



The History of The Orange Peel

The building on the corner of Biltmore and Hilliard Avenue holds many fond memories for the people of Asheville. From 1950 to 1962, Skateland Rollerdom was the place to be on Saturday night and hosted many birthday parties for children of Asheville. The downtown skating rink proved to be the perfect place for kids to have fun while moms and dads shopped in the department stores that once dominated the downtown landscape. Later, the building housed a series of R & B and soul clubs. Coincidentally, most of those clubs had colors in their names: jade, emerald, and orange. The Orange Peel was the best known of these establishments and had a reputation throughout Western North Carolina as the hottest nightclub around. Artists such as The Commodores and The Bar-Kays appeared on the carpeted, three-tiered stage, and when live music was not available, recorded disco and funk blared from the elevated DJ booth, which featured DJs from one of the few black owned radio stations in the country, WBMU-FM. The Orange Peel was the last club to occupy the location before it became vacant for many years. After a stint as an auto parts warehouse, The Orange Peel was reborn, thanks to Julian Price's downtown redevelopment company, Public Interest Projects.

Over the last three years, The Orange Peel Social Aid and Pleasure Club has become recognized as one of the best live music venues in the nation. Featured and highlighted in *USA Today*, *Travel and Leisure Magazine*, *Southern Living Magazine*, *Turner South Cable Network*, *Rolling Stones Magazine*, and in a number of regional and national newspapers and magazines, the club is known for presenting up and coming new talent as well as showcasing legendary performers. Everyone from Bob Dylan to Ziggy Marley and from Ween to Wilco have performed to sold-out houses at The Orange Peel.

In New Orleans, "Social Aid and Pleasure Club" describes organizations that provide care, comfort, entertainment and support to its membership. The Orange Peel has a mission to do all of that and more for the community of Western North Carolina. By hosting a number of benefits, galas, birthday parties, weddings, and even memorial services, 101 Biltmore Avenue has once again become a well-known address in Asheville. Ironically, The Orange Peel of the 1970's billed itself as "The *Original* Orange Peel," perhaps imagining a future for "The *New and Improved* Orange Peel".