



PHOTO: JIM PRISCHING

Chris Bauman at his Chordcraft Studio in downtown Barrington.

Preserving the Chicago Sound

SAM COOKE, HERBIE HANCOCK, the Buckingham, Smashing Pumpkins, JuiceWRLD, Fall Out Boy, STYX, Kanye West, Wilco, Earth Wind & Fire, Lupe Fiasco, Cheap Trick, Kaskade, Rise Against, Common, Disturbed, Andrew Bird, Twista, Richard Marx, Ministry, Jennifer Hudson, Alkaline Trio, Frankie Knuckles, Plain White T's, Haley Reinhart, John Splithoff, Saba, and of course the band "Chicago". Closer to home, "The Academy Is" bandmates William Beckett and Adam Siska went to Barrington High School and named one of their albums, "Fast Times at Barrington High".

These are Chicago's musicians who create a unique sound that cannot be grown or replicated anywhere else. The Chicago sound is gritty, it's calused, it's real. That's why people around the world

connect with it.

But when these Chicago musicians sing their songs, when they perform, they are telling more than just their stories. They are telling the story of Chicago. They are telling OUR stories.

It takes countless hours of music lessons from teachers, practicing in basements and garages, performing in high school musicals, joining choirs, creating their first bands/groups with friends and eventually landing their first gig in a reputable independent Chicago club. It's the cold and manic weather here, the lows of winter seasonal depression thawing and giving way to the highs of "summertime chi", the parties here, the fights here, the heartbreaks here, the falling in love here, the hustle, the money, the winning, and the losing here that somehow comes together into the magnificent

Chicago sound cherished around the world.

Chicago's sound and the talent that our communities incubate is unique. It is authentic and cannot be manufactured, replicated, or grown elsewhere. Seattle has its sound; Memphis has its sound; New Orleans has their sound; Nashville, New York, and L.A., too.

MUSIC LIKE WINE

Wine made from grapes grown in different parts of the world has a unique taste. Could you imagine a world where all wines were only made from Australian grapes? Or all Italian grapes? No variety, no opportunity to discover a new taste. Or worse yet, what if you tasted a wine you loved yet they just stopped growing the grapes that made that wine? Could you imagine a world without Chicago's sound? Where the only music being played or

performed had to be L.A.'s sound?

The truth is we are getting dangerously closer and closer to living in an "L.A. sound only" world. For decades, school boards across America have opted to defund music programs believing (naively) the funds could be better allocated elsewhere, leaving musically curious students left hanging. Once independent record labels and independent music venues—which together historically incubated a particular city's authentic music culture—are dismantled through large-scale corporate consolidations leading to all music production, choices on who can perform at a particular music venue and other decisions are made with finances only in mind from LA or New York (as opposed to music production and decisions being made from the ground in Chicago).

Where will our kids learn how to play an instrument if a family is unable to afford private lessons? Where will the professional guidance be when these children are ready to make their musical dreams and aspirations a reality? Where will they perform if there are no more independent music venues left willing and able to give them a shot with a gig?

We as a community have a responsibility and opportunity to shift the tides. We have an opportunity to preserve American arts and music culture for future generations. An opportunity to preserve and evolve Chicago's authentic music culture, to preserve and evolve Chicago's sound.

How? Be active in communicating to our school leaders that music is an important and essential part of our students curriculum. Know how to play an instrument? Volunteer to teach someone how to play for free.

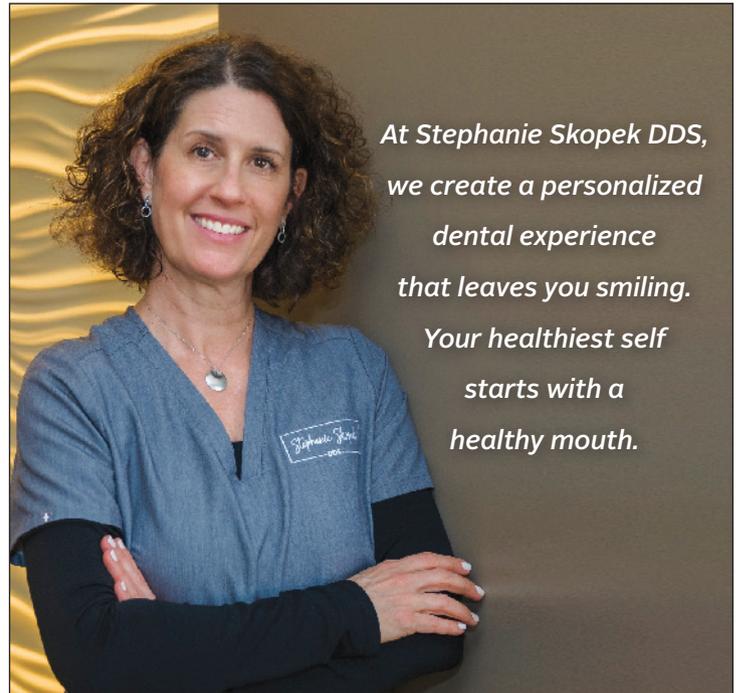
Actively seek out new music. Discover new bands. Make it a point to go out to establishments that feature live music. Support local musicians and music venues by attending shows. Buy tickets. Buy drinks. Go to as many shows as you can.

Working together as a community, we can keep our incredible music culture alive and incubate the next generation of Chicago talent. I couldn't be more excited to see who we send to the GRAMMYS next! 

Chris Bauman and his family live in Lake Barrington. He is a recognized music promoter, venue owner, and entertainment entrepreneur. With over 15 years industry experience, he began his career booking local bands, hip hop groups, and DJs in his native Chicago. Bauman has worked with some of the most popular musical talent in the world and now leads nine separate, yet complementary entertainment companies and music venues as part of his Zenith Music Group.

ZMG companies and venues include Patio Theater, a historic 1,500 capacity venue located in Chicago; Avondale Music Hall, a trendy new 750 capacity music club; Chordcraft Studios, a music production and publishing house; Genesis Presents, a boutique concert promotion company which produces multi-genre shows across the United States and Canada. He is a partner in SPKR BX Presents, a hip-hop specific promotion company and partner in the Lyrical Lemonade Summer Smash Festival. Bauman also owns Shirley's Piano Bar, a popular piano bar located in downtown Barrington and he is developing a 275-acre festival and nature grounds named Plum Tree located in Harvard, Illinois.

Chris Bauman may be reached at chris@zenithmusicgroup.com. On Instagram, follow @chrisbauman.



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