

# FORUM

COMMENTARY FROM THE COMMUNITY

## The city of Cleveland's other musical legacy ... rhythm & blues



Illustration by Advance Local; photos by Jim Gayle, Cleveland Public Library, Associated Press

### John Wilson and Harvey Rachlin

From jazz and rock 'n' roll to rock and hip hop, Cleveland's musical heritage is rich, diverse and exciting. The city has long been a powerhouse of popular music, and its impact on American culture cannot be overstated.

Although Cleveland is famous for helping launch rock and roll in the early 1950s with deejay Alan Freed and his "Moondog Rock & Roll House Party" on WJW, it has another music legacy that is often overlooked: It was a catalyst to the worldwide explosion of rhythm and blues.

Cleveland's story as an early torchbearer of R&B begins in the late 1940s when this new genre of pulsating, dance-oriented music was broadcast on local stations like WJMO and WABQ.

At this time, radio stations with predominantly white audiences wouldn't play the so-called "race records" of Black artists, but Freed exuberantly brought this music to his listeners, along with that of white artists, and called it rock 'n' roll, a phrase commonly used in Black clubs in Cleveland for many years.

R&B was an integral part of the stew from which rock 'n' roll evolved, and Muddy Waters affirmed that in his record called, "The Blues Had a Baby and They Called It Rock and Roll." Freed's radio show would have been more aptly called "Moondog's Rhythm & Blues and Rock & Roll House Party."

Cleveland's legacy as a booster of R&B continued in the next decade, a time of racial division and change. In 1967, Carl B. Stokes was elected the first Black mayor of

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Cleveland, following racial riots in the city the previous year. But for African-American musicians at the time, Cleveland was still very much stuck in the Jim Crow era. Indeed, the Cuyahoga River was like a Mason-Dixon line for white and Black entertainers. Black artists were relegated to play on the East Side of the city, and couldn't play in West Side clubs where white artists performed in more upscale venues.

Still, the East side was a flourishing music scene, with clubs like Leo's Casino, Brougham Lounge, The Versailles, and the Music Box on Euclid Avenue; Sir-Rah House on Lee Road, and Gleason's Musi-

cal Bar on Woodland Avenue. These venues were a pivotal stop for prominent and up-and-coming African-American music artists, such as Screamin' Jay Hawkins, B.B. King, James Brown and The Temptations.

By the mid-1950s, Tin Pan Alley was on life support as the burgeoning rock 'n' roll genre was supplanting it on the pop music charts. Eventually, both forms faded as other genres such as British pop, rock and Latin burst onto the mainstream. Among these '60s genre staples was R&B (now in variant forms called soul or funk), and Cleveland was not alone in propelling it to the masses. Other cities such as Detroit, Los Angeles and New York were also major exponents of it.

Those East Side clubs, some part of the Chitlin Circuit, that thrived and fired up their patrons long ago have mostly disappeared. But they indubitably comprised a live performance mecca for both African-American homegrown talent and visiting established artists wanting to spread their wings in an important music town. They — along with the Black artists who helped shape rock 'n' roll beginning in the 1940s — were integral in changing the face of music forever and are an indelible part of Cleveland's inimitable musical heritage.

*National Rhythm & Blues Hall of Fame inductee "Sly" Wilson was a founding member of Cleveland's Sly, Slick and Wicked and played in many of Cleveland's East Side clubs in the 1960s.*

*Rachlin is the author of "The Encyclopedia of the Music Business" and "Song and System: The Making of American Pop Music."*

COMMENTARY

## Can those accused of violent felonies keep their guns?

*Yes, apparently they can, according to 2nd Amendment.*



Eric Foster

If someone is accused of robbing a bank, should they be barred from possessing firearms while their criminal case is pending?

I imagine that most of you reading this would not take long to answer that question. Most of you would say, "Yes." I think the answer would probably stay the same even for those who consider themselves to be supporters of the Second Amendment.

Last week, the 8th Ohio District Court of Appeals, the appellate court that hears appeals from cases in Cuyahoga County, considered that question. Well, they considered it in a sense. Still, the court answered in a way that you may not have expected. The court answered, "Maybe not."

Here are the facts: Under Ohio law, a person accused of committing a violent felony offense is barred from possessing firearms while under indictment.

Delvonte Philpotts was accused of committing a violent felony: rape. While still under indictment, he posted photographs of himself with a gun to his social media. He was then charged with another felony — having a weapon under disability ("WUD") — for violating the Ohio law which prohibited him from possessing a gun while under indictment for a violent felony. (Life lesson: Stop posting everything, young people.)

The state of Ohio dismissed the rape case, but not the WUD case. Philpotts filed a motion to dismiss the case, arguing that the WUD law violated his Second Amendment right to bear arms.

The trial court denied his motion, after which Philpotts pleaded "no contest." He appealed his conviction all the way to the Ohio Supreme Court.

The high court sent Delvonte Philpotts' case back to the trial court for reconsideration of his motion to dismiss in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*.

You may not recall the Bruen decision. I wrote about it last year. In that case, the Court held (basically) that gun regulations are constitutional only if they are "consistent with the Nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation."

The trial court did what was ordered. It reconsidered Philpotts' motion in light of Bruen. After doing so, it determined that Philpotts was right. Ohio's WUD law violated the Second Amendment, as there was no historical tradition of firearm regulation in the same way. Therefore, the law was unconstitutional.

Said simply, Ohio's blanket prohibition of gun possession by those accused of committing violent felonies was itself prohibited by the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Last week, the 8th District in Cleveland affirmed the trial court's decision. **SEE FOSTER, D8**

COMMENTARY

## A roller coaster market means investors should sit tight at the moment

### Nir Kaissar

President Donald Trump's bombshell Liberation Day tariff announcement was greeted with one of the worst two-day US stock market routs on record. Whatever you think of Trump's tariff policies, they are a huge gamble, and no one knows how things will play out. What we do know, however, is that uncertainty makes the stock market more volatile.

So it was after Trump's sweeping tariff announcement. The S&P 500 Index tumbled 10.5% last Thursday and Friday, a two-day drawdown rarely surpassed over the past 100 years and, then too, almost exclusively during the Great Depression, the infamous 1987 crash and the 2008 financial crisis.

Understandably, I received many calls and texts from concerned friends and investors wondering if we are facing a fresh crisis. My answer was no — at least not yet.

What makes this selloff so jarring is its

speed. But speed is not severity.

The S&P 500 is down 17% from its Feb. 19 peak through Friday, less than the 20% drop that marks the start of a bear market. And the headline number overstates the impact. A good chunk of the S&P 500's decline is attributable to the technology giants that dominate the index. The S&P 500 Equal Weight Index, by contrast, is down a more modest 14% over the same time.

Other market gauges show little concern so far, if at all. Notably, credit spreads — the difference in yield between corporate bonds and Treasuries — reliably spike during crises.

Spreads for high quality borrowers surged to nearly 8 percentage points during the financial crisis, signaling that a growing number of companies were struggling to pay their debts. Today, those same credit spreads are barely above a percentage point. Even credit spreads for troubled borrowers, while higher last week, remain close to historic lows.

None of that resembles a crisis, but there are signs the economy is slowing. The 10-year Treasury yield is down sharply since the beginning of the year. The two-year Treasury yield is lower, too, signaling that the Federal Reserve will cut short-term interest rates by about 0.5 to 0.75 percentage point this year.

Those moves in Treasury markets accelerated after the White House's tariff announcement last week. They are also echoed by the Atlanta Fed's estimate that real gross domestic product contracted at an annual rate of 2.8% in the first quarter.

The question investors should be asking, then, is what to expect if the economy tips into recession. For guidance, I looked at how the S&P 500 performed during each of the past 10 recessions, a period that stretches back to the mid-1950s. Specifically, I calculated the index's peak-to-trough decline corresponding with each recession using month-end prices.

**SEE KAISSAR, D8**



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*Michael M. Santiago, Getty Images via TNS*