

Rock 'n' Soul: Universal Music Heritage

John Doyle, Executive Director, Memphis Rock n' Soul Museum (USA)

The Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum's exhibition about the birth of rock and soul music, created by the Smithsonian Institution, tells the story of musical pioneers who, for the love of music, overcame racial and socio-economic barriers to create the music that shook the entire world. Our museum is also the story of how a traveling exhibition grew into a museum and how a very local and then regional phenomenon became nationally and internationally recognized.

> In August, 2004, the Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum became established as one of the city's most prominent museums. Located at 191 Beale, on the corner of legendary Highway 61 at the FedExForum sports and entertainment complex, the museum offers a comprehensive Memphis music experience from the rural field hollers and sharecroppers of the 1930s, through the explosion of Sun, Stax and Hi Records and Memphis' musical heyday in the 70s, to its global musical influence. The museum's digital audio tour guide is packed

with over 300 minutes of information, including over 100 songs, and takes visitors at their own pace through seven galleries featuring 3 audio visual programs, more than 30 instruments, 40 costumes and other musical treasures.

History of Rock 'n' Soul Museum

Born on April 29, 2000, the Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum, Inc. has welcomed over 250,000 visitors from all over the world, including thousands of school students who participate in the museum's Education Program to learn about the social changes that impacted the nation and led to the development of rock 'n' roll.

> The "first born" of the world-renowned Smithsonian Institution and developed by the National Museum of American History (NMAH) to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Smithsonian Institution in 1996, the Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum became the first exhibition to have ever been developed by the Smithsonian Institution with another museum.

> In 1990, the NMAH set out to develop a traveling exhibition about "American music" and continually returned to the Delta and Memphis, Tennessee for what is finally declared as the 'roots of America's music' – the sounds of field hollers, work songs, blues, country and gospel of the sharecroppers in the 1930-40s that eventually collided and fused with the urban sounds of Beale Street (urban blues and jazz), SUN Studio (rock 'n' roll and rockabilly),



Rock Painting from Oued Meroutek, Hoggar (Algeria). Young girls dancing. (Tracing: E. Anati - 1994; Archive WARA E00233).

STAX Recording and Hi Records (rhythm & blues, soul music).

> Funding was not secured for the traveling exhibition, but a group of visionary Memphians banded together to raise the money, complete the research, acquire pertinent objects and artifacts, and finish the installation and construction of the museum.

> According to the Smithsonian Institution, the finest museum system in the world, "Rock 'n' Soul: Social Crossroads" is the story of the body of music that had the most influence on the culture and lifestyles of the world during the mid-20th century unto this day. It affected the way we walked, the way we talked, the way we combed our hair and the way we dressed – not only in Memphis or the nation, but throughout the entire world.

In 2007, the Museum was awarded as one of five "Globus American Icon" tourist attractions, a distinction promoted by "Tourism Cares".

<http://www.memphisrocknsoul.org>

"In the search for the roots of American music, all roads lead to Memphis."