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## Rocking New York

The Cleveland-based Rock and Roll Hall of Fame opens an outpost in the Big Apple

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Thirteen years after it first bowed in Ohio, the Cleveland-based Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum is setting up shop in New York. The nonprofit organization announced today that it will open an annex among the galleries and boutiques of the SoHo neighborhood. It's a bid to win new fans in the city's big donor community and extend the Rock Hall's reach beyond a music industry in turmoil.

The outpost will showcase memorabilia from the Rock Hall's collection, such as Bruce Springsteen's first car, and celebrate New York's rich rock history, including profiles of such venues as the Mudd Club and CBGB. With floor space reserved for a "Cleveland Rocks" promotion, the organization is also trying to drive much-needed tourist traffic to the I.M. Pei-designed flagship in Ohio.



WireImage

A 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air, the first car purchased by rocker Bruce Springsteen, will be displayed in a New York City annex of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

"It's about exposing the brand on a broader basis," says Rock Hall president and chief executive Terry Stewart, citing the Guggenheim Museum of New York, Britain's Tate Modern and the Louvre in Paris as examples of museums that have set up satellites.

The Rock Hall deserves to be competitive with established arts institutions for philanthropic dollars, says Joel Peresman, president and chief executive of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation, the organization's New York-based fundraising arm. Considering the support for institutions like the Museum of Modern Art or the Metropolitan Opera, he says, "rock and roll is as important, especially in the boomer generation, as any of these other art forms."

But the strategy carries risk, coming during a period when pressures in the economy are contributing to a squeeze on culture. "It's a stressed time for arts support in New York, and nationwide," says Robert L. Lynch, president and chief executive of Americans for the Arts, an arts advocacy group. Between 2003 and 2006, business support for the arts fell 5% to \$5.2 billion, according to a survey by the Business Committee for the Arts. Yet

the Rock Hall has popular culture on its side. The annex "may very well may attract someone who's not giving to the arts at all," Mr. Lynch says.

While fans can't seem to get enough of classic rock groups like the Police in concert, it's been something of a challenge to sell them on a museum celebrating such groups. From a high of about 800,000 visitors a year when the Rock Hall opened, admissions had dwindled to about 413,000 by 2004. A marketing push in the surrounding region helped spark a 10% increase in total admissions since then. Now, the Rock Hall is updating its image. A capital campaign has raised about \$22 million of a targeted \$35 million for a renovation to flagship's interior, the opening of an off-site research library and archives, and seeding an endowment.

However, the library won't generate income, and the Rock Hall is vulnerable to the economic slowdown that's keeping would-be tourists at home. The organization says attendance is on track to meet last year's figure. The Rock Hall has been operating without an endowment, living largely hand-to-mouth on ticket and merchandise sales, which account for about 80% of its operating revenue. (About half of the nation's history museums do not have an endowment, according to the American Association of Museums.)

The Foundation's fundraising has hinged on the Hall of Fame's annual, high-profile induction ceremony. It typically raises about \$1 million by selling table reservations and program ads to the music companies that represent Rock Hall nominees, but with music sales in an ongoing slide, donations are dwindling. After a decade of being hosted in New York the ceremony will be held in Cleveland in 2009, which could affect the participation level of labels based on the coasts.

Music industry leaders, including the late Ahmet Ertegun, founded the Hall of Fame in the 1980s and spearheaded the museum project. "We wouldn't be here without them," Mr. Peresman says, "But they can't be supportive in the bigger way they used to be."

To pull off its New York gig, the Rock Hall is counting on outside partners to shoulder the operating and marketing costs. Producers include Running Subway, which mounted a commercially successful (and controversial) exhibit called "Bodies." The ongoing exhibit in lower Manhattan features displays of flayed human remains.

After the 25,000 square-foot annex opens in November on Mercer Street, the operating partners will share an undisclosed percentage of revenue with the Rock Hall. To court potential donors, the Rock Hall will look to New York-based board members, who will play up the organization's educational programs, in addition to its curatorial efforts.