



# An American Tour: 149



## Kansas City's *Pla-Mor*

It was torn down in 1972. Before that, it was a rock concert hall. The Who performed there. Before that, it was the seventh largest bowling alley in America. But before that it was the Pla-Mor Ballroom, opened on Thanksgiving, 1927 to over 4000 patrons. The Kansas City Times raved:

“Entrance was under a brilliant electric sign. Once past the door, wall decorations of freehand painting attracted attention. Rich carpet gave an impression of luxuriousness. Up a flight of steps and down a hall past the women’s cloak room the eye followed vivid hunting and jungle scenes of the modern motif. Velour tapestries were admired particularly by the women. In the two women’s rest rooms imported Italian furniture was another feature. The ball room and mezzanine were decorated in a more strictly patterned manner. Here the lighting brilliance demanded the first and lasting attention. Ceiling fixtures of beaded glass chains suspended bowl-shaped, with variable colors glowing through them, vied with tinted lamps casting full and toned colors across the floor from the walls.”

On the northwest corner of Linwood and Main (3142 Main Street was the official address), the Pla-Mor complex claimed to be the country’s largest indoor amusement center, with a bowling alley, a restaurant, and a hockey arena, home to the Kansas City Pla-Mors of the American Hockey Association from 1928 through 1933. But the star attraction was the ballroom, which boasted a 14,000 square foot dance floor on top of 7000 springs that could flex up to a quarter inch, accommodating 3000 people.



The Pla-Mor drew unwanted attention to Kansas City when, on Christmas weekend of 1945, the segregated ballroom threw out Cab Calloway, visiting to see Lionel Hampton’s band on Hampton’s invitation, because he was Black. Calloway was struck with the butt of a gun, requiring eight stitches in his scalp. Hampton, hearing about the incident, refused to play his second set and the Pla-Mor refunded angry dancers who paid \$1.50 a ticket.

[<http://kcjazz.com>]

