**Royal Peacock**

The Royal Peacock is a reggae nightclub in the historic Auburn Avenue district.  It holds a rich history as hosting to some of the greatest entertainment figures like James Brown, Ray Charles, and Arethra Franklin.  The club was restored & reopened in August of 2010 after being closed for almost two years.

The Royal Peacock is still active today, featuring live and recorded music, mostly reggae and world music. But in its heyday, it was a mecca for black musicians from all over the country, many of them [blues](http://www.examiner.com/topic/blues-artists/articles) artists.

The Royal Peacock was opened in 1937 as the Top Hat club, in the famous Sweet Auburn district, heart of black life in Atlanta in those days. Jesse B. Blayton, Clayton R. Yates and Lorimer Milton organized a corporation known as BLMIYA, and opened the Top Hat Club on Auburn Avenue. Known as "Club Beautiful", the Top Hat Club was considered one of the finest clubs for African-Americans in the country. Most of the black clubs were on Auburn and Decatur Streets in the 30's and 40's.  In 1948, Carrie Cunningham bought the Top Hat and renamed it The Royal Peacock. She was a former circus performer, obsessed with peacocks, and often wore peacock feathers, pins, and fabrics herself. In 1949, the Royal Peacock was opened and owned by Carrie B. Cunningham. Egyptian revival became the decor (similar to the Fox Theater) and peacock feathers were cascaded down the side of the building from the street facing windows. Wednesday and Saturday performances were reserved for whites.  
Cunningham also operated the Royal Hotel and Restaurant for visiting performers unable to stay at white hotels, This building was formerly located next to Big Bethal and is now a parking garage.

Cunningham created an elegant interior for her club, with peacock feathers streaming from the windows, carpeted floor, and tables and booths to accommodate up to 350 patrons. Aretha Franklin, The Supremes, and Gladys Knight all made their first Atlanta appearances at the Royal Peacock. Otis Redding and Ray Charles appeared there, as well as Cab Calloway and Louis Armstrong.

As for blues legends, the club hosted B. B. King,  Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, and a host of others appeared here. The Royal Peacock  was a jewel of black Atlanta entertainment. and holds a very important place in [Atlanta blues](http://www.examiner.com/topic/atlanta-blues/articles) and music history.

The Top Hat Night Club and later the Royal Peacock hosted top performers including Ray Charles, Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, Dizzy Gillespie, Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong, B.B. King, the Supremes, and Gladys Knight and the Pips (Gladys was a local born Atlantan). Basking in this brilliant atmosphere out-of-town celebrities such Joe Loius, Jackie Robinson and Muhummad Ali could frequently be found at the Royal Peacock.







     

