

THE DEUCES — THE MUSIC AND THE MANHATTAN



Al Green
He began as a gospel singer and became a popular soul singer in the 1970s. A big hit was *Let's Stay Together*. Green continued to sing rhythm and blues as an ordained minister.



B.B. King
Born Riley King in the Mississippi Delta, where he worked as a sharecropper, he is usually considered the king of the electric blues guitar.



Count Basie
A pianist and later a bandleader, he became one of the more widely known figures in jazz and swing. He led a big band from 1935 virtually until his 1984 death in Hollywood, Fla.



Tiny Bradshaw
He was a college psychology major who chose music as a career, first making a name in the 1930s swing era and later moving to rhythm and blues.



Duke Ellington
Born in 1899, James Edward Ellington was the son of a White House butler. Music authorities consider him to be the most influential composer in jazz history.



James Brown
A huge figure in R&B and rock, the Godfather of Soul was an exciting, perpetual-motion screamer on stage. Brown and the Famous Flames had several big 1960s hits.



Cab Calloway
A widely known entertainer and singer by the early 1930s, he attended law school but quit for the love of show business. Calloway also appeared in several movies.



Buster Cooper
This St. Petersburg native and Gibbs High graduate became a world-renowned jazz trombonist, playing most notably with Duke Ellington.



Earl "Fatha" Hines
One of the most highly regarded jazz pianists, Hines led bands from the 1920s to the 1940s. He made a career comeback in the 1960s that lasted until he died in 1983.



Ella Fitzgerald
She is considered among the best female jazz singers of all time. She got a big show business break when she won an Apollo Theater talent show in 1934. Her first big hit was 1938's *A-Tisket, A-Tasket*.



Rosalie Peck holds a photo of her and members of Club 16, a select men's group that chose her as its queen in 1947 and 1948. All 16 members are present in this photo.



Times photo — BOB MORELAND
Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong plays the Manhattan in 1957.

SATCHMO

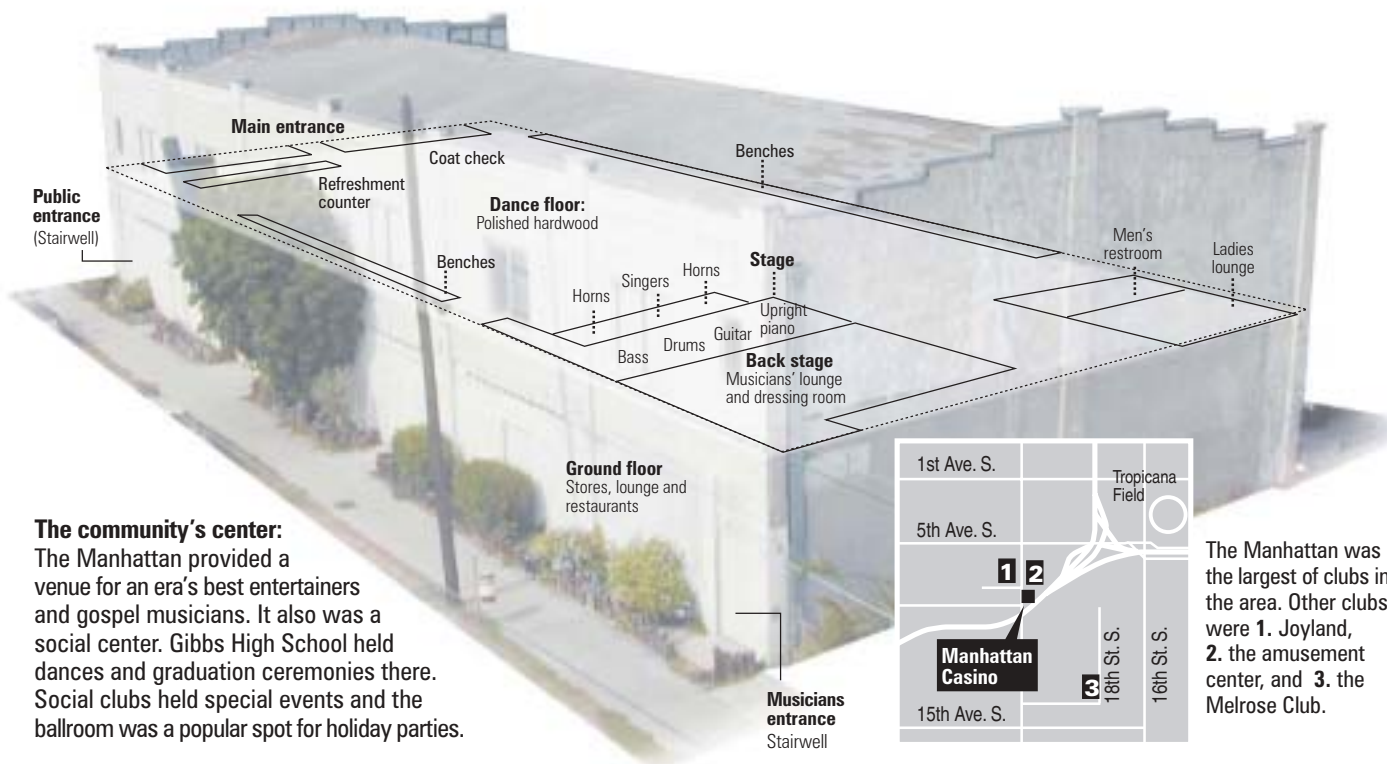
On hot summer nights before air conditioning, no one shut the Manhattan Casino's windows. Searing blues notes or bouncing big band rhythms spilled out. Across the street at the Sno-Peak Drive Inn, people sat in cars parked hub to hub. "We'd eat our sandwiches and drink our drinks and listen to the music," said Henrietta Roberts, 63. B.B. King's *Sweet 16* was her favorite song.

The Manhattan's bandstand, wedged in the second floor's southwest corner, wasn't fancy. But the orchestras, singers and horn men who used it made musical history. They represented an era's best, building their fan base along what was known as the chitlin circuit, an informal route twisting through the South. Performers hit big markets like Atlanta or Miami on weekends. During the week, they played smaller clubs in between.

In the Manhattan ballroom, partiers in tuxedos and evening gowns danced. Ella Fitzgerald sang *A-Tisket, A-Tasket*. At gospel hours, Mahalia Jackson praised the power of the Lord. Sometimes it was too packed to hold everyone who wanted to see. Neighborhood children climbed the balconies, hoping to glimpse Louis Armstrong or Count Basie. Grownups shooed them, threatening to tell their mothers and probably their grandmas and aunts. Everyone knew everyone else in the community.

The Manhattan was a segregated neighborhood's anchor. Yet at times it became one of the few St. Petersburg venues where blacks and whites met socially. Some performers enjoyed a popularity that dissolved barriers. John Breen was a delivery driver for a pharmacy in March 1957 when he learned Armstrong was in town. He bought tickets on sale at Mercy Hospital, and he and his wife, Marion, attended. So did a number of other white couples. "There was absolutely no problem. All of us were talking back and forth. It was fine," said Breen, 81. Rosalie Peck recalls such times, too. "People mixed and they mingled, and for that moment, all the foolishness (of racial antipathy) was forgotten," Peck said.

THE MANHATTAN CASINO



The community's center:
The Manhattan provided a venue for an era's best entertainers and gospel musicians. It also was a social center. Gibbs High School held dances and graduation ceremonies there. Social clubs held special events and the ballroom was a popular spot for holiday parties.



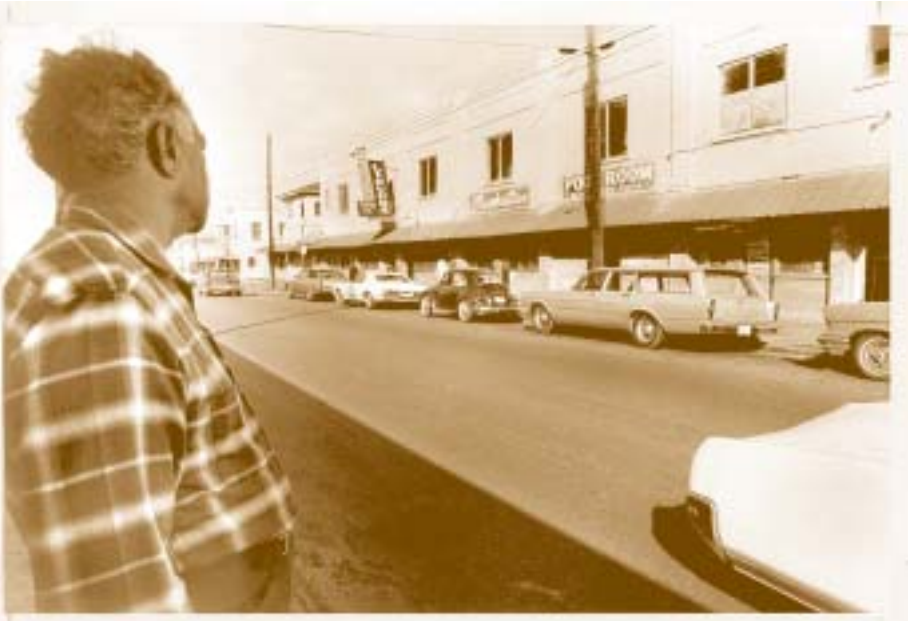
Mahalia Jackson
She is often considered the greatest gospel singer, male or female. Her 1948 recording of *Move on Up a Little Higher* became the best-selling gospel record of all time.



Al Downing
A pianist and legendary jazz figure in the St. Petersburg area, Downing taught music at Gibbs High School, where he put together a dance band, and later at St. Petersburg Junior College. He was the first black member of the St. Petersburg Symphony.



Sam Cooke
Twisting the Night Away was one of his hits. A charter member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, he came to the Manhattan with a gospel group, the Soul Stirrers.



Times files
George Grogan in 1972 stands across the street from The Manhattan Casino (looking northeast). George Grogan promoted many of the events at the Manhattan.



Down to business: The ground floor of the Manhattan was divided into commercial spaces housing stores, pharmacies, restaurants, bars and bottle stores. Here are the businesses that were located downstairs in 1960 according to the St. Petersburg City Directory:

- 632 Forest Pharmacy
- 632½ Vacant
- 634 Jackson's Department Store
- 636 Berry's Barber Shop
- Emma's Beauty Shop
- 640 The Casino Rendezvous Restaurant
- 642 The Spot Restaurant
- 644 Quick Cleaners
- 648 Manhattan Pool Room
- 650 Tee's Smoke Shop
- 656 Pinellas Package Store and Bar
- 658 S&W Cafe
- 660 Ben's Bargain Store



Little Richard (center) at the Manhattan
Shouting, trilling and yelling "Woo!", Richard Wayne Penniman had hits such as *Good Golly Miss Molly*, *Jenny Jenny*, *Tutti Frutti* and *Long Tall Sally*.



Ray Charles
The author of a song called *St. Pete Blues*, his highly recognizable vocal style is a mix of rock, rhythm and blues, country and gospel. *What'd I Say* was his first Top 10 hit.



Ike and Tina Turner
Theirs was a scorching rhythm-and-blues and rock act that produced 25 hits for the R&B charts between 1960 and 1975. Their most famous record is often considered to be *Rocket 88*.



LaVerne Baker
She is considered a pioneer in the fusion of rhythm and blues and rock 'n' roll during the 1950s.



Sarah Vaughan
Another top-tier jazz singer, Vaughan got her start with Earl "Fatha" Hines.



Lou Rawls
Starting in gospel, he became a highly regarded crooner of the soul genre.



Otis Redding
He became an influential balladeer and soul singer in the 1960s.



The Ink Spots: This prototype harmony group, which scored a hit with *If I Didn't Care* in 1939, helped set the stage for the 1950s doo-wop sound.

ON THE WEB: Tour the Manhattan. Listen to the music. Hear residents remember the good times. Also, a more complete list of musicians who have played on The Deuces. Visit www.sptimes.com/deuces. Click on Manhattan for the tour. Or click on The Music to hear the samples of the songs.