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# Best Cities for Music Fans in 2016

by [Justin Song](#) • updated Jun 1, 2021

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by Douglas Burger

When it comes to seeing a favorite band in concert, people will go to extreme lengths: wait hours in line, hit redial over and over, refresh the ticket page repeatedly -- whatever it takes. Music is an important part of many people's lives, and we set out to determine the best cities in the U.S. for music fans. We looked at 15 different data points grouped into three categories to come up with our answers. Below you will find our results, as well as a detailed methodology explaining how we arrived at them.

## Best Cities for Music Fans

Here is how 200 metropolitan statistical areas with qualifying data stacked up in the three separate categories that we studied. In all rankings below, a lower number is better than a higher number.

Rank	Area	The Band	The Crowd	The Intangibles
1	Nashville-Davidson--Murfreesboro--Franklin, TN	1	36	62
2	Urban Honolulu, HI	21	46	16
3	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	9	56	48
4	Madison, WI	40	19	34
5	Austin-Round Rock, TX	17	65	14

6	Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	42	13	45
7	Tucson, AZ	29	53	6
8	Rochester, NY	33	10	84
9	Pittsburgh, PA	25	31	76
10	San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA	4	109	2
11	Salt Lake City, UT	24	48	70
12	Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI	27	57	48

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## Top (and Bottom) Five Cities for:

Music preferences can be a polarizing subject. With that in mind, we looked at 15 different data points to try to get into the heads of every music fan. Here is a detailed look at four of those data points.

If there's one group of people that know about music fandom, it's the musicians themselves. Using the Bureau of Labor Statistics as a tool, we looked at the number of employed musicians and singers per 1,000 jobs. Eugene, Ore., was the top of this data point.

### Musicians

#### Best Cities

Rank	City	State
1	Nashville	TN
2	Los Angeles	CA
3	Boulder	CO
4	Trenton	NJ
5	Las Vegas	NV

## Worst Cities

Rank	City	State
196	Atlantic City	NJ
197	Chico	CA
198	Clarksville	TN
199	Laredo	TX
200	Spartanburg	SC

Discovering new songs and artists is an exciting experience for all music fans. Radio has helped cultivate the music scene for years, and access to a wide variety of stations is important for a city. New York and Los Angeles dominate in sheer number with 428 radio stations between them. The list looks a lot different, though, when a city's population is taken into account.

## Radio Stations

### Best Cities

Rank	City	State
1	Fort Smith	AR
2	Roanoke	VA
3	Anchorage	AK
4	Waco	TX
5	Champaign	IL

### Worst Cities

Rank	City	State
196	Provo	UT
197	Bremerton	WA
198	Vallejo	CA

199	Brownsville	TX
200	Ann Arbor	MI

The next great album has to be recorded somewhere. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 1,693 sound recording studios in the country. Los Angeles (second in this data point when a city's population is taken into account) has 366 of them.

## Record Studios

### Best Cities

Rank	City	State
1	Nashville	TN
2	Los Angeles	CA
3	Boulder	CO
4	Oxnard	CA
5	Burlington	VT

### Worst Cities

Rank	City	State
196	Bremerton	WA
197	Vallejo	CA
198	Brownsville	TX
199	Yakima	WA
200	Killeen	TX

Some musicians are gifted with natural-born talent. Others go to school to hone their craft. Using the U.S. Census Bureau, we looked at the percentage of visual and performing arts degree holders in each city. This might not lead to more musicians in a city, but likely to produce a population with an appreciation for a quality music scene.

## Music Degrees

### Best Cities

Rank	City	State
1	Boulder	CO
2	Santa Rosa	CA
3	San Francisco	CA
4	Los Angeles	CA
5	New York	NY

### Worst Cities

Rank	City	State
196	Yakima	WA
197	McAllen	TX
198	Laredo	TX
199	Beaumont	TX
200	Fort Smith	AR

## Data Takeaways

Musicians, professional or aspiring, buy records too.

How people consume music has changed -- 60 of the 200 cities in our study don't have a single tape, CD or record store -- but musicians still need places to stock up on equipment or add onto their archives.

The laws of supply and demand also apply to the sing-song industry. Based on this data, a city with fewer working musicians is likely to pay them a higher hourly wage.

## Methodology

To determine the best cities for music fans, we used 15 data points from 14 reputable sources and broke them into three categories detailed below. Not all categories were created equal as we thought bands and musicians and where they play were more important than city-specific data points that go hand in hand with consuming music. For numbers 9 and 14 (below), we aggregated multiple sources to produce the data point. If a city appeared on one of these "best of" lists, they were given a single point and then totaled to come up with our rankings. Below, we break down each statistic and point to its origin. In parenthesis is the category's and stat's weighting (a higher number represents a higher weight).

### The Band (3)

1. Musicians, Singers per 1,000 People Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015)
2. Hourly Median Wage for Musicians, Singers
3. Musical Groups, Artists per 1,000 People U.S. Census Bureau (2014)
4. Sound Recording Studios per 1,000 People U.S. Census Bureau (2014)
5. Record Labels Songwriter Universe (2015)

### The Crowd (2)

6. Radio Stations per 1,000 People U.S. Census Bureau (2014)
7. Musical Instrument, Supply Stores per 1,000 People U.S. Census Bureau (2014)
8. Bars per 1,000 People U.S. Census Bureau (2014)
9. Top Venues Complex (2013)  
Travel & Leisure (2016)  
USA Today (2015)

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## Experts' Take

Mella Barnes is a session singer, songwriter and producer in Nashville, Tenn.

1. How people consume music has changed rapidly in the last 10 years. How has music fandom changed along with it?

Music fandom has changed because today it's more about the "discovery" of music. People love to say to their friends, "Hey, I found this new artist!" Now, whether or not they financially support said artist or just download their material is another story. But I think the concept of "finding" a new artist is very important in today's streaming culture.

2. How important is local radio in creating a following for a band?

Local radio around Nashville is a decent option -- I haven't really been here long enough to know how many new artists they accept -- but I would also recommend that any artist explode their social media. The thing about local radio is, if people aren't listening right then during that song, they won't know about you. If they are browsing the Internet, they could come across your music at any time. On a scale of 1 to 10, I would put radio at maybe a 5 in terms of importance.

3. What aspects of music venues make them fun or exciting to play?

I don't play live since I'm a session singer, but I've played out a few times in Detroit where I'm originally from and what always made them fun was the atmosphere they created. Venues start to get a reputation for being one way or another -- loud, boring, rowdy -- and the audience tends to follow suit with whatever they've heard about it. Venues can control their image to a certain extent, so making it a place of creativity, fun and respect is what's best for the artists.

4. Who are some of the best, under-the-radar live bands playing currently?

I just saw a band called Lavender Country in Inglewood. They're a little difficult to track down online but worth it to do the search. Also, if you want to see amazing, talented musicians, walk down the street! There is an artist on every corner on Broadway Street downtown, and I've yet to hear a bad one. You would think there would be a lot of competition but everyone seems supportive of one another.

Eric Gilbert is the co-founder of Treefort Music Fest and Duck Club Presents in Boise, Id.



1. How people consume music has changed rapidly in the last 10 years. How has music fandom changed along with it?

It seems to me that there's less of a concentration of fandom. Thanks to technology, people listen to a much larger catalog of music and tastes are less concentrated on certain artists or certain genres. With touring becoming more common than ever for bands of all sizes, consumers have been benefiting from a growing pool of concert options.

2. How important is local radio in creating a following for a band?

In April of 2011, the Treasure Valley's first independent free format non-commercial radio station since the mid-1980s hit the FM airwaves when Radio Boise KRBX 89.9 FM was born. The relationship to radio and a band's following has definitely shifted over the years, but Radio Boise going on air had a profound effect on the local music scene. For the first time in decades, local, regional and national "indie" artists of all genres started getting regular airtime. This felt like a big shift for someone on the ground floor of that scene. Over night, aspiring local bands suddenly had a platform by which their music could be featured and it inspired a rejuvenated wave of activity. It provided a focal point for the community.

3. What aspects of music venues make them fun exciting to play?

I like venues that provide intimacy with an artist and those in attendance. I love the feel of smaller shows and the energy created when a room is packed and audience is almost spilling on top of the band. Thus, I prefer stages that aren't too high and rooms that aren't too big. Venues with good sound and lights, ability to mix in fog and haze, also makes for fertile soil for an exciting show to happen.

4. Who are some of the best, under-the-radar live bands playing currently?

Here are some of my favorite shows I've seen in Boise over the last couple years: Jonathan Richman, Whitney, Budos Band, Built To Spill, Wooden Indian Burial Ground, Thick Business, Yonatan Gat, Ancient Psychic, Tortoise, Diarrhea Planet, Music Band, Shabazz Palaces, Polica, Rubblebucket, Delicate Steve, Magic Sword, Wild Ones, k.flay, mr. Gnome, Holiday Friends, Lucy Dacus, Cy Dune, Charles Bradley & His Extraordinaires, Beach Slang, Love As Laughter, Disco Doom, Here We Go Magic, The Thermals, Quiet Life, AU, Like A Villain, Dustin Wong, Paper Gates, Deerhoof, Chanti Darling, The Suffers, Dan Deacon, Clarke and the Himself, Sly Moon Sutra, Hollow Wood, Leafraker, Downtown Boys, Screaming Females, Baby in Vain,

Wimps, Dark Swallows, Nobunny, Cool Ghouls, The Shivas, Thee Oh Sees, Beat Connection... to name a few.

Justin is a Sr. Research Analyst at ValuePenguin, focusing on small business lending. He was a corporate strategy associate at IBM.

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Homeowners Insurance in Oklahoma

Best Home Insurance in Michigan

Missouri Homeowners Insurance

Best Home Insurance in New Hampshire

Homeowners Insurance in Wyoming

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How to Buy Flood Insurance

How Much Home Insurance Do I Need?

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Flood Insurance Companies

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