shows every day, starting in early afternoon; cover \$20.

The Pilot Tavern, 22 Cumberland Street, ½ block west of Yonge, 1 block north of Bloor, (416) 923-5716

http://www.thepilot.ca/weekly_jazz

Shows Saturday and Sunday afternoons, from 3:30 to 6.30 pm; no cover (some ticketed events).

Reposado Tequila Bar, 136 Ossington Avenue, north of Queen Street West, (416) 532-6474

<http://www.reposadobar.com/>

Shows Wednesday-Friday, after 9:30 pm; pay-what-you-can.

La Rev, 2848 Dundas Street West, (416) 766-0746

<https://larevto.com/#calendar-section>

Shows Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, 8 pm - 10:30 pm; no cover.

The Salty Dog Bar and Grill, 1980 Queen Street East, north side @ Waverley Ave, 4 blocks east of Woodbine, just west of Kew Gardens, (416) 849-5064

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/saltydogbarandgrill/events/>

Shows Tuesdays, 7 pm - 10pm

The Tilted Dog, 424 Parliament Street, south of Carlton, (416) 961-9425

<http://www.tilteddogpub.ca/events/>

Shows Sundays, 4:30 pm - 7:30 pm

JAZZ MEDIA

Jazz FM Toronto Jazz

Toronto's 24-hour jazz radio station, featuring music, interviews, and show announcements.

<http://www.jazz.fm/>

The WholeNote

Coverage of jazz and other music, with extensive listings.

<https://www.thewholenote.com/>

Musicworks

Canada's avant-garde music magazine.

<https://www.musicworks.ca/>

JAZZ FESTIVALS

1. The [TD Toronto Jazz Festival](#) (June), 10-day event featuring over 1,500 musicians at more than 40 locations across the city, including free concerts at Nathans Phillips Square.
2. The [Beaches International Jazz Festival](#) (July), free outdoor festival taking place in a lakeside setting and featuring blues, big band, African, Latin and other traditions.

OTHER

Jazz Performance and Education Centre

Live performances (various venues), educational outreach programs, workshops.

20 Queen Street West, Suite 9

www.jazzcentre.ca

<https://www.facebook.com/Jazz-Performance-and-Education-Centre-123966009066/>

Somewhere There

Musician-run nonprofit dedicated to nurturing creative music in Toronto.

<http://www.somewherethere.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/somewheretherecreativemusic/>