

BY KEVIN C. JOHNSON

Missouri is widely known as “the Show-Me State,” something that’s most evident in St. Louis, host city of this year’s NSBE Annual Convention and the city showing and telling unlike any other in Missouri.

The St. Louis area is known for giving us rapper Nelly, jazz legend Miles Davis, poet Maya Angelou, rock ‘n’ roll pioneer Chuck Berry and King of Ragtime Scott Joplin, along with actors such as Kevin Kline and John Goodman, organizations such as the St. Louis Rams and Cardinals, and even toasted ravioli.

And of course there’s the Gateway Arch, the stunning, 630-foot-high steel structure that hosts tram rides to its top daily. The base of the arch is full of exhibits. (<http://www.nps.gov/jeff/planyourvisit/gateway-arch.htm>, 314-982-1410)

Despite the city’s heavy focus on sports and entertainment, St. Louis is also a bit of a hub for some science and technology attractions, beginning with the nationally known St. Louis Science Center.

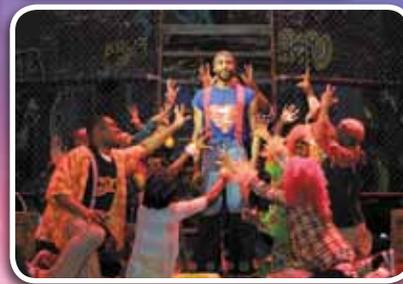
STEM EXCITEMENT

The sprawling St. Louis Science Center rolls out over three buildings and includes the main facility along with the EXPLO-RADOME and the James S. McDonnell Planetarium. A whopping 700-plus hands-on exhibits are on display in galleries including the Life Science Lab, Science Park, Designing Technologies for People, Ecology & Environment, Cybertown and more. (5050 Oakland Ave., www.slsc.org)

In partnership with the St. Louis Science Center is the Challenger Learning Center – St. Louis, offering space education for corporate and community groups and others. The center’s state-of-the-art space simulators feature an orbiting space station. There is a Mission Control center on site, modeled after the one at NASA’s Johnson Space Center. This attraction is part of the Challenger Center for Space Science Education, founded by the families of the astronauts lost during the Challenger space shuttle tragedy in 1986. (205 Brotherton Lane, 314-521-6205)

The Academy of Science – St. Louis, which is behind the Greater St. Louis Science Fair, continues its mission to expand scientific outreach, education and resource-sharing to partners in the corporate, academic and public worlds. (5050 Oakland Ave., www.academyofsciencestl.org)

African-Canadian inventor and engineer Elijah McCoy gets a spotlight in St. Louis this month on stage at the Grandel for the Black Rep’s production of “The Real McCoy,” directed by Andrew Moodie and running March 16–April 10. The Black



THINGS TO DO IN

Rep is the country’s largest, longest-running African-American theater company, established in 1976. (3610 Grandel Square, www.theblackrep.org)

Another classic of a very different sort is the Moto Museum, the place to be for super-rare motorcycles, many of them coming from Europe and going as far back as the 1900s. It’s a must for collectors and fans. (3441 Olive St., www.themotomuseum.com)

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Catering to more general yet curious-minded tastes is the City Museum, a something-for-everyone site that is home to everything from the Shoelace Factory to the world’s largest pencil. (701 N. 15th St., www.citymuseum.org)

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ST. LOUIS

For more general information about the city and state, there's the Missouri History Museum, with attractions ranging from "Seeking to St. Louis" to "1904 World's Fair: Looking Back at Looking Forward." (5700 Lindell Blvd., www.mohistory.org)

Jazz and blues music have rich histories in St. Louis, and downtown is the best place to start in search of it. A number of clubs highlighting the best of the city's blues offerings, with regional and national talent passing through, include BBS Jazz, Blues & Soups (700 S. Broadway, www.bbsjazzbluessoups.com), Beale on Broadway (701 S. Broadway, www.bealeonbroadway.com) and Broadway Oyster Bar (736 S. Broadway, www.broadwayoysterbar.com), all located near the new Busch Stadium, home of the St. Louis Cardinals.

Jazz finds its primary St. Louis home at Jazz St. Louis' Jazz at the Bistro. On tap for March are Chris Potter Underground March 2–5; Ronald Carter & OGD March 11–12; Christian McBride, Benny Green and Gregory Hutchinson March 16–19; Julian Lage and Orange CD release party March 25; and Ann Hampton Calloway March 30–April 2. (3536 Washington Ave., www.jazzstl.org)

Jazz at the Bistro is located in the artsy Grand Center (www.grandcenter.org) area of Midtown St. Louis, also home to the St. Louis Symphony at Powell Hall (718 N. Grand Ave., www.stlsymphony.org), the Sheldon Concert Hall (3648 Washington Blvd., www.sheldonconcerthall.org) and the Fox Theatre (527 N. Grand, www.fabulousfox.com).

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Scott Joplin's old digs are the site of tours for those who want to see where

he and his bride started their life in St. Louis. (2658A Delmar Blvd., www.mostateparks.com/scottjoplin.htm)

Soulard is one of those areas where you'll find a little bit of everything. The historic area, just outside of downtown, is home to the nation's second biggest

Mardi Gras celebration, along with a number of restaurants and other establishments. (www.soulard.org)

The Central West End is another heavily populated area known for trendy, hip attractions of the restaurant and bar variety. (www.thecwe.org)

Along that vein is the Delmar Loop, location of a number of shops, boutiques, clubs and theaters, as well as the St. Louis Walk of Fame, where natives such as Chuck Berry, Miles Davis, Maya Angelou, Josephine Baker, Jackie Joyner-

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Historical Sites

St. Louis, Mo., is steeped in African-American history. Take the city's Old Courthouse, for example. In this building the Dred Scott case, which played a huge role in the progression of the U.S. toward civil war, was first argued. The trial is now reenacted year-round at the courthouse, which has a permanent exhibition titled "A Legacy of Freedom: Dred Scott and the Quest for Freedom." This is only one of many significant black history events that had the Old Courthouse as a setting. The last slave auction held on the courthouse steps took place in 1861, when a large antislavery crowd refused to bid on human beings.

African Americans and Africans had a large role in the development of St. Louis. Many blacks lived in the city during the 1700s and fought the British in the Revolutionary War Battle of Fort San Carlos, which actually took place on the Gateway Arch grounds. During the 1800s, many wealthy black residents owned land in what is now known as the Laclede's Landing entertainment district, along the Mississippi Riverfront. Historical documents show that land just north of the Gateway was given by the Spanish to a free mulatto woman named Esther. ■