

Go-Go Music Collection

An inventory of Go-Go Music at DC Public Library

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on September 08, 2020.

English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

DCPL Special Collections - MLK Library

901 G Street NW

Washington, DC

archives.dcpl@dc.gov

Table of Contents

Summary Information 3

Biographical / Historical 3

Scope and Contents 4

Administrative Information 4

Controlled Access Headings 4

Collection Inventory 4

 Series 1 4

Summary Information

Repository:	DCPL Special Collections - MLK Library
Title:	Go-Go Music Collection
ID:	101
Date [inclusive]:	1988-2000
Physical Description:	1.5 linear feet; 2 boxes
Language of the Material:	English
Language of the Material:	English

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

Originating in Washington, D.C., Go-Go music is a heavily percussive subgenre of funk which combines rapping, singing, and call and response from the gospel tradition. Go-Go creates a dialogue between the audience and the musicians, making both central to the performance of the music. This genre is significant to the African American community of D.C. and often comments on contemporary issues and culture. Go-Go performance thrived in parks, schools, community centers, playgrounds, college campuses, and dance clubs in D.C. during the 1970s and 1980s. While Go-Go cannot be traced back to a single person, as various bands and artists influenced the genre, Chuck Brown contributed significantly to the early development of the musical style and is considered the godfather of the genre. The most popular bands attracted hundreds, and sometimes, thousands of people. Local radio stations devoted hours of airtime exclusively to the music. Go-Go played an important role in many neighborhoods throughout the D.C. area. The early artists who played their musical instruments in these spaces inspired many children to join school bands where they learned to read standard musical notation. Black-owned businesses sold Go-Go artists' records, concert tickets, and urban wear associated with the genre. Go-Go prospered in the 1970s and 1980s, but attempts by musicians and promoters to take the music into the mainstream in the mid 1980s with the feature film "Good to Go" and a promotional deal with Island records were unsuccessful. After a series of violent incidents in Go-Go halls, D.C. officials enacted new legislation which drove the music back underground. In the late 1990s and early 2000s as gentrification increased in D.C., Go-Go shifted to Maryland. The genre was perceived as being associated with crime and illicit activity. Club owners banned the music and politicians publicly denounced it. However, Go-Go artists continue to fight stigmatization collaborating for anti-drug and anti-violence benefits.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of clippings, interviews, photographs promotional materials, publications and audiotapes.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Revision Description

Updated biography note. 2020-03-17

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Music
- Go-go (Music)

Collection Inventory

Series 1

Title/Description	Instances	
Clippings, 1985-1990, 2000	Box 1	Folder 1
Interviews, 1988-2000	Box 1	Folder 2
Interviews, Undated	Box 1	Folder 3
Miscellaneous, Undated	Box 1	Folder 4
Promotional Materials, 1998-2000	Box 1	Folder 5

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)