



Designing Your Summer Playlist

Your Guide to Free Outdoor Music Events In West Michigan

BY BRI KILROY | PHOTO BY TONY NORKUS

The population increase outside indicates we are eager to shake off the solitude of spending months indoors during the indecisive weather we experienced this season. Harmonizing with our urge to come together are scads of invitations to absorb the local music scene through live musical performances open to the entire community. Start designing your summer playlist with the concert events happening this month below.

Jazz in the Park

Mondays, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Ah-Nab-Awen Park

The West Michigan Jazz Society revs Monday nights with finger-snapping music performed by the wealth of jazz artists in our area. The setting at Ah-Nab-Awen Park touches the top key factors to staging a romantic date night (live music, river backdrop, option to bring your own wine and cheese platter) while serving as a family-friendly environment where kids can run wild, dogs can roll in the grass and room for picnic blankets or fold-out tables is abundant. A couple of food trucks are usually present, and concert-goers are permitted to bring their own food, beer, wine, chairs and whatever else they need to sink into jazz bliss. Check out who is playing this season at wmichjazz.org.

Relax at Rosa: Lunchtime Concerts

Thursdays, noon-1:30 p.m. at Rosa Parks Circle

Occurring Thursday afternoons through September, Relax at Rosa's free lunchtime concert series offers you a refreshing recess in the heart of downtown while a local band revives your energy with original music. At the base of Monroe Center just outside of the GRAM, Rosa Parks Circle is a short stroll from its encompassing eateries and welcomes food trucks onsite during the performance, so listeners can indulge in local bites while discovering a new favorite band. Find the full line-up at downtowngr.org.

Lowell Sizzlin' Summer Concerts Thursdays, 7 p.m. on Riverwalk Plaza

If you plan it right, you can stuff your Thursdays with live music performances by heading to Lowell to enjoy a free evening concert set in front of the soothing river running through the town. Lowell's Sizzlin' Summer Concerts take place Thursday evenings on Riverwalk Plaza, where music-lovers can steal a seat on the bleachers or bring a folding chair to perch in the lawn. The venue is wheelchair accessible and features a dynamic blend of Michigan musicians performing everything from soul to rock, so no one's musical taste goes unsatisfied. Speaking of taste, food and spirits are available for purchase if you want to make a night of it. See this year's line-up at discoverlowell.org/sizzlin-summer-concerts.

Festival of the Arts

June 1-3 in Downtown Grand Rapids

Being a massive celebration of all arts, a significant portion of Festival of the Arts is dedicated to live concerts taking place each day of the event. Stages transform our city streets into open-air music venues saturated with live bands and contagious energy. All performances are free, so you can spend your hard-earned money on the seductive food booths that benefit local nonprofits and serve remarkable festival fare.

97 LAV Summertime Blues Concerts Wednesdays starting June 20-August 22 6 p.m. at DeltaPlex

Relax through the midweek lull at the free Summertime Blues concert series. The city's favorite blues artists take to the Preferred Credit Union Stage and perform for the crowds that spread their foldout chairs across the parking lot.

Parking is free for everyone, with a special invitation to motorcycles and classic cars to park inside the concert venue for a casual auto show. Full lineup at deltplex.com

Fifth Third Bank Summer Concerts at Meijer Gardens, Through September 3 at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

This annual concert series hosts world-renowned musicians in the Gardens' stunning outdoor amphitheater. Not only does the line-up feature legendary acts like The Decemberists (June 4), Seal (June 20), Jason Mraz (July 25) and Alabama (Aug 23), but the surrounding sculpture park under the vast evening sky makes for an unforgettable concert experience. Lawn seating is first-come, first-served, but you are welcome to bring low-back chairs and blankets to accessorize a nice patch of grass you find nearby. Picnic baskets are permitted, but leave any glass containers or bottles at home, as they are not allowed on the property. Bringing alcohol is also forbidden, but beer and wine are available for purchase at the food and beverage concession stands onsite. What's a show without some snacks? Check out the lineup at meijergardens.org.

For the more frugal concert-goers who still yearn to experience an outdoor concert at the Gardens, Tuesday Evening Music Club kicks off July 3 at 7 p.m. with performances by local musicians. Shows are free with admission to the Gardens. Full lineup at meijergardens.org.



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