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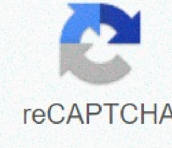

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What is dc gogo music

Gentrification, hostility from the police, and his own island-island-has pushed Chuck Brown's brand of party-starting funk to the edge of the nation's capital. Go-go pioneer Chuck Brown performs in 2011. (Reuters) This post has been corrected. Just over a month ago, thousands descended on Washington, D.C's Howard Theater to say goodbye to a legend. Chuck Brown, the guitarist who became synonymous with D.C's go-go music scene, had died at the age of 75. But while the assembled waited in the rain to be let in to see Brown's body, an official-looking man said he was wearing a police jersey, while a Howard spokesperson said the man was a fire marshal-turned-up and told the crowd to dismember because of lightning.* The crowd did not budge, recalled author Natalie Hopkinson, who was there with her two children. Instead, it became more vocal and agitated. Wind me up, Chuck, the masses roared (a common chorus shouted at Brown's concerts.) Emotions ran high between go-go fans and authorities. After all, the go-go's Godfather had been laid to rest—after a decade of obvious reminders that go-go music (or much of the population listening to it, at least) is not welcome in the new vision of D.C. Story continues under Natalie Hopkinson in her new book Go-Go Live: The Musical Life and Death of a Chocolate City enthrallingly prisoners-with interviews , photographs and accessible reportage - the ways in which the go-go tells a larger story about the nation's capital. She traces the fascinating political history of music, starting with President Lincoln's emanation of the slaves in D.C nine months before the emancipation proclamation, including the founding of the historic Howard University in 1867 and the flowering of black institutions in the city during segregation. But to read her book and then look around D.C. these days is to get the sense that the go-go is on the wane, and that the very city that created and nurtured this music has changed so fundamentally that now rejecting it. Go-go, so named because the music just goes and goes, is a love child of blues, funk, salsa, gospel, and soul that emerged in the 70s with obvious influences from the other Godfather, James Brown. The genre was created in D.C., a city where blacks from all corners of the globe could experience - or at least imagine what Hopkinson calls black privilege in his book. D.C. ranked among the few cities in the United States where black people could not be called 'minorities,' with the whiff of inferiority that the label carries with it, she writes. To live in a chocolate town is to taste a non-quantifiable richness. It provides a unique point of view, an alternative lens to see the world's power. In a chocolate town, black is normal. But even in a place like D.C., the relative privilege that blacks enjoy is weak at best. Only a month after Chuck Brown's The Fordham Institute released a study citing the nation's capital as having three of the fastest gentrifying zip codes in the nation. The study cemented the notion that Chocolate City - a moniker George Clinton of Parliament Funk gave to the nation's capital in the 70s-has undergone a radical shift. In a recent interview with Hopkinson, I asked her to elaborate on a quote she uses at the beginning of Go-Go Live, from the cultural activist Charles Stephenson, Jr.: Go-Go is more than music. It is a complex expression of cultural values disguised in the guise of party music in our nation's capital. What are these values? I use the whole book unpacking this idea, she said. Music is a conversation [speaking to] these values of community, entrepreneurship, community, giving each person a voice, whether it's through a shout out or through calls and answers or through a dance move, or shows what kind of fashion you're wearing. In fact, just as hip-hop is, in the words of Public Enemy's Chuck D, the black CNN, the go-go spoke for the black and brown youth community of D.C. through the 70s, 80s, and 90s. Browse Chuck Brown's voluminous song catalog for a portrait of the city's old zeitgeist. Hits like We the People, We Need Some Money and Bustin' Loose double as party tunes and social documentaries about what it was like to live in the nation's capital in the era after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, but before the crack era fully arrived. In his poem Tape, D.C. native Thomas Sayers Ellis paints a scene of how mix tapes were currency in the early days of the go-go:making me a copy/Carmichael said/the day after his brother's murder/a way to remember/hold on/ranked next to gold chains/&school clothes/...... attention/care/respect. But there's a competing narrative around the go-go, one that's advocated for local law enforcement, some gentrifiers, and developers looking to convert D.C. into a mini Manhattan. They see music as a problem; publicly, the talk is about crime around go-go gatherings. It's this go-go, a Metropolitan Police Department officer said during a 2005 hearing over nightclub violence. If you have a black-tie event, you have no problem. But if you put the go-go in, you're going to get in trouble. In 2010, the Washington City Paper reported that D.C. officers had taken to circulating a secret go-go report to keep track of the scene. And as DCentric.com's Elahe Izadi wrote last year, For many years now, go-go venues have been shut down inside D.C. because of club violence and liability issues, pushing music farther out in Maryland suburbs like Prince George's and Charles counties. Meanwhile punk rock, another D.C. musical mainstay, is not experiencing the same mishap. Attacks like these from the company are all the more potent given the go-go's Hip-hop, jazz and blues were all at one point associated solely with violence and working-class black culture as well. Unlike these genres, however, the go-go never went global other than then, in 1988, Spike Lee featured the EU's song Da Butt in School Daze. Go-go's only ever been big business for the local black entrepreneurs in D.C. who kept it among themselves and guarded it fiercely. The story continues under These Combined Forces - demographic changes, police assaults, and go-go's uniquely local nature—makes music rarer. When I attended Howard University in the mid-2000s, the sound itself, which is native to the area, was kept at arm's length. One would have to leave campus to hear the go-go. Still, even pushed to the edge of the nation's capital, the beat goes on. Hopkinson describes bands playing many days of the week. And you can hear the go-go's influence on music being done outside the city limits. Days after Chuck Brown's death, I attended a concert at the Howard Theatre. The airy-voiced Greenwich Village-raised singer Amel Larrieux made her voice husky as she grabbed the microphone, screaming at the audience the words to Brown's Bustin' Loose. Almost all jumped out of their seats; coiffed-haired ladies kicked their shoes. The multicolored lights turned the otherwise elegant sacrament club into a dance hall. Time was spinning backwards. The drums. Amel calls the audience, Has y'all fancy bustin' loose? I along with hundreds of people shouted back, Hell yes. * This post originally misstated and omitted some important details from the scene in the first two paragraphs. We're sorry for the errors. Experience live go-go music on Thursday, June 11, 2015, as part of our America now! Music Festival.In the early 1970s, musical pioneer Chuck Brown began laying the groundwork for a new and innovative sound in Washington, D.C., called go-go music. Driven by teenage musicians and the audience, the music was heavily inspired by funk, blues, soul and salsa. It is most identifiable by its synchronized polyrhythms and the use of multiple percussion instruments. Initially, the go-go was the term used to identify the place where the youth partied. Over time, the funky, homespun music became known as go-go music. Calling it go-go music in the early years made perfect sense because, between songs, the percussion section would continue to play, while the band leader would engage the audience through melodic calls and response sessions. This call and response method of engaging the audience became wildly popular as birthdays were recognized, graduations were celebrated, and the neighborhoods present were recognized openly over the music. Because the rhythm never stopped, Chuck Brown concerts were essentially marathon performances that kept his fans on the dance floor for hours. Brown described coming up with the idea of removing the song as a way to compete with disco DJs who enjoyed celebrity status among local partygoers. The popularity of the new sound spread quickly and resulted in fierce competition between local D.C. bands. In fact, there were dozens of go-go bands that showed up here in Washington, D.C., in the mid-1980s. A typical go-go band had keyboard players, horn sections, string sections, several percussionists, and many were teenagers. Where did formal music training come from, you ask? In the late 1970s and early 1980s there were strong music programs in D.C. high schools across the city, with heated rivalries between school marching bands. Many of these marching band members used the skills learned in school classrooms to become professional artists on the local go-go circuit. The supply of well-trained musicians wasn't the only way go-go music got a boost from the city's public institutions. During Marion Barry's first term as mayor, there was an animation of D.C.'s cultural atmosphere, an increase in black pride, and a focus on creating jobs and resources for the city's residents. Mayor Barry's Summer Youth Employment program enabled young people to gain work experience and income, and many brought musical instruments. During our notoriously humid summer months, D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation used its Showmobiles (mostly portable stages) to provide free go-go concerts for the city's youth. The bands were recreating and covering many Top 40 hits of the day, adding D.C. go-go percussive rhythms. One of the bands that received a scholarship from the city to perform at Showmobiles recalls performing up to four concerts a day during a particular summer in the 1980s! With the go-go music local range expanding rapidly, several venues around the city, previously catered for disco, funk and blues, decided to open their doors to these new bands. Several of the most popular venues included the Panorama Room (in Anacostia, in the southeast area of the city), Masonic Temple (on U Street NW), the Colosseum (in the Northeast), the Howard Theatre, RSVP, and several more throughout the city. While many of these venues are no longer around, they are common elements in the history of music. While the invention of go-go music is well storied in the Washington, D.C., community, it has been largely overlooked by cultural historians outside our nation's capital. Unfortunately, commercial success hasn't found its way into the historical narrative, except for Chuck Brown's 1978 signature hit Bustin' Loose and the use of a song by Experience Unlimited in the soundtrack to Spike Lee's film School Daze. It's interesting to note that even without huge commercial success, go-go music has thrived as a local industry. During the 1980s and 1990s, cassette recordings of live shows were sold by suppliers and bands the city that serves as a vibrant, secondary market for music. The most notable bands were undoubtedly Chuck Brown and Soul Searchers, Rare Essence, Trouble Funk, Junkyard Band and Experience Unlimited. Through strategic and knowledgeable management practices, these bands enjoyed decades of success and helped music to remain relevant over the years. Much like the birth of hip-hop in the Bronx during the same period (featured in the Places of Invention exhibition, opening July 1 at the Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation), this new music was developed in a society that experienced significant economic hardship. During the 1980s, Washington, D.C. was described as a city of two populations — the visible and the invisible. The visible group consisted of tourists, the Washington elite, the federal government, and professionals who floated in and out of the city. The invisible group was the largely African American, blue collar group that makes up a fairly high percentage of the city's population. The music flourished because, like blues and soul, it encapsulated the full range of experiences in these communities and brought joy as a cheap, fun, social expression. For most, the story of go-go music is synonymous with the story of the people who created it and gave it life. From the time of its inception, go-go music has existed as a raw, cultural asset owned equally by all its D.C. fans. If you listen carefully, within the raw percussion and funky grooves, you will hear the heartbeat and humanity of a very proud D.C. community. Is there a type of music that is unique to your hometown? What combination of people, resources and landscape resulted in a musical innovation where you live? Share your community as an inventive place on our interactive map. William Reynolds is economics and management officer of the Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation. James K. Zimmerman is senior Public Programs Producer for the National Museum of American History's Office of Programs and Strategic Initiatives, and a native Washingtonian.Learn more about Washington, D.C., as the go-go's birthplace on Thursday, June 11, 2015, on America Now! Music festival. The program will begin at 3:30 p.m. EST and will feature a live performance by local go-go band Familiar Faces and a Q&A session on stage with Donnell Floyd (lead, Familiar Faces), and writers Charles Stephenson, Jr. and Kip Lornell, writers of The Beat! Go-Go Music from Washington, D.C. D.C.

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