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Connie Atkinson
University of New Orleans

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RECORDS & TAPES
Record Bar
Babs Et Al In Cold; WMOT Seeks Higher Ground

Cold fans will have to wait a while longer to hear their idols on vinyl. The Cold had considered signing a recording contract with WMOT Records, which is distributed by Columbia.

When reached by phone at his New York office, Alan Rubin, WMOT president, explained, "We are no longer interested in signing The Cold. They have been having some management changes recently which left us wary. We made our offer but they held out trying to land a deal with a larger company. We decided not to wait any longer on them and withdrew our offer."

Bruce Spizer, co-manager of The Cold, said "They offered us the usual five-year deal, but they were vague about what exactly we would get in the way of recordings."

Meanwhile, WMOT has struck a deal with another New Orleans group, Higher Ground, a funk band. Rubin added, "We are purchasing a master on the group for an upcoming single release." According to the group's manager, Bobby Marchan, "I sent them a demo tape of 'Shake Em Up' that we made at Rosemont Studio, and they called me back and said they were interested. They aren't signing us as a group just yet, but if the single sells over 50,000 they said they would sign us to do an album."

Golden Moments in New Orleans

Radio News

WWOZ radio, 90.7 FM, is now soliciting donations for their radio auction to be held November 27 through December 6. Each donor will be credited in an auction list to be distributed to listeners and the general public, as well as thanked profusely when the item is auctioned on the air. Proceeds will go to covering general operating expenses.

Band Guide Deadline Extended

The deadline for submitting your band to the Wavelength Band Guide has been extended to November 7. The band guide will be moved up to Air December. Send the name of your band, its members' names, type of music and booking agent and phone to Wavelength, P.O. Box 15667, New Orleans, LA 70175. Include a photograph (not returnable) if possible.
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WAVELENGTH/NOVEMBER 1981
Mac Rebennack, better known to the nation as Dr. John, is as qualified as anyone to offer insights into New Orleans rhythm and blues. For twenty-five years, Rebennack has made music with that special rhythmic touch that distinguishes the Crescent City.

Starting as a teen-aged session guitarist when a new music called rock 'n' roll was still making its initial impact on American society, Mac grew up musically in the most vibrant of local scenes, the halcyon days of the New Orleans recording industry. When the local industry failed, he, like many of his fellow musicians, went with the industry to the West Coast.

While so many seminal musicians got lost in the shuffle of the Sixties' musical movements, Rebennack surfaced as Dr. John, appealing to the prevalent need for the bizarre with nothing but his most native self. As Dr. John caught the nation's ear, his music moved from the back room voodoo parlor out into the street — after all, just a walk up some "bad dog" Rampart Street alley.

Since the "El Lay" sound of the Seventies increasingly diluted his music with resident production heavy-handedness, Rebennack recently made his escape to New York, trading coasts for an energy boost. Yet through it all his musical heart and soul remains firmly sunk in the Third Coast and his native New Orleans — his large contributions to the two biggest New Orleans albums of the Eighties, Professor Longhair's Crawfish Fiesta and the Neville Brothers' Fiyo On The Bayou, are ample evidence.

Rebennack returned to New Orleans last month for a two-night engagement at Tipitina's. Backed by the Meters, they were evenings of pure, unadulterated funk. This conversation caught Dr. John between gigs, one floor up from the stage.
Coming back to New Orleans for a club date, what do you think of the local R&B club scene?

It's a good scene, but not like it was or could be again. At the time that they padlocked all the joints in the Quarters, it put a lot of musicians out of work in the Quarters. And what they really did — I resist this so much — is that they chased out a type of music. Not that there isn't Dixieland in the Quarters, but there's not much rhythm and blues in the Quarters anymore, there's not much real progressive New Orleans music.

It's for the tourists now.

Yeah, that was always there, but there was an alternate choice. I guess the Ivanhoe and a couple of those joints, they was like the last alternates. Now the Quarters has gotten back to something — it's jive, it's not really what New Orleans is. So people that come here, they go to the Quarters and expect to hear it all there. They don't find the mystic they expected, and it rubs off on the musicians. The cats coming up don't have the gigs in the Quarters like they should, they're working in Metairie or someplace. What that causes is the musicians don't get to have a common ground where they all can hook up at. There used to be five or six different places where you could just go and find the musicians you wanted — someplace where all the guys was hanging. It should be a union hall — of course we've got that ass backwards — wherever, there should be a place where guys coming through here can find who and what they want without no shit.

One of the things some of the guys has been talking about — and I think it's a damn good idea — if some of the older musicians, myself included, all get together and do like a workshop situation so there's no more generation gap. Into the Seventies there was a gap, and now we're suffering with this in the Eighties.

For me to come here and put together a group for an act, I got to depend on just about three groups of guys, and all the while I know there's other cats that can play and should be given a shot. And I'm not saying this in no cutthroat way, I'm just saying that is what keeps any place booming: competition, keeping guys up off their ass. Musicians have got to have the feeling of "Hey, if I don't do this, this cat can take it from me." At one time, a guy's gig was never going to be overcome shortly. I believe horrible attitude but that's the way it is.

So New Orleans is a long ways from the recording industry now.

Yeah, there's so much distance between everything. There's no reason for that. You don't see that in Nashville, you don't see that in any of the major markets in the United States, and too many of them are piss poor imitations of New Orleans. I mean, that's how Detroit got their big start. They imported Wardell [Quezergue] and Smokey [Johnson] and all these cats from New Orleans and bled all their ideas, and for ten years there was a good twenty or thirty percent of Motown Records' music that was New Orleans influenced. It may have been well disguised with a lot of Detroit's own talent, which they have a lot of, and I'm not denying that, but I am saying they bled a lot of stuff from New Orleans and became the trend setter of a record city when it really bothered me that a lot of their trick drum things and all was Smokey Joe Johnson, John Boudreaux, James Black — New Orleans people. Their contribution was made little by them just using a piece of something, it became distorted; and that's what the American public heard as what funk was. Later when they heard the real shit from New Orleans, it didn't have the impact on them that it should. This is to me a crime. There just aren't that many originals that come along. Your Professor Longhairs, Huey Smiths, Fats Dominoes, people of that caliber, on up to your Meters, Neville...
Brothers, Johnny Adams — these people may come along once in a generation, and you have to see them distorted or wasted. Part of it, like you say, is there's not the scene to grow up around anymore. You see a lot of kids that think they're great who are mainly influenced by the radio.

How many musicians do you know who start their musical genesis at the Beatles or James Brown? Well what do they know about the guy James Brown got his shit from? You got to look at the whole picture if you're going to study music and your instrument.

All right, Alvin Batiste did a wonderful thing at Southern University that came out through guys like Julius Farmer, who is maybe the top recording bass player in Italy. That's wonderful that Julius got out of here and did something constructive for himself, but the other side of that coin is that what Alvin did is more important. He groomed the cat and wisened him up and sent him to study with guys who was heavy in the business. When I first got on to Julius everybody like Alvin and Earl King was raving about the cat, but beyond that Alvin had taught him what he needed to know about how to go out and make a living. We need more of this stuff — Alvin needs help with grooming guys.

Like the school situation, I don't know why LSU, Tulane, Loyola don't have something to just teach our own historical cultural music and groom guys to be recording musicians. They got this at North Texas State, they can go get it at Manhattan and Berkeley and stuff like this, why can't they just get it here? As soon as they get the break, they gonna stay there! As soon as they get to North Texas State, they're gone, and New Orleans won't get anything from it. Let's get something here. The workshop idea is one approach — it took a guy from New York to bring this idea and start it, and now Art Blakey and a bunch of the jazz guys have now started this kind of thing in New York. There should be something like this right here.

What about WWOZ, the new radio station in town?

One of the good things of that is that they're playing a lot of the heritage music, not only of New Orleans but even of things that were influenced by New Orleans that had a key on the growth of here. This is important because at no time I don't think New Orleans was ever like completely cut off from everything; it was always a part of the mainstream, but a trend setter. New Orleans differences have always been subtle — this is one reason why most people in the record industry never appreciated the difference. The funk of New Orleans is inside. The musicians can spot it in a second, but the general public can't. But some of the young cats coming up are playing this shit from all over, instead of saying, "Hey, this is our roots, this is what we about, we is funk." New Orleans funk is different, anybody else in the country or the world who says the word funk can mean forty different things, but in New Orleans if somebody says the word funk, that's the pick-up, you dig, there's no question about what's meant. It's why a band from New Orleans in the Fifties through the middle Sixties could just form up, no rehearsal, no nothing, just get together and play good music.

Now you got a time right here, look, where things are at a big impasse with everything, the record industry is in trouble. I think this is good for New Orleans.

Do you think the record industry is going to pull out of it?

Video discs, video tapes with records and combinations of looking at tapes, go on Home Box Office, television and things like this — I'm not talking about tapes where you're looking at a band playing a song, but I am talking about where you can hear their music and you might be watching Mickey Mouse, whatever — that can be a new medium to expose this stuff. Because of that, I think there's a lot of new life here. Say you put the Indians — whatever is visually strong, with some strong funky music . . . fuck the radio. Fuck the whole recorded music industry. Use the other as your medium and there could be a whole new life coming out of here.

The record industry, the big labels, they brainwash the public, they'll make anything boring. My only criticism of the Neville Brothers album is that Joel Dorn put too damn many strings in it, using The Persuasions and all that. The Neville Brothers could make a record with nobody else but themselves and I would love it and I know the majority of the country would love it. But the record industry is so brainwashed that you have to bring in the strings and you have to bring in The Persuasions, whatever, it's bullshit.

The industry doesn't realize the public can handle an honest performance.

They need it, man, people actually are crying for it. I notice this at more and more live gigs. The more live gigs I do I see more people are coming out than they were maybe three, four years ago. It's not because there's anything better or different in the clubs, it's that they're tired of hearing the same boring records on the radio, television, every other medium they're barraged with where there's no electricity, there's no raw thing. More and more people are getting in touch with, "Hey, if we go to the live gig at least it will be the real thing."

Well how are you doing these days with record labels and stuff?

One of the things I did this year was to break out of the trap I was tied with the alternative, either I made a certain kind of record or I was going to get dropped. So I got to let them drop me, and I made a piano solo album for a little label, and I'm just doing some spot stuff. If somebody later approaches me and says, "Here, do what you want," good; if it's
another one of these proposals, "You got to do this, that, or the other thing," it's a unhealthy situation.

Yeah, stifling.

Worse than stifling, though; it's a corrupting influence. Whatever your morals and whatever your ambitions is — and music is a high integrity thing — you got to stay with it when you hit the crossroads. You got to fight for every inch of ground that you get, because if you give them an inch, boy, you get wiped off the whole program.

Well this solo album you did, is that something you did recently?

Yeah, about a month ago I did a piano solo album for Cleancut Records out of Baltimore.

Have they got fairly good distribution?

Oh, they're very small. They did a couple of records I liked. The main reason I did it — I'm not exclusive with them or anything else — is they just let me go in and have some fun one day. It was to me like making a point for some other cat, "This is closer to something I would do now than what I was approached with." I mean all of us get this. Willie Tee, when he did this record for United Artists, he did the record and it was a finished product. They came in and overdubbed tons of bullshit, and what happened to that original, wonderful Willie Tee record? Instead of that, you got a god-damned overdubbed-to-death piece of shit. And that is the thing. You could have a Willie Tee and the Gators number one hit if you left it alone and got behind it, promoted it. But instead of that, you might as well get some sumbitch from Hollywood if you're going to do all that shit to it.

But too much of a big deal are made out of records. Music is what counts. A record should be like a book. A book is as good as the author. But a record, it ain't the same situation. It may not be no better than the promotion, it may not be no better than the production, you know, there's too many things that go wrong. Because of all of that, you need complete control until the very end. And as long as you have to give up some of that in between there — forget it, it's gone.

But if something like the workshop thing comes down, I think that would be better than ten albums. If somebody takes that to any level, it will mean more, not just to me, but to so many cats. Because that is what's important for music. Right now too many of us are worried about ego I you me and all that bullshit, and not giving two fucks about music. Music has given me everything I got, and I want to give music back something. But I also want to give the music that was responsible for my joy and my ecstasies in life, which is New Orleans funk, and let it get its roll back into the thing because when it's rolling, it picks up all the rest of it. You know. It's a powerful force. You can't fight it. You just can't stop it.

—Redacted by Tim Lyman
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IDRIS MUHAMMAD: THIS DRUMMER CAN BURN

Idris Muhammad left the Crescent City to become a national recording figure, giving him an important perspective with which to reflect on the music of his native soil.

In popular parlance, to burn is to cook, and to cook is to get down, particularly when a "fatback" drummer is laying down a funky backbeat that won't quit. The rockish beats which are now very common actually came up down the river from the bucket, the Crescent City, New Orleans. Idris Muhammad, born Leo Morris on November 13, 1939, was one of the main people responsible for transplanting the syncopated sounds from down under to up south New York City, and for significantly altering the pulse of contemporary popular music.

"I came to New York with Jerry Butler, Maxine Brown and Dee Clark. I was one of the drummers that came from New Orleans that had this beat. The guys up in New York, at that time, were playing a shuffle beat. I had this unorthodox rhythm that I was playing that they originally called the 'New Orleans.' I was one of the only cats in New York that could play this so, fortunately, I worked a lot of recording dates. It was something new that they hadn't heard of and they could use. Also, I made quite a few hit records with this type of beat. It was very easy. But what I wanted to do was to get away from that and play jazz, which was originally what I had come to New York to do. But, unfortunately, it wasn't so easy to get into the jazz field."

Prior to leaving New Orleans, Idris had been the main drummer with the hottest R&B band of that early Fifties era, Art Neville's Hawkettes (yes, that Art Neville of the Neville Brothers). Some of the hits he drummed on included "Chapel of Love" by the Dixie Cups, "You Talk Too Much" by Joe Jones, "I'm Walkin'" by Fats Domino, and "Short Fat Fanny" and "Boney Maroney," both done with Larry Williams.

After leaving New Orleans, Idris kept the fire burning. In 1958 he toured with Sam Cooke, and later, in Chicago, served as Jerry Butler's musical director for four years. After that he drummed on such hits as "People Get Ready," "It's All Right," and "Keep On Pushing" while with the Impressions.

Moving back to New York City, Idris had a fruitful association with Lou Donaldson and recorded on Lou's big hit "Alligator Boogaloo." After doing R&B and jazz, Idris next held down the drum chair in the Broadway musical Hair. He remained with Hair for four years and then went to India for a meditative sabbatical. On returning to New York in 1972, he worked with the rock group Emerson, Lake & Palmer. Soon after that he served a long stint with singer Roberta Flack. Idris Muhammad is an all around drummer.

Under his own leadership, Idris Muhammad has recorded a number of successful jazz and pop albums including two albums on Creed Taylor's Kudu label which achieved crossover status, Turn This Mutha Out and Boogie To The Top. However, even with all of the above recording, his latest album on the West Coast-based Theresa Records label is a significant departure for Idris.

Entitled Kabsha (who is Idris' youngest daughter — the name means "gentle as a lion cub"), his new album is one of the best drum-led albums ever recorded. It features Ray Drummond on bass, who plays intelligently with a huge tone; George Coleman on tenor sax, an alumnus of the Miles Davis band and a flowing bop-oriented saxophonist; and Pharoah Sanders on tenor, the hardest of the hard Coltrane-influenced saxophonists. Except for Max Roach's consistent quartet work, and some of the early Blue Note Tony Williams sides, no drummer has approached the high level of consistently swinging, yet innovative, piano-less drum-led recording.

Idris now makes his home in Teaneck, New Jersey. This interview was conducted via telephone.

What prompted you to do a record with sax, bass and drum as the instrumentation?

I did that to show the ability of myself as a drummer to be able to play the drums and make up for the piano at the same time. A lot of drummers today, they just play rhythm. Very few of the drummers are playing the melody. So I chose to show a skill of me playing the melody on the drums.

Where did you get the idea of playing melody on the drums?

From Ed Blackwell, Max Roach, Elvin Jones and Art Blakey. These are drummers who were playing melodies on the drums. My conception of playing the drums is like that. When I was living in New Orleans, which is my home, I would hear the guys playing in the street parades. The drummers played the best but it was along the melody line of the music. So along that line, instead of just playing a rhythm, I would play a rhythm and something to accompany the melody.

Was it difficult to achieve that when you were recording?

No, because I've been doing it for a long time. It was also easier to do because I had the musicians with me whom I could rely upon and I had never had that much
freedom given to me by a record company. I never had that much freedom before to do the things that I really wanted to do.

How has the music been received?

Great. Really nice. It's been surprising to a lot of people because I've made so many commercial records, you know, with soloists and singers on it. Also they have heard me play on other jazz artists' albums, but they have never heard me feature myself in this type of setting.

Do you think it will ever be possible that a musician will be able to stay in New Orleans and develop? It seems as though a lot of musicians who have achieved heights in the music have had to leave New Orleans to do that.

New Orleans is a place for a great beginning. But to accomplish whatever you want to accomplish you have to step outside. You need the experience of playing in other places in order for you to develop what you're after. Even Louis Armstrong traveled all over the world for his musical concept although he came out of New Orleans.

For example, myself, I was born and raised in New Orleans but I traveled on the road and that made my music mature. Then I got to a point where I wanted to prove to myself that I was as good as I really thought I was, so I went to a place where there are a lot of great musicians.

New York. Once I figured I could do this, then I would have no problem because I could always come back to New Orleans. What I have accomplished away, I would never have been able to accomplish if I had stayed in New Orleans. I wouldn't have wanted to have my musical career start anywhere else in the world but New Orleans because I've found out what the musicians in other cities don't have.

How would you describe that "something?"

That's because we have a city in which you have the cultures of a vast variety of music. We have some Spanish, some blues, we've got the rock, we've got the funk, we've got the gospel, we've got the street parades, we've got Dixieland - we've got a large variety of music that enables a musician from New Orleans to go anywhere else in the world and play because he has experienced that type of music in his hometown. For instance, Chicago: they have the blues, but they don't have the funk, they don't have the Dixieland. Myself, I learned how to play all kinds of music by living in New Orleans and trying to earn a living to take care of my family.

In other words you're saying in order to earn a living in New Orleans you had to learn different kinds of music.

You had to play different types or else you couldn't be a musician. You couldn't just play one type of music, that was out! Maybe today you'd be playing for the people up on St. Charles St., they want to hear the foxtrots and the waltzes, and then that night you play for their sons and daughters and nephews and they want the funk. And then you play for our people. Then you got to go to Bourbon Street and play. So then you have played four varieties of music in one day. That means that you had to switch up.

Your album is not full of drum solos, and it has a wide variety of types of tunes — some blues, some standards, some straight ahead. How did you come up with that mix?

I always made records that I think a consumer or listener would like to listen to. I don't just make records for myself. The way this record was constructed is that I wanted to give a variety of music to show myself playing different styles without doing a whole lot of solos. This shows talent as a drummer to be able to play the variety, make it sound good without a piano player -- just two horns, bass and the drums.

In fact, on most numbers, it's just one horn.

Yeah, a trio. This shows that this guy can play: he's playing the melody, backing the horn player and keeping the rhythm going with just the support of a bass. This was a way to show my ability as a drummer. I'm happier about this record than any of the others that I've made. I've got ten albums and they've been on the charts. I sell records because I make a record for the consumer and I know somebody is going to buy. But this particular record, I produced it myself which gave me a lot of authority of how I wanted to do it and who I wanted to use. There is more of me in this record than in any of the other records that I've made.

What kind of set up do you use?

I'm using Slingerland drums with maple wood shells, a cherry color. They are all wooden shells with no air holes in them. That means that the sound rings. When you apply the stick to the head, the vibration and pressure goes down to the bottom head and up back to the top. It keeps a sustained sound. I'm using a regular head.

Have you tried those new plastic heads?

Yeah. There's a difference. Now they're making them too thick. They don't vibrate enough. They're making
them for the rock drummers — guys who really beat the drums.

The way you say "beat" implies that you see a difference between "beating" the drums and "playing" the drums. You use more energy and you create less music when you "beat" the drums. There's a difference between a drum beater and a drum player. You can spot a drum beater by the way he uses his hands. A drum beater uses his hands to look like he's playing a lot but he's not. With a drum beater it's obvious that he has to do a lot to play nothing. Some of the guys have their sticks turned around backwards, you see them hitting, but if you listen to what's coming out compared to how hard they hit you realize that it doesn't take all of that beating.

My home is in New Orleans and some of the funkiest drummers in the world come out of there. I know the difference in the drums because at the time in the Sixties when I came to New York, no one played like that. I was the only cat in town. We got something that's original. Basically, New Orleans is a drum town. I came from a family of drummers. All my brothers were drummers and my father was a Dixieland banjo player. We had rhythm in our family. The syncopation thing comes from the bass drum player in the marching band. I developed mine from that rhythm. You take that and develop your own style. Like Zigaboo, Zigaboo used to watch me play when I was playing with Art Neville back in the Fifties. Zigaboo used to come and stand on the porch and watch through the screen door when we would rehearse at Art's house on Valence Street.

Have you ever thought about cutting a New Orleans-type record?

Yeah, yeah. But in order for me to do that I would have to get the cats from there, the bass player, the keyboard player, the guitarist that I would need to do that. There's a whole different conception up here.

Another thing about New Orleans is that there is so much talent that a lot of music that's being played down there never gets up here. They get some of the most funky music down there but you won't hear it past Atlanta or Mobile. That's because of record companies and the type of artists. The unprofessional artists that we have down there and how the people can maneuver you. Today, a musician can't just be a musician. I can't be just a drummer. I'm a businessman. I came from New Orleans and I never knew anything about politics until I got up north. Now I'm a politician. I've got to know how my royalties are coming, how much air play I'm getting, how my record is being distributed. This is the reason why: When a guy approaches someone at home about making a record, all this guy is thinking about is making this record. Today this is a music business. It's not just about how well you play or how good you are. It's how much business you know that counts too.
State-of-the-Art at an Affordable Price. Really!

Lots of people agree. Radio Electronics said “… the sound is as good as anything we have ever heard, regardless of price.” Stereo Review said “Considering the truly state-of-the-art performance of the Hafler DH-200, its price (especially in kit form) makes it something of a bargain.” The Gramophone (from England) said “The DH-200 can be recommended without reservation.” And more.

The Hafler DH-200 is a basic power amplifier. This means you need to hook it to a pre-amplifier, and if you want a radio, then you need a tuner too.

The Hafler DH-200 is rated 100 watts, 20 to 20,000 Hertz with no more than 0.02 % THD. That’s low distortion, but some amps have even lower. Remember, this distortion spec is done with test signals, not music, hooked up to resistive loads, not speakers. Hooked up to real speakers, playing music, this amplifier has reduced all forms of distortion dramatically, like TIM distortion, now considered to be the biggest obstacle to musical enjoyment. Even wattage ratings cannot be directly compared. Stereo Review said “this ‘100 watt’ amplifier should easily outperform a number of amplifiers that carry ratings of 200 to 400 watts per channel.”

How did Hafler do it? Instead of conventional “bipolar” transistors, used in 99% of all amps, this amp uses much more expensive, and very different MOSFET transistors in the power stages. These transistors act more like a tube than a regular transistor. They produce less objectional distortion characteristics. They handle larger amounts of current, and let the current travel through them much much faster. This means negative feedback can be reduced, and this helps the musical quality of the amp.

Other amp makers have ignored power FET transistors because they’re expensive, they’re too different, and too new. But the FET advantages are numerous, their disadvantages few, price being the main one. FET amps can be designed differently, too, helping offset the price. For example, these transistors are much less likely to blow themselves up, so Hafler did away with conventional and expensive protection circuits. This helped the sound too.

David Hafler was the man behind Dynaco, known for very low price, and top notch sound. The new Haflers are getting the same reputation, even more so because quality in the 80’s costs so much.

The David Hafler DH-200 has become one of the most universally agreed upon state-of-the-art products for top notch sound and reasonable price. Sound it out for yourself.

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Alterman Audio
"for some Sound Advice"
So you've got a fine old record that's a little bit wrinkled?

Here's just the remedy to bring the music back to life.

By Almost Slim

One of the sheer pleasures of being a vinyl junkie is flipping through a pile of old records at a flea market or a garage sale and stumbling upon a record that makes your blood run cold. In my case it's generally blue script Imperials, early Suns, silver top Chess records, and orange labeled Excello discs that make my temperature drop.

This feeling of bliss can quickly turn to instant despair upon closer inspection, finding the disc so badly warped it resembles a Ruffles potato chip. But before passing the record up or attempting suicide by slashing your wrists with a Victrola needle, wait. There is still hope for that warped wax work of art, in the form of this simple home remedy.

You'll need some basic equipment to try and straighten out that record: a regular household iron, an ironing board, a thick cotton towel, two pieces of glass (panes) large enough to completely cover the record, and finally a couple of heavy books that will serve as weights (encyclopedias or a bound set of Wavelengths should do the trick).

First, make sure the record that you're going to attempt to straighten is perfectly clean, free from grime and any dust particles.

Second, soak the towel in water and wring it out so that it is damp but not sopping wet. Place the record in question on the ironing board. Fold the towel in half, placing it on top of the record, making sure it completely covers the disc.

Next, make sure the setting on the iron is at the cotton notch of the heat scale, and the steam switch is at the "on" position. After the iron has heated up sufficiently, place it on the towel, which should be laying flat over the warped record. Press down with a fair amount of pressure, moving the iron back and forth over the entire record.

The record has to absorb the heat from the iron, so you'll have to continue this for at least one minute without stopping. You should feel the record beginning to flatten out.

When it feels like the record is completely flat again, stop ironing. Too much heat will stretch the grooves and the damage to the record will be irreversible.

Next is the most important and intricate stage of the process. You'll have to work fast because the record will warp again if it is left to cool, perhaps worse than previously. As nimblly and carefully as possible, place the disc between the two pieces of glass, making sure the glass is perfectly clean containing no dirt or dust. Press the record down between the glass and weigh it down with the heavy books. Allow the record to cool. Leave it between the glass for at least half an hour before you attempt to play it.

If all goes right, nine times out of ten the record will be flat and playable. I've used the procedure on albums, 45s, and even on 78s. It's wise not to start trying to flatten out your most valuable records right off. Try practicing on a record that would make no difference if you melted it accidently (one of your little sister's Grand Funk singles, for example). I don't want to field irate calls and letters from those of you who destroy a copy of an Elvis Presley on Sun.

WAVELENGTH/NOVEMBER 1981
BOBBY MARCHAN: AIN'T ROCK 'N' ROLL A DRAG?

The ageless Bobby Marchan, lead Clown in Huey Smith's old group, has done blues, rock 'n' roll, soul, funk, and disco, and is eagerly awaiting whatever comes next...

Trying to piece together Bobby Marchan's life story is very much like trying to put together a very difficult jigsaw puzzle. Marchan has virtually ridden every trend in black music since the late Forties. He's cut city blues for Dot and Aladdin, vocal group rock 'n' roll for Ace, solo Sixties R&B for Fire, contemporary Memphis-type soul for Volt and Cameo, funk and bump records for Dial, and disco most recently for Sansu.

To make matters more difficult, Marchan is more interested in hyping his new group, "Higher Ground," than recalling details of his colorful career. It can be said Marchan is not a biographer's model subject.

Bobby Marchan is now 51 years of age. Most of the time he resembles neither his age nor his sex (please excuse this and any future cracks). Marchan was raised in Youngstown, Ohio. As a youth he was interested in being an entertainer, and cites Larry Darnell as his earliest influence, particularly his version of "I'll Get Along Somehow."

As a teenager Marchan began working some of the clubs in his hometown as a drag comedian singer, and he became a regular attraction at the Club '77. Bobby remembers tours of twenty-four female impersonators going through Youngstown. [AUTHOR'S NOTE: Female impersonators have long been popular attractions in the field back of black entertainment. Their origins date back to the touring medicine show days. In New Orleans, the Dew Drop Inn often had a female impersonator as the master of ceremonies, and impersonator shows are still popular (Marchan is proof of that). Also, a number of male singers are virtually indistinguishable from women on record—besides Bobby, one can cite Ted Taylor and Billy Wright.]

Bobby recalled how he made his way to New Orleans. "Everybody would come through town saying that New Orleans is where it's really happening. So around 1954, I had a troupe of about six female impersonators called 'The Powder Box Revue.' We were pretty good so we decided to try New Orleans. "We worked some clubs on North Claiborne and also The Tijuana, where I met Huey Smith. That had to be around '54 or '55. Huey was working in the house band at the Tijuana then."

Obviously New Orleans appealed to Bobby, as he has made it his home off and on since then. Marchan worked regularly in the clubs, still as a female impersonator, and lived on top of the Dew Drop Inn, where he often performed. He recalls seeing Guitar Slim, Ray Charles, Sue Turner, Sam Cooke, Little Willie John, and a host of other R&B stars around the Dew Drop.

His first trip to the studio was in 1954 for Aladdin. He cut "Just A Little Walk"/"Have Mercy" (Aladdin 3189). He then switched to Dot, a label out of Nashville. Both records were fine examples of city blues. But Marchan dismisses them. "Oh those? They were just records, they didn't do anything."

Next, Marchan found himself recording for Johnny Vincent's Ace label, using the alias Bobby Fields (see this month's Rare Record), probably because he was still under contract to Dot or Aladdin.

Marchan's next release on Ace was the first to make noise sales-wise. Marchan recalls, "Huey had written this song (Chickee Wah-Wah) that we did over at Cosimo's. We were pretty good so we decided to try New Orleans. "We worked some clubs on North Claiborne and also The Tijuana, where I met Huey Smith. That had to be around '54 or '55. Huey was working in the house band at the Tijuana then."

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Once Bobby took over the Clowns, the band took on a different style—many of the tunes were written with Bobby in mind as the lead vocalist. When quizzed on what records he participated on, he allowed, "Oh all of 'em, 'Don't You Just Know It,' 'Don't You Know Yockamo,' 'Havin' A Good Time,' 'High Blood Pressure,' lots of 'em."

Although he didn't write any material for the Clowns, Bobby said, "I did learn to write stuff by watching Huey." Marchan and Huey enjoyed over a dozen releases on Ace.

"I was with the Clowns from the beginning (1957) until I quit in 1960. I was the boss, Huey Smith stayed home with his wife and children. I took the group on the road, I paid the group off, and even sent Huey's wife the rest of the money. Not to Huey.

"Little James Booker played the piano on the road. He was so close to Huey we took him on the road and had a wonderful time. People thought I was Huey Smith! I had to tell them I was Bobby Marchan. Then they thought Booker was Huey Smith.

"Huey liked to stay around New Orleans—he enjoyed it. I guess he got tired being on the road with Shirley and Lee. So he said, "Bobby you take the group." Huey bought a brand new wagon, and I rehearsed the group and took 'em out. I did the hiring and firing.

"I hired Geri Hall, she sang with the Raelettes for a while. A boy named John ["Scarface"] John, he's dead now, he could sing and clown a lot. I had Eugene, he couldn't sing but he sure could clown. He dyed his hair reddish green. I had Roosevelt Wright, who was one of the best bass singers in the country.

"A lot of companies tried to sign me, yes indeed. But I enjoyed being the overseer of The Clowns. I enjoyed those days. We were on the road all the time. I stayed with The Clowns until 'Something On Your Mind.' They called me from New York saying they were gonna pay me $1,300 a night. You know I was gonna go then."

Not only was Bobby under contract to Ace still, but Marchan sold the master to two different companies: Fire, and Chess in Chicago. The end result was that Vincent sued Robinson, and Fire had to post $12,500 to continue releasing the hit.

None of this concerned our hero, though. "I left the Clowns and began working as a single all over the country. I worked the Apollo in New York, The Regal in Chicago, The Howard in Washington, The Peacock in Atlanta, just about any city you can name. I toured with James Brown for 30 days."

"I was in heavy demand during the Sixties, 'cause I had all the hit records. I've always been a very good performer getting over and being able to execute. I was doing the shows in drag, just like I do now. See, I do this comedy thing in drag and I think the public should get more than just singin' all night. They should get something exciting for their money."

Fire accounted for an album, his only one, and a number of other fine singles including "The Booty Green" and "Things I Used To Do," all fine efforts—but none reached the charts. Bobby stayed with Fire until the early Sixties when the label folded. Of course, this was just a minor obstacle for the ever ambitious Marchan.

"Otis Redding and I were very close friends. See I lived in Macon, Georgia for a time, and we did some jobs together in colleges. Then Otis had a hit with "These Arms Of Mine" and I brought him over to New Orleans and he heard Irma sing "Ruler Of My Heart"; he liked it and changed the words to "Pain In My Heart." That was a big hit.

"After that he talked to Jim Stewart (Stax Volt producer) for me and told him I had a nice voice. So Jim Stewart said he'd like to record me also. Booker T and the MG's backed me up. I did a couple of things but they really weren't up to standard."

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"Something On Your Mind" caused quite a stir. "I tried to get Johnny Vincent to cut it but he wasn't interested in releasing it so I sold it to Bobby Robinson in New York of Fire Records. It was number one all over the country.

Actually, the record (Fire 1022) stayed on the Billboard Pop Record Chart for 11 weeks, peaking at number 31. All hell broke loose once the record was released.
that than on my own records.”

Bobby renewed his association with Johnny Vincent, who attempted to reactivate Ace in 1975. Bobby cut one record and helped produce a minor hit for Willie Dixon, covering Al Green’s “God Blessed Our Love.” Marchan had been working in Florida with Dixon, who had been billing himself as Al Green Jr., and brought him to Jackson to record.

Then it was back to New Orleans for a release on Sansu, “Shake It Don’t Break It”/“Do You Want To Dance.” Bobby has little use for Sansu. “Sansu was very stupid. Marshall Sehorn had ‘Separate Ways’ there [written by Marchan but recorded by Z.Z. Hill, a recent big Southern hit on the soul charts]. I begged him to release ‘Separate Ways’ every day, but he put it on the shelf and hurried to get a disco record out. A year after he wouldn’t release it, Z.Z. Hill called me and asked me if he could do it. I told him yes, and he got a hit out of it. Then Sansu called me up and asked me if they could put it out and I told them ‘No.’ In fact I told ‘em, ‘Hell no! Don’t even call me about it.’”

Since then Bobby has worked regularly as the emcee at Prout’s Club Alhambra. “When Mr. Prout opened his club he asked me to work there, and he also needed an entertainment manager. I help Prout’s with the booking too.”

Bobby’s shows are usually riotous affairs. He most often appears in cocktail dresses and evening wear of his own design that he sews himself. Marchan never has a problem loosening up an audience, being able to handle any crowd.

Bobby also emcees a regular Gong Show at the Club 2004 that has been a weekly affair for two years now.

What occupies most of Bobby’s time now is hyping his new group Higher Ground, a funk band that is comparable to Cameo. “My band Higher Ground, in my estimation, is one of the highest bands in the country. Four horns, they work very hard rehearsing. Every club we play we get return engagements. I’ve had my band just six months, and as you know we just cut our first record, ‘Shake ‘Em Up,’ Part One and Part Two. Alan Rubin, the president of WMOT, just signed us. We may be on our way at last.”

Higher Ground works Prout’s, J.J.’s in Algiers, and on weekends they sometimes work around South Louisiana. Bobby works hard finding them jobs and promoting shows, and he financed Higher Ground’s recording sessions.

Although at times a frustrating interview, you still have to admire Bobby for always having his thumb on trends and the public’s taste. He has virtually been a master of it for the past thirty years.

When quizzed on what keeps him going in the music business after all these years, he says, “I’ve never wanted to do anything but be an entertainer. I love to entertain the people.”
BRINGING BACK THAT BOSWELL RHYTHM

By David W. McCain

The Pfister Sisters sing in the swinging style of New Orleans' Boswells, who some fifty years ago blended the blues and jazz of their hometown into a sound all their own.

In the May 13, 1981 issue of Variety there was a review of the best acts of the New Orleans Jazz Festival. One of the acts singled out was a group of New Orleans girls who billed themselves as "The Pfister Sisters." Holley Kroll, Susan Malone and Yvette Voelker sang in the jazz tent between breaks of the New Leviathan Oriental Fox Trot Orchestra. The style in which these three girls sang was a radical departure from the structured beat of a fox trot orchestra, for the Pfister Sisters were singing in the swinging style of the Boswell Sisters, three sisters from New Orleans who made their debut on the music scene fifty years ago.

The Boswells — Martha, Connie and Vet — were a remarkable combination. They arranged all of their songs, which combined their classical training with the blues and jazz they heard in their native city. Their harmony was exceptional and they developed on their own a truly original, somewhat madcap sound that for five brief years (1931-36) was known as "Boswell Rhythm." Then came the Andrews Sisters (who started imitating their idols, the Boswells) and the Boswells faded from memory.

The last three years have seen a resurgence of interest in the Boswells' music. In San Francisco a popular nightclub act called Nicholas, Glover and Wray ask their audience, "Has anyone ever heard of the Boswell Sisters?" then do a medley of Boswell songs. In New York there was a recent musical tribute to the Boswells entitled The Heebie Jeebies in which three girls sang nearly thirty Boswell numbers. Even in England a group called "Sweet Substitute" cut two albums for Decca in the Boswell style. It is only fitting that here in New Orleans, three local girls pooled their talents to pay tribute to three sister Orleanians of the past.

How did the Pfister Sisters get together? It was all Holley Kroll's idea. "A friend of mine, John Malone, had an album of the Boswells. He knew I was a harmony fan and many times some friends and I would go to his house and we would sing the harmony of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, each of us assigned a part. When John played the Boswell album, I was knocked out. I never knew of any female trio that had such low voices. I have a low voice and I really felt my voice was suited to doing their type of music."

Holley became intrigued with this new sound and the next few years were spent doing research. "I called many people all over the city, including several musicians, and asked about the Boswells. I would make visits to DeVille's and Leisure Landing and buy any Boswell album they might have in. I found out that only Vet Boswell was still living, 'somewhere in New York.'"

Somehow Holley found Vet Boswell's address, and the success of this performance promised her to write. Holley eventually got to meet Vet the following May when they both attended One Mo' Time at the Village Gate in New York City. "She was so nice to me, and I wrote down everything she told me later."

By December 1980 Holley had acquired two new singers, Susan Malone and Yvette Voelker. Also, Kenneth Raphael was added as arranger and accompanist. Their first performance was at the New Orleans Country Club, again singing between breaks of the Fox Trot Orchestra.

Holley, Susan and Yvette all say that Boswell harmony is the most challenging type of singing they've ever encountered. Susan, "The Boswells were so disciplined but at the same time they were so bluesy — you can't just freestyle this sort of music, you have to make three voices sound like one." Yvette: "I think the remarkable thing about the Boswells is their tempo changes. They'd be in the middle of a song and have a complete turn around in tempo. I've never heard any harmony group do that and it is difficult for us to do." Holley: "Their key changes were so smooth that sometimes we'd be singing and suddenly become aware that something was not right, there was a change that we had missed. We'd have to rewind the tape and listen closer. See, the Boswells often switched parts; their singing was never just three-part harmony."

Susan and I are the low voices, Yvette is the high. The Boswells were made up the same way — Martha and Connie were low, Vet was high. Their switching of parts made them distinct from other trios and it created a really tight harmony." "I know we've come to understand their sound," said Susan, "because I now sing higher than I've ever done before, and Yvette is singing lower!"

Yvette commented, "If this music was just blues, it would be totally out of my range, because I've a much higher voice than Holley or Susan. Because this music has some classic overtones, it pulls Holley and Susan up higher, and I get pulled down lower because of the blues. This music has really helped our voices tremen-
Yvette has had one year of classical training at UNO, and has been active in local theater for several years, as has Holley. Susan played guitar and sang in country and rock bands before encountering the jazz of the Boswells. "The Boswells' music was totally new to me, and it is hard to do," remarks Susan. "When we manage to do these songs and get through all the key modulations, tempo changes and scat singing, we really feel proud."

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Boswells' music was their arrangements. The Boswell Sisters sang the most un-jazzy pop tunes of the Depression in a most jazzy way, and they did all of the arrangements themselves. The complicated arrangements are transposed for the Pfisters by Kenneth Raphael, who begins by listening to a record and establishing the rhythm and one of the harmonies. "The Boswells' harmony was so tight that I have a problem sometimes picking out the bottom part — I can usually hear the middle and top. Their arrangements remind me very much of gospel songs," he says. "We are only using piano accompaniment so far, and I try to capture the feeling of a complete instrumental arrangement for the piano after hearing their records."

Many times the girls themselves have to do the instrumental riffs vocally — something the Boswells did frequently — but they eventually plan to get a small band for future accompaniment. Kenneth is also the girls' vocal coach.

The Pfister Sisters are now busy rehearsing. "We're busy learning new songs," states Holley, "most of them Boswell. We're concentrating on their era, the Twenties and Thirties. We all strongly identify with the Boswell Sisters and we like to think that we're becoming more Boswellian in our thinking and singing. Sometimes when we can't make out a certain part of a song we substitute something of our own and hope that Vet would approve. Eventually we want to learn at least twenty of their songs but we want to throw in more modern stuff too."

"I'd like to progress to something on the order of Manhattan Transfer," says Yvette. "Susan and I saw them in concert and they did all types of music from all eras, and that goes to show you that good music is good music, no matter how old it is. But right now we're keeping the Boswells as our base, and we are learning so much, mainly harmony."

"I feel like we're helping the Boswell Sisters," states Susan. "Before we did the Jazz Fest, a lot of people that I knew had never heard of the Boswells, and I felt a very rewarding feeling about being able to bring this music to their attention. We've had several offers to perform, but we first have to learn more songs."

Holley Kroll envisions an interesting goal for the Pfister Sisters. "I hope we go on until one day we can do Aaron Neville's 'Tell It Like It Is' in three parts with all his licks, a la Boswell."
ROCKIN' DOPSIE: BIG BAD ZYDECO MAN

By Almost Slim

No matter how you spell his name, Rockin' Dopsie is the top zydeco button-accordionist in South Louisiana. Dopsie used to have D-O-P-C-E-E on his accordion, and he has recorded under the spellings Dupsee and Dopsie. Further combinations of vowels and consonents have been spotted in print. What's important is that you get the pronunciation right. It is not DOPsee; nor is it DOPsee. The man's name is DOOPsee. Say it to yourself: it captures the spirit of his wildly expressive zydeco, it implies the imperative to dance, it connotes doing flips. Here is Dopsie's story.

My real name is Alton Jay Rubin. I was born in Carencro, Louisiana, out in the country, you know, in the parish of Lafayette, February 10, 1932.

My daddy would play them French accordion, them little 'cordian. I had another one of my uncles was playin' violin, but I always admired accordion. That's why I took 'cordian, I love 'cordian music. I started on them double note 'cordian, my father bought me. That's a 'cordian that has two row of keys and eight basses on it. I was about fourteen years old when he bought that.

My parents spoke French. I didn't start speaking English until I came to Lafayette when I was nineteen. My language is French, really. I speak English not too well.

I worked in the fields, cut cane, dug potatoes — hard work, oh yeah, break corn, pick cotton. At night when we got off from the fields, he would teach me the 'cordian. When I started playin' music out, I was about eighteen or nineteen. In that time they had them house dances, you know, they use to give them dances in the houses. They didn't have them clubs like they do now. The farthest I had ever been was to Carencro. When I first got to Lafayette I thought I was in New York City somewhere! I was a country boy, you know.

When I moved to Lafayette, that's when I started to make it. I met Shorty — that's Chester Zeno, he's related to my mother. He use to come visit me and say, "I play a washboard ya know." So I said one day, "bring it." So we started playin' from there. About 1955, we started goin' in them clubs. I was playin' at night and workin' construction, I was workin' with Magnet Electric. I worked there until five years ago, sometimes playin' seven night a week, and work everyday. I was an electrician's assistant.

There was the Blue Angel where we played in Lafayette, The Bon Temps Roulet, Roger's Night Club on the Breaux Bridge Highway. Then we started playin' New Iberia at Doffin's Club and Richard's in Lawtell. Played pretty much for black people.

I use to buy a lot of records. I didn't follow those big bands. I liked B.B. King. I liked his style, Ray Charles, Guitar Slim, Muddy Waters. I liked the blues, I loved the blues. I used to see Fats Domino and Gatemouth Brown, they used to come to Lafayette. I used to go listen to Lightnin' Slim and Lazy Lester, they was good friends of mine.

When we first start playin' the clubs we was playin' like Saturdays and Sundays. We was gettin' $25 a night; $25 was big money back in them times 'cause we was only getting $12 in the country. I was using the name Rockin' Dopsie.

Before I started playin' music, in the country, I use to dance. There used to be a guy from Chicago, Illinois staying in Lafayette, he was one of the great dancers. They used to call him Doppee. One night he gave a show and I went see him dance, I started dancin' just like him. You couldn't tell the two of us apart. So everybody start callin' me Doppee. So when I started playin' music they called me Rockin' Doppee! That's how my name got started.

I play the button 'cordian. I love a piano 'cordian. I wish I had one too. But I can't make my changes with it like I want to. You couldn't play a more natural blues than on the button 'cordian. You see, everything you play on a piano 'cordian sound alike really. You gonna sing a different song, but they sound alike. Every song I play sound different. I can make those changes and they don't sound alike.

Me and Shorty played about eight years together. Then we added a drummer. Ledet, he was from Parks. It's hard to get a good drummer, 'cause it take a pretty good drummer to keep up with the kind of music I play. Then I went to a lead guitar, there was another Chester on lead guitar. But when I started growin' I had to let him go. I got so great where he couldn't follow no more. So he had to stop. Then I hired another guitar player, Ardoin Victor. Them guitar players, they...
go and come, they so wild. My bag is Can­jui music, French zydeco, that's my bag, I don't want to play no disco music.

The first recording I did was with J.D. Miller, that was — let's see, in the Sixties. [AUTHOR'S NOTE: Rockin' Dopsie's first release was "Woman I Don't Want Your Troubles"/"Things I Used To Do," Blues Unlimited 2000. It was released in 1970. A previously unreleased track, simply entitled "Blues," appeared on Flyright 535-Zydeco Blues. It is a superb slow blues that predates all of his single releases.] Somebody recommended me to him, so I went over to Crowley to record. Those records did pretty well around Louisiana. Then times he had a big pull in Europe. They got more popular in Europe. Miller was a nice man, he treated me right. I also did a couple of singles with Floyd in Ville Platt. [Floyd Soileau's Bon Temps label]

In 1976 I was playing right here in New Orleans at the Jazz Festival. This guy tried to approach me while I was playin' on stage. I had to tell him, "When I get off stage I'll talk to you." But I lost him in the crowd. The following Monday he called me at my house. He said he was Sam Charters, a Sonet producer, from Stockholm, Sweden. He said, "That's the man. That's what I been lookin' for. Can I come over to your house?" So he come over and that's when we got to talkin'. And just like that he said, "Can you be ready to cut an album by Wednesday night?" I said, "That quick?" He said, "Yeah." So I signed up with him right quick.

So we went to Baton Rouge and that's where I cut my first album on Sonet. Then about six months later he called me back and said, "You want to do another album?" I was still working days, Monday to Friday and playin' seven nights a week too. But about five years ago I figured I could quit workin' days and make a pretty good livin' playin' music. I've been with Sonet since then. Every time I sign a contract it's for three years. That's the best company I ever worked for. Some of those albums are Number One over there, Number One. "Hold On" was a real big seller. I go to Europe about twice a year. Last year I went three times, and the year before that I went four times. This year I went one time, but I'm supposed to go back in December for ten days. They [Sonet] arrange the tour and everything, see it don't cost us nothing.

The first time I got to Europe I got wild. I never saw the world before, it was beautiful. It's a lot of experience. There's no club in the state that can hold the crowds we got. In 16,000-18,000 people every night. They got big tents. First time I got there I almost caught a heart attack. They dance under that tent, dust be flyin' under that tent, but they don't dance like they do here in Louisiana, no.

We play all around the state in between goin' at Europe. Mother's Mantel in Baton Rouge, I play lots in Houston, Beaumont, Lake Charles, Shreveport, I go to Monroe, Louisiana. I play so many I have to check my book out to remember 'em all. I didn't play at a club in New Orleans until I was here at Tipitina's, even though I always play at the Jazz Festival. I think Clifton Chenier helped me to get more popular. That's what really got me popular. One night, me and Clifton Chenier, it was in 1978, we did a concert together in Lafayette. We played man to man with no background, just 'cordian to 'cordian. Him and his piano 'cordian, and me with my little button 'cordian, and Cleveland. [Cleveland Chenier, Clifton's wash-board-playing brother.] He couldn't do nothin' with me, and them times, Clifton he was great. He told me, said, "Rockin' Dopsie, I tell you what. I been around, there's not a man who stand by me like you do." He said, "Man you great, you fantastic."

So since then, people started followin' me more, you know. They figured that if I could have competed against Clifton Chenier, 'cause he was the best, I was great, so I started gettin' big audiences, and workin' different places. That Clifton Chenier, he's great.

But now they like my music so well in Europe we could play there all the time. But I couldn't live there. I'm pretty set up, I'm set up pretty good, I got a brick house in Lafayette. I got a big house that cost me a $150,000. I got a wife and kids. No, I can't live there — they got no boudin, they got no crawfish, man, they don't even have any hot dogs!
The man behind the saxophone on so many of the New Orleans hits of the Fifties and Sixties, from "Tutti-Frutti" to "Tell It Like It Is," talks about what's wrong with the jazz scene here and how he has dealt with it.

By Shepard A. Samuels

Unlike so many of the New Orleans jazz and rhythm and blues notables who grace these pages, Alvin "Red" Tyler was not born into a musical family. In fact, bathroom baritones and closet crooners can take heart in learning that Tyler didn't even start playing his now legendary sax until he was 22 and attending the Gruenwald School of Music in 1947, along with such talents as alto sax man Warren Bell and bass player Chuck Badie. The Gruenwald School was in part established to provide a place for students and musicians to study on their GI Bill after getting out of the armed forces. Red Tyler is a specimen rare to New Orleans music as he chose to pursue it rather than just fell into it, taking music for granted. His initiative explains his early successes, experimentations, survival, and unique perspective on jazz after over 30 years of recording.

After starting out with Clyde Kerr's junior band, Tyler was recommended by drummer Earl Palmer to Dave Bartholomew. Then the city's strongest bandleader, Bartholomew was renowned for being a strict leader, fining members who came to rehearsal late. (To this day Red Tyler remains one of the few musicians who shows up for shows and interviews on time, if not early.) The Dave Bartholomew Band consisted of Frank Fields on bass, Ernest McLean on guitar, Joe Harris on alto sax, Salvador Doucette on piano, Earl Palmer on drums and Red Tyler on tenor as of 1950. During this period, Red played with Dave Bartholomew's group for the first recordings of Fats Domino, Jewell King and the late Roy Brown. From out of Bartholomew's band came the nucleus for Cosimo Matassa's studio group, which independent record labels such as Imperial, Alladin, Chess and Atlantic pounced upon to back the likes of Ray Charles, Amos Milburne, Guitar Slim, Shirley and Lee and even Sam Cooke (then recording under the name of Dale Cook). This prodigious period for local recording lasted well into the 1950s.

However, some of Tyler's greatest contributions to music came about with the arrival of Specialty Records' A&R man Bumps Blackwell and a singer Red and the others dubbed "The Dragon Lady" (better known as Little Richard). That's Red Tyler you hear on all of Little Richard's hits doing the baritone sax on such cuts as "Tutti Frutti" "Baby Face," and "The Girl Can't Help It."

Tyler remembers, "A unique aspect of these sessions was that they had me playing baritone more as a rhythm instrument with Lee Allen on tenor. None of the arrangements were written; he would just sing it and we would make the rest of it up. We were going so far by the end of the fifth take we knew we had to stop and that was it."

These head arrangements were the norm in Cosimo's during the Fifties and Red Tyler, in an interesting experiment, will be bringing them back soon on Gatemouth Brown's latest album on which he is one of the lead session men. Tyler is still amazed at studio production today, especially that he can come in and do his fill weeks after the main session has been completed. In an odd twist of fate, one of Red Tyler's solo singles, "Snakeyes," may have been one of the first recordings to utilize over-dubbing for sax since it features two tenor parts and a baritone and was made right after Matassa had purchased his first eight track.

Through his session work in 1957 through 1959 with Huey "Piano" Smith and the Clowns on such hits as "Rockin' Pneumonia," "Don't You Just Know It" and "High Blood Pressure," Tyler began working Johnny Vincent's Ace Records. At this point Tyler, who had often unofficially arranged the sessions at Cosimo's studio, started doing all the arrangements for Ace's first white artist, Jimmy Clanton, and was largely responsible for his Top 10 hit "Just A Dream." He later followed this up by arranging much of Frankie Ford's material including "Sea Cruise" and "Time After Time," both classics embellished by Tyler's sax work. Red also recorded some vintage solo piece for Ace including "Peanut Vendor," "Junk Village," and "Walk On." But like everyone associated with Ace Records, Red Tyler doesn't remember receiving any royalties for his playing or arrangements. "Everything for Ace was verbal—there were no written contracts. I felt we were taken advantage of."

It would be inaccurate to leave the impression that Tyler was simply a studio fixture. During the 1950s he continued playing at night, first with Dave Bartholomew's Band, followed by the Earl Williams Combo, the Lee Allen Band, and by 1961 Red was leading his own group, the Red Tyler Quartet, at the Joy Tavern. The Quartet consisted of Allen Toussaint on piano, Chuck Badie on bass, June Gardner on drums, with Angel Face as lead vocalist.
Also during 1961, Red Tyler embarked on a music venture which twenty years later is still considered quite an innovation: the creation of a production company consisting entirely of musicians, AFO (All For One) Records.

A.F.O. had its own band, the Executives, to back their recordings. The Executives consisted of Harold Battiste on piano, Red Tyler on sax, Melvin Lastie on cornet, John Boudreaux on drums, Peter Badie on bass, and Tami Lynn on vocals. In 1966 Red Tyler, along with guitarist George Davis and art instructor Warren Parker, formed Parlo Records, which recorded Aaron Neville's "Tell It Like It Is." Even though the title cut from the album sold over a million copies and reached number one nationally, neither Aaron nor Red nor George, who played on the album, ever made any noticable money. There are many renditions of what went wrong financially but Red Tyler attributes it to the fact that Cosimo Matassa, who was to distribute the record, was inexperienced in that aspect of the recording industry.

That episode ended Red Tyler's involvement in the recording business and lead him into taking a full-time day job as a liquor distributor, a position he still enjoys. However, Red didn't lose his love of music and played at Mason's for over ten years with the Gentlemen of Jazz until 1979, when that establishment refused to pay a higher union wage scale. If you want to hear the man behind the story, Alvin "Red" Tyler can often be found playing with his good friend James Rivers at Tyler's and on the weekends in a new group with Tami Lynn at Gino's. What follows now are some of Red's observations on jazz and related topics. You'll find that after over thirty years of playing, his perspective is just that much sharper.

**TYLER TALKS**

What has kept New Orleans from becoming a major center for jazz?

There are several things. First, in the Deep South there aren't any major cities outside New Orleans. Where do you go besides Atlanta or Houston? Name musicians come here for one night on their way somewhere else; it's a booking problem. Two, the city is known as the home of jazz. The tourists who come to New Orleans are usually older and are looking for traditional Dixieland jazz, not the contemporary or the avant garde, so it's limited here.

Do you see any progress in the opening of new jazz clubs in the past few years?

In one way I see progress and the other regression. There are no black jazz clubs; they're disco. After we [The Gentlemen of Jazz] left Mason's, we played at the Bottom Line. Now it's all disco; they're following the money. The only clubs where you have live jazz are the white clubs.

What happened to the black club audience? Why are they going to disco? There's certainly a black audience for jazz in radio.

You're talking about two generations or one and a half generations back. I meet people every day who ask me where I'm playing but nine out of ten times they don't show up. They've gotten out of the habit of going out. The younger kids have never been to a jazz club, they're not interested in it. Now for special concerts, there is a black audience but it's older.

So there is a definite lack of interest in jazz among younger blacks?

It's partially the musicians' fault. At one point, in playing bebop or modern jazz, you played in a way that the audience could hear what you were doing. Then it went into a thing where musicians started playing for musicians, so it got to the stage where the audience couldn't determine where the beat was. You had all the technical facilities but the audience couldn't tap its feet, they couldn't swing. So you had a lack of interest. I find it difficult myself to listen to some jazz groups for more than 15 minutes.

Could you give an example?

I'll put it to you like this: There are a lot of young musicians with all the technical ability that you can imagine. Everybody says "I'm going to play free" but what they're missing is identifying with the audience. If you can't get the audience to participate, you've missed the boat. Musicians are not playing for musicians.

When did this start? During what period of jazz?

Coltrane was partially responsible. It ruined a lot of musicians. They took one segment of what he was doing and developed a style. Some of the musicians I talk to say Coltrane made it easy for a lot of guys that aren't that good. To say, "I'm playing free" by not playing the changes of the song makes it easy when you're not restricted to playing the way the song is. The whole idea of playing jazz is to take a song and, when it's your turn to do your solo, try to embellish it, to make it as good as the original or better. You need more emphasis on a melodic structure than a tone thing.

What are the work opportunities for a jazz musician today?

It's a drought in terms of places to play. You may have five white jazz clubs but that takes care of only about 25 musicians a night. A lot of tremendous musicians have to play Dixieland as their livelihood. I decided 15 years ago to take a day job; I only take jobs I like now. I want to add that in my opinion the powers that be in this city have done nothing to help jazz flourish.

—S.A.S.
The Topcats

What's wrong with this picture?

November 13, 14, 19, 20, 26 ........................................ Chez Ami, LaPlace
November 4, 11, 18, 25 ........................................... Fletcher's, Fat City
November 6, 7, 28 .......................................................... Iron Horse, Thibodaux
November 1, 2, 21, 22 ................................................... Palace Saloon, Lakefront
November 3 ................................................................. Kaleb's, Fat City
November 8 ................................................................. Miss. River Trade & Expo Fair, W.B. Expy, Gretna
November 15 ............................................................... Daddy Sawbucks, Gretna
November 16 ............................................................... Southwood Academy, Hammond
November 27 ............................................................... Oudry's Odyssey, Belle River, La.

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Once upon a time in Sodom-By-The-Sea—about the same time, in fact, that the Twenties started to roar—somebody decided that since the Almighty had created the thing called Music and the place called New Orleans in the same majestic sweep, the two were as one, and should be treated accordingly. That such a premise suited Hollywood's box office aspiration to a Tee was presumably incidental.

And so it happened that the team of New Orleans and Music became a star. The act was already getting top billing when motion pictures developed into talking pictures. During the 1920s—the decade preceding that event—Hollywood had produced sixteen major movies set in New Orleans, and eleven of them dealt in some way with music. If the leading lady wasn't a chanteuse or a hoofer, the hero was a songwriter or a night club owner. Villains gambled and ran music halls on the side. And love, it seemed, reached its crescendo most often on the dance floor.

With the popularization of sound in 1929, Hollywood couldn't wait to do it up brown—or at least sepia. It quickly remade Cameo Kirby, a New Orleans movie scarcely six years old, slapped on a layer of music, and proved with celluloid certainty its theory of functionalism in film: Melodies and Magnolias Mean Magic.

A few months later, Bebe Daniels became the first high-rise star to make music in a movie about New Orleans (Dixiana). She started something she couldn't stop. After that it was open season.

Barbara Stanwick did it. Ingrid Bergman did it. So did Maureen O'Hara and Marlene Dietrich. Even Bette Davis, in crimelines and in unison with a great big lawnful of swaying darkies.

Naturally, Mary Martin did it. And, of course, Deanna Durbin and Kathryn Grayson and Mae West and Vivian Blaine and no telling how many other leading ladies.* Jeanette MacDonald did it twice, as did Dorothy Lamour.

Joan Crawford meant to do it, but the Depression got to MGM before she could get to New Orleans to start the picture. It was scrapped with ten full days of footage in the can.

Nevertheless, at least three dozen major New Orleans-and-Music films have been released commercially since pictures learned to talk (and sing and dance and play the piccolo, too). When you tack on to that a list of other films in which music occupies a less prominent spotlight, the tally comes close to sixty. Perhaps more.

Occasionally a picture show's not even about New Orleans and the city gets musicalized anyway. For Thanks A Million (which had nothing to do with the Crescent City), they wrote a whole song called "New Orleans" and put Dick Powell to singing it. For Pin Up Girl, Twentieth Century-Fox built a two-tiered balcony with special wrought iron design copied from Royal and St. Peter just so they could perch Betty Grable up there and have her do a number entitled "Once Too Often" (which also had nothing to do with here).

Neither have the men been shrinking violets when it comes to starring in New Orleans films of musical interest. A few: Bing Crosby, Elvis Presley, Will Rogers, Bob Hope, Pat Boone, Nelson Eddy, Mario Lanza, and, of course, Louis Armstrong.

* Neither have the men been shrinking violets when it comes to starring in New Orleans films of musical interest. A few: Bing Crosby, Elvis Presley, Will Rogers, Bob Hope, Pat Boone, Nelson Eddy, Mario Lanza, and, of course, Louis Armstrong.
The range of musical form has virtually been limitless. Opera (both heavy and light) and rock 'n' roll, folk and religious and contemporary pop, and, of course, jazz, that multifaceted mainstay for more themes and subthemes in these movies than any other musical form.

Some of the stuff has been pretty wretched, and mercifully forgettable. (Just name one somebody who goes around whistling "Sweetie Pie," a song by La Lamour in Lulu Belle, or "It's A Lovely Day Tomorrow," from Louisiana Purchase. Jimmy Van Heusen wrote one, Irving Berlin the other, and neither gentleman was recorded as having bragged about it too much.)

Yet, an occasional jewel has been known to surface in a New Orleans film. "My Old Flame" was first sung by Mae West in Belle of the Nineties. "Spring Will Be A Little Late This Year" was introduced by Deanna Durbin in Christmas Holiday. In 1947, some well-known performers named Armstrong and Holiday showed off a then-unknown tune named "Do You Know What It Means To Miss New Orleans?" The movie was New Orleans.

"Be My Love," from The Toast of New Orleans was an Academy Award nominee for Best Song in 1959. So was "Walk on the Wild Side" in 1962.

There are those who would argue that the most remarkable aspect of the relationship between Music and New Orleans, as combined in motion pictures, is the durability of the arrangement. Certainly, movies have utilized the pair's joint efforts for long enough to make that claim logical. Others insist that what's remarkable, rather, is the natural complement each provides for the other. Surely that point is valid, too, since the city and music have achieved through choice and chance an image of easy alliance.

Still, there is something even more remarkable about the relationship. That is the raw-nerved adaptability of the two for a collective purpose.

It seems to make not a whit of difference what the plot of a New Orleans movie might be; it can always be whittled down here or fluffed up there, and music squeezed in somewhere.

Whether the theme of the film is football or social climbing or murderous revenge or moral corruption in the Thirties or unrequited love in the antebellum South, there's a rule of thumb. It's this: any movie with New Orleans can be a movie with music.

Backtracking ... football? Al Hirt did some fancy horn tooting in Number One. Social climbing? The song "Sweet as the Blush of May" was Dietrich's first run in The Flame of New Orleans. Murderous revenge? Hoagy Carmichael wrote and performed "Memphis in June," both for the George Raft stalker, Johnny Angel. Moral corruption? Raunch was the tone of both his player piano and his intentions, as demonstrated by Candy Man (Yves Montand) in Sanctuary.

And unrequited love? Well, Bette Davis may have been born a Jezebel, but it was rejection in romance that drove her out on the plantation steps and set her to warbling that spiritual.

Don Lee Keith is a New Orleans journalist working on a book about New Orleans in film. What follows is a closer look at one of the films he has been researching.
THE PICTURE

New Orleans

THE CAST

Dorothy Patrick (Miralee Smith); Irene Rich (Mrs. Smith); Arturo de Cordova (Nick Duquesne); John Alexander (Colonel McArdle); Louis Armstrong (Himself); Billie Holiday (Ende); Richard Hageman (Henri Ferber); Marjorie Lord (Grace Voiselle); Woody Herman (Himself); and Kid Ory, Zutty Singleton, Barney Bigard, Bud Scott, Red Callendar, Charlie Beale, Meade Lux Lewis.

Note: Footage of George Lewis with Zutty Singleton, Barny Bigard, Red Callendar, Charlie Beale, Meade Lux Lewis.

THE CREDITS


Released: June 1947
Running Time: 89 Minutes
Black and white

THE STORY

Or what there is of it. In 1917, the inevitable clash between "long-haired" music and jazz occurs, spawning the fictionalized tale of the birth of said jazz and spanning 40 years, Basin Street et al. A New Orleans society girl — according to her uppercrusty mother — is headed for a promising concert career until sidetracked by a cabaret king whose devotion tends toward gut-bucket. Girl slips off to midnight jam sessions, is torn between the classics and the hot stuff until finally, alas, minds and melodies merge.

THE SONGS

"Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?" (Louis Alter, music; Eddie DeLange, words). Louis Armstrong and the All Stars, Billie Holiday, Woody Herman and his Orchestra, and Dorothy Patrick.

"Endie" (Louis Alter, music; Eddie DeLange, words). Louis Armstrong and the All Stars, and Woody Herman and his Orchestra.

"The Blues Are Brewing" (Louis Alter, music; Eddie DeLange, words). Louis Armstrong and the All Stars, and Woody Herman and his Orchestra.

"Where the Blues Were Born in New Orleans" (Bob Carleton, music; Cliff Dixon, words). Louis Armstrong and the All Stars.

"West End Blues" (Clarence Williams, music). Louis Armstrong and the All Stars.

"Buddy Bolden Blues" (Jelly Roll Morton, music). Louis Armstrong and the All Stars.

"Honky Tonk Train Blues" (Meade Lux Lewis, music). Meade Lux Lewis.

"Dippermouth Blues" (King Oliver, music). Louis Armstrong and the All Stars.

"New Orleans Stomp" (King Oliver and Alphonse Picou, music). Woody Herman and his Orchestra.

"Shimee-sha-wobble" (Spencer Williams, music). Louis Armstrong and the All Stars.

"Basin Street Blues" (Spencer Williams, music). Louis Armstrong and the All Stars.

"Farewell to Storyville" (Spencer Williams, music). Louis Armstrong and the All Stars.

"Mahogany Hall Stomp" (Spencer Williams, music). Louis Armstrong and the All Stars.

PRODUCTION NOTES

When Billie Holiday signed for her part in this, her only Hollywood movie, she thought she'd be playing herself. "I should have known better. When I saw the script, I did," she recalled later in her autobiography, Lady Sings the Blues. She was playing a maid, and she was far from smiling about it. "You just tell me one Negro girl who's made movies who didn't play a maid or a whore... Right off she clashed with Dorothy Patrick, the leading lady. "Every night after we'd finished work at six o'clock, Blondie would rush to the projection room to see the rushes and find out how she was doing. I didn't have time to look at no rushes. After the 'star' looked at a few days' rushes she decided I was stealing scenes from her. This was a laugh."

Just before the picture was finished, there was a flare-up between the women, and Holiday busted out crying. That's when Louis Armstrong declared to everybody — to the director and the producer and all the others — "I know Lady, and when she starts crying, the next thing she's going to do is start fighting."

Things settled down.

Director Arthur Lubin and crew arrived in New Orleans in the summer of 1946 and announced that 100 extras would be needed for the location shots. Lubin expected a few calls. He got 5,000. The local shooting took two weeks, much of which was spent at the Prytania Street wharf. That's where they filmed sequences involving the Dixie Belle, which in actuality was the General John H. Newton, courtesy of the U.S. War Department.

PRODUCTION NOTETTE

Shelly Winters appears briefly as deCordova's secretary.

—D.L.K.
It was late afternoon. The building was quiet, the office staff already gone for the day. Monroe and Willie were huddled over Monroe’s desk, tightening up the year’s album production schedule, so engrossed in what they were doing that neither of them heard the man enter the room.

“Scuse me, y’all . . .”

They looked up, startled.

He was about thirty-five, wearing a baggy, one-button-roll suit and a shirt with a frayed Mr. B collar. He had a home haircut—chopped unevenly all over his scalp, the sides shaved—and the muscular, stocky look of a black man who has dragged a lot of sixteen-foot cotton sacks through a lot of furrows.

“How’d you get in here?” Monroe asked sharply, angry at the interruption.

“The front door was open. There wasn’t nobody out front, so I just kept walking around till I found somebody.” He smiled, showing a gap where his two front teeth should have been, and stuck out a calloused hand. “My name’s Rydell Mercer. I come to audition for y’all.”

“You got to make an appointment,” Monroe said, dismissing him.

“I can’t make no appointment . . .”

“What you mean, you can’t make no appointment?”

“I don’t live here, I lives in Indiana.”

“Well, what you doing here, then?”

“I told you, I come up here to audition for y’all.”

Monroe dropped his pen on the desk, sighed, and leaned back in his chair, resigned to spending a few minutes getting rid of him. “Okay, what do you do? Sing, write, what?”

“We sings and plays.”

“We? What you mean, ‘we’? What you
got, a frog in your pocket?"
"I got my band outside. We all come up her together."
"From Indiana?"
"Yeah, Evansville."
"Damn! You brought your band all the way up here on the chance somebody might listen to you?"
Monroe made a face. "You sure got a lot of nerve, man. How many cats in your band?"
"They's usually seven of us, but one couldn't come — one of his childrens is sick."
"Where you all parked?"
"Out front, down the street a little ways."
"Okay, as long as you came this far, I might as well hear what you niggers sound like. Pull your car around back and start unloading your stuff."
Monroe talked to Willie a few minutes longer, then walked down the hall and opened the back door to a burst of cold air just as a muddy brown DeSoto was pulling into the parking lot, dragging a dirty U-Haul trailer with an Indiana license plate hanging by one screw.

The six blacks who climbed out of the car ranged in age from eighteen or nineteen to a bald man who looked old enough to be Mercer's father.

Monroe shook his head. These were some of the most soulful blacks he had ever seen. He didn't know men like this were still around.

Monroe grabbed a ragged blue imitation-alligator saxophone case from the floor of the trailer and stood off to the side, giving orders. It took almost no time for the men to get their instruments inside. The last piece of equipment was an old Hammond B-3 organ with most of the shellac worn off. They set it on a splintered dolly with wobbly wheels and made a lot of noise pushing it over the hump in the doorway.

Monroe closed the door quickly, trying to keep some of the heat inside, and followed the musicians down the hall.

"What you niggers call yourselves, man?" he asked Mercer.

"Rydell Mercer and the Indiana Blues Boys," Mercer answered, making it obvious that Monroe should have heard of them by now.

Monroe shook his head disgustedly.

He went inside the control booth and watched through the window as Willie placed the microphones where the sound could be picked up and played inside. Willie joined him a few minutes later, taking his customary seat behind the console. "You want me to tape them, Mr. Wilcox?"

"Hell, no! Man, if these niggers sound anything like they look, we about to hear some sad shit!"

He gave the band a few more minutes to finish tuning up, then pushed the button on the studio mike. "Lemme know when you guys are ready," he said to Mercer.

"We's ready now."
"Okay?" Monroe asked Willie.
"Umm-hmmm," Willie said, fooling with the knobs, already sounding bored.
"Okay," Monroe said into the mike, "lemme hear what you got."

He took his hand off the button and heard Mercer issuing some last-minute instructions, followed by four clicking noises as the drummer banged his sticks together to set the tempo.

Mercer had the introduction — a honking, preaching four-bar saxophone solo. It didn't take long to set the groove. After the first couple of notes, he had his eyes rolled back in his head, the gap where his two front teeth should have been firm. Mercer turned to Willie. Willie was moving back and forth in his seat in time to the music, slapping the console with his palm, a wide grin on his face.

God damn! Those raggedy-looking characters were cooking!

Monroe knew the sound blaring from the two speakers above his head was exactly what he had been waiting for. It was genuine, it was telling the true story:

Saturday night in the neighborhood... scraping up the rent money... hanging out on the corners... trying to jive some foxy little mama out of her phone number... or her drawers... chewing on a rib... drinking red soda pop... squeezing bedbugs... sitting on the back porch in your undershirt... sticky hot... swatting flies with a rolled-up Pittsburgh Courier... shooting rats with a .22...

He had his asses now!

There wasn't a white musician in the world who could "cover" the music that was coming out of that studio. Not yet.

Not unless he had spent the last ten years of his life on the back of an Evansville, Indiana, dump truck, picking up trash in subzero weather, with the handles on the cans so cold that they stripped the flesh off his fingers when he set them back down.
"Anybody ever publish any of your tunes before?"

"No, we ain't never played them for nobody before."

Monroe reached into the top drawer. "Here, read this," he said, thrusting a contract at Mercer.

Mercer took it, looked through it with a puzzled expression.

"It ain't nothing but a standard recording contract," Monroe said. "You can take it to a lawyer if you want."

"I don't need no lawyer, man," Mercer said defensively. "I can read it myself." He squinted at it for a few seconds, making it obvious that he couldn't. "I ain't got my glasses with me," he concluded.

"What do it say?"

"All it says is, if you sign with me, you can't sign with nobody else. And that I'll pay you five percent of ninety percent of every record I sell on you."

Mercer thumbed through the contract. "It take eight pages just to say that?"

"No, it's got a lot of lawyer talk in it, too," Monroe explained. "The party of the first part, 'henceforth and to wit,' that kind of bullshit, you know what I mean?"

Mercer looked a little dubious.

"Lemme tell you something," Monroe said firmly, looking Rydell Mercer straight in the eye. "I got one rule at this company. I don't fuck over nobody and I don't let nobody fuck me over. Can you dig that?"

Mercer nodded.

"So if you want to take it to a lawyer, that's cool. I ain't gonna try to con you into doing nothing you ain't sure about. But if you want to sign it now, I'll cut you as soon as I can, and get a record out on you eats immediately."

Mercer looked down at the contract in his hand, back up at Monroe, down at the contract, back up at Monroe, trying to resolve his indecision.

"Okay," he finally said. "This is what we come up here for. If you want to mess over us, this piece of paper ain't gonna make a damn bit of difference. Where do I sign?"

You don't have to sign right this minute," Monroe said. "It ain't filled in yet."

"That's okay, you done give me your word. If I'm gonna trust you, I might as well start trusting you now. Where do I sign?"

Monroe showed him.

Mercer signed three blank recording contracts and four blank publishing contracts, his scrawly "Rydell D. Mercer" so cramped and illegible that Monroe could hardly make it out.

"Okay," Monroe said, sticking the contracts back in his desk. "I got a girl coming in in the morning. I'll have her fill everything in. Then I'll sign them and make sure you get a copy, okay?"

Mercer nodded. "When we gonna make a record?" he asked.

"The sooner the better."

"The band's here, the stuff's already set up, the contracts is already signed. How come we can't go 'head and do it now?"

"The studio ain't set up yet for making a record. It'll take about a half-hour. You guys wanna go eat or something?"

Mercer's dark eyes were lit with determination. "Man, we can eat anytime, but this might be the only chance we ever get to make a record. Go on and get your studio ready while I rehearse my band. I got five babies to feed. I got to make some money!"

Monroe had the record pressed and shipped within ten days.

By the middle of February it was number one on the rhythm-and-blues charts.

That same week, it jumped on to the pop charts: number thirty-nine and with a bullet next to the number, which meant it was coming up fast.

The next week, it was number thirteen with a bullet.

The week after that, it was number three with a bullet.

The week after that, it was number one.

He had done it.

It had taken him the better part of five years to get another number-one record, but this one was all his. He owned the tune, the group, the company, the whole damned thing.

For the first time since he had formed his company, he had some leverage with his distributors.

It was what he had been waiting for. He stopped shipment.

Before he would send out more records, they had to pay him every penny they owed for delinquent accounts.

They paid.

The second week the record was number one, he had two pressing plants going around the clock. His publishing company already had five cover records on the song, including one country-and-western version in the top ten on the country-music charts. He had shipped out 1,750,000 singles. He had actually received payment for more than a million of them.

To date, including the squaring up of delinquent accounts, the song had earned him more than a half-million dollars.

It was the wildest, most exhilarating month of his life, like nothing he could have imagined. His whole catalog came alive. His label was suddenly the hottest label in the business. Young buyers, previously unaware of its existence, were now flocking to the stores to grab every Big City record they could get their hands on.

Friday morning, Ebony magazine phoned. They wanted to do a cover story on him.

He worked straight through the weekend, filling orders.

Monday afternoon, two white men came to see him.

They were gangsters.
THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED
Joseph C. Smith
Grove Press, Inc. $12.95

This is an important book about the music industry. No other approaches the passionate and essentially correct condemnation of the great rip-off of Great Black Music which took place during the Fifties and early Sixties. It's far from a great novel, although all the ingredients for a great novel are present (it technically lacks development). But for anyone faintly interested in the business end of music, or in the origins of present day funk/pop/rock, this book is an essential education.

The author, Joseph C. Smith, whose stage name is Sonny Knight, is a songwriter and R&B artist who has toured and/or recorded with artists such as Fats Domino, James Brown, Aretha Franklin, B.B. King, The Beach Boys, Eric Clapton, Buffalo Springfield and Sammy Davis, Jr. He currently performs and lives in Hawaii. Day is his first novel.

About three years ago, Smith wrote a letter to Grove Press which landed on Kent Carroll's desk. Carroll became Smith's editor, responding to Smith's letter affirmatively. Carroll was excited that someone was embarking on a rock 'n' roll novel, a project that Carroll had long wanted to read. The correspondence between author and editor yielded this book which Smith initially wanted to title A Still And Quiet Conscious, but which received its final title as a result of a suggestion from Carroll.

The book is divided into three major sections. As a novel, section one is the most accomplished. Section two, only seventeen pages, is virtually nothing more than a narrative synopsis of what should have been written as exposition with dialogue. Section three is structured similar to section one but is incomplete because the outcome of three of the four main characters is left hanging without any resolution or critical conflict.

The four main characters are Mark Donovan, an upper-class, intelligent, sensitive, son-of-Hollywood, liberal Anglo-Saxon Californian who eventually becomes a major recording executive; Monroe Wilcox, a Chicago ghetto producer who becomes "the" black man in the recording business with his Big City company; Carl Clinger, a Nashville based, self-made "redneck" who becomes the greatest seller of country music; and Paulie Schultz, an obnoxious Jewish producer and "genius" shyster who steals every lick he can hear from classic black recordings to produce his "hit" records. Of the four, only Mark Donovan is fully developed, transformed and revealed. In the final analysis, Donovan is shown to be the embodiment of the classic "white liberal," i.e., the reluctant collaborator. Although it initially appears that Donovan resists selling out, in reality, as the novel subtly and conclusively makes clear, Donovan consistently fulfills his traitorous role. The book ends with Donovan kicking a young black who is down and, more importantly, being emotionally unaffected by his own behavior.

But character development is not this book's strong suit. What is extraordinary about this book is Joseph Smith's insightful development of his main theme: the exploitation of rhythm and blues. Smith unselfconsciously shows how it was done: from ripping off songs, to ripping off whole companies; from exploiting black musicians, to using "talented" whites to cover tunes by blacks who are infinitely more talented; from payola buying of airtime, to acquiring radio stations -- the whole sordid story of the recording industry is dissected.

Significantly, none of the main characters are major artists. This book is not meant to be a gossip novel or even a fictionalization of somebody's life story. Smith precisely keeps his eye on the target. This is a book about the music industry. Artists, both black and white, had no significant power in the industry. What Smith shows is the producers, executives and accountants at work. He shows how organized crime moved in and how many so-called "good" people ended
From now until Dec. 5, you can add realism to your stereo and save money at the same time.

Just come in and listen to the 3 BX Dynamic Range Expander. It increases the dynamic range of your records and tapes by a breathtaking 50%. It also gets rid of surface noise, so all you hear is the music.

Then when you buy the 3BX, we'll give you a dbx Model 21 Disc Decoder absolutely free. Buy the 1BX or 2BX, and you get the Model 21 for half price. The Model 21 lets you play the revolutionary dbx Discs and Digital dbx Discs, the world's first Full Dynamic Range Recordings. Choose from new albums by Joan Baez, The Police, J. Geils, Moody Blues, Styx, and more than 100 others. And soon we'll introduce dbx Cassettes.

Stop in today and discover the truth about your stereo system. But hurry. This offer ends Dec. 5.
company had been making shady deals with the government and was eventually bought out by financial interests which were fronts for organized crime.

While accurately pointing out the racism in the industry, Smith does not shrink from revealing how the racists turn class exploitation on each other. Smith's delineation of the rape of country music/musicians is factually on time and a significant eye opener for those who were unaware of the extensive influence of country in the music business. Country, then called "hillbilly," was a major aspect of the cover for the exploitation of black music. It was the merging of country artists with rhythm and blues which was an essential ingredient in the development of rock 'n' roll as presented to the American public in the late Fifties. Remember that the "king" of rock and roll was a "hillbilly," Elvis Presley. However, the importance of country notwithstanding, it is finally the ripoff of rhythm and blues that is the core of this book.

Early in the book, Monroe Wilcox, in a discussion with his silent partner, articulates and prophesizes the life and death of rhythm and blues. "I got something he wants, bad. My music... It's still gonna take the white man another five years to learn how to imitate our music so it don't sound like no joke. Now, understand this... I know the white man has got to come out on top. He's got the radio, the television. He can fuck around with people's minds, especially kids', and make them buy damn near anything he wants them to. And eventually he's gonna be able to convince them that the imitation is better than the real thing... Later on, when he don't need me, he'll tell me right quick to kiss his ass." Which is essentially what happened in 1963 when the Beatles came on the scene.

Today, in the early Eighties, rhythm and blues records are still selling, are frequently reissued and repackaged, rearranged and re-recorded. In the prologue to this required reading Smith attempts to define the power and attraction of rhythm and blues, the music that was so shamelessly hustled. "The early rhythm and blues artists did, however, recognize the power of the music and its potential for good or evil, and many of them... sought the approval of their ministers and peers before they would take it from the church... They realized that while it appeared to be simple and repetitive, it contained a pulse that could touch the human spirit at its most primordial level. It was music that could be easily packaged and merchandised, but not easily understood."

While this book does not actually help one to understand the power of the music known as rhythm and blues, it does carefully reveal how R&B was packaged and merchandised; and that is a significant achievement.

-Kalamu Ya Salaam
Since the Toulouse Theatre discontinued its policy of having salsa jams after the performance of One More Time (something a lot of people wish would be reinstated), the Latin music scene in New Orleans has been practically hidden. But that's about to change with the appearance of Caliente, an Afro-Cuban jazz-fusion band that has begun to play in the French Quarter and the uptown area. The music, definitely muy caliente, is in the style of much of the Cuban music coming out of New York right now... Cuban rhythms with jazz improvisations. The band consists of keyboards, saxophone and upright bass, along with a strictly Cuban rhythm section of wooden congas, timbales and percussion (traditionally there are no trap set drums in Cuban music). Besides spot gigs around town, the band will be doing the rhumba regularly at the Old Absinthe House.

Also entitled Caliente is a ninety-minute weekly program of traditional and contemporary Cuban music broadcast every Saturday from 12:30 until 2:00 pm on WWNO, 90.7 FM. (Both Calientes are the efforts of percussionist/DJ Mark Sanders.) Those not yet familiar with WWNO, the newest radio station in New Orleans, should know about the station's ethnic programming. The ethnic time slot, from 12:30 until 2:00 pm, is a treat every day. Each day's program concentrates on one type of ethnic music, including reggae, calypso, Puerto Rican music, Cajun/zydeco, Tex-Mex music and more. There is no particular sequencing of programs during the weekdays, but lovers of Caribbean music can expect to hear it at least a few days every week. Also featured every Saturday night from 8:30 until 10 is a Caribbean program that is a mixture of reggae and calypso. The deejays for all of WWOZ's ethnic programs bring their own records, so check it out if you'd like to hear music from the record and tape libraries of avid (maybe fanaticual) musicians and record collectors. And for more reggae on the radio, don't forget Shepard's reggae show. Monday nights at 9 on WTUL, 91.5 FM. Listen to Shepard's show for the latest releases coming out of Jamaica and Great Britain.

Anyone who has been listening in on Shepard's reggae show lately will have noticed that drummer Sly Dunbar and bassist Robbie Shakespeare have been moving the reggae beat in a new direction. Backing up a wide range of artists on their Taxi label including Grace Jones, Black Uhuru, Wailing Souls, and Junior Delgado, they're creating a syncopated, disco-ish sound with heavy use of drums and other electronic percussion effects. Another currently popular back-up band that can be heard providing backing on new albums by Culture, Dennis Brown, and many more is We The People, led by bassist Lloyd Parks. New Orleanians who saw this band behind Dennis Brown at Ole Man River's in July probably remember the dynamic sax playing of Dean Frazer along with Jr. "Nambo" Chin and Chico on trombone and trumpet, respectively. Evidence of their popularity was shown at the recent Reggae Sunsplash held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, where they not only backed up a whole roster of artists on each night of the festival, but also performed a set of their own music.

"Soon come" is about the only way to describe the live reggae scene for November in New Orleans. Toots and the Maytals are still trying to get their show on the road. At press time, they have been tentatively scheduled for Nov. 15 at Tulane University. Black Uhuru never got their American tour together either, due to scheduling problems with Sly and Robbie who Black Uhuru insist on using for its back-up band. The good news, though, is that Grace Jones is scheduled to appear at the Saenger Theatre. While this probably won't turn out to be a reggae event, it will be an event, nonetheless. Grace Jones has been leaving audiences gasping for its back-up band. Try to get a seat close up to the stage because this is likely to be more of a visual experience than an auditory one.

—Gene Scaramuzzo
NATIONAL, LOCAL ARTISTS BLEND AT FAUBOURG

Bringing jazz artists of national repute together with the great local musicians is a good idea; the Faubourg is an excellent venue for this music; so where are the crowds?

I remember my excitement one evening last May when I walked into The Faubourg to catch sax man Sonny Fortune. Since the closing of the uptown jazz club Rosy's, the prospect of attracting national jazz artists to New Orleans had been bleak. When I discovered at the Faubourg that Sonny’s pianist was going to be Ellis Marsalis, I was more excited. Also in the rhythm section were James Singleton and John Vidacovich. Sonny’s presence really got the New Orleans trio fired up. The four musicians up on stage had to work hard to communicate with each other and the audience, but everyone enjoyed every note. I have to admit that it wasn’t until then that it hit me. What a great idea! Until that time, I had thought it was for purely economic reasons that Xenia Foundation was bringing in nationally known jazz artists, but not with their regular bands. But seeing that group of heavyweights on stage brought it home to me. Bringing jazz artists of national repute up on stage alongside of the great musicians living here in New Orleans offered exciting growth opportunity for all involved.

That idea is a keynote in the concerts presented by the Xenia Foundation. A major objective of the Foundation is to create an atmosphere in which there can be an exchange of musical cultures. Does the scheme work? Well, it does and it doesn’t. Financially, it has not worked, at least not yet. Aesthetically, however, the shows have been a great contribution to the New Orleans jazz scene.

In various organizational forms, the Xenia Foundation has been in existence for about three years. It is only within the past year that it has regularly presented high quality jazz concerts at the Faubourg Restaurant. To date, Xenia has brought Nat Adderley, Mose Allison, David Liebman, Joanne Brackeen, Eddie Harris, Sonny Fortune, Art Baron, Ricky Ford and John Scofield to the back room of the Faubourg to play with various combinations of New Orleans musicians. The club in the rear of the Faubourg has an intimate atmosphere, an asset requiring no further praise. The acoustics are good, and most importantly, the club has just been supplied with a new Yamaha baby grand piano. In addition to presenting concerts, Xenia has recently begun providing the jazz artists they bring into town to area universities and middle schools for workshops. The students were so eager at first that they were going to pay for the cost out of their own pockets. But now the host universities pick up the tab. UNO and Dillard are now also involved. The workshops are usually attended by 100-150 students, and it is not uncommon to find local musicians sitting in.

Director of Operations for Xenia Foundation, Jonathan Rome, says that the foundation loses about $500 on each act brought into the city. So where does the money come from and why do Rome and his associates continue with such losses? Brace yourself, for the answer to these questions may seem esoteric.

So far the money has come mostly from individuals interested in seeing the shows happen. Also, services and support have been given by the Faubourg, Gambit newspaper, and Leisure Landing. Xenia has just been awarded a tax number, and Rome looks forward to attracting investments from corporations. Several have expressed interest and are waiting for the right grant proposal.

Rome and the foundation's business manager, Bill Doyle, approach the work of Xenia and the music very sincerely. They feel that New Orleans desperately
This curious alias hides the true identity of Bobby Marchan. Both sides are fine examples of suave New Orleans city blues. "Pity Poor Me" is very much in the early Roy Brown style, although Fields/Marchan's voice doesn't quite match up to the master blues blaster. The guitar break is right down in the alley, sounding very Guitar Slim-ish.

Bobby puts his soprano voice to good use on "Give A Helping Hand," sounding very feminine indeed! The record is an attempt to cover Faye Adam's giant hit, needs the fresh energy that national jazz artists can bring, and that our musicians need an outlet for their names and talent to acquire national reputations. Already, musicians such as Mose Allison and David Liebman request the Singleton/Vidacovich unit when they come to town. Rome carefully selects musicians to come to New Orleans who are sincere about playing their music. They must be interested in continuous growth, and must agree to play for what would be a laughable purse in their hometown. Rome says that when the musicians come to New Orleans they enjoy the city and relax.

The musicians must also be interested in facing the special problems posed by playing with a strange group. So far, most every act that has come to the Faubourg has met that challenge with what can only be described as eager anticipation. Exceptions to this are the solo performance given by Joanne Brackeen (necessary for the uniqueness of Ms. Brackeen's style) and the David Liebman/Richie Bierach duo concert. The flip side of this, though, is that the big name artists are not heard with the musicians with whom they are practiced. Granted, this is a loss. But when you consider what a contribution the present approach makes to the community, the loss seems somehow less lamentable.

But where are the audiences for these shows? The Faubourg's club area can seat about 100 eager jazz fans quite comfortably. Yet Nat Adderley played to an embarrassedly small group of 10-15 people last spring, the night I attended. Xenia is partially to blame for this, because up until now their publicity has not been up to par. But even with that discount, there appears to be some problem when a city with a population of 1,146,000 people cannot fill a 100-seat club for four or six shows by these great jazz artists. It is easy to see that Rosy's steep cover charge, two-drink minimum and overly formal atmosphere discouraged regular attendance by jazz fans. I doubt, though, that Xenia's $5 admission charge is making a dent in the potential crowd, since many of the folks with complimentary tickets do not show up for the concerts. But then again, I should not be surprised. New Orleans is one of the very few major cities in the country that does not have a full-time jazz radio station. I try not to listen to the endless commercials and instead turn on my own radio station. I try not to listen to the constantивion by the people here who claim to like jazz.

Many people are cynical about the apparent altruism of Jonathan Rome and Bill Doyle. I think that whatever these guys stand to gain out of their work is well deserved. I will have no trouble forcing myself to sip Dixie beer in the back of the Faubourg and hear musical teams such as Sonny Fortune and Ellis Marsalis play their brains out.

—Brad Palmer
IS IT TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT DIXIE?

From the cabin-in-the-cotton songs to “New Orleans Ladies,” the song of the South cliches live on and on . . . with one notable exception.

Is it true what they say about Dixie? Do they laugh, do they love, like they say in every song? Outside of the fertile imaginations of Broadway and Tin Pan Alley composers, probably not. The depressing thing about the popular-music diorama of the South — a mural of steamboats, cheery darkies, cotton fields and cotton bales, honey-colored moons shining down on oaks and cypresses, and Creole tunes filling the air, springs to mind is a tune, endless nostalgia for what was — is not itsched in Spanish moss, magnolia’s heavy scent and Creole tunes filling the air, shanties and lean-tos that represent an idyllic retreat from the perils of urban life, punctilious manners that affect both crinolined belles and barnyard animals, endless nostalgia for what was — is not its ignorance about the actual but the fact that for the most part it is devoid of genuine feeling. The one exception that springs to mind is a tune, “It’s The Same Old South,” a ferocious any-old-town-is-Lynchburg satirical number that enlivened a 1940 revue, Meet The People. But more of that in a moment.

The blues, a more evocative, almost diary-like form of music at its best, represents the opposite of this. Blues are filled with shorthand descriptions that uncommonly summon places and feelings. There are as many legitimate blues about getting out of the South as there are fake blues about the bliss of return.

The main tone of Southern songs is that of a unique Elysium with a potent spell and a set of rules and mores that are peculiarly its own (recognized even by Mrs. Stoew — “Trading negroes from Africa, dear reader, is so horrid! It is not to be thought of! But trading them from Kentucky, — that’s quite another thing!” are the last lines of Chapter XII of Uncle Tom’s Cabin) — and this quaintness excuses it.

The South is filled with singular characters and singular custom — characters like Dinah and Sweet Georgia Brown and Hard Hearted Hannah the Vamp of Savannah and Birmingham Bertha and their escorts, those legions of Sons of the South (“If he’s dressed up to kill, if his feet won’t keep still you can tell he’s a son of the South”), who occupy a mid-way place between the heroes and heroines of turn-of-the-century seministel coon and plantation shows (like “A Trip to Coontown,” “The Origin of the Cake Walk, or Clorindy,” or “Kings of Koondom” and the lazy black couple of the “Scratch My Back” number in “New Faces of 1956” who, something on the order of a shantytown version of Chekhov’s Three Sisters, lie in their bed debating sluggishly about whether or not to drive down to Memphis — “But we’ll never get there . . . scratch my back!”)

The beginnings of the genre — beside Stephen Foster and the minstrels — were the coon songs in direct descent: the ignominiously huge success “All Coons Look Alike To Me” made famous by Ernest Hogan (and also, gossip tells us, a favored party performance by the great Polish opera singers of the belle epoque, the marlene-idol-handsome Jean de Reszke and his gigantic brother Edouard who convulsed society gatherings by their spirited renderings of the song complete with Polish accent) and the songs of Broadway belle May Irwin, whose coon songs were hugely popular with pre-World War I stage audiences. The coon songs died a natural death — although as late as 1931, in George White’s Scandals of that year, Everett Marshall sang (in blackface) “That’s Why Darkies Were Born.” Liberal elements (or so say historians like Gerald Bordman in his exhaustive “American Musical Theatre”) killed the coon song, slowly but surely. But the other cabin-in-the-cotton cliches flourished.

Enormous numbers of homesick blues appeared, designed apparently to appeal to blacks who had been disappointed with their experiences in the new urban North — and whites took them up, too. “Swanee” and Irving Berlin’s underrated “Some Sunny Day” and “The Lure of the South,” as well as black-composed numbers like “Arkansas Blues” (“I’m on the right track, I’ve got my trunk packed and I have asked the Good Lord to take the train back . . .”) and Will Marion Cook’s “I’m Coming Virginia” express a haunted nostalgia for what possibly never was — a vision of agrarian peace and dance-because-you’re-happy contentedness limited to the imagination.

All of these cliches, in their most pristine forms, are summed up perfectly in Eubie Blake’s operetta-ish “Dixie Moon” with its bending, courtseying melody just made for hoop-skirted flouncing and curl-tossing and a final cakewalk into the wings on the last high notes — “Next to their mammy, each Sue and Sammy, love the dear . . . old . . .
Try “J.R.”!
J. Roget
American
Spumante

Dixie . . . moonlight!” Later versions of such songs are far more sophisticated: scores for Broadway shows are filled with them, whether the Southern-set ones were successes, like Showboat or New Moon or Cabin In The Sky or Louisiana Purchase or even the 1967 Hallelujah Baby!; or flops, like the 1924 Ruth Chatterton musical Magnolia Lady, or two disastrous late-1920s operettas about New Orleans (A Noble Rogue, in 1929, about Lafitte, and the 1927 The Lace Petticoat, about love at the Mardi Gras — an idea later satirized by, of all people, Beatrice Lillie, in the 1948 revue Inside U.S.A.), or, most intriguingly, the 1939 Swingin’ The Dream which reset A Midsummer Night’s Dream as an 1850 Louisiana plantation folio and included Louis Armstrong as Bottom, Butterfly McQueen as Puck (enchanting the lovers with an insecticide-atomizer), and Jackie “Moms” Mabley as Quince (one would like to travel back in time to hear Moms grapple with Quince’s prologue and lines like “Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show: But wonder on, till truth make all things plain,” and indeed what few gentles saw the thing must have wondered long and heartily.

The popular dance tunes of the day present a less varied picture — the tunes from novelty (“Saturday Night Fish-Fry,” in which the irrepressible Moms Mabley exclaims, “As I live and breathe, now here’s somebody I really didn’t expect to meet! Pearl, what you doin’ down here on Rampart Street?”) and Miss Bailey replies, “Jackie, girl, I’m gonna try to hop in on a Saturday Fish-Fry”) to the sexual fireworks of “Stars Fell On Alabama” and the more innocent silhouetted-beau-and-belle of “When A Lady Meets A Gentleman Down South,” to the description as before of moonshine- and magnolias in “Louisiana Fairy Tale,” and the excited nostalgia of “Just A Little Bit South of Carolina,” to the forlorn separation-anxiety-inflected “There’s A Cabin In The Pines” (the verse of which sums a genre up nicely — “Why am I homesick, sad and forlorn when the evening shadows fall? Why am I yearning for days that are gone? Here’s the answer to it all . . .”) and Phil Harris’s astonishing phenomenological cataloguing of Southern cliches in “That’s What I Like About The South” (whether the wrecking-crew of a swing-band barely keeping pace behind the speedy patter of the lyrics which embrace food (”She’s got baked ribs and candied yams, those sugarcured Virginia hams, basements full of those berry jams and that’s what I like about the South”) and romance (“Down where they have those pretty queens keep-a-dreamin’ those dreamy dreams, oh let’s sip that absinthe in New Orleans, that’s what I like about the South”) and geography (“Did I tell you ‘bout the place called Doo-Wah-Diddy, it ain’t no town and it ain’t no city, it’s just awful small but awful pretty . . .” and indeed such a town exists in Tennessee) and a few more ambiguous topics.

The masterpiece in this style is probably Hoagy Carmichael’s “Georgia On My Mind” which has been sung with lambent brilliance by Ethel Waters and rather more heavily by Ray Charles — its lyrics have an almost-folk-poetry quality to that sends them above the conventional (“a song of you comes as sweet and clear as moonlight through the pines . . .”) and a melody easily embellished by any knowing singer, always to effect. The song has a genuine feeling that crosses color-bars and a genuine unpretentiousness that steers it away from the rampant cliché.

“It’s The Same Old South,” a song filled with undisguised hatred for its subject (and willtily rendered by Jimmy Rushing with Count Basie’s Orchestra on a 1940 recording: Rushing, “apt to sound as if he were trying opera in a tune like ‘Blue Skies,’” in Whitney Balliett’s immortal phrase, seems on this record to have a built-in smirk in his rotund vocal tones as the song rhymes Niagara with pellagra), like so few other songs about the South has real feeling behind it: the fashionable Northeastern urbanite’s built-in superiority to the Land of Cotton and its inhabitants and customs (which makes it superior to the primitive satire implied in W.C. Handy’s the chilling lyrics to “Beale Street Blues” where, if the street could talk, “married men would have to grab their beds and walk,” or Tom Lehrer’s academic reprise of the 1940 tune: “I Wanna Go Back To Dixie” which ends with “Be it ever so decadent, there’s no place like home”), an attitude that led Lenny Bruce to bewail the fact that the government had never spent a dime setting up something called Radio Free South. “It’s The Same Old South” takes on the topics of cabaret satire — not just Lynchings, fake etiquette, Huey Long, race hatred and the insincerity of the Jolson school of burnt-cork panegyrics — but disease, the general ignorance and, most vitriolically, labor conditions for both children (“It’s a regular children’s heaven, cause they don’t start to work till they’re seven”) and adults (“Now the bloodhounds that once chased ’Liza, chase the poor CIO organizer, it’s the same old South,” the song concludes); and it is unfortunate that — perhaps because of its mean-spiritedness — the song remains a lone, deeply-felt outburst (when divorced from Rushing’s mocking reading in the canon of songs about the South. Subsequent songs in the genre — be it just-missing-lachrymose like “New Orleans Ladies,” anthesmesque like “Sweet Home Alabama” or, closer to home, as ebulliently descriptive as “Mardi Gras Mambo” or as fake-nostalgic as “Walking to New Orleans” — merely resurrect and reinforce cliches contradicting half-a-century of politics and activist resentment and achievement. The happy dance in the cotton fields after work is done goes on, unto eternity.

—Jon Newlin
FOOD

“HOME SWEET HOME”

BETTER JAZZ THROUGH RED BEANS

In New Orleans, you play what you eat — if the food isn’t going to travel, chances are the musicians won’t either.

Food and music, what a gracious pair. They may be our best-known exports. And in the vice versa department, people swarm here from the four corners to enjoy those same delights. Those folks fit right in because the locals are busy enjoying the same things. After all, next to dancing the funky chicken, eating a good oyster po-boy is one of life’s most sublime pleasures. Enjoying food and music each generates such enthusiasm that the momentum from one often leads directly into the other.

First let me get my head right. I have a big plate of fatback swimming in beans right next to me. Solid. Next, let me prime this little cassette player with some tasty music. We got your basic “Blues and Barbecue, Parts 1 and 2,” your basic “Rooster Knees and Rice,” four versions of “Soul Food,” from funk to reggae, and Smiley Lewis’s “Gumbo Blues.” Dr. John his-own-self has got his “Pots on Fiyo,” cookin’ up some “Croaker Courtbouillion.” Joe Tex is going “Chicken Crazy,” singing a spicy ditty entitled “Yum Yum.” Amos Milburn is going for “French Fried Potatoes and Ketchup.” Percy Mayfield is “Cookin’ in Style.” Bo Diddley is off to the “Feast of the Beast of the Maumaus.” And, in the jazz side, Charlie Mingus is singing for us to “eat that chicken, eat that chicken pie.”

Now, we should define terms and explain our method. We shall do this by example.

COOKING. Remember the Chuck Berry song “Down the Road Apiece?” He sings about “an old piano and a knockout bass. The drummer man’s a cat Kickin’ McCoy.” They make music so hot he says it is “Better than chicken fried in bacon grease.” That is “cooking.”

JAMMIN’. In the opening of James Brown’s minor classic “Pass the Peas,” somebody asks, “Bobby, why do you like soul food?”

Croons Bobby in response, “because it makes me haaaappy.” (sigh)

Then the rest of the Famous Flames start chanting: “Pass the peas like you did before. Pass the peas like you did before.” They repeat this a few more times and that is it for the lyrics. From then on what we get is pure, unadulterated “jammin’.”

FOOLPROOF METHOD FOR ROCKING. We refer the Professor Amos Milburn’s song manual “Way Down in New Orleans.” It is the one which begins “All day long and all night too / They eatin’ that cabbage and they know what to do.” Just follow his instructions and you will know too. The doctor explains:

- Pig snoots and sauerkraut
- Mustard greens and turnip tops
- When you get to eat you begin to rock.

Very simple. It is easy to practice and results are guaranteed. Now the secret is revealed.

Of course, this effect of food on the rock glands has long been known to musicians. It is one of the major reasons why so many hometown hipsters hate to leave south Louisiana. They know that here they can get a good meal. Once out on the road they have trouble keeping their stomachs in tune.

In the history of New Orleans music many a travel contract has gone unsigned at the thought of Mondays without red beans. Professor Longhair refused to tour for a long time, and food was a prime reason why. When he found it fitting to go on the road later in his career, he took the precaution of carrying supplies. I heard one tale of a particularly undigestible flight to Europe that had all his sidemen seriously considering fasting. When a stewardess tried to insist that he take her factory-made food offering, he is said to have waved a brown paper bag at her like a talisman. Fess, being always a gentleman, politely declined. "No thank you," he told her, "I got my Schwegs."
The Olympia Brass Band probably travels more than any other group in town. Over their years as missionaries of jazz, bringing the beat to the poor and deprived, they have developed their own methods for maintaining optimum verve. Calvin Trillin, the noted food writer, relates that one band member would be designated the navigator. He would have to study the road map and instantly alert everyone if they got within two hundred and fifty miles of Kansas City. An immediate detour would then be made directly to Arthur Bryant's barbecue palace. Trillin mentions this place because he is from Kansas City, partial to barbecue, and happens to think Arthur Bryant's is the best restaurant in the world. However, they certainly have other sanctioned pit-stops for other necks of the woods. And being seasoned travelers, they always keep one ace in the hole.

If things get desperate, they get on the horn and summon the man himself, Buster Holmes, the red beans king. They know he's got what it takes to put them back in the groove.

At this point we might reflect on the fact that the most famous of all local musicians, Louis Armstrong, used to conclude his letters "Red beans and rice... yours." Satchmo was a philosopher; he knew where it's at.

I trust most of you readers understand where Louie was coming from. But there may be some newcomers out there. Please stay in focus and I will try to guide you to the world of better jazz through red beans.

You will need:
- 1 lb. red beans
- 4 strips of bacon
- 1 large yellow onion
- 14 toes of garlic (Fear not. It's a lucky number, and garlic loses pungency with cooking anyway.)
- ½ lb. pigmeat (pickled pork or whatever, cubed)
- 1 or 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp. thyme
- ½ tsp. Steen's Cane syrup (optional) white pepper and cayenne (to taste)
- green onions and parsley

Get your beans, which you have soaked overnight, to cooking in some water. Add your pigmeat, herbs, peppers, and syrup. (You might also add a little celery and bell pepper.) Fry that bacon. When it is done, snack it. You can add it to the beans later. Sauté the finely minced onion and garlic in the bacon grease until they are clear but not burned. Add them to the beans. Cook until soft. Add salt. Serve over rice. Garnish with chopped parsley and green onions.

In closing, I would just like to leave you with some words of advice, compliments of the Rev. Little Richard.

"It ain't what you do/It's the way that you do it,
It ain't what you eat/It's the way that you chew it!"

(You got it?)

—Steve Armbruster
which featured a delightful vocal exchange and great guitar licks. The crowd responded with instant recognition to what are perhaps X's two most popular songs — "White Girl" and "Los Angeles" — but after an enthusiastic applause, a disgusted Exene announced to the sound mixer that she still couldn't hear herself.

Half resigned to what apparently was to be a perfunctory date, I figured I could do worse than to check out X's resident enigma, Billy Zoom, whose fixed guitarist-adonis stance and cherubic cat grin belies an incredible talent. Zoom is forever complimenting the music's solid rhythm chords with the most tasteful rockabilly leads — a perfect example being "Johnny Hit And Run Paulene," which he played live, as on record, with effortless finesse.

X's next new tune, "Riding With Mary," didn't strike me as particularly memorable, but then the group suddenly launched into "Sex And Dying In High Society" and a whole new show began to unfold. The band magically came alive and started kicking! Bonebrake broke into a crashing roll. Doe called out, "Here We Go," and Exene belted out "Year One" with pure punk passion — her Medusa locks flying and emerald eyes aglow! The crowd roared in approval as both John and Exene wailed through an excellent rendition of "The World's A Mess, It's In My Kiss"; and with no let up in intensity, X immediately bore into "Sugarlight," Doe's ode to O.D'ing into the electric night....

More audience hollers brought the band back for an encore which featured a riveting version of "In This House That I Call Home." The sound was by now impeccably tight. Exene was smiling and vamp-dancing. John had developed a rhythmic sway like a metronome in sync with D.J.'s accurate downbeat. And all the while, Billy Zoom just stood there playing great guitar.

With ears still ringing, my mind echoed what Exene had said: that you can be anywhere . . . It's when the smoldering's ignited, and you hit your stride . . .

— Richard Braverman

Buckwheat Zydeco
At Greenville, Miss.
September 19, 1981

South Louisiana push-and-pull music invaded the Mississippi Delta Blues Festival for the second year in a row when Stanley "Buckwheat" Dural and his I.I.S. Special Parti! band played the "Blues Special" slot in Freedom Village outside Greenville, Mississippi, on September 19.

Buckwheat didn't buy a raccoon, but he bought the hearts (and dancing feet) of the more than 17,000 people who attended the fourth annual celebration of the blues, sponsored by Mississippi Action...
for Community Education (MACE), a non-profit, minority rural development organization.

Zydeco was featured at the festival for the first time last year when the Sam Brothers Five, along with Herbert "Daddy Good Rockin" Sam, literally drove the crowd wild with their infectious blues vocals in Cajun French, and with Leon Sam's rollicking accordion playing and little brother Calvin's mesmerizing rubboard playing. There were howls of disappointment when the band was denied an encore and Herbert loaded up his sons and their equipment and headed home to Opelousas.

This year, the crowd had its way. They demanded, and Buckwheat played, the first encore of the day.

Before reaching that point, however, Buckwheat - shouting his battle cry, Ils Sont Partis! - had rocked the celebrants through "Zydeco Boogie Woogie," "Buckwheat Music," "Zydeco Rock" and "Rock Me Baby."

By the time he finished a heart-wrenching version of Tyrone Davis's "I've Reached The Turning Point," the delta's conversion to zydeco was complete, judging from the dancing, whooping and yelling going on.

Just back from a three-month tour of Europe, Buckwheat seemed genuinely appreciative of the reception accorded him on his first visit to the Mississippi delta as he lounged around backstage with a beer, talking with well-wishers and new fans.

"It makes no difference where you are," he said, "Louisiana, Europe, Mississippi. When you start playing zydeco, the people are gonna start dancing."

Buckwheat's set was interrupted when a member of the audience suffered a heart attack and a doctor was called. This was the first serious emergency in the four-year history of the festival, but it ended well when the heart attack victim responded favorably to treatment and was taken to a hospital. The incident prompted MACE field coordinator Worth Long to later say, jokingly, that he wasn't sure he should book any more zydeco bands.

Traditionally held the Saturday after Labor Day, the date for this year's festival was changed to accommodate the schedule of headliner Muddy Waters. This was the first time in over 20 years Muddy had been home to Mississippi, and members of his family from Rolling Fork had front row seats for his closing set.

The big surprise of the day was Johnny Winter jamming with Waters to close the show, and rumor has it that Winter thought the festival was so down-home and righteous that he plans to attend next year.

The Delta Blues Festival is nothing as grand as the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, but it has come a long way since 1977, when the stage was a flatbed truck. Because of the smaller scale and the intimacy it affords, it should be a must on any blues lover's calendar.

—Michael Swindle
A lot of fuss was made over the release of these recordings. Lawsuits were threatened between everybody involved. In the true spirit of the shouting matches that oft-times taint the New Orleans record industry, no legal punches were thrown.

When I asked Huey about this session last spring he told me "there wasn't too much to get excited about." Well, that turned out to be an understatement. This release is rather dire, to say the least. Huey just gets lost in the Sansu production job. Between the tubas, the screeching girls, the heavy-handed drumming, and the over-amplified bass, poor Huey is barely discernable. This set just lacks the spark Huey sometimes generates live with the right band (i.e., David Lastie's unit). It isn't bad, just plain boring.

Hurry back Huey and get low down, and start having a good time rockin' behind the Iron Curtain. If not, don't you know it, I'll have to be John Brown!

—Almost Slim

This album has been mentioned in Musician magazine as well as People. It's rare enough for any Nonesuch LP to be recognized, but weirdo stuff from the Upper Volta?

Several qualities distinguish this work from other compilations of African music. The cuts are longer. The accent is on musical performance, which unfolds in time. There aren't like thirty seconds of this and then thirty seconds of that. The first cut by the Bob-Dyula tribe is 5:21. For a recording made in the field, the sound quality is superb. Everything's right there. The lolongo, a musical bow, featured on the cut from the Northern
Samo tribe, would have sounded shrill on previous recordings; instead, it rings and it sings. Drums that would have sounded flat have more pound.

The performances are incredible. The xylophone-like tones of the bala (played by the Bob-Dyula) recalls Diga Rhythm Band and Gamelan music. "Allah man dogo" is a duet between two bala. In the first part of the cut there's constant variation, each bala's lines feeding off the other's. In the latter part, the ensemble, after slowing down a bit, quickly builds to fever pitch, one bala playing an intense but constant lick, while the lead bala trills simple patterns at breakneck speed.

The liner notes observe that "African music is rarely played for its own sake; an African musician plays 'with' people, not 'for' them." This essential unity of existence is incomprehensible to "developed" Westerners. The Fulani praise their god by striking the calabash, which they also use to cook their food in. The spiritual purity that musical intellects of Western society grasp for is a daily fact of life for the people on this record; they plant their grain to the beat of their drums, the call of their voices.

—Zeke Fishhead

Gatemouth Brown
At Old Town Music Hall
September 23, 1981

BIRMINGHAM — Written in smaller letters right under Gatemouth Brown's logo on his touring van is the phrase Kickin' Ass and Takin' Names, and if his two sets at Old Town Music Hall here are any indication of the rest of the stops on this tour, they are not idle words.

The show was billed as Gate with an eight-piece review, but the touring band, at this point, consists of Larry Sieberth on keyboard, Steve Masakowski on bass, Rick Sebastien on drums, Steve Schrell on alto sax and Bill Samuel on flute and tenor sax.

"As soon as the new album company can afford me," Brown told the crowd at one point, "I'm gonna get me three more horns."

The band opened up with a long jazz piece that gave each member a chance to take an extended solo and strut his stuff and then Brown came on wearing the familiar black western outfit and black hat.

He introduced the band and told the audience he had some good news and some bad news. The good news: they were going to receive an education in "American music." The bad news: they were not going to hear the same thing twice.

The first set included two songs off the new album, due out soon on Rounder Records. "Sometimes I Feel Myself Slipping (But I Guarantee You I'm Never Gonna Fail)" was a hard-core Texas blues and "Alligator Boogaloo" ("for our
kids") was Cajun funk, with a searing tenor sax break from Bill Samuel.

An extended version of "Gate's Express" included sound effects of trains, train whistles and coyotes, along with snatches of "Dixie" and "Oh Suzanna," when the train pulled into Alabama.

The highlight of the first set was an incredibly up-tempo version of "Up Jumped The Devil" that Brown dedicated to all the fiddle players in the audience, "who hang around like gunslingers wanting to shoot you down." He put on an awesome display of fiddling, slapping the strings with the bow better than most people play straight.

The guitar counterpart in the second set was "Honeyboy" from the Blackjack album. It was dedicated to all the guitar players who were left in the house and Gate left no doubt in anyone's mind that not a one of them could stay on the stage with him.

Early in the second set, Brown had the crowd on its feet with a calypso medley, in which he pounded island sounds out of his guitar with open-handed slaps and judo chops.

He played the obligatory long version of "The Drifter," as well as "Dollar Got The Blues," "I Feel Alright Again," and a superb rendition of "Mercy, Mercy, My Love, "to my sleeping daughter and wife at home."

Gate is the only musician I know who can blow your brains out with his playing, but you know your mother would love his show too. Some of the people here who weren't familiar with him and thought they were coming to see just an old bluesman were confused at first by his blend of country, Cajun, jazz and blues, but by the end of the night they were firmly in his grip.

After the show, Gate and the band chowed down on a red beans and rice pizza one of his fans made for him before heading out for Nashville.

—Michael Swindle

Pair-a-Dice Tumblers
At The Decadence Ball
October 3, 1981

This night the Tumblers, most degenerate of local marching bands, performed in place before consorts of similar ilk. They played their usual sleazy, sloppy versions of the classics — "Second Line," "The Saints," and "Down By The Riverside," to mention a few — when Oliver Morgan's troupe took a break, providing a little something the drunks could mess around to without falling down. (Was that really Mike Early in jeans behind the stage?)

The Tumblers, if you aren't familiar with them, are a loose collection of non-musicians that usually come out of the...
woodwork, cockroach-like, in the vicinity of the Dream Palace whenever there’s an excuse to march. They have a particular affinity for costuming, so this fantasy-clad social event was a natural for them.

Unfortunately, the Tumblers are approaching competence. For example, their “Second Line” intro – duh dot DAAAAAA dot – has been cutting down the number of A’s in the third syllable lately. It still isn’t nearly up to speed, mind you, but their old tempo, which was almost interminable, was often necessary to draw the attention of the sloshed-out airheads that like to fall in behind them.

Oh, the gig was a success — after all, they got some folks into the pool. But they need to do something soon to prevent further improvement. Maybe if they put the instruments in a pile and reached for them blindfolded . . .

—Tim Lyman

Frozen Alive
Albert Collins
Alligator 4725

Wow! There I was sitting in a bar drinking beer, wondering when it was going to cool off, and in comes Hammond Scott with this record for me. I didn’t believe it at first, but when it hit the turntable it was the Albert Collins I know and love — I was convinced. This stands out as one of the best live blues sets in recent years.

Collins comes up with variety, playing a mixture of original and “traditional” material. Both sides are strong with plenty of Albert’s frigid guitar work. “Caldonia” and “I Got That Feelin’” rock right along, while “Frosty” captures the feel of the original. The slow blues “Angel of Mercy” and “Things I Used To Do” are really lowdown and straight from the gutter. My personal fave is “Got A Mind To Travel” while “Cold Cuts” doesn’t seem to reach the sharpness that the “Houston Razor Blade” has previously reached.

A good buy. What surprised me most is that almost the whole disc is a straight blues set — are people getting sane again? I hope the next one’s in mono so we can really tear the house down!

—Almost Slim

Hip Shakin’ Mama
Irma Thomas
Charley 2019

This is very much a “live” recording of Ms. Thomas, dating from the 1976 New Orleans Jazz Festival, so if you experience a deja-vu sensation it’s because three of the tracks were previously released on Island Record’s anthology of the ’76 Fest. Usually, live festival albums are lacking something, but this one is an exception.
Backed by Tommy Ridgeley and the Un-
touchables, you really get the feeling of an
“in-person” appearance by Irma, who is
at her hip shakin’ best.

The album runs close to 40 minutes, so
it isn’t one of those 20-minute rip-offs. Of
course Irma runs through the inevitable
string of her hits. It’s hard to pick out a
high spot, there are so many, although I’d
love to see the title track released as a
single—it’s so nasty. There aren’t any low
spots except when the needle runs off at
the end of side two.

If you dig Irma, this is a must, one of
the best New Orleans releases so far this
year.

—Almost Slim

Can Your Heart Stand It?
James Brown
Solid Smoke 8013

Yeah brutha! I can dig it. Since
Brown’s old King albums have all but
disappeared from the 88¢ bins of K-Mart,
this is a valuable release. Especially for
me since I had all my Brown ips swiped at
a party I had in high school. Also, it’s a
quick way to get most of JB’s classics so
you can get down too!

It’s interesting to note the change in
Brown’s style over the thirteen years this
album covers. The two earliest cuts,
"Please, Please, Please," and 
"Oh Baby
Don’t You Weep," are straight out of the
Baptist Church. "Please," released in
’57, caused quite a stir at the time because
it blended secular lyrics with a gospel ar-
rangement. The intense "Don’t You
Weep," the sleeper on thi s album, is
merely the old spiritual, "Mary, Don’t
You Weep."

"I Got You" and "Papa’s Got a Brand
New Bag," Brown’s biggest pop hits, of
course are included and still knock me
out. "Cold Sweat" and "I Got The Feel-
ing," dating from the late Sixties, are
good examples of Brown when he really
gets his funk thing working.

"Prisoner Of Love" and "It’s A
Man’s, Man’s, Man’s World" prove that
James could sing just as nice a s he pleased
and didn’t need to shout and shimmy to
sell records. His "Popcorn" funk
odysseys are a little hard to take and
repetitive, but someone somewhere liked
them — they sold like hell.

Vintage King-like packaging makes this
a very attractive purchase. Check this
platter out, and maybe you too can be
tired but clean.

—Almost Slim

Faces
John Clark
(ECM 1-1176)

For a record company to have a par-
ticular sound associated with it is certainly
not a new phenomenon. Motown immedi-
ately springs to mind when speaking of
labels with a "sound." In jazz, more
subtle examples are Blue Note Records, not the Blue Note currently owned by the Capitol/EMI United Artists conglomerate but the Blue Note that brought us Art Blakey, Wayne Shorter, Lee Morgan, Andrew Hill and many fine improvisers. The "new wave" of jazz on the Impulse label throughout the Sixties also had a distinctive direction. The latest entry to the list of record companies with a distinctive sound is ECM Records, now owned and distributed by Warner Brothers. Allowing for a few exceptions, the music recorded on the ECM label is very quiet, while remaining free in spirit and highly improvised. John Clark's *Faces* is true to the ECM tradition. *Faces* used the ECM sound not as a restriction but as a pathway leading to uncharted territories.

The most striking feature of the album is immediately apparent upon picking up the jacket. The credits read as follows: John Clark, French horn; David Friedman, vibraharp and marimba; David Darling, cello; and Jon Christensen, drums. That combination of instruments and the very fine graphic design should be enough to ensure that ECM will break even on the investment. The musicians, however, are not household names.

In many ways, John Clark's career parallels those of French horn pioneers John Grass and Julius Watkins. Like these Fifties innovators, Clark picked up the French horn in high school and has had extensive classical training. One summer, he played at Tanglewood with the Boston Symphony. His academic endeavors include studies at the Eastman School of Music and a Masters in French Horn from the New England Conservatory. Clark's interests were always split between classical and jazz, but after working for a time as a classical freelancer around Boston, he became more attracted by the creative possibilities of jazz. *Faces* is John Clark's second lp as a group leader. His work as a jazz artist, however, has brought him into contact with a variety of styles and influences. His contributions to large jazz ensembles include work with Gil Evans, Carla Bley and George Russell. He has recorded as a sideman with Bill Evans, Carla Bley, Gato Barbieri, Diana Ross, Pink Floyd, Joni Mitchell and many others. In addition, he performs with classical and new music ensembles and a wide range of improvisation groups. It becomes obvious then that John Clark brings to *Faces* a rich musical background. That background contributes a sensitivity to all of the music on the *Faces* album.

Speaking of musicians with broad backgrounds brings up the name of cellist David Darling. Darling is respected as a fine classical musician and is a student of folk music of different cultures. His approach to the instrument, improvisation and music qualifies him as an excellent choice for Clark's group. The haunting sound of the cello and the melancholy timbre of the French horn
blend so well together that at times it is difficult to differentiate between the two.

Adding contrast to *Faces* and preventing the French horn and cello from becoming mournful are the vibraphone and marimba of David Friedman. Friedman's career has been concerned more exclusively with jazz and modern improvisational music. An accomplished drummer and percussionist, Friedman interacts with drummer Jon Christensen to give an elusive simplistic appeal to the more rhythmic passages on the album. On several tracks, the rhythm has subtle Latin influences. Having recorded with Jan Garbarek, Eberhard Weber and Miroslav Vitous, Christensen is well attuned to the ECM sound. His ability to really "listen" proves a great asset to the group.

*Faces* contains six tunes totalling approximately fifty minutes of music. Three are John Clark compositions and three are cumulative efforts by the group, all creating a satisfying synthesis. For those unfamiliar with ECM sound, *Faces* offers an excellent introduction to a rewarding musical listening experience. For patrons of the ECM sound, the album is a must.

One word of caution should be passed along: the three copies of the disc that I have heard were plagued with faulty pressing. Due to the nature of the music, the slightest destruction of the grooves renders a track unlistenable. Light tracking and heavy use of a cleaning solution is advised. —Brad Palmer

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**Local Singles**

"All I Want to Do" /
"Alex in Wonderland"

**Godot**

Top Pop TP-004

This is the first single by Godot, and it's on the Cold's label, Top Pop (that's the one with the pop top pictured on the label). The group's line-up has changed considerably since this recording was made, with only bassist Paul Sanchez and harmonica player John Herbert remaining, but they still perform these songs live. Side one, "All I Want to Do," is a fairly conventional love song, in a style that recalls Lennon's "Starting Over." It has a very pretty chorus and some interesting chord changes that rescue it from total normalcy. This track sounds like it was aimed at the radio, and it should feel at home there. The other side, "Alex in Wonderland," is more interesting. The story of a drunk who "finally lost his pitiful life" set to a snappy pop tune, it sounds more like the current Godot, with its folkish arrangement and harmonica. Both sides were done at Ultrasonic, and the recorded sound is terrific, stressing group vocals without obscuring the instrumental sound. A good start for a good band.
"I'm Awake"/
"Promises (She Isn't in Love)"
The Uptights
Up Records WB-71581

The first single by The Uptights is finally in the stores, and it's a good one. It was produced by drummer Web Burrell, and the sound is surprisingly good, considering that it was recorded on a four-track machine. "Promises," one of their newer songs and a rather slow-paced one at that, might have seemed an odd choice for a single, but the arrangement here works very well. I especially like the funky bass line in the chorus and the guitar break which is so concise (four bars) that it's gone before you know it. Also, the line "She's the oldest single girl at the reunion" always gets to me. The real winner here, though, is "I'm Awake." Carolyn Odell, who wrote the song with Burrell, has a neat voice, but it sounds better than ever with a touch of echo, and the Byrdian lead guitar is a nice touch. The song is also very cogent as a kind of statement of purpose. "Knowing that the Seventies probably passed me by / No one's gonna stop me now that I'm a totally converted girl / I'm awake / I'm a wake of the wave ... I might be a little late but / I'm gonna ride the wave and dance / Into the Eighties / I'm not afraid this is a mistake ..." It certainly isn't, and I can't wait to hear their next record.

-Steve Alleman

"The Greatest Love"/
"Big Blue Diamonds"
Bobby Cure
Bobby's Place Records 100!

Somehow Bobby Cure got hold of Aaron Neville's hit arrangement on the A side. But can he possibly think he can out-sing Aaron!!! On the flip Bobby rapes Earl King Connerly's classic. Should be a hit in Chalmette.

"Overnight Sensation"/
"Hooked On A Feeling"
Lee Bates
Magnolia 300

I dug Lee's last effort, "Wishin' Waitin' Hopin'," but these are two undistinguished soul tunes, the kind the air waves are polluted with.

"You Got The Papers (But I Got The Man)"/
"Anything You Can Do"
Jean Knight
Soulin' 1951

This is the hit that Cotillion leased and turned into a national chart record. Nothing really spectacular although Ms. Knight really gets nasty telling the Mrs., "You need a complete overhaul, your face, your body and your house." Not only that, "She's a terrible cook!" Obviously sold off its novelty appeal. Flip side knocks me out as I related a couple of issues back.

—Almost Slim
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WAVELENGTH/NOVEMBER 1981
Red Rocker's new lp *Condition Red* is available on 415 Records. Romeo Void's four-song 12-inch EP will be released by 415 in mid-November.

Carla Westcott has taken over the new wave show on WTUL since Jay Hollinsworth's departure. . . . The Men In Black are preparing to go into the studio, this time to cut their own "Hot Fork" with some new works. . . . 030 Second Flash has unveiled its new single, with "No, No," "Insanity," "Green-eyed Girl" and "Another Time." . . . Mike Staats is now playing drums. . . . Look for a new group around town — Inhibiting Factor, formerly Berlin.

Jean Knight has had a fair sized national hit with her latest waxing, "You Got The Papers, I Got The Man." The single rose as high as 56 on the Billboard soul chart. In fact, the record proved so successful Jean and her producer Isaac Borges at Traci's Knight Studio, produced by Tommy Ridgley, is reportedly doing well in portions of Texas and Mississippi. No one has worn it out over the local airwaves, however . . . Where-have-they-gone department: Wonder what happened to a lot of those early Seventies New Orleans albums that are now in Jim Russell's $25 bin? We turned up quite a few in the 886 bin of a department store in Canada. Allen Toussaint, Chocolate Milk, Wild Magnolias, Meters, Wild Tchoupitoulas and Dr. John's by the score. See you in Toronto, Jim.

The Radiators second album, entitled *Heat Generation*, has been completed at Ultrasonic Studio, and is set for release around December 1. It contains ten original tunes all written by pianist Ed Volker, including "Nail You Heart To Mine," "Jigsaw," "Rainbow," and the title cut . . . The Look is going to California for six weeks, back in time for Christmas . . . The Raffyes are either going to Australia, courtesy the Split Enz, for nine days or are teasing us again. (This will teach you guys to cry wolf next time!)

Leo Nocentelli and Art Neville have been in New York recording with Manhattan Transfer . . . The rejuvenated Uptown All-Stars have been burning down at the Absinthe Bar on Monday nights . . . Chepito Areas, former percussionist with Santana, has recorded a few tracks with the New Jazz Quintet. The cuts, according to NQ's Dave Emilion, are "top 40 with a Latin boogie beat." Reported, Chepito came to town for that "New Orleans sound" . . . Godot, back from a brief vacation, reports its single, "Alex in Wonderland" has been getting lots of requests lately . . . Rumor has it that Ivy's new single, soon to be released, will cause a stir . . . Lea Sinclair, who plays Barbie on *PM Magazine*, will be recording a single "Singing Again" written by Traci Borges at Traci's Knight Studio soon. Metropolis is moving to New Orleans this month. Formerly of Mobile, this jazz/funk band whose Latin beat has been heard recently at Tipitina's, Clarity, A-Bar, and the Blues Saloon, is composed of Mike Shaw on piano, guitar and vocals; Chuck Schwartz on sax and flute; Larry Carter on trumpet, flugelhorn and flute; Dennis White on lead guitar; Ellis Bryant on bass; and Scott Pettersen on drums and vocals.

The Widespread Jazz Orchestra (a.k.a. The Widespread Depression Orchestra) really tore 'em up at the Old Absinthe Bar the morning of October 10. The eight piece New York band played their special brand of Thirties and Forties jazz and boogie woogie tunes for a packed house of locals and tourists until 5 a.m.

Start saving up your pennies. The new album by Tony Dagradl and Astral Project is scheduled for release at the beginning of December. Lunar Eclipse is the title and all of the band is heard in fine form. If it doesn't sell well here Tony will have to take the band out on the road — and you know what that means. . . . New albums will also be released soon by Woodenhead and by Jasmine. Ramsey McLean says to remember to ask for History's Made Every Moment, N.O. Now next time you're record shopping. The Lif'er's lp has a great contemporary jazz sound.

Jazz Awareness Month is over but the Jazz Hotline is still available to keep you informed about live jazz shows. The number is 482-7185.

Club News: Clyde's Comedy Corner has moved from the French Quarter to Fat City. They now occupy Frankie Brent's old night club. . . . Chief's in Baton Rouge, which has brought in a number of touring rock and R&B groups, has been sold to a new owner — Mother's Mantel, another BR nightclub, to become a pizza parlor!?

Enjoyed the Elvis Presley movies on Ch. 6 this past month. How about some of the classic movies like the TAMI Show, The Girl Can't Help It or High School Confidential? . . . Check out Allen Fontenot's Sunday morning radio show on WWOZ for the best in Cajun music . . . Johnny Vincent is no longer located on Capitol Street in Jackson, he has rented his "office studio" to a Texas barbecue and a Chinese restaurant.

Frankie Ford is set for European tour this month. . . . Ray Charles back in town last month — all reports were favorable. . . . Albert Collins show in Baton Rouge "solid Jackson," reports one Wavelength contributor. Why no New Orleans show? Happy 75th birthday to Tuts Washington . . . Rumors of a possible move of Guitarist John Rankin to Nashville.

Shorty Zeno, washboardist with Rockin' Dopsie, under the weather again. Dopsie says Shorty's blood pressure is high and he's resting up by leaving his board in the laundry room. . . . Sad to hear of the death of Memphis Bluesman Furry Lewis.

Lots of national attention for the local front this week. Interview magazine's Glenn O'Brien, reporting on his visit to New Orleans, says he listened to "one of the world's greatest radio stations: WWOZ." He also mentioned WWOZ dj Almost Slim: ". . . he spins like a god, ought to be syndicated." In the same issue is a story on the Neville's, who are also mentioned in the Keith Richard interview in the October Rolling Stone, in which Mr. Richard praises the band's new album.
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