

Written by Tami S. Seitz  
Tuesday, 30 April 2013 12:46

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From April 29 to May 23, the halls of local libraries and non-profits will resound with the beat of uniquely American musical genres, thanks to the grant-funded “America’s Music” project. Bettendorf, Davenport, Moline and Rock Island Public Libraries, in collaboration with River Music Experience and Western Illinois University-Quad Cities, will host the six-week series, which features documentary film screenings, scholar-led discussions of twentieth-century American popular music and live performances.

“America’s Music: A Film History of Our Popular Music from Blues to Bluegrass to Broadway” covers a wide span of musical interests, including blues and gospel, Broadway, jazz, bluegrass and country, rock n’ roll, mambo, and hip hop. Featuring 19 presentations in the Iowa and Illinois Quad Cities, the local effort is one of just 50 sites nationwide selected to host this program series, which is funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the Human Endeavor.

Starting with blues and gospel and ending with swing jazz, the general audience programs will explore the connections between six uniquely American genres of 20th century music and the influence of music on the history, culture and geography of the United States. Each screening and discussion session will examine an important American musical genre in the context of key social and historical developments, giving attendees of all ages an opportunity to recognize the influence of these popular music forms on the cultural landscape.

A full list of performances and locations is available at [www.americasmusicqc.com](http://www.americasmusicqc.com), but the basic line-up is as follows:

Bluegrass and county music are the focus of the week of April 29, with film/discussion events of

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“High Lonesome: The Story of Bluegrass Music” at Western Illinois University-QC and the Bettendorf Public Library. Bettendorf Library will also host a bluegrass performance by River Town, a four-piece ensemble performing traditional bluegrass and folk favorites.

Classic rock and roll takes the stage during the week of May 6, with film/discussion events of “The History of Rock ‘n Roll: Plugging In,” at the Bettendorf Public Library and Rock Island Main Library. The Rock Island Library will also host a performance by Meet the Press, a dynamic three-piece band performing 80s and 90s originals.

Mambo and Hip Hop music will fill the week of May 13, with film/discussion events of “Latin Music U.S.A. and “From Mambo to Hip Hope: A South Bronx Tale,” at Davenport Public Library Eastern Avenue Branch and Western Illinois University- Quad Cities. The Davenport Public Library will also present a Hip Hop dance performance and instruction event with Midwest Academy of Dance.

Swing Jazz events fill the week of May 19, starting with a jazz performance at the Polyrhythms Third Sunday jazz at the River Music Experience. The event, featuring the Bill Bell trio, is the only ticketed event in the series. Cost is \$10 general admission or \$15 for reserved seating. Tickets will be available at the door, or by calling 309-373-0790. Free swing jazz film and discussion events with excerpts from “Ken Burns Jazz” and the “International Sweethearts of Rhythm” take place during the week at River Music Experience and Moline Public Library.

Discussions, along with a call for stories about memories of the Quad City musical landscape, will be led by program scholar Dr. Daniel S. Malachuk, associate professor of English at Western Illinois University – Quad Cities, and several faculty colleagues, including Dr. Everett Hammer (English), Dr. Nancy Schaefer and Dr. Tammy Werner (Sociology), and two students in the English Masters program, Chelsea Clearman and Jill King. With help from his students, Dr. Malachuk will present some of the local stories collected at the final event in the series, “Celebrating America’s Music in the Quad Cities, “ from 6:00 to 8:00 pm on Thursday, May 23, at the Western Illinois University –Quad Cities Riverfront Atrium.

Attendees are encouraged to bring their stories about the great variety of music heard in the Quad Cities over the past 50 years. Musicians are encouraged to bring instruments, as the event will close with an open mic event of local performers.

For details, please visit [www.americasmusicqc.com](http://www.americasmusicqc.com) or contact [americasmusicqc@gmail.com](mailto:americasmusicqc@gmail.com) or 309-524-2470.

“America’s Music” is a project by the Tribeca Film Institute in collaboration with the American Library Association, Tribeca Flashpoint, and the Society for American Music. “America’s Music” has been made possible by a major \$2,500 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the Human Endeavor. Additional funding for the Quad City effort was

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received from the Riverboat Development Authority, Sedona Technologies, UAW Local 2282, Friends of the Moline Public Library and Friends of the Rock Island Public Library, along with in-kind sponsorships from River Cities' Reader, WQAD-TV Newschannel 8, STAR 93.5, WQPT Quad Cities PBS and WVIK Augustana Public Radio.

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