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NEW ORLEANS MUSIC MAGAZINE

Wavelength

The Devil and Guitar Slim

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**Christmas
On Wax**

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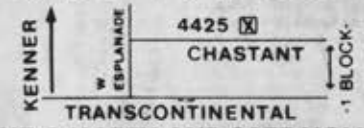
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Wavelength

ISSUE NO. 38 DECEMBER 1983

ISSN 0741-2460

"I'm not sure, but I'm almost positive, that all music came from New Orleans."

—Ernie K-Doe, 1979

Cover by Bunny Matthews

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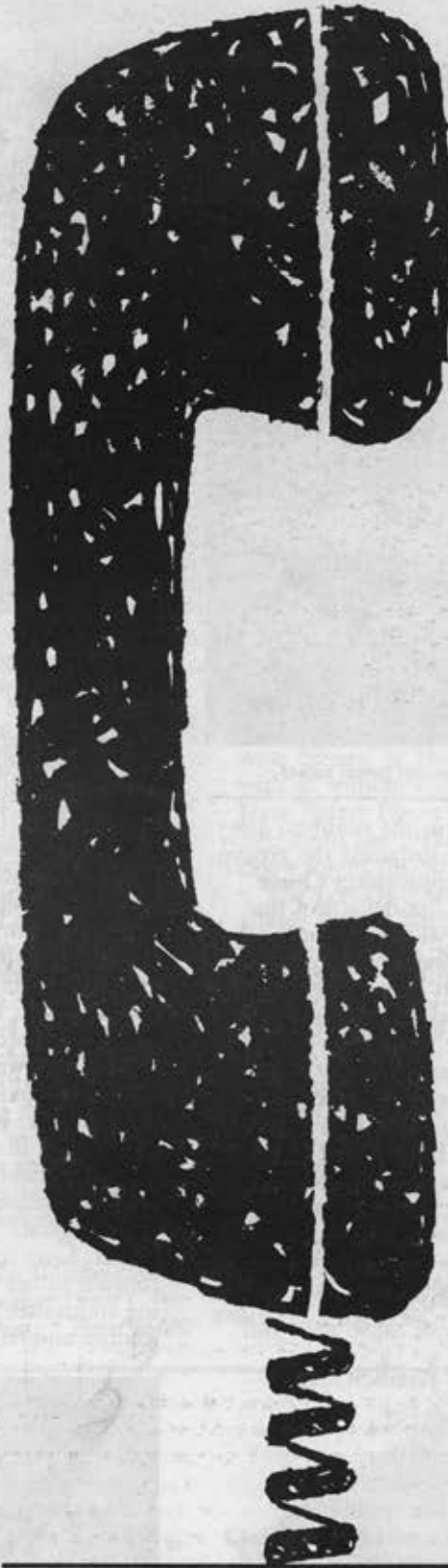
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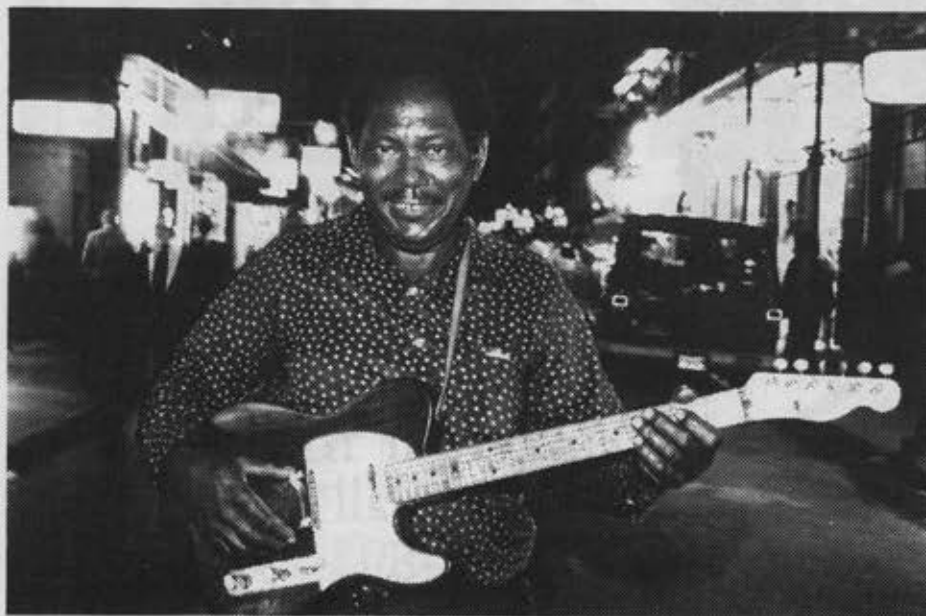
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Boogie Bill's Video Voyage Down Bourbon St.

After Cox Cable capped the first installment of its *Music City* video documentary series with a live recording of bluesman Boogie Bill Webb and Mason Ruffner at The Absinthe Bar. Time Saver Stores, Inc., sponsor of the program, donated a copy of the series to the Jazz Archives of Tulane University's Howard-Tilton Memorial Library. Bill Groome, General Manager of CCNO presented the series of thirteen tapes to Kurt Jerde, Curator of the Jazz Archives and long-standing member of the New Orleans musical community.

Walter Brock and John Scheuerman were there representing WWOZ-FM (which simulcasts the performances every Wednesday night) and the local musicians union, respectively. "A royalty contract has been established that will directly benefit the featured musicians every time these shows are aired," added CCNO 2 Executive Producer Jim Gabour, "which could mean substantial dividends for the players if we secure an arrangement for European distribution of the series. We were also lucky to have taped James Booker at the Maple Leaf Bar just a few weeks ago, which was his last recorded performance."

The November 4 Absinthe Bar taping was an interesting study in blues tradition, which has often been handed down from older black players to younger white guitarists on the contemporary scene. A slight generation gap was apparent when Boogie Bill and his accompanying harmonica player, Slim, joined Mason and the Blues Rockers for a few numbers. A satisfactory take of "Johnny B. Goode" was eventually recorded, however. Even though Bill popped

Does Takee Outee sell guitar picks?

a string early in the number, The Blues Rockers sustained the groove with Mason improvising Chuck Berry licks to the delight of his older cohorts. Bill and Slim's solo performance was wonderful eccentric, with Slim blowing wild to Boogie Bill's classic offbeat meter and authentic back porch Ninth Ward vocalizing.

"You know, this is the first time I've ever been down here to Bourbon Street," Bill said. "I was supposed to be leaving for Europe this morning, but I had a funny feeling about it, something just didn't set right. But I'm glad I came down here to play with these boys instead." —rico

Preston Jackson, Trombonist, Dies At 81

New Orleans jazz trombonist Preston Jackson died November 12 at the age of 81. Jackson died in Blytheville, Arkansas, of heart failure while on tour with Kid Sheik's Jazz Band. Born in 1903, Jackson studied trombone under Honore Dutrey (who played with King Oliver) and Roy Palmer, before moving to Chicago in 1917. Jackson recorded in 1923 with Benny Young's Band and later with Erskine Tate. During the 1930s, he recorded and toured with Louis Armstrong and later with Jimmie Noone. Jackson also played on Johnny Dodds' last recording session in 1940. From the Forties until the late Sixties, Jackson led his own jazz band. By the early Seventies, Jackson had stopped playing altogether because of poor circulation and health. However, he moved to New Orleans where the warmer climate revitalized him and he returned to music, playing with Kid Sheik and other groups at Preservation Hall. Even though

Jackson spent more time away from New Orleans than in it, his playing always reflected the traditional sound of his birthplace. He was buried in Chicago.

—Almost Slim

A Day In The Folklife

The Folklife Pavilion at the 1984 World's Fair got lucky this summer when Mrs. Russell Long visited a special Smithsonian exhibition with a large French folkways section. Surely, there would be something like that at the Louisiana World Exposition?

Not necessarily. Though an active steering committee had been formed in May and people like Nick Spitzer, Louisiana Folklife Program manager, had been beating the bushes since 1981 for the sponsorship, so far no help had been forthcoming. This was true, despite the wild success of a similar exhibition sponsored by Stokely Van Camp at the Knoxville Fair. Money was needed fast to ensure space. Otherwise, Louisiana's unique living heritage, including traditional music, would have to be sandwiched in with other entertainment programs, as space, funds and inclination allowed. It was looking grim.

Mrs. Long communicated her concern to her husband. The steering committee put together a five-minute tape/slide presentation and

Senator Russell Long convened a group of corporate lumber representatives. He pointed out the merits a folklife pavilion would have to the people of the state and to their own corporate prestige. He got some nibbles, interest at the Fair staff revived, and Jean Lafitte Park put up the initial funds necessary to hold a site in the Fulton Street warehouse section. The wheels were in motion but the project still had a major drawback—no full-time director. In November, Missouri folklorist Jane Bergey came on to head the project. In addition to programming folkways for the St. Louis Gateway for the last several years, she is also experienced with a little known segment of Acadian immigrants, the French speakers of southern Missouri.

The folklife exhibition intends to offer a rich mix of traditional music. Plans are for two stage areas, one with a 400-person capacity and another smaller, more intimate setting. With about fourteen performances a day, the musical focus will shift from week to week. Some theme weeks under consideration include a Delta blues week, old time fiddling, East Texas music and zydeco.

In addition to music, the exhibition will include storytellers, indigenous food, architecture, accordion makers, weavers and more.

According to Bergey, space has been staked out and the official announcement of sponsors is just around the corner. The envelope, please. —Virginia Levie



Anson Funderburgh and Darrell Nulisch: Rocketry 'n' roll.

Texas Rockers: Six Strings, Not Six-Shooters

Everybody knows about The Bermuda Triangle, but there's another one that extends from Austin to Galveston to Baton Rouge that's a

lot more fun to get lost in. Once you get sucked under by its cosmic current of magic music, you may never be seen again.

A staggering number of great rocking R&B and blues artists came from the South Texas/Louisiana region: Slim Harpo, Juke Boy Bonner, Albert Collins and many

others. Great guitarists like Sam "Lightnin'" Hopkins of Centerville worked the small clubs of the area with his insightful everyday songs and smoky voice. Mance Lipscomb, farmer, fingerpicker extraordinaire, equally facile with a boogie, ballad or ranting rag played around Navasota, Texas for over fifty years. The Bayou Prairie has always spawned passionate players, from the days of T-Bone Walker and Pee Wee Crayton right up to Johnny Winter and ZZ Top. Thankfully that tradition lives on in Texas club bands like Anson Funderburgh and The Rockets, The Leroi Brothers and The Cold Cuts.

The Rockets and The Cold Cuts have both released albums on New Orleans' Black Top Records, while the Leroi Brothers have a debut LP on Amazing Records (also issued on Jungle) and a mini LP scheduled for release on, believe it or not, CBS. Jackie Newhouse, former Rocket bassist, now works the bottom for the Leroi, an electrified quartet/quintet of blast furnace blues rockers. They contrast rather sharply with the sophisticated ice house cool of Anson and The Rockets, who played November 18 at the Maple Leaf Bar.

Hundreds of bands can play Otis Rush's "All Your Love," for example, but few can interpret his choppy guitar phrasing or plaintive vocal yearning with such a satisfying accuracy as Funderburgh and Co. When they shift mid-song from a jerky tango beat to their trademark shuffle, you can sense that here is a band with a finger firmly on the pulse of the blues heartbeat.

Meet The Cold Cuts is a not-so-recent release that is more than a little schizophrenic. The tunes can be neatly divided between straight ahead rock-ability tunes from bassist Kenny Bobo and jazzy blues from guitarists Jimmy Don Smith and Little Junior One Hand. Although they make great live dance songs, the rockers are not extraordinary cuts. They could fit well on any Top Forty radio station's playlist, which may well be the reason for their inclusion on the album. The real gems here are "Little Junior's Sleepwalk" and "Jailbait."

Little Junior One Hand (a.k.a. Freddie Cisneros) is well known around the Texas R&B scene as a versatile white-haired guitarist who can switch from blasting rock to mellow jazz at the drop of a hat. His most recent New Orleans gigs as one of Allen Haynes' Stepchildren have given us lots of the former, but "Little Junior's Sleepwalk" leans heavily on the latter. It also epitomizes the high quality production to be found on this album.

Jimmy Don Smith has the most lecherous voice in rock 'n' roll and "Jailbait" puts that gravel-laced growl in perfect context. It is a



Mason Ruffner and Li'l Junior One Hand: Exiled from the Bayou Prairie.

talking blues that somewhat chauvinistically warns the "mature" man about the perils of "Junior High Ju Ju," "Tattle Tail," and "Scum Puppy."

The Leroi Brothers play wild, screaming, full blown, open-the-corral-gate-and-let-the-stampede-begin rock 'n' roll music. They are not brothers and none of them is named Leroi. Before they acquired a bass player, they were the world's greatest garage band. (Real garage bands don't have bass players, real garage bands have two electric guitars and a great drummer like Mike Buck.) Now we can envision them practicing in the dining room: "Mom, you better move the china closet, the longhorns are loose again..."

A reviewer in the *Washington Post* called their sound "half rhythm and half lust." Their music

has nothing to do with the British Invasion, synthesizers, men who wear dresses, or Men At Work, with or without their respective Hats. Safety Dance? Heh, heh. No, more like a Danger Dance and don't forget the Absorbine, Irene.

The Leroi Brothers have an album called *Check This Action* that is as furious, joyous and downright demented as a rock 'n' roll record is likely to get in this, the final quarter of the twentieth century (to borrow a phrase from Tom Robbins who would no doubt dig this band if he ever heard them). Their upcoming mini LP reportedly contains a version of Roy Head's "Treat Her Right" that has caused several heart attacks among privileged insiders. The Beaumont Triangle is a very dangerous region.

Now how often do we get to flirt with death in this repeatedly

boring time-space continuum called "life"? When was the last time you laughed in the face of arrhythmia or hyperventilation by working up a real lowdown American funk froth to some high-volume diddy-bop? Bet it's been a while unless you belong to one of those signifyin' churches. Well, calibrate your compass, baby, the Leroi Brothers will be in town January 1984. Bring your own life insurance, nitroglycerin pills, oxygen tank, maps and navigation devices.

—rico

Jumbo Makes Way For Fishnet

The old Al Hirt club has been converted recently into the Moulin Rouge for Las Vegas style shows, complete with showgirls and enough fishnet to wrap Manhattan. The current production from NYC, *Follies on Broadway*, gaily splices together motifs from *Guys and Dolls*, *Fiddler On The Roof*, *My Fair Lady* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* concluding with an amazing disco version of *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

In between shows in the back bar, Decatur Street's own Becky Allen, with Harry Mayronne on piano, deliver the cheeky, lascivious and altogether good-natured atmosphere of Storyville gone by, in songs and soft shoe shuffle. Evidently, the lure of greasepaint was enough to make Al Hirt bypass his much publicized qualms about the French Quarter, as he was seen catching the second show of the Follies in November.

Collect 'Em All

R. Crumb, the legendary San Francisco counter-culture/underground cartoonist, artist and musical archivist of some stature, has inaugurated the Eighties in classic high times style. The introduction of Crumb's Heroes of the Blues trading cards in 1980 brought his patented eccentric neo-realism and ironic sense of humor to bear on the likenesses of some 36 early blues greats. The selections span the well-known and the nearly forgotten—from Blind Lemon Jefferson and Skip James to Charley Patton and William Moore.

The Early Jazz Greats series followed in 1982, highlighted by a change from his famous cartoon style to a new populist watercolor portrait idiom. From a grinning Louis Armstrong holding his trumpet and a natty, pensive Earl Hines with hands in his pockets, to the quiet look on New Orleans clarinetist Johnny Dodds' face and the detachment and resignation on the visage of King Oliver, Crumb has caught a whole new strain of



nuance and expression. Reportedly, next in the trading card series, due to be finished next year, is R. Crumb on hillbilly stars.

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—William D. White



DALE MILFORD

imprimatur of Mrs. Alice Byrd, Longhair's widow, who wanted to donate her husband's gold teeth and sunglasses to the project. Robichaux, however, nixed the idea, figuring that some of the wilder inhabitants of the Mighty 13th Ward would make off with the teeth and shades within hours of the sculpture's dedication. Likewise, the bust of Mr. "Ball The Wall" will be very implanted in place. Some people, unfortunately, have got no respect.

—Gianlorenzo Bernini

Ernie The Whip Dies, 'Never Bought A Drink'

Prof. Longhair In Bronze

Although none of his own records were ever issued in gold-plated versions, a bronze bust of Henry R. Byrd, better known as Professor Longhair, will soon grace the Napoleon Avenue neutral ground, just outside the door at Tipitina's.

The bust, designed and executed by artist Coco Robichaux (who has been responsible for many of Tipitina's more transcendental posters and brochures over the years), will be cast in a new foundry deep within the Ozone Belt and dedicated at a celebration on Sunday, December 18 (the day—or evening—before Fess' birthday).

Robichaux worked from numerous photographs of the late Longhair to create his sculpture and the work bears the personal

Ernest Bringier, who came to be known in New Orleans radio circles as "Ernie The Whip," died this past month in Los Angeles, of heart failure. He was in his early sixties according to his one-time radio associate Larry McKinley. Ernie The Whip began his broadcasting career on WMRV in the early Fifties playing R&B records. (He also owned a body shop on Martin Luther King Blvd. were Lee Dorsey was discovered.) Blatz Beer was a regular sponsor of his program ("All the cats are switching to Blatz, all the kittens too") and he became one the city's most popular black radio personalities.

"It was amazing how popular Ernie was," recalls Larry McKinley. "He never had to buy a drink in a bar or a restaurant. He was a true personality in the era when personality was as important as music was to radio." He was buried in Los Angeles.

—Almost Slim



New Orleans: Homeplate of the Blues

Big Bang/ Waka Waka Smash Backbeats/ Red Rockers

On November 13, 1983, the thirty-three-inch deluxe girls' model aluminum bat of white American reggae pinged resoundingly against the softballed head of white American pop rock. Sunday 13 was the fateful day that the Big Bang/Waka Waka softball powerhouse whipped upside the head of a spirited, but outclassed, young Backbeat/Red Rocker team by a score of 13 to 2.

The BBWW hit machine was piloted by Big Bang percussionist George "Slugger" Terzis, whose homer-bashing prowess was surpassed only by his rifle-shot left field arm to second and his ability to meaningfully converse with teenage girls in colorful knit tops. BBRR pitcher Vance DeGeneres had a fair day signing autographs but a disaster on the mound. As the day wore on his lofting literally "degenerated" into cannon fodder for the power packed BBWW r.b.i. howitzers. Several of the BBWW top sticks used the November *Wavelength* cover photo of Degeneres (shot by umpire Rico Esquela) for a batting target in their fiery pre-game pepper sessions. "We came to play ball and soil reputations," growled the spliffing sluggers. "Why am I not having all the fun in the world?" muttered the determined pitcher.

The BBRR offense never materialized, even after a miraculous base hit by right fielder Fred "Dread" LeBlanc. "Hey Dreddymon, you have wasted your you' away listening to Bo Diddely records, mon," taunted the opposing bench in fake Rastafari accents. "Your mothers like Ozzy Osborne!" squealed the BBRR cheerleaders in frenzied retort.

"I think the key to our victory was the way we physically punished the opposing squad," boasted BBWW co-captain Vernon "Sticky Fingers" Rome, "you see, we owned all the baseball gloves, and we were nice enough to let them use our gloves when we were up to bat. But just before tossing them our gloves between innings, we'd each slip in a few upholstery tacks from a stash in our respective jockstraps. Everybody except Tracey "Butch" Williams, that is, she used caramel danish. I don't think they ever caught on."

Possibly the most outstanding performance that day was by umpire Rico "Eagle Eye" Esquela who nailed nine exacting split-second calls, two questionable decisions, and one out-and-out mistake. BBRR left fielder Paul "Hothaid" Sanchez vehemently objected to Esquela's close calls, but the steel-willed and almost-composed arbiter held firm. "Ju get back on leff feel or my cousing weel cut leetle peeg tail off ju head neck, Pedro!" shouted the excitable alien in irreparably broken English. "Now we take peek-chur..."

—rico

A Nasty Letter To The Editor

To the Editor:

I would like to thank Vance DeGeneres for his statements concerning our band, Nasty Nasty. We are now devoted Backbeats fans and look forward, with much eagerness, to their next record. The publicity was appreciated and if *Wavelength* ever does a cover story or an interview with us, we will be sure to return the favor. Maybe for the cover of their next album, they could write "Censored" across the front cover and it would sell out...

Thanx Again! Sincerely,
Nasty Nasty



Who Dat Say Who Dat?

By now, we've all heard Steve Monistere's grid-iron hit, "Who Dat?" (the song that finally vaulted New Orleans music to the front page of the *Times-Picayune*) but only a chosen few were actually

in the studio to watch history begin made. The participants in the hottest local seller in recent memory were (bottom row) Steve Monistere, Carlo Nuccio, Aaron Neville, Ron "Pit Bull" Swoboda; (top row) B.R. Waymer (with mike), Brad Edelman, John Hill, Reggie Lewis, Louis Oubre and Art Neville.

CAJUN COLLECTIBLES

Tired of paying exorbitant prices for Louisiana collectible records? A short trip down the highway from New Orleans uncovers a treasure of Louisiana bits, all under one roof.

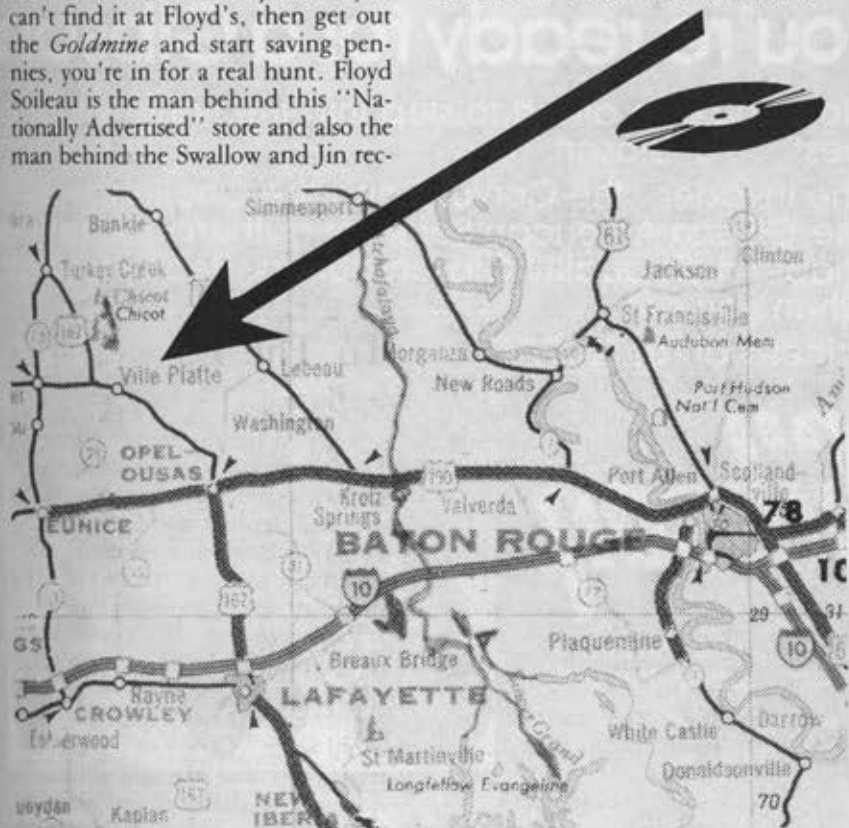
Are you sick and tired of walking into your favorite local record store to find it's been converted into a jazzercise boutique full of huffing ladies and a lonely Pomeranian? Tired of paying exorbitant prices at used record stores for untouched vinyl collectibles? ("Well, that \$25 single of Myron Floren doing "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White" was on pink vinyl in a white velveteen sleeve," you mutter in a feeble attempt at justification.) Have your last five garage sale outings netted nothing more than another copy of *Mantovani Live at Mt. Rushmore*? Then it's time for you to hit a *real* record store, there, one like Floyd's in Ville Platte. Ville Platte is about a three-hour drive from New Orleans via I-10 to Baton Rouge and LA 190 to Opelousas. When the political posters start to say things like "La La Leloux for Assessor," you'll know you're getting close.

Floyd's Record Store offers what is probably the largest selection of Louisiana records to be found in the world under one shingled roof. From Johnnie Allan to Buckwheat Zydeco, if you can't find it at Floyd's, then get out the *Goldmine* and start saving pennies, you're in for a real hunt. Floyd Soileau is the man behind this "Nationally Advertised" store and also the man behind the Swallow and Jin rec-

ord labels which have preserved some of Louisiana's most important local music for the past few decades. Hoping to meet this somewhat legendary producer, I called ahead to announce my visit, but to no avail: "Well, I'm going with my family to the camp this weekend, podna, sorry but I won't be around the store," he explained in a slight French accent, "we're gonna barbeque and maybe watch the ballgame, you know, just take it easy and spend some time out in the woods." Yep, Mr. Floyd is definitely a Cajun.

Once you hit town, it's almost impossible to *not* find the store; it is literally a Ville Platte landmark. It contains the obligatory large screen TVs, burglar bars, cheap Japanese guitars and Michael Jackson posters, but all that modern junk is worth tolerating once the sales girl hands you the singles catalogue.

Many record buyers today don't buy the humble 45rpm single simply because of its inconvenience on current quartz-locked direct drive high tech turntables, but often these little discs contain not one, but *two* great tunes for only \$1.89! For example, if you need a copy of Rod Bernard's "This Should Go On Forever," and you buy Jin's Golden Oldie 1001, you get Jivin' Gene's "Breaking Up Is Hard To Do" (not the Neil Sedaka song) on the flipside, another swamp pop classic. Same thing with Dale and Grace's "I'm Leaving It All Up To You," which is backed with the similarly beautiful "Stop and Think It Over"; the Sir Douglas Quintet's debut hit, "She's About A Mover"



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b/w Huey Meaux's wonderful "The Rains Came"; or Bobby Bland's "Turn On Your Love Light" b/w "I Pity The Fool"—the list goes on and on. Great tunes for under a dollar apiece and you don't have to wade through all that flotsam to be found on your average long-player. With a tape-recorder you can make your own greatest hits compilations by artist, genre, location, or time period. Of course, some flip sides really stink like Billy Swan's somnambulistic version of "Don't Be Cruel," or ? and the Mysterians' "I Can't Get Enough Of You Baby," but if you just *gotta* have "I Can Help" and "96 Tears" you take the bad with the good.

Many of Floyd's compilation albums are near-full with contagious cuts like Jin LP9001, one of the very popular *Golden Dozen* series. With this one you get both Dale and Grace hits, Rufus Jagneaux's novelty classic "Opelousas Sostan" ("I can-nyeer de juke box play, alon avec mois, bon ton roule!"), Tommy McClain's tender "Sweet Dreams," Bobby Charles' "One More Glass of Wine," and the ultimate Cajun wedding reception song, "Mathilda" by Cookie and the Cupcakes. Even Elvis Costello owns these records, so take his word for it, it's cool.

Floyd's has lots of Cajun humor records. Insiders will choose Dave Pettijean's hilarious LPs over that red-neck-in-coonass'-clothing, Justin

Wilson. Dave does some rather off-beat skits like "Chickens, Girl Scouts and Farming" and "Furniture Diseases." If your taste runs toward the more risqué form of comedy and you have a good working knowledge of Cajun French, check out the two Nonc Helaire albums. If you don't have a good knowledge of Cajun French, the "Conversational Cajun French" book and cassette tapes may be the ticket for your trip to linguistic Louisiana. It helps, I mean helps, to have a good teacher to go along with the tapes, to tell your *couion* from your *cochon* and things like that. All these various items can be had by mail order; send for a catalog at P.O. Box 10, Ville Platte, LA 70586.

If you can make it through Floyd's without completely draining the ole pocketbook, you might want to stick around Ville Platte for some down home grub and entertainment. The Pig Shack has pretty good seafood right on the main drag a few blocks up from Floyd's, and after tanking up on a Saturday night you can get directions from anybody around on the best route to Slim's Y-Ki-Ki for a wild night of two-step abandon to some of the area's best zydeco bands. If there were only some way of exporting all this rural charm to an oft-jaded metropolis like New Orleans...maybe we could talk Floyd into opening a branch store in the Crescent City. Nah, it just wouldn't be the same. ■



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LET'S GET CLASSICAL!

You're thrilled by the great symphonies, and you'd love to play them at home, but the classical section of your record store overwhelms you. Here's some suggestions on getting your own classical collection started.

Buying your first classical recordings can be a little like diving into a pool without testing the water's temperature. What may first look like a pleasant experience could in fact turn out to be a shock. Let's face it, walking into a record store and being confronted with several hundred artistically packaged (and expensively stickered) album covers can be extremely confusing. What looks like God's gift to the turntable on the outside may send you running for the reject button. Then you're faced with filing the album away (never to be played again) and wondering whether it's possible to stop payment on your check! Fortunately there are a few solutions.

There are several first class magazines that feature reviews of classical recordings. Probably the two best are *Fansfare* and *Gramophone*. *Fansfare* comes out every two months and although it sometimes runs a little behind on new releases, it contains enough information (it looks like a small novel) to keep you reading for at least the next sixty days. *Gramophone* is a more traditional-looking magazine, printed in England. Since many new releases appear there first, it is an excellent way to jump the gun on new recordings.

Also available from England is the *Penguin Guide to Stereo Recordings*. This is the most helpful book I have ever come across in choosing classical music. It is comprehensive, well written, simply laid out, and very objective in the writers' approach to reviewing the material. The writers tend to stress the positive aspects of what is available instead of hacking away at what they don't like. This book is available through Polygram Special Imports. If they don't stock it in the store where you shop, they should be able to order it for you.

For those of you who don't feel like researching for the recordings that match your taste I have compiled the following list of records, which I believe are good places for the

uninitiated classical consumer to begin.

1. *Bach's Brandenburg Concertos* as recorded by Nikolaus Harnoncourt (*Telefunken* 2635620). Excellent recording and very spirited playing on original instruments. There are many good recordings of the Brandenburs but for my money none can quite stand up to this. (For the hopelessly insatiable audio nuts, this recording is not only digital but is also a direct metal master and should prove to be very impressive, even to you!).

2. *Holst's "The Planets"* as recorded by Herbert Von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic (*Deutsche Grammophon* 2532019). For those seeking BIG recordings you usually can't go wrong with the Boys from Berlin. When a lot of power is needed behind a piece of music, no one can surpass Karajan. The Holst recording is only one small part of a huge catalogue of performances. For Beethoven, Richard Strauss, or any other grandiose pieces, Karajan and Berlin are the perfect choice. Stay away from the chamber music and the Baroque where they often sound like elephants in the china shop. If you're interested in breaking your lease, check out their recording of Richard Strauss' *Alpine Symphony* (DG 2532015).

3. *Any of the recordings of the Mozart symphonies by The Academy of Ancient Music on the L'Oiseau-Lyre label*. This is the series of records which *Time* magazine reviewed as "the best of the year," with good reason. It is an expensive group of records (there are seven sets, three to four records a set), but if you have the cash it is well worth it. Volume six contains what are probably the more popular symphonies, but there probably isn't a bad groove in the entire twenty-three record series. Sell your car and buy them all!

4. *Vaughan Williams, an orchestral collection performed by Neville Marriner and the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields*. (Argo zrg 696). Perfect music for your Walkman in Audubon Park. Rolling English countrysides at their best. Sunrise at Stonehenge. Castles on the Thames. You get the idea...now get the record. Marriner is perfect for this kind of thing. Practically anything with strings. His *Four Seasons* by Vivaldi (Argo 654) still stands above the many fine performances as the best by far.

5. *The Unknown Kurt Weill*. (*Nonesuch* 79019). Rare songs performed flawlessly by Teresa Stratas. This may be my favorite vocal record of the last couple of years. If you think you hate classical vocal recordings, you owe it to yourself to check this out. Absolutely wonderful songs including a great attack on the Shell Oil Com-

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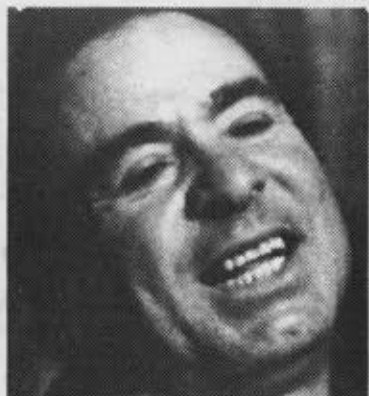


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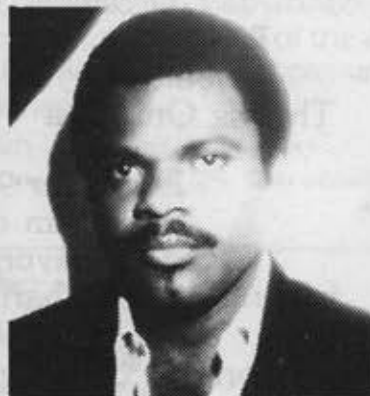
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pany, the album is a perfect first step into the world of vocalizing. None-such, by the way, has changed their whole approach to record releasing in the last couple of years and is now fast becoming the classiest label produced in the U.S. They are no longer content at just being a good budget label but now stress high quality performances and good recordings (as well as record surfaces) while still emphasizing the presentation of the more unusual and lesser known musical works.

6. With Christmas coming up, I thought I would use this space to recommend what I consider to be the best recordings of *Tchaikowsky's Nutcracker* and *Handel's Messiah*. There are several good *Nutcrackers* as well as *Messiahs*. For the *Nutcracker*, try Andre Previn's on Angel (3788 or 36990 for the suite only), or the Dorati recording on Phillips (6747257 or 9500697 for the suite only). For *The Messiah*, try the Marriner (Argo D18D3), the Colin Davis (Phillips SC71AX300), or

the Richter (DG 2709045). There are excerpts available on single discs of all the above performances. So much for Christmas...Happy New Year!

7. If you *must* buy a copy of the *Pachelbel Canon* there are some things you need to know. 1. No two performances are alike. Everyone who records this piece seems to take different liberties with it. They stick strings, flutes, oboes or whatever, in all the corners and generally treat the whole thing as if it were the final chorus in "Take The A Train." 2. The one that was used in *Ordinary People* was the RCA recording (FRL1-5468). 3. The only one which is the original arrangement (that I know of) is the Academy of Ancient Music recording on L'Oiseau-Lyre (594). This one is my favorite but will tend to make some people gag since it is only performed on three violins and a keyboard. It does *not* sound like the G.E. light bulb commercial, *Ordinary People*, or a quick ride up to the fifteenth floor!

cinema

BY JON NEWLIN

HOLIDAY TURKEYS

Without seeming too hastily oracular about it, I think we can go right on and file 1983 away as a perfectly wretched year for movies (not just American ones, either)—it's the reverse of a benchmark, whatever that is, and although I've tried to be careful about what crimes-against-vision I inflict on myself, you simply can't win. Just about the only heartening trend (for lack of a more endearing term) seems to be that American movies are recovering some of their sense of humor. Almost every one of the enjoyable American pictures this year have been comedies: *Vacation* and *Eating Raoul* and *Trading Places* and *Easy Money*, and even *Zelig*, are all beady-eyed, overburdened with conceit, goofy-grotesque to point of luxuriance, all one-note-sambas, period pieces for the age of Reganomics. Even their titles have a sort of sour wistfulness that echoes the title of Depression-mood comedies (*Nothing Sacred*, *Love Is News*, *Soak The Rich*, *Merrily We Live*, *Sing and Like It*, etc. etc.) The humor even seems to cross into other genres—*Psycho II* is only enjoyable when it's played at a shabby low-laugh level, and a picture like Larry Cohen's *Q* (most idiosyncratic grade-C horror this year—about a quetzalcoatl, for heaven's sake, nesting in the spire of the Chrysler Building, occasionally dipping over Manhattan to gobble up sunbathing cuties by their penthouse pools or hardhats working on high-rise

Why movies will never replace oyster dressing or eggnog with a dash of Wild Turkey...and some notes on Matt Dillon, Bunuel, James Bond and the generally depressing state of the world.

construction) even gets into the act with a Poverty Row wit that is what is missing from sombre horrors like *Videodrome*, *The House on Sorority Row* (any picture with that title should be a natural—just like Rita Mae Brown's feminist body-count glory, *Slumber Party Massacre*—but it ain't so), or *The Evil Dead* which comes complete [sic] with Stephen King's personal testimonial to its greatness—a warning to the curious right there. If one stays away from the good art films (*Veronika Voss*, *La Nuit de Varennes*) and simply surveys the ordinary terrain, things are not promising.

Most peculiar at the moment is *The Boy Movie*. Certainly the most stupefying exhibition by a once-considered-major director this year, Francis Ford Coppola's *Rumble Fish* (his second Boy Movie this year—just goes to show what happens when you have Matt Dillon and plenty of time on your

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hands) is one of the damndest things ever seen. Matt Dillon is a living (sort of) Caravaggio, sweating, bleeding, rippling, smirking, weeping, often simultaneously (I could watch him cry till the cows come home but there isn't near enough of this), and the picture is a swamp of camerawork and sound and lighting out of some 1929 Tobis Klangfilm or a 1954 Brakhage short about nocturnal despair, with lots of nutty angles and spitball editing—even, God help us, a use of Negroes as some sort of cheap exotica, the kind of thing one thought had flown away with Lew Leslie's Blackbirds (even an appearance by Queen Ida and her band!) or with the mystique fostered by people like Nancy Cunard and Cocteau.

All of this elaborate wrapping conceals nothing more urgent than the standard-mild juvenile delinquent *bildungsroman*—can Matt live up to/down his brother's mythopoeic reputation as sage-and-hell-raiser (a question that wouldn't keep a moron awake nights). *Rumble Fish* is something like opening an old issue of *Muscle Teens* and finding someone's notes from a bad college English Lit. course stashed inside, pederasty on ice. Don't even ask me about the Tom Cruise pictures, or *The Lords of Discipline* (which is far duller than what it sounds like, an old Olympia Press Traveler Series title).

One recent picture of dazzlingly routine interest (to readers of this rag at least) is *Eddie and the Cruisers*, a curious item that unsuccessfully takes on such forlorn minor topics as the venality of record producers, can-popular-music-produce-art as it produces singular figures of semi-legendary stature, what do people do twenty years later when their group/record suddenly hits as nostalgia; this item deals with a Jersey Shore bar band that wants so desperately to make Art—their producer won't let 'em—that their char-

ismatic lead singer drives his car off a bridge in the wee, wee hours and the body is never recovered. For those not familiar with Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Mrs. Braddon and their imitators, the above plot device may have some novelty, but that isn't the issue here, nor is the general tired seediness of the production. Rimbaud is evoked by name (often), and Springsteen and Morrison are at least called on for a few raps on the table-top, but Eddie—this dumb-Adonis monument to musical *art brut*—is, at least as Michael Pare plays it, something like a brunette Joe Dallesandro, an amiable dimwit with nice arms and thick voice and a too solid jawline. The missing tapes of the "great lost album" are a plot device, not a musical milestone. A film like this ultimately asks too many large questions about the meaning of putting one's life into one's art, and answers the questions less well than, say, *Orchestra Wives*, a zestful 1942 B-musical about the tribulations of the dames married to the boobs, buffoons and Lotharios in the Glenn Miller Orchestra.

Aside from the usual run (and it's a shame to use such an animated verb in this fashion) of Christmas turkeys and geese that the studios will put into the national deep-freeze for the holidays, there isn't much to look forward to. Along with the Prytania's festival of new (and one suspects, from past experiences, worthily unexportable) French films, the Uptown Square is planning (or so my sources have it) a series of films by Jean Gremillon ("one of the great French film makers, despite forced periods of inactivity," says Sadoul); Gremillon is almost unknown in this country—his most famous films are *Remorques* (1939 with Gabin, Michele Morgan, Madeleine Renaud, about an adulterous tugboat captain) and *Lumiere d'ete* (1943, with Renaud, Pierre Brasseur and Made-



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leine Robinson—about a debauched innkeeper trying to seduce the mistress of a has-been painter), both with Jacques Prevert scripts. Also interesting—at least in print—is *Le Ciel est à Vous* (1944, about a woman pilot—Madeleine Renaud again—who sets a world's distance-flying record for women), according to Sadoul, this should have been “the seminal film of a French neorealist movement.”

Loyola also has—along with standards that appear again and again over there—*Strangers On A Train*, *Alea's La Ultima Cena*, *Persona*—some interesting oddities. Bunuel's *That Obscure Object of Desire* (December 1), his last film and unhappily slammed by most critics, is from the Pierre Louys novelette *La Femme et la Pantin* (also filmed by Von Sternberg as that lace-and-tortoiseshell apocalypse, *The Devil Is A Woman*, and also by Duvivier with Bardot), about a heartless siren who is the ruin of one of those courtly old gents that Fernando Rey plays so well. Two very different (physically) women play the one role of Concha, which doesn't help things, but there is a glorious framing device on a train (with Milena Vucotic all gussied up for a change, and a mid-get) which gives the show away as a shaggy-dog story. There is also an obli-

que homage to Dali through the use of Vermeer's “The Lacemaker” (which also figured in *Un Chien Andalou*, the first Bunuel film some five thousand midnights ago), an amusing scene with two peasant women and an elaborately gowned pig, and some clever political asides—the film is suffused with terrorism, psychic and political. I also rather hesitantly recommend *Casino Royale* (December 20), originally billed back in 1967 as “the James Bond joke to end them all.” It didn't of course; there were six directors and the film looks like it. To say that it's a garish mess is being quite charitable, but it's hard to resist a movie where Peter Sellers, Woody Allen, David Niven, Dahliah Lavi, Ursula Andress, Joanna Pettet as well as some toothy tailor's-dummy named Terence Cooper all play James Bond. Orson Welles is the major villain, but Deborah Kerr (!!) is very funny as M's Scottish widow as is Anna Quayle as the head of a school for spies. The sets and costumes are of a style that future archeologists will no doubt refer to as Psychedelic. Also, on December 14, a double bill of two (reported) classics from Japan, Kurosawa's 1945 film of a famous Kabuki play, *They Who Step On The Tiger's Tail*, and Mizoguchi's *Sansho Dayu*. ■

reviews

Tuts Washington NEW ORLEANS PIANO PROFESSOR

Rounder 2041

Professor: the definition aptly describes Tuts Washington on his first album. At 76, Professor Tuts exhibits all the confidence of a dean from the old school of New Orleans piano, a school known for its highly evolved approach to the keyboard. Much of the fuel for this evolution came from intense competition. Like gun-fighters, the quickest and most accurate rose to the top while others got shot down. Tuts, armed and dangerous, is still walking the keyboard.

In this fine offering from Rounder Records, Tuts has given a sampling of standards as well as more obscure blues, showcasing his considerable talents as a solo performer. He has been reluctant to record over his long career. The professors are performers, not recording artists, and Tuts has been cautious about freezing his ever unfolding music in a finite form.

The album opens with “Arkansas Blues.” Tuts exhibits the walking bass line that endured from the early days right through Fats Domino's rock ‘n’ roll. On the right hand side, Professor Washington cascades again and again, echoing himself, ending the song in a most unorthodox flourish. The stage is set.

Bill Doggett's “Honky Tonk” is given the full Washington treatment. Tuts addresses the keys with immediacy and very direct execution. There are no gaps left as he fills foreground and back with figures. Side A ends with a jumping “Papa Yellow Blues,” Tuts' nickname and a signature song for this lively bachelor. It's his only vocal on the album.

Side B is equally strong, featuring an unusual rhythmic rendition of “Georgia On My Mind.” “Tee-Nah-Nah” gives clear evidence of Washington's considerable influence on Longhair's “Tipitina.” “Santa Fe Blues” is the bluest of the album's offerings from that idiom, featuring a way low-down piano. Tuts uses flatted notes throughout to tint the song.

The album ends with a spirited version of “When The Saints Go Marching In.” It is here that the Professor shows the competitive nature of the music. Phrasings, though similar, are never identical. Tuts plays with the melody, always creating variations that are humorous and interesting. This aspect of his music is the fascinating dimension of that old school.

The album has solid sound quality. The piano is balanced and very present (hats off to Ultra Sonic Studio). Rounder Records is to be applauded for their efforts in New Orleans, generally, and for this historic album, specifically. Professor Tuts Washington has allowed one of his lectures to be recorded at last and students have got some heavy homework due.

—Jonathan Foose

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Thurs. 22 Chimes Baton Rouge
Fri. 23 Tipitina's
Sun. 25 Cooter Brown's
Xmas Party
Fri. 30 Dream Palace
Sat. 31 New Year's Eve
Tipitina's

Mint Condition Jazz

BY VIRGINIA LEVIE

Traditionally, New Orleans jazz has not held the fascination for New Orleanians that it has for those farther afield. For decades, the dedicated have flocked here from Hamburg, Osaka and Cleveland with the zeal of pilgrims to see the town that spawned Louis and Jelly Roll and catch the music at its roots. Today, a dose of Dixieland is de rigueur for even the most casual tourists. But public recognition by the residents of this town which is altogether proud and casual and commercial in its handling of its cultural riches has fluctuated over the years.

For the last several, there has been a curious gap in the commemoration of New Orleans jazz. (We do have the white light arch to Louis Armstrong Park, bristling with incandescents, but the education visitors receive in that hilly domain is another matter.) On October 29, a major museum exhibition, *New Orleans Jazz*, opened at the Old Mint on the corner of Esplanade and Decatur, providing the storyline for the music. It's been a long time coming—thirty-five years after a fateful po-boy at Uglesich's and twenty-two years since David Brinkley put the first, scrappy little museum on network TV.

New Orleans Jazz chronicles the music's evolution, taking a particular look at the roots that produced such a vibrant hybrid. The show opens with a bandstand mural of the King Oliver band, lovely Lil Armstrong at the keyboard, surrounded by their instruments. Visitors are lured in by the sound of classics by the likes of the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra. The emphasis is historical, tracing influences back to the opera, voodoo, spasm bands and brass. As a clip from the paper, the *Picayune*, 1838, informs,

New Orleans Jazz horn section.



PHOTOS BY RICO

"there is a mania in this city for horn and trumpet playing." Social life gets a lion's share of the responsibility. The importance of music at home, "the piano in the parlour," the ragtime sheet music industry, the absolute necessity of dance hall music all get their due, while Storyville and all its seedy rapture receives definitive low key treatment here. There are original copies of the rags in sheet music, Louis Armstrong's first cornet from the Colored Waif's Home and shots of Buddy Bolden.

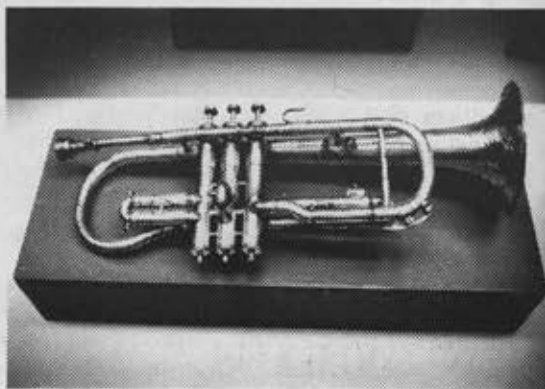
A large show, half the exhibition space of the main floor of the old federal building, the exhibition is broken up into numerous smaller sections. The impression is neat, ordered and linear, like a guided tour. Arranged chronologically at first, in terms of influences, it shifts to individuals like Papa Jack Laine, Ferdinand Joseph de la Menthe—Jelly Roll Morton, then on to a focus on instrumentation, the flow north of the musicians, to Chicago and Roseland in New York, and the "revival" that got going in the Forties.

New Orleans Jazz is a sleek compilation of the history behind the music. Visitors spend a lot of time reading. In weeks to come, they should also be holding white plastic wands that will pick up the music designed for each segment like tiny radios. The past seems secure. We've got the history of New Orleans jazz, right here, all tied up, plus any night of the week we can head down to Preservation Hall and hear the music for a buck. But for that, we owe the musicians and an assortment of local folks who never played anything but a phonograph.

The jazz that began in New Orleans in the first

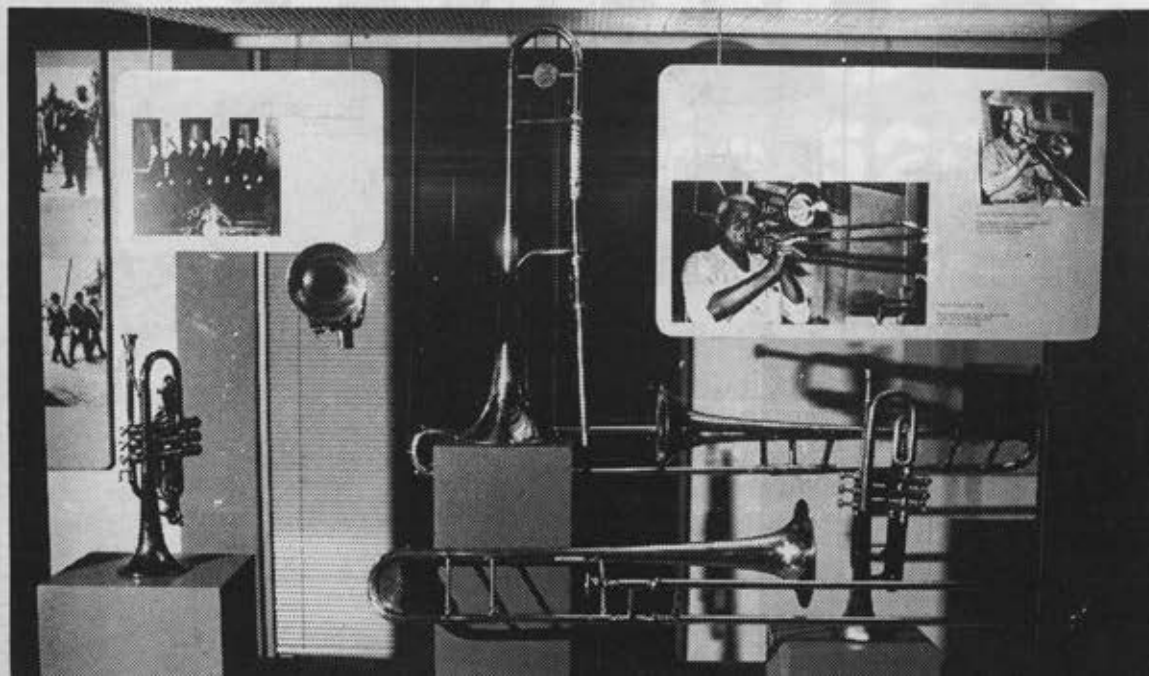
The King Oliver Band in its heyday forms the entrance to the jazz museum.

The cornet from the Colored Waifs' Home. Hundreds of New Orleans youngsters got their start on this horn, including Louis Amrstrong.



couple of decades of this century was hurting by the Thirties. Constrained by hard times and the emphasis on big band sounds, many of the local musicians who stayed in town were forced to relegate music to a hobby. But in the Forties, after the war, a new generation of fans emerged. On the basis of early classic recordings, New Orleans sound jazz bands were being formed by young, mostly white musicians as far away as San Francisco and London. Locally, enthusiasts found a source at Oren Blackstone's New Orleans Jazz Records down in the Quarter. An imposing discophile, ex-newspaperman Blackstone published probably the first jazz discography in English (in four volumes), *Index To Jazz*, as well as publishing *Playback* magazine for new releases.

New Orleans Jazz Records was the place to buy records and hang out. A lot of the customers were kids at the time: Gilbert Erskine was at Loyola and Don Perry, a nineteen-year-old Irish Channel boy. As Perry recalls, an informal group evolved, listening to records and catching the live music at places like Manny's Tavern. By Mardi Gras, 1948, the group decided it was high time they saw Zulu. Growing up white in New Orleans in the Thirties, Zulu had seemed off limits but Al Matalbert was playing trumpet in Lewis' band and it was time to go. Johnny Wiggs, Al and Babette Diket, Erskine and Perry caught the coconut-laden spectacle on Dryades Street and it was a thrill. Exhilarated by their daring and the music, they decided to fortify themselves with a po-boy at Uglesich's on Baronne and Erato before



Jazz was born alive and kicking in New Orleans and has been a restless youngster ever since. *New Orleans Jazz*, now on view at the Old Mint, chronicles the music that emerged here, uptown, downtown, and back of town. We can look back and remember, thanks to the musicians who made history and a number of New Orleanians who never played anything but a phonograph.

going on to see Rex. Over their roast beef and gravy, a brilliant idea struck—why not form a club? As original member Perry said, "I was never that interested in clubs, but we wanted to get together more and listen to records." Grinning, he adds, "Besides, we were hoping that with a group we could get a better deal when we went out to hear the music." That week, Perry and the others did a bit of calling around and the New Orleans Jazz Club was born, dedicated to "the preservation and fostering of traditional New Orleans jazz." Over the years, the club proved to be a focal point for jazz enthusiasts, hosting Sunday jam sessions, publishing the magazine *Second Line*, and drawing in jazz fans the world over.

At the urging of original member Harry Souchon, the club decided to open a museum dedicated to the music in 1961. Over the years, Jazz Club members had accumulated quite a stash of photos, records and memorabilia. New Orleans jazz was into its second revival period, with Preservation Hall having opened in 1960, Dixieland Hall going too. With more determination than funds, they secured a building a building for their use from D.H. Holmes. Holmes deconstructed the Quarter cottage from its original site on Bienville Street and moved it to some property Steiner Brothers had made available at 1017 Dumaine. A week-long celebration marked the opening of the New Orleans Jazz Museum and David Brinkley picked it up for his special on New Orleans jazz. Much of the instruments and memorabilia now on view at the Mint were also at 1017 Dumaine but so were some items that have been edited out over the years, a wall-sized "tree of life" mural, the dial-a-music phones where you could choose Jelly Roll Morton or Bix Beiderbecke at the flick of a rotary dial, the Louis Armstrong wind-up tap-dancing doll, and a lamp made out of King Oliver's cornet.

As long-time volunteer Helen Perry recalls, "We

Founding father Harry Souchon at 1017 Dumaine with Alan Watson, curator.



The ever-popular "Museumophone," an innovation of the original jazz club museum. Visitors could ring up anything from "Immortal Piano Rolls" to "Primitive Blues."

always had somebody in, mostly tourists—lots of Germans and Japanese. We always had music on. Danny Barker was on the staff and he would talk to the people as they came in. If he didn't know a fact, he could make one up, just like that. People loved him." However, rooms in the old Quarter cottages run small and after nine years, the Collection was cramped. When jazz fan Jim Nissakis, as the manager of the new Royal Sonesta, offered the club space above its Economy Hall club, the Jazz Museum moved. It stayed at the Sonesta until the mid-Seventies when Nissakis was transferred and priorities shifted. The Museum moved again to Conti Street, but the rising costs in the French Quarter made it harder to get by on zeal and good intentions. The staff had always been largely volunteer and the museum depended on admission for funds. The club began looking for a sponsoring organization to take over the Collection and the responsibility for exhibiting it. The state museum system got the honors, and the exhibition we see today has been in the works since the Louisiana museum got the Collection in 1977. Jazz curator Don Marquis had the jazz

buff's dream of sorting through the boxes and boxes of jazz records, instruments, and memorabilia. The Collection has over 10,000 photographs, for example.

In the Old Mint, *New Orleans Jazz* is a clear, durable exhibit that can accommodate the kind of numbers that visit New Orleans today to satisfy their curiosity about America's major cultural contribution to world music.

The Collection begun by the New Orleans Jazz Club is now secure and strengthened by the professionalism of the Louisiana State Museum. But growth necessitates change and some of the warmth and charm of the first struggling spot on Dumaine is gone. The shift is to be expected, it's almost inevitable, but there's no reason to assume that the presentation of New Orleans jazz shouldn't continue to refine itself. The Old Mint includes an audiovisual area and one would hope that it can soon be occupied by old jazz clips and documentary films and video. The old dial-a-phones had a virtue that shouldn't be dismissed; they let visitors choose and identify the musicians they were hearing. Some high tech version would be a great addition to the music that accompanies the show. There's a lot more gold in those hills, and a lot more music history in the archives. In the meantime, *New Orleans Jazz* does New Orleans proud. More New Orleanians should take a look at it.



Please come home for Christmas... and bring the turntable.

BY VINCENT FUMAR



Christmas Soul Special

Wilson Pickett
Martha Reeves
Ben E. King
Mary Wells
Sam Moore
Shirley Alston

The risk of immersion in banal music runs high during the Christmas season. Whether it be from Charles Brown's lovely but overexposed "Please Come For Christmas" or "The Twelve Days Of Christmas," tedium reigns. Meanwhile, some of the finest works of this vast genre remain perennially little heard.

Perhaps it is the widespread yearning for musical familiarity that seems to reinforce the mawkishness of so many Christmas pieces. Certainly the most commonly heard works were at first merely precious. But time and repeated cover versions have done little more than make them exercises in sentimentalism, or checklists of the season's decorous aspects. As a consequence of the annual demand for cozy standards, gems are lost in the shuffle.

Consider Amos Milburn's "Let's Make Christmas Merry, Baby." By all rights, it should have become an R&B Christmas classic. (It did reach the #3 spot in the R&B charts in November 1949.) With some of the finest piano he ever put on record, Milburn only brushes against the seasonal clichés, and instead pleads with his baby to let him "slide down your chimney," with promises of "a dolly, a chartreuse Cadillac and a diamond." It's too bad that Milburn never had the luck that his old pal, Charles Brown, had in this department.

Two Christmas beauties that somehow failed to gain much popular acceptance come from that Yuletide treasure trove, *Phil Spector's Christmas Album*. Both are by Darlene Love—"Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)" and "Marshmallow World." The "please!" refrain of the former is considered by many Spector buffs to be Love's greatest moment on record, while the latter's majestically rocking arrangement always suggests a sleigh-ride collision between Nelson Riddle and Dave Bartholomew. For some curious reason, the Warner/Spector label's 1976 re-release of the album was in stereo.

No one would doubt the significance of the *acapella* choral style in Christmas music. The recording world's two best exponents of the style have both issued Christmas albums. The King's Singers, an English sextet, released a George Martin-produced LP, "Songs for Christmas," in 1973. The group's stately articulation is heard on exquisite readings of "Morning-song for the Christ Child" and "Illuminare Jerusalem." Those masters of vocal harmony, The Singers Unlimited, recorded *Christmas*, an album whose vocal grandeur never fails to overwhelm. Much of the collection concentrates on the works of the late Alfred S. Burt, a jazz trumpeter who composed "Jesu Parvule" and "Ah Bleak and Chill the Wintry Wind." But their readings of "It Came Upon A Midnight Clear" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" are simply of angelic perfection, and confirm that the Singers Unlimited are the most engagingly ornamental vocal group in the business.

Among Christmas oddities, the pop world has yielded "Rain, Sleet or Snow," a Paul Revere and the Raiders tune that sympathizes with postal officials and advises us to start sending our Christmas mail by the Fourth of July. And the devious Procol Harum offered the appealingly enigmatic "Shine On Brightly," a song whose demented narrator viewed himself as the Christ Child: "The chandelier is in full swing/As gifts for me the three kings bring/Of myrrh and Frankincense, I'm told/And fat old Bud-dhas carved in gold."

Perhaps the most unwarranted case of Christmas-pop obscurity comes from the brilliant English mimic Roy Wood. His short-lived group Wizzard released "I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day," an orchestral masterpiece of massed pianos, French horns, sleigh bells, a children's choir, and sledgehammer saxes. Wood managed to nail down the season with the same aplomb demonstrated on the Spector LP. The tune rocks emphatically from start to finish, and from the standpoint of sheer finger-popping splendor, Christmas never sounded so good. ■

CHRISTMAS ON WAX

BY ALMOST SLIM

Acoustic Christmas *David Grisman (Rounder 0190)*

Bluegrass and New Age music fans will want this. Joining Grisman on versions of "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town," "Wish You A Merry Christmas," "White Christmas" and "Auld Lang Syne," are Darol Anger, Mike Marshall, Bela Fleck and Rob Wasserman.

Popular Songs of Christmas and New Year *(John Fahey) Varrick 012.*

Fahey's first Christmas album "Christmas Guitar," proved to do so well that this year a brand new followup Christmas disc was recorded. If you liked the first, you'll want this one too.

Sound of Christmas *(Ramsey Lewis) Chess 8310*

Thankfully, Chess has seen fit to reissue this mid-Sixties jazz Christmas classic. Ramsey goes through the best of the season, "Jingle Bells," "White Christmas," etc. in classic style.

Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite *(London Symphony Orchestra) Everest 3111*

I forgot this one last year and it should have been at the top of the list. I know next to nothing about classical music but this piece of music has been associated with Christmas for what seems centuries.

Traditional Christmas Carols *(Pete Seeger) Folkways 32311.*

Seeger handles these traditional Christmas songs in his usual excellent style. This is one of the better seasonal releases.

Reggae Christmas *(various) Joe Gibbs 8077*

What can I say? You'll just have to buy this one to find out. It features Dennis Brown, The Mighty Diamonds and others.

Voices and Bells of Christmas *(The Boy's Choir of Vienna) Olympic 8130*

You don't have to be from Austria to enjoy this one. From what my ears detect this had to be recorded by little angels in a 500-year-old church hidden somewhere near the Alps.

It's Christmas Time Again *(various) Stax 8519*

You could name this one the Memphis Christmas Soul Spectacular. It contains such Christmas Classics as Mack Rice's "Santa Claus Wants Some Lovin'" and "I'll Be Your Santa Baby" by Rufus Thomas. Other Stax artists include Johnny Taylor, Albert King, The Emotions and The Staple Singers.

December *(George Winston) Windham Hill 1025*

This isn't strictly a Christmas disc, but it has the flavor of a cold, crisp winter day and that's good enough for me. Anyone who enjoys Keith Jarrett will fall head over heels for George Winston.

The True Meaning of Christmas *(Reno and Smiley) Starday 874*

This is truly a magnificent album. This duo has always been one of my favorite "hillbilly" exponents. These Christmas songs echo the traditional sounds of Appalachia.

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens *(narrated by Lionel Barrymore) Radiola 1114*

Bah Humbug! This will remind you of when you were a kid.

Please Come Home For Christmas *(Charles Brown)*

Without doubt, "Please Come Home For Christmas" is the one R&B Christmas standard. Surpris-

ingly, it was recorded in July of 1956, right here in New Orleans. (What a time to think of Christmas!) Glorious versions of "Christmas In Heaven," "Merry Christmas Baby" and a host of other yuletide selections on this one.

Elvis's Christmas Album *(Elvis Presley)*

This is one of my favorites—I even listen to "Blue Christmas" on Elvis' birthday. "I'll Be Home For Christmas," "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem" are also included. A must for Elvis fans.

Have A Merry Cajun Christmas *(various)*

Of course when Santa arrives on the bayou he has to dispense with his standard sleigh and reindeer and switch to a *traneaux* (mud sled) pulled by six tiny

Twenty-One Records You Probably Won't Hear This Christmas

Backdoor Santa—Clarence Carter

Christmas At The Triple-X Ranch—Riders In The Sky

Christmas In Vietnam—Jon and Joe

Party This Christmas—Rockin' Sydney

Santa's Messin' With The Kid—Eddie C. Campbell

How I Hate To See Xmas Come Around—

Jimmy Witherspoon

Santa Claus Walks Just Like Daddy—Dootie Williams

Boogie Woogie Santa Claus—Mabel Scott

I Want A Man For Christmas—Joan Shaw

Christmas Party Shuffle—Lowell Fulson

Christmas In The Jailhouse, Ain't That A Shame—Leroy Carr

Santa Came Home Drunk—Clyde Lasley and the Cadillac Baby Specials

Dig That Crazy Santa Claus—Oscar McLollie

I'm Dreaming of a Black Christmas—Little Alfred

Blues for Christmas—John Lee Hooker

Be Bop Santa Claus—Babs Gonzalez

Santa Claus, Bring Me a New Woman—Bumble Bee Slim

It's Gonna Be A Blue Christmas—Larry Darnel

Empty Stocking Blues—Floyd Dixon

Santa Don't Let Me Down—Earl King

Christmas In The Ghetto—Big Daddy Rucker

alligators. I recommend "Christmas On The Bayou" by Vin Bruce. Also available on eight-track, as all good Cajun records are.

Merry Christmas *(Bing Crosby)*

Not only is this the biggest selling Christmas album, it's the biggest selling disc of all time. Everyone gets a lump in the throat when Der Bingle croons "I'll Be Home For Christmas."

Phil Spector's Christmas Album *(various)*

Contains rockin' renditions of the yuletide numbers by the Ronnettes, the Crystals, and Bobb B. Soxx and the Blue Jeans. Quite honestly, the sax solo on Darlene Love's "Christmas Baby, Please Come Home" alone is worth the price of the album.

Rhythm and Blues Christmas *(various)*

This one's good enough to listen to all year long.

"White Christmas" by the Drifters, "Run Rudolph Run" by Chuck Berry, Amos Milburne's "Let's Make Christmas Merry," and the inevitable Charles Brown classic, "Please Come Home For Christmas." Perfect for a rhythm and blues Christmas.

Jingle Bell Rock *(Bobby Helms)*

Probably the title tune is rock 'n' roll's most popular, if not only, Christmas Classic, though I doubt you'll ever hear it at Midnight Mass. Bobby runs through an even dozen tunes including "Rocking Around the Christmas Tree."

New Orleans Christmas *(Johnny Adams)*

This is probably the best of the lot. Johnny sounds just great in these reworks of Christmas classics.

Guitar Christmas Album *(John Fahey)*

This is a most pleasant album. A fine guitarist, Fahey performs acoustic versions of "Joy to the World," "The Bells Of St. Mary," "Silent Night" and more.

Merry Christmas From The Jackson Five *(Jackson Five)*

These guys were just so cute. Fine Motor City versions of the usual assortment of Christmas faves. I'll be listening to this December 25.

'Twas The Night Before Christmas *(Huey Smith and the Clowns)*

This is my favorite, and gets me in the Christmas mood. The record was banned when it was first released for its "blasphemous" renditions of sacred Christmas classics. Wait till you hear the Clowns work out on "Silent Night."

Disco Noel *(Mirror Image)*

I'm just listing this, don't go out and buy it. But if you do you'll find the album jacket contains disco steps choreographed by Arthur Murray's Disco Dance School, no less. Disco versions of "Joy To The World" and "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town" are included.

Gospel Songs of Christmas *(various)*

Stunning renditions of Christmas favorites by the brightest of Gospel's stars. James Cleveland gives out with the definitive version of "The Lord's Prayer," and Shirley Caesar does the same with "It Came Upon A Midnight Clear."

It's Christmas Time Again *(various) Stax 8519*

Perfect if you plan to be spending Christmas in Memphis. Little Johnny Taylor, Rufus Thomas, Albert King and the Staples Singers will insure a soulful Christmas if you pick this bargain up. Mack Rice's "Santa Claus Wants Some Lovin'"—my choice for Christmas tune of 1982—is included here.

Christ Was Born On Christmas Morn *(various) Historical 34*

This is a collection of mostly pre-war country blues on the Christmas theme. But with Blind Willie McTell and Blind Willie Johnson featured, you'll probably listen to this all year.

Merry Christmas *(NRBQ) Rounder 4520*

This is a four-song EP that contains NRBQ doing "Jolly Old St. Nick" and "Christmas Dream" plus (you guessed it) two more.

Bluegrass Country Christmas *(various) Starday 317*

This is a collection of some of the finest country and "hillbilly" artists on the old King label. Quite a treat, this is one of Christmas' best. ■

Guitar Slim: The 'Performanest' Man in the History of New Orleans Rhythm and Blues

'Slim was getting a fuzz-tone distortion way before anyone else. You didn't hear it again until people like Jimi Hendrix came along.'

BY ALMOST SLIM

*"Now they call me Guitar Slim, baby,
And I'm come to play in your town;
Now if you don't like my music, baby,
I will not hang around!"*

*I like my pocket full of money, baby,
And my whiskey, gin and wine;
I like to eat a country dinner, baby,
And I like to get my lovin' all the time.*

*Now they call me Guitar Slim, baby,
And I'm come to play in your town.
Now if I can't play my guitar, baby,
I'm still gonna jump and clown."*

(© Venice Music—BMI)

Simply entitled "Guitar Slim," and recorded in 1955, the song conveys in the man's own words Guitar Slim's life and attitude. Earl King remembers seeing Guitar Slim at the peak of his all too short career:

"Gatemouth Brown, T-Bone Walker, Lowell Fulson and Guitar Slim were all performing one night at the White Eagle in Opelousas. Slim was headlining because "The Things I Used To Do" was a scorcher. They were all sitting in the dressing room and Guitar Slim walked up to 'em all and said, 'Gentlemen, we got the greatest guitar players in the country assembled right here. But when I leave here tonight, ain't nobody gonna realize you even been here.' Well, they all laughed, but that's exactly what happened.

"Slim come out with his hair dyed blue, blue suit, blue pair of shoes. He had 350 feet of mike wire connected to his guitar, and a valet carrying him on his shoulders all through the crowd and out into the

parking lot. Man, he was stopping cars driving down the highway. No one could outperform Slim. He was about the performanest man I've ever seen."

"King's description coincides with most everyone else who saw Guitar Slim on stage, or knew him personally. Dead for over two decades, Guitar Slim's legend continues to grow. Even though his music has remained popular all these years, many details concerning his life are still shrouded in mystery, so much so that putting together a concise biography is like completing a complex jigsaw puzzle.

Guitar Slim was born Edward (Eddie) Jones, December 10, 1926, and is known to have at least one sister. Even though Slim claimed in his Specialty biography that Greenwood, Mississippi, was his birthplace, Hollandale, Mississippi, has also been suggested. No matter, Slim was raised in the Greenwood area, a rural region of intense cotton production in the heart of the Mississippi Delta. Times were probably tough, and likely Slim did his fair share in the fields, visiting Greenwood on weekends.

The first mention of Guitar Slim (he was six feet tall, 160 pounds, so he easily fit the colorful alias) in the *Louisiana Weekly* was during September, 1950. It stated: "New Orleans' newest gift to the show world is Guitar Slim, held over at the Dew Drop. The New Orleans blues sensation has made a terrific impact on blues fans in New Orleans. Acclaimed to be an exact carbon copy of Gatemouth Brown, the singing guitarist includes 'My Time Is Expensive,' 'Gatemouth Boogie,' and several other performances made popular by Brown."

The comparison between Guitar Slim and Gatemouth Brown is indeed apt; it is interesting to note that he would draw his greatest influence from the Texas guitar school, rather than the guitar players from his own state, Mississippi. "Gatemouth's 'Boogie Rambler' was Slim's theme," adds Earl King. "He listened to all of 'em and compiled bits of their style—Gatemouth, T-Bone, B.B. King. But he took a different approach, he had a lot of melodic overtones in his solos. He used to play a solo that had a marriage to the rest of the song, rather than just play something off the top of his head."

Earl also chaffs when others suggest Slim was a poor instrumentalist and unable to even play without the aid of a capo, or as Slim referred to it, "a choker." "Slim tuned Standard, but he used that capo to get the effect of open strings. You can't do that without that choker. I've seen Slim play many a time without it. He just used it for effect."

Percy Stovall booked Slim during his early career. "I used to worry him sometimes and hide

his choker. He's be runnin' around saying, 'Stove, where's my choker at? I can't find my choker.' I'd say, 'I ain't seen it, Slim,' and he'd be runnin' around tryin' to find it everywhere. Then just before he would go on, I'd pull it out of my pocket and hand it to him, and he'd say, 'Stove, I knew you had it all the time.'"

Stovall is the first to admit that Slim was his favorite artist, but also points out he had his share of headaches with him. "Man, he loved to drink," says Stovall, shaking his head. "If I didn't watch him all the time he'd miss his job. If he had a job over in Florida, I'd have to ration him. I'd make sure the valet gave him only a fifth of wine when he left New Orleans, another fifth in Biloxi, and one more by the time he got to Mobile. And don't nobody fool with Slim's wine or he'd be in trouble."

One of Stovall's favorite stories concerning his early days of booking Guitar Slim took place in Monroe, Louisiana. "Fats and Slim played a 'Battle of the Blues' at the Monroe Civic Auditorium. Man, the place was packed. Slim had told Fats before the show, 'Fats, I'm gonna run you offa that stage tonight.'

"So Slim went on first because Fats had hit records out. Slim just tore 'em up. The place was goin' wild. Slim walked off the stage with his guitar and went out the back door of the place and got in a car, still playing. Everybody wondered where Slim had went. When it came time for Fats to come on, Fats just told the people, 'Ain't gonna be no battle tonight. You just saw it.' So Fats just played his regular show."

By 1951, the record companies had been hearing about this wild guitar player in New Orleans. Imperial approached first, and Al Young produced four sides on Eddie Jones at the J&M Studio. The session was rather chaotic, originally producing "Bad Luck Is On Me," and "New Arrival," but the record sounded and sold poorly. Imperial wouldn't ask Slim back to the studio, but still issued the remainder of the session when Slim hit the big time, using his alias instead of Eddie Jones.

Slim's next record was a different story. Percy Stovall arranged a session with Jim Bullet in Nashville, producing the popular "Feelin' Sad," in 1952. David Lastie played sax on the tune and remembered the circumstances that surrounded the session: "We was working at the Kitty Cat Club in Nashville, and me, Huey, Little Eddie Lang, and Willie Nettles did the session with Slim. 'Feelin' Sad' was a good little record, it had a church sound to it. We worked pretty good off it."

When Slim came in off the road, he stayed upstairs at the Dew Drop. "Slim liked to be where the action was," chuckles Earl. "In fact you knew Slim was back in town, 'cause early in the morning, around seven—eight o'clock, if he was tanked up, you'd hear them amps and P.A.'s going off. People'd be calling the police, 'cause you could hear Slim three blocks away! And here's Slim up in his room with his shorts on, goin' through his stage routine.

"And Slim's room was something else, man," laughs Earl. "If you went up there, there'd always be about seven or eight different women up there. He'd have his songs written with eyebrow pencil on pieces of paper tacked to the wall."

Earl also recalls that Slim bought the first Les Paul guitar in New Orleans. "Slim was playing one of those big hollow boxes like T-Bone had. But when the solid boxes came out he got one right away. Slim said the hollow boxes were too big, and they didn't give him enough room on the stage. He couldn't control the feedback that was comin' out of 'em. So he dealt with the Les Paul."

By 1953, Guitar Slim was one of the biggest draws on the southern R&B club circuit. The responsibilities of managing and booking reverted to Slim's landlord, Frank Pania, who owned the Dew Drop, while Percy Stovall concentrated on building up a larger roster of performers. Pania also took it upon himself to find Slim a new band. He hired the Lloyd Lambert band from Hosea Hill's Sugar Bowl in Thibodaux, Louisiana. Hosea was a friend and business associate of Pania, and paired Slim with the band for a series of road dates. Lloyd Lambert claims that Pania was responsible for introducing Johnny Vincent, then a Specialty A&R man, to Slim. Vincent was impressed enough to convince his boss, Art Rupe, to sign Slim to a recording contract. Vincent recalls that "Slim was supposed to sign with Atlantic, but this was one artist I just had to get. He was fantastic. Slim wouldn't let anyone outperform him. I wouldn't let him out of my sight until he signed with Specialty."

On October 16, 1953, Slim entered the J&M Studio to record what was to be the biggest record of his career, "The Things That I Used To Do." Backing Slim on the session were Gus Fontenette, Charles Burbank and Joe Tillman on saxes, Oscar Moore on drums, Lloyd Lambert on bass and Frank Mitchell on trumpet. Vincent claims he had to bail Ray Charles out of jail to arrange and play piano to complete the personnel.

When Vincent says, "Slim was hard to record," he has lots of support. Tales of Slim's recording sessions are many. Vincent claims that it took "all night" to record "The Things That I Used To Do." Engineer Cosimo Matassa says "all day," and Lloyd Lambert reports it took "two days." Nonetheless, the musicians were obviously gratified when it was over, because Ray Charles is clearly audible yelling "Yeah!" in relief in the last bars of the song.

According to Earl King, the idea for the tune came to Slim in a dream. Slim related to King that in the dream he was confronted by a devil and an angel, both of whom held the lyrics to a song. Naturally, Slim chose the devil's song and it turned out to be "The Things That I Used To Do."

Vincent sent the tapes of the session out to Rupe, who was less than impressed with the result. According to Vincent, "He told me it was the worst piece of shit he'd ever heard. He said, 'I'm gonna put it out, but if it don't sell, you start looking for a job.'"

The public disagreed with Rupe, to say the least. Immediately after its release, both *Billboard* and *Cashbox* made it the pick of the week. *Cashbox* commented, "a slow southern blues rhythmically chanted by the blues shouter...great vocal with the proper blues styling and this side is headed for sales...top notch."

"The Things That I Used To Do" stormed the charts. It topped the R&B charts for six solid weeks,



PHOTO COURTESY EARL KING

and ended up the biggest selling R&B record of 1954. The record caught the imagination of the public: the lyrics, sung in Slim's impassioned gospel-like style, struck a chord in everybody's imagination. For many, the real appeal of "The Things That I Used To Do" was the novel guitar approach that Slim took, as Earl King explains: "Slim was gettin' a fuzz tone distortion way before anyone else. You didn't hear it again until people like Jimi Hendrix come along."

"Believe it or not, Slim never used an amplifier. He always used a P.A. set, never an amplifier. He was an overtone fanatic, and he had these tiny iron cone speakers and the sound would run through them speakers and I guess any vibration would create that sound, because Slim always played at peak

volume. That's why it was hard to record him, because of the volume he was accustomed to playing—'cause let's face it, if Slim was playing you could hear him a mile away."



Lloyd Lambert agreed that Slim played as loud as he could. "He had this tinny sound," says Lambert, "that he'd get by turning all the bass controls on his guitar and amplifier as low as they would go, and turn up his treble controls as high as they'd go."

With the number one record in the country, Frank Pania booked a full itinerary for Slim through the South, and bought him a brand new Olds 88. Slim promptly got drunk one night and ran into a parked bulldozer, wrecking the car and sending Slim to

the hospital. "Slim weren't too good a driver," laughs Lambert. "He didn't hurt himself too bad, the doctor just told him to take it easy for a month."

Pania decided to send Earl King out to impersonate Slim on a number of dates, and apparently got away with it. Even though King went along with the charade, he admits he was "scared to death."

"When I got back to town, the first person I saw was Guitar Slim," laughs Earl. "He was walking down LaSalle Street with a hospital gown on, a guitar under one arm and an amp under the other, yellin', 'Earl King, I heard you been out there imitatin' me. If you wreck my name I'm gonna sue and I'm gonna kill you!'"

Slim was back on his feet soon, and ready to hit the road for a tour of the northern theatre circuit. Since Lambert's band already had Lawrence Cotton on piano, Slim had to split with Huey Smith, an event which likely saddened both of them.

One of Slim's first stops was at the Apollo Theatre, where he shared the bill with the Spiders. Earl recounts a story told to him by Chuck Carbo (one of the Spiders), about Slim's initial performance: "When it came time for Slim's cameo to conclude, they closed the curtain on Slim, but Slim decided he wasn't finished. Instead he just stepped in front of the curtain and continued playing!"

Eventually Slim's popularity became too much for Frank Pania to deal with, so he turned over Slim's management to Hosea Hill, who ran his own popular nightclub in Thibodaux, The Sugar Bowl. Consequently, Slim spent a good amount of his time in Thibodaux, which nestles Bayou Lafourche.

Guitar Slim's next release, "The Story of My Life," was a powerful follow-up and came from his initial Specialty session. Once again *Cashbox* spotlighted it by giving it their weekly award and calling it "another powerful item. His mournful tale is accentuated by the chanter's stylings and impressive guitar work."

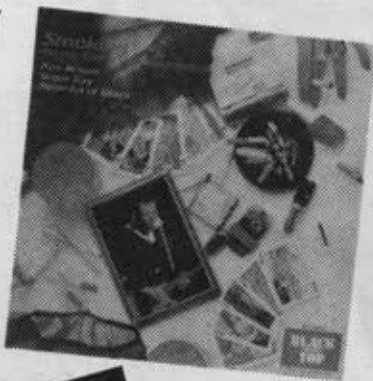
Lambert still relishes the days of the mid-Fifties barnstorming the country. "We had the best band out there," he affirms. "Fats, B.B. King, even Lionel Hampton—we could cut 'em all."

"We had trouble following Slim at first 'cause Slim'd always jump meter, but it got to where we'd just jump right with him and it would sound fine. Slim was a showman and a musician. He'd have purple suits, orange suits, green suits, with shoes and hair to match. He'd make motions and faces that would drive people berserk. You couldn't hardly get into the place when he was playing."

Earl King agreed: "You could play Slim at the Dew Drop and get a mob of people, and the next night play him in Shrewsbury [in adjacent Jefferson

Continued on page 40

'Have A Black Top Christmas, Baby!'



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Johnny Reno and his Sax Maniacs
"Born To Blow"
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'Even people who knew him to say hi to him in the streets would think nothing of driving 100 miles to go see him that same night.'

Bernadette Kerrigan's grandfather fiddled at the Old French Opera House, her parents composed ragtime classics and she pounds the skins in an all-girl band. Bernadette is 82.



classics and she pounds the skins in an all-girl band. Bernadette is 82.

Bernadette jamming with Roe Dietrich at the Krauss Senior Citizens Center.

BY BOB RANDALL

I had lunch with my friend Bernadette the other day. Bernie and I had a pleasant visit, and as the waiter poured coffee we talked of her career in music. Enthusiastically, she told me how glad she is to be keeping busy in a city that has always harbored more musicians than it could ever support. She is the drummer for an all-girl group, she says, and they work often. Troupier that she is, Bernie also finds time to do spot engagements as a solo pianist.

Now at face value, there is nothing odd or unusual about any of this, but I listened with a curious wonder anyway—my friend Bernie, drummer, pianist, musician, is 82 years old.

Bernadette Kerrigan, formerly Kelly, *nee* Peterson, was born in New Orleans in 1901, back when the Crescent City actually *was* just a crescent. Widowed twice, Bernie has five children, and a veritable herd of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She hails from a background that reads like an abbreviated history of this city's musical heritage. Her grandfather was a first violinist in the Old French Opera

House; both parents were composers of popular music. Her mother, in fact, is reputed to have penned many of the ragtime classics that are still well-known today.

"There's no way to prove that," says the soft-spoken Bernie. "Back then you wrote a song and sold it to a publisher for maybe fifty dollars, and then it wasn't yours anymore, you see."

Back at her home, Bernie seats herself before an ornately wrought upright piano that is undoubtedly a priceless antique.

"This was my mother's piano," she says, and then plays the classic "12th Street Rag" for me. She delivers the piece with an authenticity that defies description. Stunned, not so much by her skill as by the anachronism that has just taken place, I ask the obvious question:

"Bernie, did your mother write that?"

"Well, we can't *prove* it, you see."

She doesn't say any more about "12th Street Rag," and the talk turns to other things—her brother, for instance, eighty-five-year-old Harold Peterson ran a music store on South Broad some years back, the store, according to the story, where Pete Fountain got his first clarinet.

The heritage continues. Bernie is pleased to tell me that a daughter, Theresa Kelly, has studied and performed opera, and lists a Carnegie Hall recital among her accomplishments. One grandson is a rock musician/songwriter, and another is a church cantor.

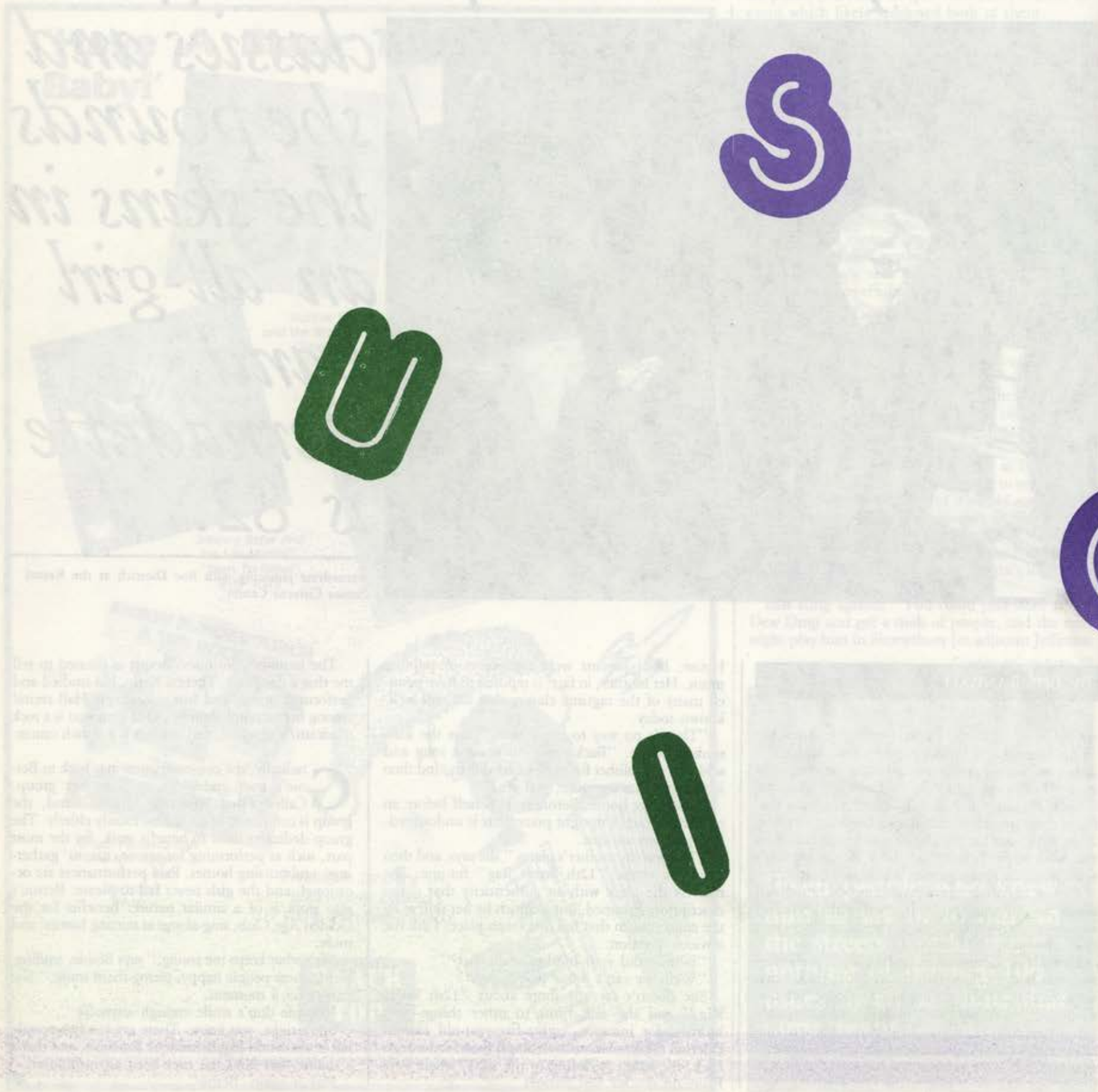
Gradually, the conversation swings back to Bernie's own endeavors, such as her group. Called Ethel Merwin's All-Girl Band, the group is comprised of six ladies, mostly elderly. The group dedicates itself to benefit work, for the most part, such as performing for senior citizens' gatherings, and nursing homes. Paid performances are occasional, and the girls never fail to please. Bernie's solo work is of a similar nature: benefits for the Golden Age Club, sing-alongs at nursing homes, and more.

"It's what keeps me young," says Bernie, smiling, seeing those people happy, seeing them smile." She pauses for a moment.

"People don't smile enough anymore."

She's right, you know. There are too few people left in the world like Bernadette Kerrigan, and that's a shame; her kind has ever been an inspiration.

Play it again, Bernie. ■





METRONOME

James Booker: Music As A Mysterious Art

BY BUNNY MATTHEWS

"Harlequin without his mask is known to present a very sober countenance, and was himself, the story goes, the melancholy patient whom the Doctor advised to go and see Harlequin—a man full of cares and perplexities like the rest of us, whose Self must always be serious to him, under whatever name or disguise or uniform he presents it to the public. And as all of you here must needs be grave when you think of your own past and present, you will not look to find, in the histories of those whose lives and feelings I am going to try and describe to you, a story that is otherwise than serious, and often very sad."

—William Makepeace Thackeray, 1851

James Booker's death, according to Dr. Frank Minyard, Orleans Parish coroner and freelance trumpeter, occurred at 11:32 p.m. on Tuesday, November 8, 1983 as Booker, in a wheelchair, waited to be admitted to Charity Hospital, where the pianist was born on December 17, 1939.

The morning after Booker died, *The Times-Picayune/States-Item* ran a front-page obituary. The story, by Vincent Fumar, was headlined "Piano Prince of N.O.' James Booker dies at 43." On the same front-page, there was a large front-column photograph of Aaron Neville and a group of New Orleans Saints in the recording studio, cutting "Who Dat?" and an Associated Press story that Bill Allain had won the Mississippi gubernatorial race, "overcoming charges that he had sex with male prostitutes."

On Thursday morning, *The Times-Picayune/States-Item* printed Booker's official death notice. His parents were listed as "the late Reverend J.H. Booker [who had come to New Orleans from Bryan, Texas and employment as a professional dancer] and the late Mrs. Ora Champagne Booker." Booker was survived by his two aunts, Mrs. Eva Sylvester, who lives Uptown near the Magnolia Housing Projects, and Mrs. Bessie Lizona of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, where Booker spent much of his youth.

On the same morning, *The New York Times* printed its obituary, headlined "James Booker; Was Called Piano Prince In New Orleans Jazz." The unsigned piece noted that Booker "was known in New Orleans as a flamboyant pianist" and that, among other things, he had recorded his first single ("Doing The Hambone") in 1953, impersonated Huey "Piano" Smith on tour during the late Fifties and served a one-year jail sentence during the Sixties for possession of heroin. "He was rediscovered in the 1970's," the *Times* said, "and became a major attraction at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival and in Europe, although he rarely played in the United States outside of New Orleans."

Actually, Booker served his one-year jail sentence in 1970 at Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola. On January 23, 1970, Booker was observed remov-



ing a plastic bottle containing a white powder from his coat pocket by a New Orleans police officer and was arrested at the Dew Drop Inn on LaSalle Street, not far from his Aunt Eva's House. Booker was charged with possession of heroin.

On June 23, 1970, at a hearing before Judge Bernard Bagert, Booker was denied a motion he had filed "to suppress evidence" and on the same day, as advised by his attorney (Jerome Winsberg), Booker pled guilty to a lesser charge of "attempted possession of heroin." Judge Bagert sentenced Booker to two years at hard labor at Angola. The 34 days Booker had already spent in Orleans Parish Prison were credited to Booker's sentence. While serving time, Booker worked in the prison library, taught himself yoga and was allowed to play the piano. Because he was a first offender, Booker was freed after serving half his sentence.

Booker's wake was Thursday evening at the Rhodes Funeral Home on Washington Avenue, formerly the Tivoli movie theatre. Whereas Professor Longhair's wake was something of a three-ring circus with the curious and bereaved snapping at the body with Instamatics and Nikons while Ernie K-Doe and the female commandants of Civil Defense Post 714 vied for control of the podium, Booker's wake was solemn and dignified. Those present were mostly family, friends and what Booker called his "contact men." "Contact men" were basically people who could help Booker—attorneys, club owners, writers and anyone who would sit down and—with some degree of sincerity—listen to what he had to say.

There were few musicians at Booker's wake. Saxophonist "Red" Tyler and bandleader Deacon John were in attendance, and Allen Toussaint arrived in his brown Rolls-Royce after the brief service was over. Booker's two closest musician friends, Earl King and Mac Rebennack, were both in Europe at the time of his death.

Booker's body, dressed in a dark suit, was placed in a silvery coffin. He wore the sunglasses he was usually seen in during recent years (having discarded the rhinestone eyepatch as the '80s dawned) and his face was whiskered with a few days' growth of beard.

Booker did not look very good. He looked like a body that had been dead for a couple of days and his face bore the usual uneasy countenance. Even alive, he sometimes looked dead but then when you saw Booker laying there looking as utterly respectable as the morticians' skill allowed and the grim faces passing before his body and the floral arrangement that utilized his "Classified" album cover as a centerpiece and the ubiquitous, sepia-toned portrait of Jesus on the altar—a picture that is well known to every child who has ever been through Sunday School, the mourner sensed that Booker would've dug the proceedings. The music—Muzak piano versions of songs such as "Oh, Danny Boy"—might've bothered the deceased, but Booker would've really loved the idea of his friends and relatives—all of them in their best clothes—arriving at one time to see him, to pay their tributes.

At the end of the wake, a middle-aged black man dressed in a pink, three-piece polyester suit briskly walked down the center aisle, introduced himself as a minister and told those present that it was important for them to go to church. Then a younger black man stood up and sang "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." Finally, Booker's 82-year-old Aunt Eva knelt before his coffin and sobbed: "I tried to talk to you, I tried to talk to you..." The last time she had seen Booker alive was two months before when she went to the Maple Leaf to hear him play. Eva left during the first set without speaking to him.

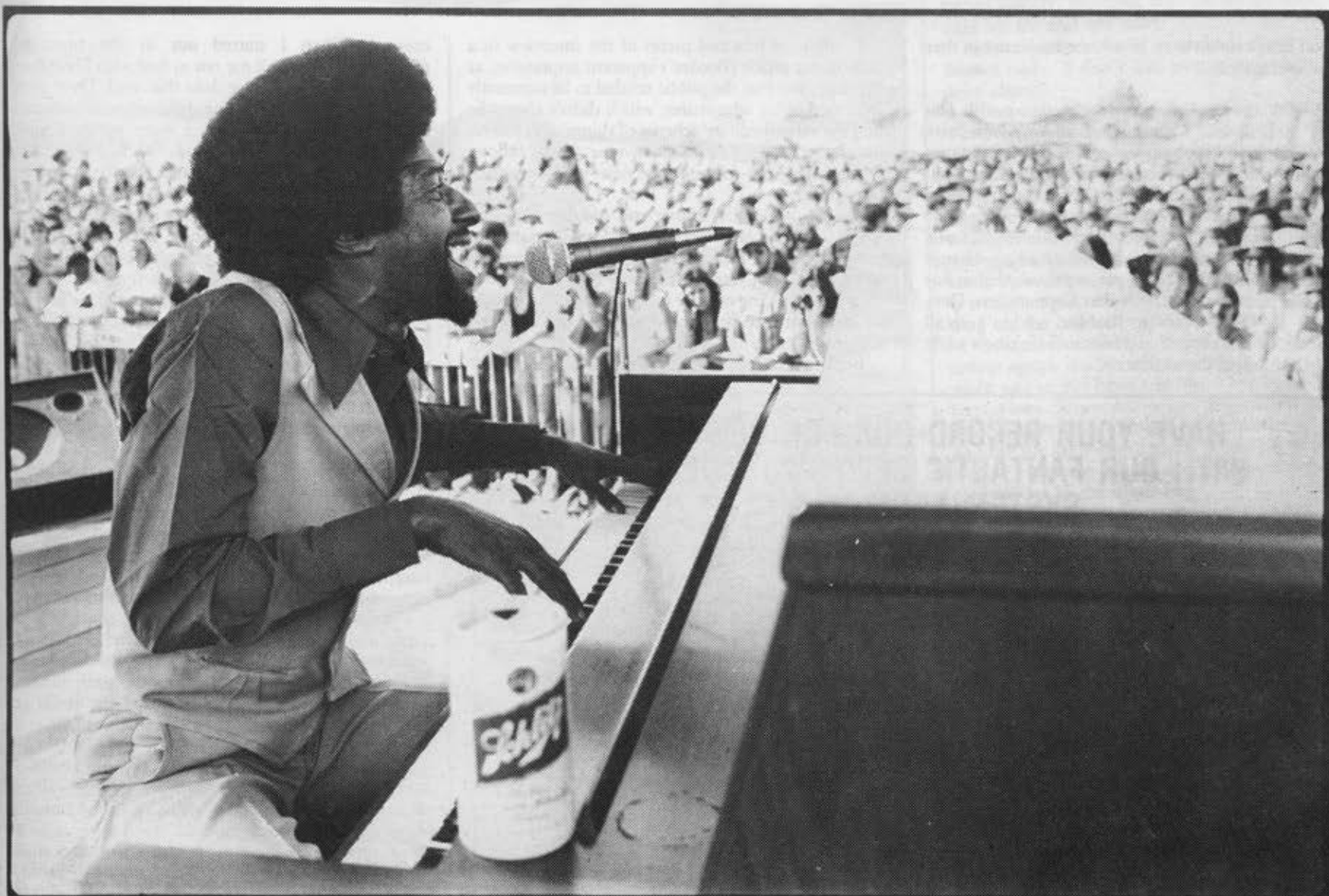
On the next morning—a cold, gray Friday morning, Booker's hearse was driven slowly down Airline Highway to Providence Memorial Park in Metairie. His coffin was placed in a crypt and the mourners departed. Gerri Hall, the New Orleans singer, blamed Booker's death on astrological factors—citing that Pluto had entered Scorpio (or "Scorpius," as she called it) and such an event only happens once every century always causing large numbers of deaths. Booker would be back, she said, the next time it happened.

Friday afternoon, veteran record dealer Jim Russell, who had known Booker as a teenager, confessed that a conversation with Booker could give a person "chills." "Booker," said Russell, "was a man who lived 430 years in 43 years."

Leaving Providence Memorial Park, this writer recalled the evening when I encountered Booker at the Maple Leaf and asked him if it was true that he was really going to go to Chicago to tape a program for educational television with Mac Rebennack. Booker laughed: "I might go as far as Airline Highway."

In person, Booker could be a little like having the entire Bacchus parade march through your living room. A few hours with Booker was a demanding experience, a draining experience and usually, an enlightening experience.

One rainy afternoon, he arrived to see me and I



MICHAEL P. SMITH

was busy—too busy for Booker's shenanigans and conspiracies so he departed in a taxi, leaving me with his cane and a stapled manila envelope rubber-stamped six times with his "Creative International Associates" logo. Booker told me to hold on to it and that I would know when the time was "right" to open the parcel.

About four years later, when Booker asked Rounder Records producer Scott Billington to ask me to compose the liner notes for his "Classified" album, I assumed that the time might be "right" at last to open Booker's secret envelope. I removed the staples and perused its contents—an assemblage

He departed in a taxi, leaving me his cane and a stapled manila envelope. He told me to hold on to it and that I would know when the time was "right" to open it.

of Booker's correspondence, receipts and four sheets of lyrics in Booker's handwriting. I put the stuff back in the envelope, deciding that it had no relevance to the "Classified" liner notes and stored it away. Knowing Booker, he might come along and say that the time was *not* "right" and that I'd used *classified* information for his "Classified" liner notes.

Now, I believe, Booker would figure the time was "right" to unveil the artifacts which represent a slice of his existence circa-1978-79, catalogued thusly:

1. A color postcard with two scenes of Mason's Motel Americana on Claiborne Avenue. It is addressed to a friend in West Germany, signed "Booker—The Piano Pope" and reads: "This is the place when you come to play the festival; stay here and you'll never leave."

2. A Creative International Associates business card, printed in green ink. Booker's address is given as "New Orleans, Blueziana."

3. A medical prescription from Oslo, Norway, dated August 2, 1978.

4. A 1968 receipt from Mighty Duke's Tavern with the telephone number of a sax player on the back.

5. Assorted business cards and phone numbers written on slips of paper.

6. A receipt from Werlein's for a book of sheet music entitled "Bing Crosby: Favorite Songs."

7. Two panoramic-view-of-Canal-Street color postcards. On one of them Booker has used a blue ballpoint pen to draw arrows emerging from the top of the Bank of New Orleans skyscraper, the roof of which features a giant "BNO" sign. The arrows evolve into musical notes over Carondelet Street and then, centered over Canal Street—the heart of the city—Booker has printed in vertical letters: "Booker of New Orleans," corralling his B, N and O with quotation marks.

8. A copy of a birthday Mailgram to pianist Harry

Connick, Jr., son of the District Attorney and a James Booker pupil. Booker signs his greeting, "The Bayou Maharajah."

9. Four sheets of lyrics, in Booker's handwriting. One is in blue ballpoint ink and the other is in pencil.

The pencilled sheets for a song titled "One Day From Bein' A Fool!" are credited to James Booker and Ronald Cuccia, "a.k.a. Vonnzig Dark and Zerk Y. Black."

The inked sheets, for a song titled "Take Your Time (And Live)," dated "4-11-78" and credited to Booker and a name that looks like "WuBuKu," contain the line, "Remember them the way you'd want them to remember you."

During the same period, Booker was arrested three times for public drunkenness—August and November of 1978, and September of 1979.

At 2 p.m. on November 11, 1978, I interviewed Mac Rebennack in his hotel room at the Hilton. After nearly 45 minutes of reflection and commentary, he got around to his mentors and, of course, Booker: "That's how I learned from like Papoose [Walter Nelson] and [Roy] Montrell, watching their fingers and learning how to make some nice chords and things. On the piano, I would use off-brand fingerings like Huey [Smith] and Fess. Allen [Toussaint] and Booker played much more correctly and they were more properly trained in the piano, and naturally, more classically-orientated. I've never had any delusions of playing that stuff.

"Booker, being like the child prodigy he was when he was so young and to have gone through all he's been through over the years—that's he still amongst us is, to me, great. I don't think any different than any of the rest of the guys in the business. It's like a part of the tradition of New Orleans to not be a

good businessman or to be a worse businessman than the average cat."

Two months before my conversation with Mac Rebennack, I conducted an interview with Booker, who had just returned from a European tour that had taken him to Scandinavia, Germany, Switzerland, the French Riviera and the Montreux Jazz Festival, where, Booker proudly announced, his Swiss album, "James Booker Alive!" had won the Grand Prix award for best live recording. Honorable mentions, he pointed out, were awarded to Ray Charles and Otis Rush. In either Copenhagen, Denmark or Oslo, Norway (Booker couldn't recall where), he had slipped and fractured his elbow while going through the airport.

I only used bits and pieces of the interview in a subsequent article (Booker's apparent impression, at the time, was that the public needed to be constantly informed of his adventures, which didn't always fit into my various editors' scheme of things) and I never transcribed the entire interview tape. What follows is most of the 45-minute interview, with commentary.

Booker began by urging me to interview Earl King, "because he's very frank and very honest. I'm proud of him for being like that because I remember when he was not very frank or very honest." Booker then accused King of once taking some of his material and turning it into songs "where I couldn't even recognize 'em when I heard 'em."

Booker proceeded to bandleader Dave Bartholo-

mew.: "When I started out in the business, everybody used to tell me not to fool with Dave Bartholomew because 'Dave does this' and 'Dave does that'...I saw Dave producing different record sessions and how he handled 'em. I went to his house, counted his Cadillacs and I said, 'Well, if that's the way you do it, then shit, me and Dave is gonna be partners.'

"They were gonna try to show me how dishonest he is. The ones that's very honest, as far as everybody else is concerned, they're in places where they'll never be seen or written to or talked on the phone to or nothing. Ain't nobody on the planet 100% honest.

"Now the less a man tries to convince me of how honest he is, the more confidence I have in him. If a man lets me know he's tricky, I know he's honest enough to let me know what I'm dealing with. If a man lets me know that he doesn't dig a person that indulges in trickery, it makes me wonder if he's honest or not or is he actually the tricker that's tricking the tricker?

"The situation with record companies—not only record companies but booking agents, personal managers, producers, anybody you gotta sign up with—how can I remember what's on eight pages of contract, eight pages of another contract, eight pages of another contract and sign something saying, 'I will not violate this agreement—everything is cool?'

"The most important thing is the sales clause and guaranteed release. You can put five clauses on the contract and have it very, very flexible because those five clauses can have subclauses—maybe three of 'em. I'm for revolutionizing the music business. Let the tables turn a little while.

"Music is a little bit at a standstill right now [the Number One song on *Billboard's* Pop Chart the week of the interview was Taste of Honey's "Boogie Oogie Oogie."]. You can't tell the difference between a record that was made this year or a record that was made last year all the time. Some of 'em sound like that's the same song you heard last year at such and such a month and then when you find out who it is, it's a different person singing it. Or maybe it's not a different person singing it—maybe it's a different song and a different person singing it and it just sounds like another song that came out last year that was successful. Music is a tricky business, man."

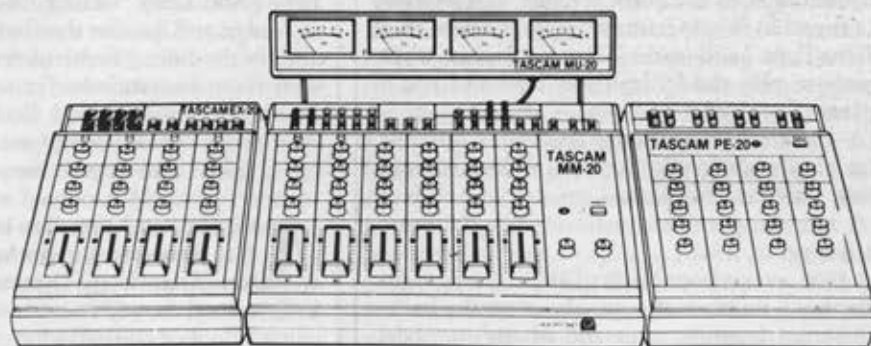
I asked Booker if he had ever met Charles Levy, the New Orleans attorney, now deceased, who had handled the careers of Dave Bartholomew, Fats Domino, and Chris Kenner. I wanted to know because Mrs. Chris Kenner, the recording artist's widow, had recently been released from St. Gabriel Women's Prison (where she had served time for

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'I don't have no combination of faults that the average entertainer doesn't have.'



manslaughter; Chris Kenner, Jr., in 1978, was an Angola inmate) and was trying to discover what happened to the royalties from her husband's compositions, which included "Land of a Thousand Dances" and "I Like It Like That."

Booker laughed heartily at the mention of Levy's name and said: "I think Charles Levy does a very good job as he has done for the past 25 years or so. He's a very, very perceptive observer of the procedures of the music business—very perceptive."

"I've never negotiated with this man. I've spoken to him on the phone. We've had conversations face to face that were a little bit on the negative side because I took Dave Bartholomew's advice and said, 'Well, if Fats [Domino] won't give me the gig, I'm gonna take the gig.' Dave told me, he said, 'Just get on the bus, bring your suitcase and go ahead and ride. When you get to the gig, play the piano.'

"So I did this. It was a year after Kennedy got killed—1964. Fats recorded my song, 'So Swell When You're Well.' He was on Warner Brothers then. At this particular time, he was on ABC/Paramount and Clarence 'Junior Boy' Brown—he was my drummer. And we both were sent for to go Nashville and record with Fats. When we came back or maybe a couple of months later, Fats hired Clarence and anyway, I always wanted a job with Fats. So Dave said, 'Man, if you want a job that bad, just go ahead and get your clothes, put 'em on the bus—go ahead because he likes you.'"

Booker explained that he went to Levy after the Fats Domino gigs and asked for his money. Levy informed him that the \$35 a night Booker wanted for his services had not been stipulated in any contract and therefore, Booker would not be compensated. Whereupon, Booker, by threatening to throw some

sort of unholy, psychotic tantrum on the spot, was paid his fee and bid adieu.

"He shouldn't have squawked about that," Booker said. "I don't like people squawking over petty change."

"They talk about principles. The principle of what? Principle is one thing, feeling is another..."

"I have respect for contracts but there's always an exception to quite a few rules. If you're qualified to be an exception, that's something that's quite natural to draw resentment and all kinds of negative responses and it's very difficult to deal with and for this reason, I've been just about on the brink of insanity three or four times. I've never been really, really totally insane, but I've felt as though I was standing on the brink of insanity at times."

"I can feel it when it comes on. My brain gets certain signals just like heart trouble. You get signals when you've got heart trouble. Your heart beats a certain way. When you've got rheumatism like I've got, you get pains through your muscles at times. So I usually keep myself kinda posted on what time it is. It's time for a brighter day because we've had a whole lot of the other way."

The subject of managers and booking agents arose: "All this for control. Uh uh. They say my biggest difficulty is that I cannot be controlled or that I'm too difficult to be controlled. Oh, I can be controlled. I can be controlled very, very swiftly if the circumstances prevail in favor of the better half. I consider the better half to be to my financial advantage, where I can call out a few shots."

"Don't get me in a studio and tell me to do this, do that, do the other. If you know how to do this, that and the other and a little bit more, I wouldn't have to be sitting there screaming and hollering like somebody hit me in the head with a cue stick."

"If a manager gets a commission to be a manager—to give you advice—you're the performer but you're also the boss, right? If so, why do the powers that be want to dictate to the artist as if he were in Moscow?"

I reminded Booker that record companies are capitalistic enterprises. Selling records and selling toothpaste—what's the difference? There's little regard for the artist...

"Little regard for the artist—that's the punchline of this whole interview. Little regard for the artist, no matter how big he is or what."

"A friend of mine, a very good friend of mine, Richard Perry, who produced Ringo Starr, he told me one time, 'I don't like lawyers, I don't deal with lawyers.' When I had to file a claim against Ringo Starr to get my proper earnings for the one song that I did with him—'Hold On'—around \$1,398, Ringo didn't want to pay it because Richard had advanced me about \$760 and Ringo felt we should be even because that was a hell of a favor. And it *was* a hell of a favor."

"Richard Perry was real, real hung up behind my music because he told me one time he remembered when 'So Swell When You're Well'—he produced it—he said, 'I remember the night I met you, Booker, you came and staggered over to the piano and you played some of the most fantastic stuff I've ever heard in my life!'"

"Music is a mysterious art, to start off with, and people that's really good at it—at an elaborate, mysterious art—they get a little taste of the mysterious...sometimes mysticism, too. In fact, all of the time, they have mystical, mysterious attributes but it's whether or not they're aware of it that's important."

"Let me tell you something, man, every generation that has ever come up has always revolted against the older generation. This happens in the music business, too. And the revolting only comes sometimes from professional envy—that motivates a whole lot of things. Professional envy has some good sides to it, if it's dealt with a certain way."

"Look at the politicians. They have their share of

Continued on page 40

Booker's Life and Achievements

BY JON FOOSE

He was born to James Booker Jr. and Ora Cheatham Booker, December 17, 1939, in New Orleans. His sister Betty Jean was six years older. James Jr. was a tall dark man much older than his wife. Ora's family moved to New Orleans from Cajun country. She was fair-complected; an early photograph shows a pretty woman with delicate features, high cheekbones. His father was a Baptist

preacher described by pianist Edward Frank as a "very stately man, tall, very neat, well-spoken and pleasant." James' mother worked as a beautician.

Because of family problems, James, at two, went to live with his maternal aunt and uncle in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, a tranquil resort town on the Gulf, sixty miles from New Orleans. Two years later, Reverend Booker suffered a stroke and Betty Jean

joined her brother. Aunt Betsy worked for the Prowell family at their beach house. Her husband, Bernard Lizana, was a construction worker. The Lizanas lived in a pleasant Victorian house on a huge corner lot, one block from the beach. Shady live oaks and flower beds made for idyllic boyhood explorations. With no children of their own, the Lizanas accepted little James and Betty Jean with great love and tenderness.

The house today has big rooms and a homey kitchen with ceiling fan to boost breezes from the Gulf. Antique cabinets filled with crystal and china line the dining room. The old upright piano in the corner by the window was the focal point of Booker's youth. He began instructions at six.

Mrs. Lizana called her nephew J.C. "I have never seen a child as good. I used to take him to work with me and Mr. Prowell was just wild about J.C. Everywhere he would go, he would take J.C. with him. They would go out and crab and fish and things like that. He was smart as a whip." At St. Rose, a Catholic school, he made good grades.

He also made remarkable progress on the piano. Mrs. Lizana: "The boy was gifted—He loved Miss Nat [Natalie Piernas, his teacher] and his lessons. She said that he learned quicker than any child she had taught. When his sister would be playing, he would say, 'No, you're playing that wrong.' It was comical 'cause Betty was six years older than J.C. My husband was so proud of him." When James was seven, his uncle Bernard died.

In the ninth grade he returned to New Orleans to live with his mother. In Xavier Preparatory School he outpaced the music program, took lessons from faculty at Xavier University and was viewed as a child prodigy.

He formed a band, Booker Boy and the Rhythmaires, in 1953; they played R&B numbers popular on the radio. His sister introduced James to WMRY dee-jay Ernie "The Whip" [who died this November] and the fourteen-year-old promptly played "Lawdy, Miss Claudy." Soon he had his whole combo broadcasting. New Orleans was a fertile field for James Booker. As older musicians heard of his ability, they called him to sit in and play. He gained entry to the inner circle of artists.

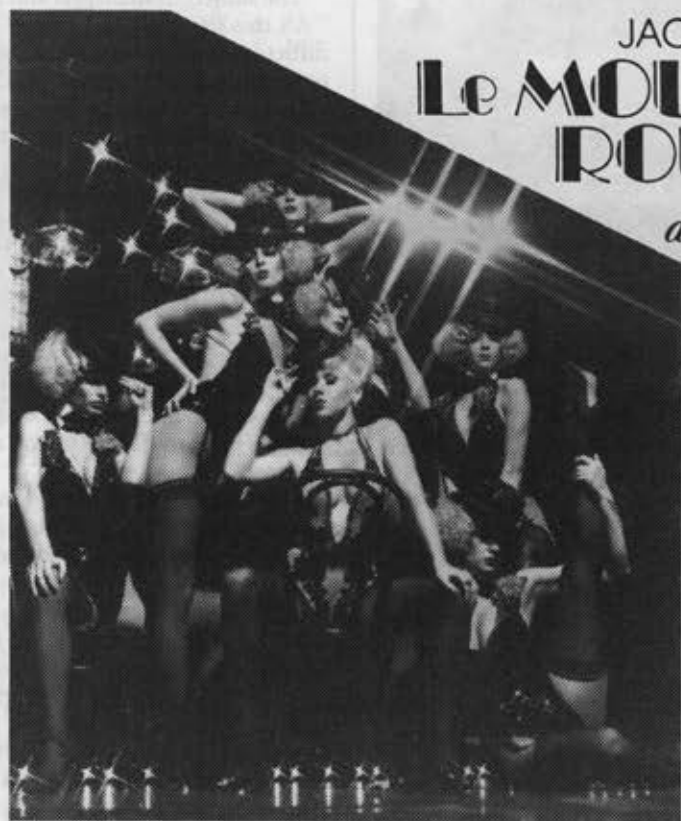
Edward Frank: "He had great technique and a good blues feeling even then. He was different, very gifted, not sure of himself 'cause he was young, but everywhere he would go, he would play. He had to, because people would insist on it. Dave Bartholomew asked me about James 'cause he had heard about him, and one day Dave called me down to the studio and James was there."

"Doing the Hambone" (which Bartholomew had written) appeared on Imperial. It didn't sell, but at fourteen James Booker had a record to his name.

"I went to Xavier University Junior School of Music while I was in the tenth and eleventh grades," Booker explained. "In the twelfth I didn't go at all 'cause I was playing more in nightclubs, with people like Earl King, Smiley Lewis, Shirley and Lee." Still, he did well enough to graduate.

The organ had become popular in the emerging rock music of the period, due to the Bill Doggett hit "Honky Tonk." Booker was a pioneer in New Orleans on organ. With guitarist Earl King, James started the first organ group in New Orleans in 1955. Later he joined Joe Tex for a road tour; through Tex, he met Johnny Vincent, and recorded a lively organ instrumental for Ace called "Teenage Rock." Things went fine until Booker discovered Vincent overdubbing Joe Tex lyrics on the tune, calling it "Open

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the Door." Booker exploded. Vincent backed down, and released it on the flip side, under the name "Little Booker."

In 1958, Booker hit the road with Shirley and Lee. He had a talent for imitation, and gravitated to Huey "Piano" Smith, who didn't like to tour. Thus Booker went on the road with Bobby Marchan and the Clowns, playing piano as Huey Smith. He was also moving heavily into studio sessions at Cosmos, and playing clubs around town.

Booker was a complex young man, sensitive and often high strung. He began experimenting with heroin. At twenty, he entered Southern University, feeling that the structure of school would help. But when Dee Clark came to town needing an organist, James dropped out of school to tour. Because of financial difficulties, the group split up in Houston and Clark sold the band organ to Don Robie. Ed-

now, and Bartholomew hired Booker to put down piano tracks for "Fats is Back" in 1968. An exceptional Domino-style piano appears on Booker's "I'm Ready," released on the Reprise label.

Booker left New Orleans for New York. In the early Seventies, he did session work for producer Mike Stoller, who sent Booker to Nashville to work at Starday-King studio as a session pianist. His reputation on keyboard spread among musicians around the country. He recorded with Maria Muldaur, Ringo Starr, Aretha Franklin, the Doobie Brothers, and the Grateful Dead.

In 1975 he went to Spain, played a music festival in Barcelona, dazzling the audience with his rocking boogie version of "Malaguena." He was now working to rid himself of his addiction. Of those years, he said, "It started like a nightmare and ended like a dream—because you know overcoming the

The only thing that's missing is the cowbell that the horses used to have." Booker achieves the effect by an octave-spanning yodel.

*Why don't you go somewhere
If you don't know what you're doin'
Check your situation
Before you see your ruin.
I'm gonna tell you just what I heard,
First time, second, and you know third.
You got oo wa, oo wa, oo wa,
One hell of a nerve...*

The other song, "So Swell When You Well" has been Booker's most successful composition since "Gonzo," covered by Aretha Franklin and Fats Domino.

*You so swell when you're well (three times)
But you had to stay sick so long.*

*You know I love you, honey,
From A to Z,
But something about you
Seems to worry me.*

*Today you love me,
Tomorrow you don't.
Sometimes you will,
And I know sometimes you won't.*

*You so swell when you're well (three times)
But you just stay sick so long!*

Late 1977 found James Booker at the Boogie Woogie and Ragtime Piano Contest in Zurich, Switzerland. His performance resulted in the LP *James Booker Live*, first released in Europe. It won The Grand Prix de Disque de Jazz for best live album of the year, which James accepted at the Montreaux Jazz Festival in 1978. (In the U.S., Rounder Records released it as *New Orleans Piano Wizard: Live!*)

Of all the artists in New Orleans, James Booker is the most difficult to characterize. He resettled in the city in the late Seventies and became one of the most popular musicians on the performing circuit—if not always a predictable one. When the crowd was right, when the music surged, the man was a wonder to behold. To some, Booker was known to erect a cold, sardonic wall.

Booker's brilliance was tempered in the flame—the painful struggle of his addiction literally embodied the Junkies. Booker recorded "Junko Partner," an updated version of the old piano anthem on his first LP. The poetry and imagery, set to pulsing blues-and-boogie beat, are vintage Booker.

*Down the road
Came a junko partner.
He was loaded, he was loaded,
Loaded as can be.
He was knocked out, knocked out loaded,
And he was singing, he was singing,
He was singing this-a song to me.*

*If I had, if I had,
If I had one million dollars—
I wanna tell ya, wanna tell ya,
Wanna tell ya what I would do.
I would buy, I would buy
Land around Angola,
And grow a nice weed farm 'til 1992.*

*I want whiskey, whiskey,
Whiskey when I'm thirsty.
I want water, water,
Water when I'm dry.
I want my lover, lover,
Lover when I'm lonely, right now!
And just a little herwon, herwon
Herwon right before I die,
With a little cocaine, cocaine,
Cocaine on the side.*



James Booker in Germany, 1977.

ward Frank found session work for Booker at Robie's studio. James worked with Duke/Peacock talents Junior Parker, Bobby Bland and others.

His own recording, "Gonzo," a rocking organ instrumental, surprised many people by climbing to number ten in the R&B charts of 1960. Edward Frank suggested the title, which was Booker's nickname. ("Gonzo" had been the lead character in the movie *The Pusher*.) The flip side was called "Cool Turkey."

The heroin references eluded producer Robie, which Booker and Frank took as a fine joke.

James Booker was a bit of a gypsy; his restlessness is reflected in the early Sixties. He toured the west with Roy Hamilton's show and B.B. King. Then he toured with Lloyd Price, Joe Tex again, and Wilson Pickett. Then "I went down to Bourbon Street and played at one club called Papa Joe's and the guy heard me play and he bought three organs 'cause he had two other places, Madam Franchine's and Po-dle's Patio. I played all three of those places every night and, when it got to taxing my body, I called on Dr. John and taught him how to play organ and let him be my understudy. That's how he started playing organ."

His deepening dependency on drugs put him at odds with the law. He was arrested and found himself in the company of Chris Kenner at Angola State Penitentiary. On release there was more session work. Fats Domino was on the road a great deal

addiction itself is a dream. It's every junkie's dream to square up. Some pursue it, some don't. I found every reason to pursue it because I had so much to look forward to and it seemed to be a stumbling block. I found out after I did kick it, I had a few other problems, personality-wise. When I was coming off of methadone in 1976, I found I was very paranoid. I got placed in Charity Hospital on the third floor mental ward. I had two nervous breakdowns between January and March. Then I came to the Euterpe Center and I was on the tail end of de-toxing the methadone and it was quite painful. It was quite a drastic experience. I wasn't sure I could do it."

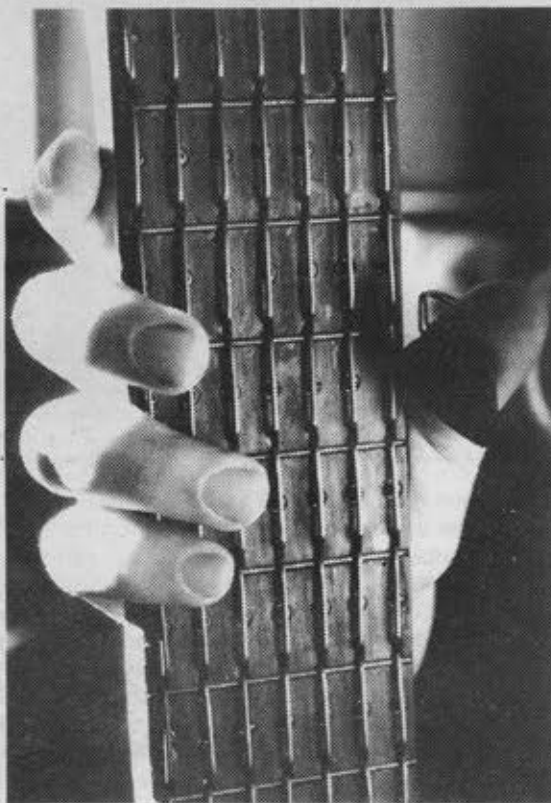
He did do it, and late in 1976 R&B historian Norbert Hess arranged a European tour, which resulted in two live albums. The first LP, *James Booker/The Piano Prince of New Orleans*, features several Booker compositions. "One Hell of a Nerve" has an interesting history. New Orleans has long had fruit vendors, who drive small trucks through the neighborhoods, hawking their produce. Booker: "I remember listening to the watermelon man; 'I got watermelon, I got canteloupe, I got okra and shrimp.' That influenced me to write a certain style of music. I wrote 'So Swell When You Well' from that. And there's another I have, 'One Hell of a Nerve,' and it really gives you the sound of the man going behind the watermelon truck [to sell produce].

Steve Masakowski, jazz guitarist and inventor, exposes New Orleans to sounds from *Mars*

BY YORKE CORBIN

The sweet smell of commercial success has so far failed to descend upon any of the artistically potent jazz composers stirring about the city. The small audience that New Orleans normally musters for contemporary jazz events has heard some striking music these past few years, and out in the big world the advent of Wynton Marsalis has generated more public excitement than anyone concerned with either jazz or New Orleans would have dared hope. But the gulf between Wynton's success and the recognition accorded his home-based peers is large (as is the distance between jazz and pop stardom: the first Wynton Marsalis album has sold about 125,000 copies; double that figure would make a modest pop hit). Sniffing out jazz trends is a pastime in which few Orleanians indulge.

Patrons of the perfume department at D.H. Holmes, however, caught a whiff of what's happening a few weeks back. Floating through the store were the strains of Steve Masakowski's mellifluous jazz guitar, perhaps the pleasantest promotional idea any local department store has devised in recent memory. One jazz scene hanger-on who happened to be ambling about the store at the time looked up in astonishment to see Masakowski, whose usual persona suggests a serious intellectual with a sardonically humorous edge, playing gentle riffs for the perfume seekers. With his chunky frame encased in a rented tux, Masakowski's improbable Fu Manchu mustache seem-



Steve Masakowski plays an instrument of his own devising—the keytar. It's a keyboard for the left hand arranged like a guitar finger board, interfaced with a polyphonic synthesizer. Because there's no picking involved, the right hand is free to fire notes.

ed a touch of the surreal. "Now I've seen everything," the jazz head muttered. "I guess you have," the guitarist noted sagely.

Steve Masakowski takes the quirks of making a living as a contemporary jazz musician in stride. Supporting himself as a private teacher, sideman, and astute grant-getter, Masakowski leads one of the most adventurous jazz groups in the city, Mars. He has just released his first album, also called *Mars*, which sounds like a canny mating of intellectually challenging music with an accessible, commercially-attuned

approach. The third release of Prescription Records, the contemporary New Orleans jazz label, *Mars* will not have the advantage of major label distribution, which means that Masakowski remains several big steps away from connecting with a large audience. What we're looking for at the moment is solid evidence that he is determined and able to take those steps, one after another.

"You have to make your breaks yourself," he says flat out. "You have to pull your own strings—especially in New Orleans. I've been getting my business frame of mind together; I'm seeing with the whole group of contemporary musicians here, that's one factor that's necessary for people to get to the point where they can start breaking away from the New Orleans scene, doing things on a higher level.

"In the beginning, it's an uphill battle. You have to get to a certain point where people start becoming interested in you. But I feel like the New Orleans musical scene is on the verge of becoming prosperous and beneficial for everybody. Every separate band of personality—everyone who's working for a higher goal—is closer than they've ever been before to quality, to getting recognition that would put them on a different level."

Conscious that he has a lingering reputation for negativism about the local music scene, Masakowski is straining a bit to sound positive. But it's worth looking at how he has steadily applied himself to the



PHOTO

task of making his musical ideas, which tend toward the advanced and esoteric, a force to reckon with on the highly conservative New Orleans scene. A New Orleans native ("no one believes that") who studied at Boston's Berklee School of Music, Masakowski returned home to pursue two separate musical paths. First, he fell in with the hip young players who were making Tyler's jazz club the center of the local jazz scene in the late Seventies; the emphasis there was on instrumental flash, showy virtuosity. Masakowski's skills gave him ready entree to that circle, but his understated playing seemed to set him apart. Meanwhile, he was exploring a different territory, advanced composition in the contemporary classical mode, under the tutelage of Dr. Bert Braud, the noted composer who heads the music department at the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts.

About three years ago, Masakowski began to emerge as a composer in his own right. He formed Mars as a vehicle for experimenting with electronic effects, combining his new music studies with his jazz background. Mars began to present club audiences with carefully thought-out compositions that sometimes played hob with listeners' expectations, as synthesizer-generated electronic sounds travelled outside the normal boundaries of jazz. As might be expected, Mars has been slow to build an audience in New Orleans.

"I would never go out to try to find a steady gig situation for Mars," Masakowski explains. "On a weekly basis at Tyler's, it wouldn't work. It's more conducive to a concert type of situation. You have to look forward to particular gigs and try to make them interesting—totally different."

That sounds like the resigned stoicism of a struggling avant-gardist, except that Masakowski has in

The Story Behind The Label

Packaging uncompromised music, despite its voice-in-the-wilderness overtones, is usually a collective affair. Such is the case with the fledgling Prescription label (of which Mars is part) as viewed by one of its founders, Ramsey McLean.

"Anthony Braxton once told me that there was no such thing as a good record deal," he said. "What we're trying to do is put out the best contemporary music that New Orleans has to offer. It's an artist-produced label. It's really more of an umbrella than a formal record company. It's nice from the standpoint of control. Things now aren't the way they were six or seven years ago, when minor companies marketed new artists. Record companies today are interested in people who have produced for them in the past. Now they're buying catalogs and re-releasing things, like Elektra/Musician."

McLean's Prescription entry, *The Long View* which is in the final production stages, is a duet with Tony Dagradi, and should be out before the year's end.

"All of the music is totally original," he said. "The more original the material, the higher the level of musicianship. On this album I play cello. Tony plays tenor, soprano, flute and bass clarinet. Actually I play bass on one tune. We recorded it in the playhouse at Longue Vue Gardens. It was recorded acoustically. We used the room, it should sound big. There's no studio that offered that

quality. I'm going to keep picking out places like that."

McLean's first album, "History's Made Every Moment," was recorded at the Faubourg, so apparently the idea of working in a studio still holds no appeal for him.

"I just think it's got to be live or it's not a jazz record," he said. "For authentic quality, it's got to be taken live. It has to be done with everybody playing together. You can't play it separately. You get the edge this way."

"We'll have 1,000 copies pressed. Michael Cuscuna will do the liner notes. If we have four records out on the same label, we'll have a catalog of contemporary New Orleans music, which will help us to deal with distributors, European companies and mail order. The strength of that will be greater than any individual could do." (Also on Prescription are the IAQ's *No Compromise*.)

The first album received favorable reviews and helped put McLean on the musical map. He compares it to the *The Long View* with a terse frankness: "The first one did well critically. The new one doesn't sound like the first one; it's thematically unified. I like duets. It's like a solo but you have a friend. It's not nightclub music. It's a highly compositional record. But it's not a stiff kind of formal. Some of it's pretty abstract. The production is better, the material about equal."

—Vincent Fumar

Steve

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Bunny Matthews

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fact managed to deliver. And if his performances in recent months are a reliable indication, he may be ready to break through to a broader audience. This year's jazz fest found Masakowski collaborating with a talented visual artist, John Graubarth, at the Snug Harbor jazz club, which has emerged as the place to hear the freshest music (some would say the most exciting art) that New Orleans has to offer. On a screen behind and above the band, Graubarth projected a shifting, overlapping series of images that danced at the edge of a viewer's powers of concentration, seeming to resolve themselves into coherent visual statements, then dissolving to begin a new chain of association. Masakowski and his band (some of whom seemed to chafe at the task) insinuated their music into the consciousness of the audience; depending upon where one's attention was more fully engaged, the music would seem a commentary on the imagery, or vice versa.

In subsequent performances, most notably at the Longue Vue Gardens concert series, Masakowski, Mars and Graubarth have refined and expanded their concept. Besides the considerable art involved, there is a trick: juxtaposed with the flux of visual imagery, the element of intellectual play in what might otherwise seem an intimidatingly complex style of music springs to the fore. This art provides its audience with a surprisingly easy means of access, a way to focus one's conscious attention that gives subliminal influences free play.

"None of it's a new idea," according to Masakowski. "I really believe that electronic music is the music of the future, and as with all music that is new on the scene, people have a hard time relating to it, appreciating it. I think having visual effects will help people digest the music. It gives the music a clearer emotional perspective."

Masakowski relishes the challenge of engaging an audience. Surprisingly, he makes a virtue of the fact that conservative New Orleans audiences necessitate an extra effort on the artist's part. "One thing good about New Orleans is that there's always something you can do—little goals, little projects that are good things to work for. That's why I've been down here so long.

"I keep thinking about moving to New York. I even talked to Branford Marsalis about it. He seemed to think that Wynton would never have gotten the deal he got with CBS if he hadn't been in New York. And of course, the people in high positions in the record business would never have heard him if he'd stayed here because they're never down here. But at least down here there are things that you can do with grants, etcetera, that can be artistically re-

warding that people in New York don't do. There's not a whole lot of competitions for grants here."

Grant and prize money have gone to support some of Masakowski's writing, and he has a substantial grant to spend on a second album. The one he has just released was largely underwritten by a patron, the father of one of his guitar students. He produced it himself over a couple of years, employing one nationally known musician, saxophonist Dave Liebman, and what Masakowski calls "a New Orleans all-star band. I used different people for different things—three drummers, two keyboard players. It's all my compositions, and it's a cross-section of different things. I'm into a lot of different things, which is good and bad as far as marketability is concerned. I think for a first album it's important to show what

you can do, what your strong points are."

Steve Masakowski's strong points recall those of one of his regular collaborators, pianist Ellis Marsalis, his partner for the Monday night duets at Tyler's that for the past year or two have been the most rewarding regular jazz gig in New Orleans. Like Ellis, Masakowski is a virtuoso player, a challenging composer and a man with sufficient intellectual detachment to produce fine work at a steady pace in an environment that too often discourages the musical talent with which New Orleans is almost haphazardly blessed. Masakowski's first album, to be reviewed here next month, makes a convincing case that a smart jazz man can pull together the right elements from the New Orleans scene to send the city's musical force hurtling toward a new audience and into a new year.

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'You have to make your breaks yourself,' Masakowski says flat out.

december listings



Madama Butterfly by the New Orleans Opera Association, Dec. 7, 8, 10.



Lady BJ at the Snug Harbor, Dec. 23, and a special farewell concert at the Saxony, Dec. 18.

Bobby Bland at the Riverside Centroplex, Baton Rouge, Dec. 31.



CONCERTS

Thursday, 1

38 Special, Mississippi Gulf Coast Coliseum; ticket information at (600) 388-8010.

Saturday, 3

The Neville Brothers, Steamer President. Call 524-SAIL.

Rich Little narrates Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* with the New Orleans Symphony; also on the program: his salute to MGM and press conference. At the Orpheum; admission information from the Symphony's office, 525-0500.

The Messiah, performed by the Jefferson Community Chorus at Immaculate Conception Church on 7th Street in Marrero; information at 833-3366.

Sunday, 4

Frank Federico and his band, French Market; free.

Gertrude Stein Gertrude Stein Gertrude Stein, Dixon Hall, Tulane, 8 p.m. Pat Carroll performing her celebrated monologue (and I hope it vaguely resembles John Candy's parody on SCTV)—I always think of Pat Carroll on those old shows like *The Commuters* with Sid Caesar and Nanette Fabray, or on *Keep Talking* (surely due for revival soon). The subject matter of this ought to be obvious from the title. Information at 865-5143.

Africa Suite/Kidd Jordan Elektrik, 9 p.m. at Tiptina's.

The Messiah, performed by the Jefferson Community Chorus, at St. Agnes' Church on Jefferson Highway; information at 834-5727.

Wednesday, 7

The Sophie Newcomb Memorial Concert, part of the Music at Midday series; participants are the Tulane and Newcomb Choirs. Rogers Memorial Chapel, noon, free.

Madama Butterfly, Wed. 7, Thurs. 8 and Sat. 10, Theatre for the Performing Arts. Puccini out of David Belasco and if you've not before thrilled to the doomed affair between Cio Cio San and that heel Lieutenant

Pinkerton, you may as well get it over with. Conducted by Elio Boncompagni. Information from the New Orleans Opera Association at 529-2278.

Thursday, 8

Joan Rivers, Saenger Performing Arts Center, 525-1052. Anyone planning to attend this is advised to steal a look at the December issue of *Hustler* magazine for a "cosmograph" (as they called them in the Twenties) of "Joan Rivers' Nightmare."

All We Are Saying..., a music and film tribute to John Lennon, and a benefit for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. At Tiptina's; details at 899-9114.

Friday, 9

Holiday Favorites with the New Orleans Symphony, as well as the Symphony Chorus, the Children's Symphony Chorus and Lisa Trapani narrating. Orpheum, information at 525-0500.

Jeffrey Osborne, Saenger, 8 and 11. Ticket information at 525-1052.

X, Steamer President (although it might be more appropriate to hear them while steaming down the Orinoco or even the Styx); details at 524-SAIL.

Saturday, 10

Johnny Rivers, Steamer President. Call 524-SAIL.

Saturday, 11

Brass Quintet, at the French Market, free.

Michael Franks, Saenger, 525-1052. I like Michael Franks OK since anyone who likes *le douanier* Rousseau is OK with me and a little subtlety is always welcome, but don't you ever wonder if this guy ever gets upset and shouts and stomps around?

Tuesday, 13

Dan Fogelburg, UNO Lakefront Arena. Ticket information at 286-7222.

Wednesday, 14

Stray Cats, Saenger, 525-1052.

Friday, 16

Stray Cats, Mississippi Coast Coliseum, details at (600) 388-8010.

Friday, 16 and Saturday, 17

Amahl and The Night Visitors, Menotti's opera about a little lame boy who entertains (partially unawares) the three Magi during a pit stop one Christmas long ago; at the Orpheum, details at 525-0500.

Saturday, 17

Ronnie Dio, formerly with Black Sabbath (and is he any relation to Madre de Dio?), with Humble Pie opening. Saenger, 525-1052.

Sunday, 18

The Desire Community Chorus, at the French Market, free.

Caroling, by candlelight, beginning at 6 in Jackson Square.

Farewell Concert for Lady BJ, Saxony, 1717 Canal, beginning at 6; information at 581-4466.

Wednesday, 21

The Messiah, performed by the New Orleans Symphony, Orpheum Theatre, 525-0500; but aren't you starting to wonder why someone doesn't maybe do Berlioz' *L'Enfance du Christ* at this season (kinda creepy but our favorite Xmas music anyway) or even perhaps Bach's Christmas Oratorio?

Irma Thomas Christmas Special, 9 p.m. on Channel 12. Irma performs such works as *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*, *Bring A Torch Jeanette Isabella*, *Frosty The Snowman*, *Angels We Have Heard On High* and many others; advance notice is that it's a killer.

Wednesday, 28 to Friday, 30

New Orleans City Ballet, Theatre for the Performing Arts. Wed. 28 through Fri. 30:

The Nutcracker, Tchaikowsky's ballet—inexplicably a family favorite—about the lurid and sordid things that went on after lights out in 19th Century Russian households at Christmas time. Call 587-3070 for information.

Saturday, 31

New Year's Eve Blues Festival, and is there a better time to have the blues?, Riverside Centroplex, Baton Rouge, with **B.B. King, Bobby Blue Bland, Z.Z. Hill, Denise LaSalle**—so who needs noisemakers?

FESTIVALS

Thursday-Saturday, 1-3, Saturday, 10

Christmas Festival, Monroe. Information at (318) 323-3461.

Friday, 2

Christmas Comes Alive, Lafayette. Information at (318) 981-0693.

Friday, Saturday, 2-3

Three States Arts and Antiques Festival, Shreveport. Information at (318) 222-9122.

Saturday, 3

Candlelight Tour of Clinton, Clinton, La. Information at (504) 683-5594.

Saturday, Sunday 3-4

Pioneer Christmas Celebration, Franklinton. Information at (504) 839-3637.

Plaquemines Parish Fair and Orange Festival, Fort Jackson. Information at (504) 657-9958.

Sunday, 4

Annual Victorian Christmas, Franklin. Information at (318) 828-3631.

Saturday, 10

Homer Christmas Festival and Parade, Homer, La. Information at (318) 927-3271.

Saturday-Sunday, 10-11

Louisiana Crafts Christmas Fair, New Orleans. Information at 861-8267.

LIVE MUSIC

Bistro Lounge, 4061 Tulane Ave., 482-9377. Fridays and Saturdays: Ruben Gonzalez and his Salsa Rhythms, from 10.

Blue Room, in the Fairmont Hotel, 529-7111. Through Tues. 13: Billy Preston. Wed. 14 through Sat. 24: John Gary. Mon. 26 through Jan. 3: Sam Butera, that sempiternal accomplice of the antics of Louis Prima, assuredly with his Witnesses. Reservations; dancing, as well.

Bobby's Place, 520 East St. Bernard Highway, Chalmette, 271-0137. Fridays and Saturdays: Bobby Cure and the Summer-time Blues.

Bonaparte's Retreat, 1007 Decatur, 561-9473. Ralph Cox, every day except Sunday.

Bounty, 1926 West End Park, 282-9144. Certainly the darkest and most "intime" of W.E. clubs. Fridays and Saturdays: Harvey Jesus and Frye.

Bronco's, 1409 Romain, Gretna, 368-1000. Every day except Sundays, the Mississippi South House Band.

Carrollton Station, 8140 Willow, 865-9190. Sat. 3: Mason Ruffner and the Blues Rockers. Tues. 6: *Reverberations*, a play by Richard Pierce. Fri. 16 Johnny J and the Hitmen. Sat. 17: Mason Ruffner and the Blues Rockers. Call for other dates if not for Phillip Morris.

Dorothy's Medallion, 3232 Orleans. Snake-dancing, examples of *adiposa dolorosa* in motion for Botero-eyed girl watchers, and Fridays and Saturdays, Johnny

Adams and Walter Washington with the House Band.

Dream Palace, 534 Frenchmen, Dec.30: Radiators. Other dates tee bee ayy.

1801 Club, 1801 Stumpf Blvd., 367-9670. Wednesdays through Saturdays, Janet Lynn and Waka Waka. Thurs.1: Frankie Ford. Sat.3: the ever-dapper Tommy Ridgeley. Sat.10: Jean Knight. Thurs.15: Frankie Ford. Thurs.29: Frankie Ford. Sat.31: New Year's Eve bash.

Fairmont Court, in the Fairmont Hotel, 529-7111. Tuesdays to Saturdays, Judy Duggan occupies the piano bench from 9 to 1.

The Famous Door, 339 Bourbon, 522-7626. Everyone of note, from Thackeray to Durante has passed through these charmed portals; Thomas Jefferson and his Creole Jazz Band play Thursdays through Tuesdays. Wednesdays are taken up by Art Rider's Jazz Band (are his brothers named C.C. and Easy?) who also enlivens weekend afternoons from 4 to 8.

Fat Cats, 505 Gretna Blvd., Gretna, 362-0598. Mondays and Tuesdays: Rocking Russ. Wednesdays and Saturdays: Big Jake and the Nifty Fifties. Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays: Grice and Gravy with Jimmy Simon and Janie Grice.

544 Club, 544 Bourbon, 523-8611. Wednesdays through Saturdays, Gary Brown and Feelings.

Fool on the Hill, 1000 Bayou Black Dr., Houma, 851-6892. Thurs.1 through Sat.3: Cross Roads. Fri.9: Studebackers. Sat.10: Nightlife. Wed.14 through Mon.26: Lifeline. Fri.30: Zachary Richard.

Pete Fountain's, in the Hilton, 523-4374. Pete Fountain and his band, at 10 nightly; one show only and reservations probably a good idea.

Gazebo Cafe and Bar, 1018 Decatur, 522-0862. Alfresco; ragtime piano each afternoon and again as night is falling. Saturdays and Sundays: John Ryan's New Orleans Rhythm Band makes a little more noise from 1:30 to 6.

Houlihan's, 315 Bourbon, 523-7412. Live music of a jazz nature outside on weekdays from 7 to 11 saving Fridays; the music moves inside on weekends and starts two hours later.

Jimmy's, 8200 Willow, 866-9549. Thurs.1: what used to be known as a triple threat—Rockouts, Limit and PennyLane. Fri.2 and Sat.3: The Radiators, if Zeke can get there in time from his part-time job as Kris Kringle at the Azalea Gardens Shopping Center on Jefferson Highway. Wed.7: The Hands presenting, I guess, a hand job. Thurs.8: Bas Clas and the Batteries. Fri.9: Alison and the Distractions. Sat.10: The Backbeats. Wed.14: The Mysteries (the Eleusinian ones?). Thurs.15: The Fleshtones with the Uptights. Fri.16: Woodenhead, named after that song Elvis Presley sang in *G.I. Blues*. Sat.17: The Models, courtesy of the Powers Agency. Wed.28: The Limit. Thurs.29: Mrs. Bates—you mean the one that ran the motel next to her creepy Victorian house in *Psycho*? Fri. and Sat., 30 and 31: The Sheiks (of the Burning Sands).

Maple Leaf Bar, 8316 Oak, 866-9359. Tuesdays: Li'l Queenie and her Boughs of Holly. Wednesdays: Mason (he thought Delta Blues were sad songs that stewardesses sang) Ruffner. Thursdays: Bruce L'egru and Bourre. Fri.2: Gatemouth Brown. Sat.3: Little Bob and the Lollipops. Mon.5: Tomcat Shaka. Fri.9: Exuma. Sat.10: Beausoleil. Fri.16: Deacon John's New Orleans Blues Revue with Earl (yo' mama and yo' poppa) King. Sat.17: Zachary Richard. Fri.23: TBA. Sat.24: The Charles Neville House Band. Fri.30: Rockin' Dopsie and the Twisters. Sat.31: Marcia Ball and a New Year's Eve party that no doubt will include many cups of kindness—the 80 proof kind.

Monoffee's, 1101 N.Rampart, 566-0464. Mondays through Saturdays: Marguerite Montgomery from 11 a.m. until 3, and from 5 to 7. Tuesdays through Saturdays: Lee Aldridge from 10 until 2 a.m. Thursdays through Tuesdays: Janis Medlock from 7 to

10. Fridays and Saturdays: Sandy Hanson (no relation to Monte—*helas!*) from 11 until 4 a.m. Mondays: B'Auray from 10 until 2 a.m.

Munster's Dance Hall and Bar, 627 Lyons, 899-9109. Wednesdays, The Louisiana Repertory Jazz Ensemble.

Old Absinthe Bar, 400 Bourbon, 524-7761. Mondays and Tuesdays: The Blues Rockers. Wednesdays through Sundays: Bryan Lee and the Jumpstreet Five.

Old Opera House, 601 Bourbon. Mondays: the Pontchartrain Band from 9. Tuesdays through Sundays: Aubry Twins and the Fresh Air Band from 8:30. Saturday: Oliver and the Rockettes—gosh direct from Radio City!—from 2:30 until 8:30. Sundays: the Pontchartrain Band from 2:30 until 8:30. Mondays: Helt Oncalt from 4:45 until 8:30. Wednesdays through Fridays: Randy and Dickie from 4:45 until 8:30.

Old Post Office, 4000 Downman Rd., 242-9960. Call for listings.

Parkview Tavern, 910 N. Carrollton, 482-2680. Fri.2: Mason Ruffner and the Blues Rockers. Fri.16: Bourre. Fri.23: Tim Williams Band. Fri.30: the Renegades. Sat.31: New Year's Eve soiree with Mason Ruffner and don't give your right name, no, no, no.

Penny Post, 5110 Danneel. Sundays, always open mike. Check the board as you enter for details of who's playing when.

Pontchartrain Hotel, Bayou Bar, 2031 St.Charles Ave., 524-0851. Nightly: Bruce Versen, from 5 to 8, or what was known in happier days as that pause in the day's occupation known as the cocktail hour. From 9-ish until the midnight hour, Joel Simpson does the pianistic honors.

Preservation Hall, 726 St. Peter, 523-8939. Along with Galatoire's and K-Paul's, one of the three places in town that consistently draws a long and deserved line outside; the only amenities are the musical ones. Sundays: Harold Dejan and the Olympia Brass Band. Mondays and Thursdays: Kid Thomas Valentine. Tuesdays and Fridays: Kid Sheik Colar. Wednesdays and Saturdays: The Humphrey Brothers.

Riverboat President, Canal Street Docks, 524-SAIL. Sat.3: The Neville Brothers. Fri.9: X. Sat.10: Johnny Rivers, the pride of Catholic High in Baton Rouge. Sat.17: Ivy. Sat.24: Christmas Eve Moonlight Cruise. Sat.31: New Year's Eve afloat—sounds suspicious, grab a life preserver if you see Shelley Winters or Red Buttons running around.

Seaport Cafe and Bar, 424 Bourbon, 568-0981. Tuesdays through Saturdays, Sally Townes.

711 Club, 711 Bourbon, 525-8379. Tuesdays through Saturdays: one man Symphonia Randy Hebert, preceded Thursdays through Mondays by Al Broussard.

Slidell Hotel Bar, Slidell. Thurs. through Sun., 1-4: Silk 'n' Steel. Fri., Sat., 9-10: Chance Band. Wed. through Sat., 14-17: The Sheiks. Sun.18 and Wed.21: Dock of the Bay Band. Thurs.22: Nightworks. Wed. through Sat., 28-31: Skruples.

Snug Harbor, 626 Frenchmen, 949-0696. Wednesdays: Amasa Miller. Thursdays: the Olympia Serenaders. Sundays, except for Christmas Day: Li'l Queenie with her All-I-Want-For-Christmas-Is-My-Two-Front-Teats revue. Fri.2: guitar virtuoso Emily Remler. Sat.3: Tony Dagradi Quartet. Fri.9: Ellis Marsalis plays Horace (hiyo) Silver. Sat.10: Germaine Bazzle and the sentimental Gentlemen of Jazz. Sun.11: The Dirty Dozen and the Survivors, starting at 5, just in time to smoke some high tea. Fri.16: James Moore's Urbanites. Sat.17: Willie Metcalf. Fri.23: Deacon John and Lady BJ, the Hepburn and Tracy of cool music. Fri.30: The Al Belletto Quartet. Sat.31: The Pfister Sisters' New Year's Eve party and, speaking of Spencer Tracy, you know it's going to be like one of those mid-late Thirties pictures of his: it's New Year's Eve in the ballroom and everyone is drunk and wobbling and doing the Shag and wearing paper hats and he and the Little Woman (probably Loretta Young or Joan Bennett) have quarrel-



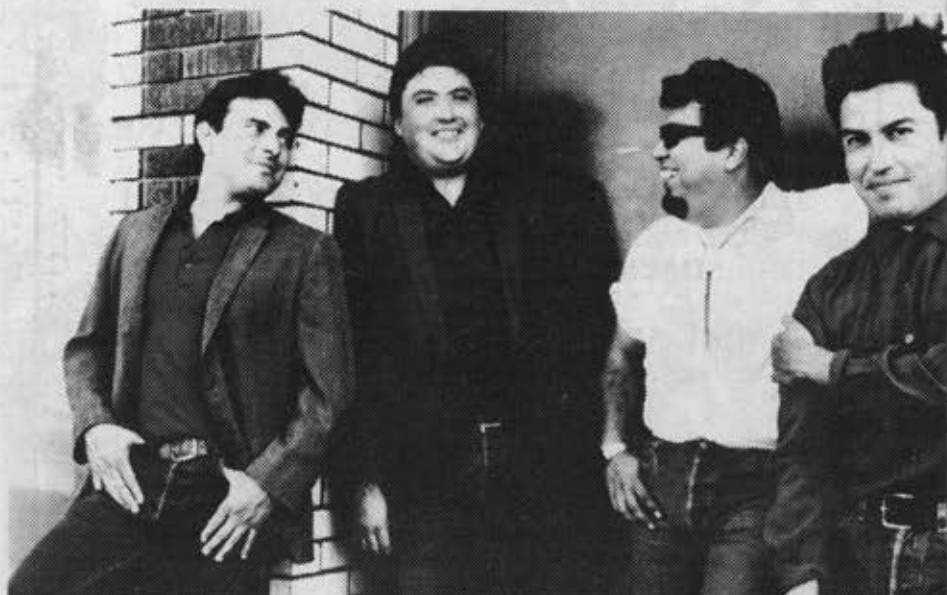
Michael Franks, the Saenger, Dec.11



Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein, Dixon Hall, Dec.4.



Buddy Guy and Junior Wells, Tiptina's, Dec.16.



Los Lobos from Los Angeles, Tiptina's, Dec.9.

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REGULAR WEDNESDAY FEATURE
AMASA MILLER—9 PM
REGULAR THURSDAY FEATURE
DEJAN'S OLYMPIA SERENADERS—9 PM

FRIDAYS—11 PM	SATURDAYS—11 PM
2ND— EMILY REMLER	3RD— TONY DAGRADI
9TH— ELLIS MARSALIS	QUARTET
PERFORMS HORACE	10TH— GERMAINE
SILVER	BAZZLE & THE
16TH— JAMES MOORE'S	GENTLEMEN OF JAZZ
URBANITES	17TH— WILLIE METCALF
23RD— DEACON JOHN &	24TH— NO LIVE MUSIC
LADY BJ	31ST— PFISTER
30TH— AL BELLETTA	SISTERS' NEW YEAR'S
QUARTET	EVE PARTY

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ed and everyone else in the place is bombed and jovial, even the strangers at their table, and God, who just knows it's going to be a miserable 1938, and he's glowering and she's acting sort of worried and snippy (she spent the whole day before working over an old dress so she could look mildly fancy and he would be proud of Her) and then, suddenly, the band starts playing Auld Lang Syne and people are shouting and crying and throwing serpentine everywhere and she looks at him, tentatively, and then the band segues, as they say, into another number and—gosh—it's Their Song, and it looks like, well, it might be a 1938 to look forward to after all...that's what New Year's Eve with the Pfisters might be like.

Sugar Mill Lounge, 4520 Williams, Kenner, 467-7946. Thurs.1: Topcats. Fri.2: Contours (not the ones that did "First I Look At The Purse" and "Shake Sherrin"). Sat.3: The Brothers (Karamazov? Four? of the Holy Cross?). Wed., Thurs., 7,8: Topcats. Fri.9: Southwind. Sat.10: Rock Island (there's a famous line there they tell me). Wed., Thurs., 14, 15: Topcats. Fri.16: Nobles. Sat.17: Rock Island. Wed., Thurs., 21, 22: Topcats. Fri.23: Contours. Sat.24: Sneaker. Wed., Thurs., 28, 29: Topcats. Fri.30: Southwind. Sat.31: Sneaker.

Tipitina's, 501 Napoleon, 899-9114. Thurs.1: Ziganola. Fri.2: Tracy Nelson, a sort of legendary singer (we've always best liked her early *Deep Are The Roots* album of classic blues classics (not a pleonasm, by the way). Sat.3: Deacon John's New Orleans Blues Revue featuring such figures from local music hagiography as Earl King, Walter Washington, J.D. Hill, J. Monque'd, and Sadie Blake. Sun.4: Kidd Jordan's Elekrik Band (Africa Suite), at 9. Thurs.8: "All We Are Saying," a tribute to John Lennon and a screening of *Let It Be*, a benefit for Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, also including appearances by the Moderns and Good Wave. Fri.9: Los Lobos and Bourre. Sat.10: The Radiators. Tues., Wed., 13, 14: Nighthawks. Fri.16: Buddy Guy and Junior Wells. Sat.17: The Neville Brothers. Sun.18: Professor Longhair's Memorial Mambo and I don't mean La Cumparsita. Fri.23: The Radiators. Tues.27: Woodhead. Wed.28: the original Meters. Thurs.29: the Dirty Dozen Brass Band. Fri.30: the Neville Brothers. Sat.31: those Radiators bringing out the old and ringing in the new, and listen, if not by Christmas, by New Year's night, okay?

Tyler's, 5234 Magazine, 891-4989. Modern jazz, good raw oysters. Sundays: Mike Peller, David Torkanowsky and Johnny Vidacovich. Mondays: Ellis Marsalis and Steve Masakowski. Tuesdays: chanteuse Leslie Smith. Wednesdays: George French Quartet. Thursdays, Germaine Bazzle with David Torkanowsky. Fridays and Saturdays: the James Rivers Movement.

Germaine Wells Lounge, 833 Bienville, 523-9633. Fridays and Saturdays, Mike Peller, Jim Singleton and Jeff Boudreaux, from 11 p.m.

Weasey's, 1610 Belle Chasse Highway, 361-7902. Country and Western. Mondays through Thursdays: Firewater. Tuesdays and Wednesdays: the Gela Kaye Band.

Winnie's, 2304 London Ave., 945-9124. Call the club for details.

LA. CLUBS

Antler's, 555 Jefferson, Lafayette, 318-234-8877.

The Big Apple, Highway 1, Larose, 693-8688. Seats 2000!

Booker's, 1040 Texas Ave., Shreveport, 318-425-2292.

Chief's Southside, (formerly Trinity's), 4365 Perkins Road, Baton Rouge, 388-9884.

Circle in The Square, Shreve Square, Shreveport, 318-222-2216.

Clancy's Landing and Brick Street Tavern, Shreve Square, Shreveport, 318-227-9611.

Desperado Saloon, Highway 90, Raceland, 1-537-3647.

Emporium, 2183 Highland Road, Baton Rouge, 387-9538.

Enoch's—A Cafe, 5202 Desiard Street, Monroe, 318-343-9950.

Gibson Street Lounge, Covington, 1-892-7057.

Grant Street Dance Hall, 113 Grant Street, Lafayette, 318-332-9569.

Harry's Club, 517 Parkway, Breaux Bridge, 318-332-9569.

Humphree's, Shreve Square, Shreveport, 318-227-9611.

Iron Horse, 403 Phillip, Thibodaux, 1-447-9991.

Jefferson Street Cafe, 209 Jefferson, Lafayette, 318-234-9647.

Mulate's, Breaux Bridge Highway, Breaux Bridge, 318-332-4648.

The Ol' Corner Bar, 221 Poydras, Breaux Bridge, 318-332-9512.

Pam's Place, Old Town, Slidell.

Pappa Joe's, 12375 Florida Blvd., Baton Rouge, 1-273-2376.

Paradise Club, 121 S. Buchanan, Lafayette, 318-232-5313.

Party Town, Military Road, Slidell, 1-649-3867.

Ruby's Rendez-Vous, Highway 190 in Mandeville, 1-626-9933.

Rusty Nail, 540 E. King's Highway, Shreveport.

Scarlett O's, 1025 Broad, Lake Charles, 318-436-8742.

Slick's Music Hall, Highway 31, St. Martinville, 318-394-3867.

Steak and Lobster Inn's Fireside Pub, 820 E. King's Highway, Shreveport, 318-868-5306.

Steamboat Annie's, Shreve Square, Shreveport, 318-424-8297.

Tenth Floor, Shreve Square, Shreveport, 318-425-7539.

Toby's, 1303 Grimmel Drive, Shreveport, 318-222-9903.

FILMS

Contemporary Arts Center, 900 Camp, 523-1216. Wed.7: Winners of the 25th Annual American Film Festival. Wed.14: Open screening for anyone interested invited. By admission unless you are a CAC member.

Loyola's Film Buffs Institute, 895-3196. Thurs.1: *Cet Obscur Objet de Desir*, the last Bunuel film about a heartless chippy, Spanish variety, who destroys a courtly old fool (Fernando Rey, natch); the framing device—on a train as Rey tells the story to an increasingly incredulous group in a sitting room—is very funny and there are plenty of characteristic touches, including pigs, politics, Spanish dancing, curious leather lingerie and the much-deplored tactic of having two quite different actresses play the central female part.

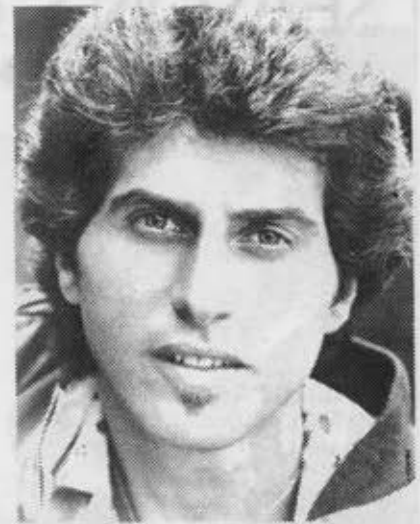
Mon.5: *La Ultima Cena*, a period Cuban allegory about a wealthy planter who succumbs to the blandishments of the Age of Reason and decides to tender a banquet to his slaves. Need one say, the idea is not a success; nor is the film—a curiously muted, excessively pretty affair (Tomas Gutierrez Alea, who directed this, looks like a one-shot so far—*Memorias del Subdesarrollo* is one of the great post-modern films—but how can we know until we see *The Cuban Fight Against Demons*, another early work?). Tues.6: *Frenzy*, a late Hitchcock distinguished by the almost peculiar serenity of manner it takes in dealing with repulsive crime and by one of the best punch-lines a picture ever had; there are amusing performances by Alec McCowen and Vivien Merchant as an inspector and his ruthlessly gourmandizing wife, and a brief appearance by Elsie Randolph, one of the fixtures of Thirties English musicals.

Tues.13: *Strangers On A Train*, this 1951 Hitchcock has a script by Raymond Chandler (who did not enjoy the experience, and which may account for the fact, as Manny Farber has pointed out that the slazy verisimilitude of Laura Elliott's character is quite un-Hitchcockien) and is enjoyable for its grotesqueries and set-pieces (the tennis match, the mock-strangulation at the party that gets out of control, the performances of Robert Walker and Marion Lorne as the dapper psychopath Bruno and his momma), but although the much-discussed transference-of-guilt theme is right there on the surface, it doesn't seem the major work it once did. Wed.14: *They Who Step on the Tiger's Tail*, a 1945 Kurosawa film of a famous Kabuki drama which was banned

upon its release by that famed connoisseur of film Douglas MacArthur, and *Sansho Dayu*, a late Mizoguchi unseen by us and apparently a major work, and therefore worth seeing. Thurs.15: *The Magician*, this 1958 Bergman comedy is a peculiar mixture of nightmare and knockabout, with elements from well-made-play, horror film, *Marchen*, and half-baked metaphysics all floating around rubbing elbows but never meshing. Best to remember the dark, opulent look of the film—a period piece—and some of the acting—especially Inggrid Thulin *en travesti* and that old dear, Naima Wifstrand, as the grandma/crone. Tues.20: *Casino Royale*, this 1967 burlesque of the James Bond films is highly uneven (half a dozen directors, half as many comic styles, and much Caesar's-Palace-on-Psilocybin decor), but there are funny bits by, among others, David Niven, Woody Allen, Deborah Kerr, Anna Quayle, Joanna Pettet and Peter Sellers. Orson Welles is the gambling villain, Le Chiffre, Woody Allen presumably wrote his own material (he explains at one point to a firing squad that he really can't go through with his execution because he has "a very low threshold of death") and the little song at the end is by The New Vaudeville Band. Dec.22: *Persona*, one of my favorite Christmas movies, this 1967 Bergman heartwarmer is fun for the whole family—tears, laughs and nervous breakdowns—what more could one ask for the Yuletide. Why even the setting is cheery: an apparently uninhabited island in the Baltic...Films are by either season subscription (the new season begins early January) or by \$1.50 admission; they are shown in Orbet or Beth Hall.

New Orleans Museum of Art, City Park, 488-2631. Sun.18: *The Seven Samurai*, Kurosawa's classic, shown once at 1 p.m., free with Museum admission.

Prytania, 5339 Prytania, 895-4513. Through Thurs.15: *Lonely Hearts*—not the Nathanael West novel (which, in three separate tries, has never been filmed properly), but an Australian comedy about a middle-aged piano tuner and a young woman trying to escape what looks to be a spinsterish imprisonment within her family. Fri.16 through Jan.5: *The Return of Martin Guerre*, directed by (an unknown quantity to us) Daniel Vigne, set in 1557 and with



Johnny Rivers, Riverboat President, Dec.10.



Shari Lewis with the New Orleans Symphony, Dec.22.



Joan Crawford in *Mildred Pierce*, Saenger, Dec.12.

SEASON'S GREETINGS from THE BACKBEATS



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Sat.3 Radiators	Thurs.15 The Flestones	Thurs.29 Mrs. Bates
Wed.7 The Hands	w/The Uptights	Fri.30 The Sheiks
Thurs.8 Bas Clas & The Batteries	Fri.18 Woodenhead	Sat.31 The Sheiks
Fri.9 Alison & The Distractions	Wed.21 The Raffey's	

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Gerard Depardieu as a (no doubt loutish) *moyen-age* Enoch Arden—a peasant returning from the wars—which reminds us of Billy Wilder's great suggestion for the film he most wanted to make: a Middle Ages romance about the Crusades beginning with the knights going off to fight the Saracens and locking their wives into their chastity belts. "The rest of the story," said Wilder, "centers on the village locksmith, played by Cary Grant."

Saenger, 524-0876. A series of Sunday evening double features, each beginning at 8, five bucks a shot. Sun.5: two John Wayne films, *Flying Tigers* and *Rio Grande*, the latter of which—a 1950 John Ford—always makes me, marshmallow that I am, weep real tears at its end when Wayne and Maureen O'Hara and his estranged son (Claude Jarman Jr.) are reunited. In between there is much stately movement of cavalry troops, much Irish low comedy (Victor McLaglen, natch) and a bit too much harmonizing from the Sons of the Pioneers, in other words, business as usual in Ford Country. Sun.12: Joan Crawford night (nurses on duty), with *Queen Bee*, a 1955 rarity in which Joan makes everyone's life a torment (including, if I recall correctly, Betsy Palmer, who thoroughly deserves it) and is also (again if I recall correctly) a sort of Sacher-Masoch version of *Harriet Craig*, which is pretty clinical to begin with, and *Mildred Pierce*, that 1945 apotheosis which involves family life, the restaurant business, the class struggle and crime in a witty and entirely appropriate manner—Joan's somnambulist/apprehensive performance is also entirely appropriate, and there are emblematic performances from Eve Arden, Zachary Scott, Jack Carson and even Butterfly McQueen, who has the film's gut line: dredging chickens for frying on the frenetic opening night of Mildred's restaurant, she exclaims to Crawford and Carson, "This is so exciting—just like my wedding night!" Sun.19: *Bringing Up Baby*, which is in its highly rarefied way, perfection—the dog is especially good and this is the film where Cary Grant tells May Robson—upon greeting her at the door in a woman's kimono—that he's "just gone gay all of a sudden!" Katharine Hepburn is the heiress, Asta plays George the dog, and also *The Philadelphia Story*, from Philip Barry's play and directed in a crushed velvet style by George Cukor, but also a relatively laughless comedy. Ruth Hussey proves that she was one of the great underrated second-lead actresses, and Virginia Weidler is bearable (which is going some) but I wonder why this is always revived but never Cukor's *Holiday*, also from Philip Barry and also with Grant and Hepburn; Roland Young plays the ne'er-do-well father, James Stewart the young man from the picture magazine.

TUCP Series, McAlister Auditorium, 865-5143. Mostly new films. Fri.2: *King of Comedy*, with Jerry Lewis and Robert de Niro, at 8; *The Hunger* (to be shunned) with Catherine Deneuve and David Bowie as New Wave vampires and Susan Sarandon as their chief victim, at midnight. Sat.3: *Octopussy*, Sun.4: *Hang 'Em High*, early (1967 or so) Clint Eastwood. Wed.7: *Lovesick*. Thurs.8: *War Games*.

PLAYS

Contemporary Arts Center, 900 Camp St., 523-1216. Thurs.1 through Sun.18: *The Tooth Of Crime* by prolific Sam Shepard, who manages to be a Hollywood leading man sort of, and also the most acclaimed "avant-garde" dramatist in America at the same time. Call the C.A.C. for ticket information.

Minacapelli's Dinner Theatre, 7901 S. Claiborne, 888-7000. *The Owl and The Pussycat*, a fairly brassy "romp" about a mild bookish sort and a somewhat strident hooker and how their romance causes them to reverse their world-views or some such. Reservations.

Theatre Marigny, 616 Frenchmen, 944-2653. Tennessee Williams' *The Rose Tattoo*, described as a comedy by its

author, about the Gulf Coast widow Serafina and her worship for her deceased truck-driver husband, her problems when she meets what might be a similar man, her daughter and a sailor and a (symbolic) goat and two snippy Wasp types who make her life profoundly miserable. Call the theatre for performance dates and times.

Toulouse Theatre, 615 Toulouse, 522-7852. Wednesdays through Sundays at 7:30, *One Mo' Time*, which threatens to become New Orleans' answer to *The Fantasticks*, beginning at 7:30.

Tulane Theatre, off Freret and McAlister, so this must be the Phoenix Playhouse, 865-5360. Through Dec.3: *The Glass Menagerie*, Tennessee Williams' play about a somewhat defeated Southern belle, her crippled daughter, her moody-dreamy son and a gentleman caller. A lovely play that has been overshadowed by the subsequent turns taken by Williams' work (the late *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* is a return, not totally successful, to the style and to St. Louis itself as a setting).

ART

Aaron-Hastings Gallery, 1130 St. Charles, 525-5858. Through Dec.8: Tallahassee painter, Geoffrey Lardiére. Sat.10 through Jan.5: Spooky figurative stuff by Jacksonville artist Patricia Way, described by Our Art Critic as "Vietnam veteran nightmares."

Academy Gallery, 5256 Magazine, 899-8111. Sat.3 through Wed.21: New work by long-time Newcomb faculty member Pat Trivigno.

Arthur Roger, 3005 Magazine, 895-5287. Through Dec.8: paintings and sculptures by Ida Kohlmeier. Sat.10 through Jan.5: paintings by Adrian Deckbar, whose clarity of technique usually conceals something quite murky, and paintings and photographs by James DeSana.

Blenville Gallery, 1800 Hastings Place, 523-5889. In the first part of the month, local potters display their wares, Turkish market fashion. In the latter half of the month, work by Georgia artist Charles Malin and Baton Rouge ceramicist Isume Ito.

Contemporary Arts Center, 900 Camp, 523-1216. Through Sun.18: *Victims and Violations*, a cheery pre-holiday show in a sweeping genre we're partial to (suppose you'd have to include all those merry and ecstatic martyrdoms in here, and Renaissance battle scenes, etc.), with contributions by nine national and local artists including Leon Golub, an old master at big, enraged figures, Peter Dean and Peter Sahl. In the back gallery, ceramicist Toby Buonagurio and photographer Susan Austin, and upstairs, *State of the Art: Mississippi*.

Delgado Fine Arts Gallery, 483-4048. Through Tues.6: glass art by Deborah Stanitz, Mark Rosenbaum and Cynthia Butler Rasche.

Galerie Jules Laforgue, 2119 Decatur, 945-7379. Through Thurs.29: *George Dureau's Most Famous Model*, fifty photographs of human-torso-legless-wonder B.J. Robinson (who last we heard, was in prison in New York for running a gang of subway pickpockets—the idea of cripple as crime czar is almost Brechtian), taken over the last five years.

Galerie Simonne Stern, 2727 Prytania, 895-2452. Through Dec.8: new works by painter/performance artist Jesse Poimboeuf, who on Sat.3, will present a performance piece *And the Mice Kept Me Awake (Euclid)*. Sat.10 through Jan.5: *Christmas Show/Miniatures*, small scale works by Galerie S.S. artists.

A Gallery For Fine Photography, 5432 Magazine, 891-1002. Through the end of the month: platinum prints and photogravures by English pioneer P.H. Emerson.

Gasperi Folk Art Gallery, 831 St. Peter, 524-9373. Through the end of the month: sandstone and marble sculptures by Ernest "Pop-Eye" Reed.

Historic New Orleans Collection, 533 Royal Street, 523-4662. Wed.7 through Jan.27: *Sugar Bowl: 50th Anniversary Ex-*

hibition, a show of memorabilia of happier times when Tulane Stadium was still among the living, including ancient pigskins, trophies, photographs and a 30-minute film.

Gallier House, 1118-32 Royal Street. Through Epiphany (and no later, one would hope), *Christmas Dress*, showing what extravagant fun Christmas was among those Victorians using items from the Gallier House collection.

Longue Vue Gardens, 7 Bamboo Road, 488-5488. Decorative arts: Sat. and Sun., 10 and 11: Christmas weekend with traditional music and decorations. Fri.18: a lecture and demonstration on antique dolls in Christmas dress (or holiday drag, in the vulgate) by Mary Anne DeBois Blanc.

Louisiana State Museum, on Jackson Square and elsewhere. Tues.13 through December, an 1850 Christmas restaged in the Lower Pontalba. At the Old Mint on Esplanade, *New Orleans Jazz and Carnival in New Orleans*. At the Presbytere, continuing: *Spirit World: Photographs and Journal* by Michael P. Smith, *Six City Sites and Louisiana, Exploration and Settlement*, which is cartographic in nature.

Mario Villa Gallery, 3908 Magazine, 897-8731. Sat.3 through Sat.24: sculpture by Brian Borrello as well as a Christmas group show.

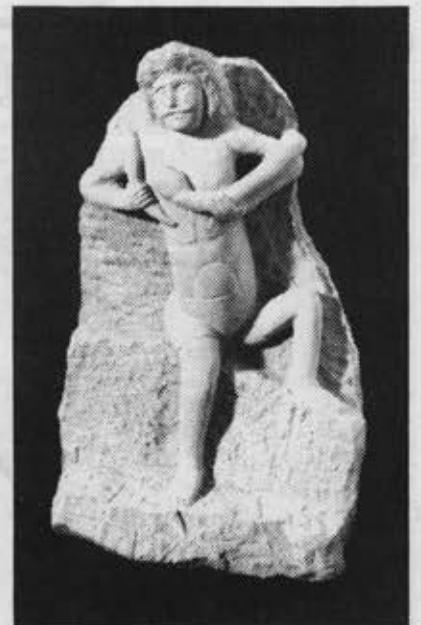
New Orleans Museum Of Art, City Park, 488-2631. Through Jan.15: *A Myriad of Autumn Leaves: Japanese Art from the Kurt and Millie Gitter Collection, A Classical Approach to Photography*, by Leslie Gill.

Optima Studio, 2025 Magazine, 522-9625. Through Thurs.8: paintings by Robert Ruello and Mimi Kubnick. Sat.10 through Jan.5: paintings by Larry Zink. Panel discussions second Wednesday of each month.

Tilden-Foley, 933 Royal, 522-7728. Through the end of the month: a group show of artists on the Gallery's roster.

Tilden-Foley, 4119 Magazine, 897-5300. Sat.10 through Sat.24: the grand opening show, made up of three score small pieces by about 20 gallery artists from all over the South.

UNO Fine Arts Gallery, Lakefront Campus, 286-6493. Through Wed.9: Sculptures by Julia Withers. Sun.11 through Jan.27: A show of undergraduate work.



Man and a Snake by Ernest "Pop-Eye" Reed at the Gasperi Folk Art Gallery.



Traci Nelson at Tipitina's, Dec.2.



The Topcats (in younger days, with friend) at Sugar Mill.

Guitar Slim (cont'd from page 20)

Parish] and get the same mob. Even the people who knew him to say 'Hi' to in the streets would think nothing of driving 100 miles to go see him that same night."

When the first Electric Fender basses came on the market, Slim wanted one for his band and talked Lambert into buying one. Although Lambert became one of the first electric bass players, Earl King says that it took a lot of convincing on Slim's part to prod him into buying the new bass.

"When he saw that B.B. King's band had one that was it. Slim wanted everything electric. If Slim would have had all the gadgetry that's out today it would be ridiculous. When the Cadillacs came out with all that gadgetry he was just like a little kid. He just marvelled over that—seats moving, water shooting."

Slim stayed so busy that Specialty had to arrange to record while the group was touring. Lambert recalled that the second Specialty session took place at Chess Studios in Chicago, and produced Slim's next big seller, "Sufferin' Mind," in 1955, with Art Rupe flying in from L.A. to produce.

Rupe, however, took it upon himself to bury Slim's guitar way down in the mix, and even added a Hammond organ. The session lost a little of the New Orleans feel, but it was identifiable Slim just the same. His final Specialty session took place in early 1956, and was recorded out in Los Angeles, before he switched to the Atlantic/Atco label.

Even though Slim's record sales began dipping, he was still a top attraction. He and the band criss-crossed the country, playing to overflow houses. When he came in off the road he would spend the days in a lazy manner usually drinking with friends in the Dew Drop or in Thibodaux at the Sugar Bowl.

Atlantic recorded Slim both in New York and at Cosimo's, according to Lambert. There was little departure from the last Specialty sessions (although voices were occasionally added and the horn section beefed up) largely due to the strength of Lloyd Lambert's tight band. Atlantic must have been somewhat disappointed though in their attempts with Slim. They had visions of crossing his records into the teenage market on the same scale Chess had done with Chuck Berry, but with little success. As

it would turn out, his last Atco session in 1958 would produce the prophetically titled "When There's No Way Out" and "If I Had My Life To Live Over."

Despite doctors' warnings about his heavy drinking, by 1958, Slim was really sick and getting weaker, so much so that he was unable to travel and forced to stay in Thibodaux. "I wouldn't say he was a pretty good drinker," says Lambert. "He was the best! Slim just wouldn't take care of himself. He lived fast, different women every night. I'd try and tell him to eat good and get his rest, but he'd say, 'Lloyd, I live three days to y'all's one. The world won't owe me a thing when I'm gone.'"

Earl King gives some insight into the last days of Guitar Slim: "Slim got ruptured [from riding the guitar on stage] and I think that's what caused him to drink more than he ever had. Man, when he came in off that last tour, he almost had to wear a truss.

"I went over to visit him in Thibodaux when he was sick and he had empty 100 proof bottles laying all over his room. The doctor told him to stay off that hard liquor, but what are you gonna tell a guy who drinks a pint of gin and chases it with a fifth of black port every day?"

Strangely enough, Slim had quit drinking the last months of his life, according to some. "Slim was getting ready to go on another tour," continues Earl. "Slim sat in the Dew Drop one night and he was talking very straight and serious. He told me, 'Earl, all this liquor I been drinkin', all the wrong things I been thinkin', you know my body's been slowly sinkin'."

"That's when I went over and asked Hosea Hill, 'Is there somethin' wrong with Slim?' and he said, 'No, he's fine, he just got out of the hospital, and he's not even drinkin.' Why do you ask that?' I said, 'Cause Slim talks too straight tonight, he's not funny. He's never under the weather about anything.' That was the last time I saw him."

In February 1959, the group embarked on a tour of dances and nightclubs in New York State. "We went up to Rochester," recalls Lloyd Lambert, "and Slim came up to me and said, 'Lloyd, I'm tired, I don't think I can make it no more. Y'all got a good band, you can get another singer.'

"I said, 'Come on Slim, you can make it. You just been with a broad or something.'

"He said, 'No, Lloyd, my time is up.' So we played the dance and when it came time for Slim to come on, he could only do part of the first song

and couldn't finish.

"So we drove to Newark to play the next night, and Slim played the gig but he collapsed right after. One of the valets ran and got a doctor, and the doctor looked at Slim and said, 'Man, check this man into a hospital, he's really sick.'"

"We were gonna stay in New York 'cause that's where our next date was. So we drove up to the Ceecil Hotel, and I sent the valet across to take Slim to the doctor, while I checked into the hotel. When I got to the desk, there was a telephone call waitin' for me from the valet. He said, 'Lloyd, Slim's dead.' I didn't believe it 'cause I'd just seen him not more than five minutes before. We got in the station wagon and drove 'round the corner to the doctor's. But sure enough Slim was layin' up on the table gone."

Word on Slim's death was slow getting back to New Orleans. The *Louisiana Weekly* was a full week late in its announcement. "Somebody knocked up on my door and said 'Slim's dead,'" says Earl. "I said, 'Man, that can't be true. People like Slim don't die. They're still here when I'm gone.'"

"It wasn't liquor that killed him," specifies Lambert. "The doctor said it was bronchial pneumonia. Today they might could have saved him, but all that drinking and hard living brought his resistance down."

Slim's body was kept in New York by authorities to see if drugs were involved in his death. Hosea Hill eventually paid the fare to fly Slim's body back to Thibodaux for a massive funeral at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church. Guitar Slim now lies in an unmarked grave next to his benefactor, Hosea Hill.

So ended the all-too-short life span of the 32-year-old Guitar Slim. He is survived by several common law wives, and a number of children, one of whom plays guitar in the small clubs around New Orleans and who keeps Slim's name alive. Hardly a year has passed since his death when someone doesn't rerecord one of his songs. Earl King's 1982 version of Slim's anthem, "It Hurts To Love Someone" only reinforces the timelessness of his work.

Almost everyone is adamant about what would have happened if Slim were alive today. "He'd have been on the scale of a B.B. King or a Ray Charles," says Earl King. Lloyd Lambert states simply, "No question about it. Guitar Slim would have been the biggest." ■

Booker (cont'd from page 27)

professional envy for each other, in spite of their friendship. I don't know how to phrase this but music and politics is the same thing. Music has a very political nature. The music business as an enterprise has more of a commercial nature than it has an artistic nature. When the artistic nature combines with the commercial nature and goes over—beautiful. But if the artistic product is denied certain freedoms...

"The record company is a loan company. I remember I used to borrow money from record companies and they'd say, 'Look, remember now, Booker, we're not a loan company.' And I said, 'Oh, yes you are!'

"If you're gonna pay the musician \$3,000 for so many sides and then deduct the money when my royalties come in, you're a loan company. You're a loan company that's loaning me money—don't tell me you're not a loan company."

Booker mentioned that Jerry Wexler had got him some work connected with the soundtrack for Louis Malle's *Pretty Baby*, shot on location in New Orleans and starring Brooke Shields. Booker called Wexler's aid "a little bite."

"Why can't a man like that," Booker asked, "who tells me how great I am—why can't he help me? Is it because of my attitude? Is my attitude so

unorthodox? The last time I saw Jerry Wexler, he had very high compliments for me.

"Whatever faults a man can find with me, those faults exist all over—not only in the entertainment industry but in each and every business there is. There are times when my biggest fault gets to be getting on the telephone. I might call Jerry five times a day but the man is so busy—he's *somewhere*, he might be in Cairo, Egypt, or something.

"I don't know whether to take a crap or go blind because it's totally beyond my comprehension why I know some of the biggest people in the world and I have not made \$10,000 a week in my life and they all tell me I'm the greatest thing they've ever heard and the most unique thing they've ever heard. Everybody writes nice things about me.

"It's incomprehensible to me. I don't have no combination of faults that the average entertainer doesn't have—especially the successful ones.

"One of the faults that I don't like about myself is my extravagance. I detest that because I know too much about economy to participate in extravagance. But if that's one of my natural faults, it's not as bad as quite a few others that *could be* top priorities."

Booker then expressed the notion that the record companies might have permanently blacklisted him "but I don't ever intend to hear no honest answer but I'm entitled to draw whatever conclusions I wish and me drawing the conclusions that I decided to

draw and seeing concrete evidence of it, makes me say, 'Man, don't you think it's time to just go ahead and throw the towel in?' Or should you just be as stubborn as a mule and let 'em know that they cannot freeze you out?

"That's a hell of a challenge. I'm not in the position to challenge anyone because I come from a family that was not poverty-stricken, but now I'm a grown man. I have responsibilities that fall in certain categories. It gets difficult in a case like mine where you have collection agencies hounding you and threatening you and all that kinda shit."

Europe, Booker said, is where they know how to live. There are doctors willing to prescribe morphine derivatives for one's throbbing bones and when Europeans produce music festivals, they spare no expense.

"That's the way to be," Booker concluded. "Like that old governor said a long time ago—what's his name? Huey Long? He said, 'Every man a king.'"

"And if he handles the ivories right, he's the Ivory Emperor. If he's just a piano player that ought to be making zillions and ain't, he ain't nothing but a Piano Prince.

"I fell into all those categories. Sometimes it flattens me and gives me reason to smile and sometimes it makes me laugh on the outside and cry on the inside." ■

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Sat.17 — Zachary Richard

Fri.23 — TBA

Sat.24 — Charles Neville

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1983 Band Guide



In February, **Wavelength** will publish its annual Band and Booking Agent Guide, a comprehensive list of the working bands and musicians in the New Orleans area, with all the pertinent information—addresses, phone numbers, members' names, what kind of music, agent's name, and anything else you might want to add.

After almost a year, we still receive requests for last year's Guide from people who are looking for bands, and since **Wavelength** goes all over Louisiana and the Gulf South, club owners and bookers in other cities and states often want to find the bands they read about in **Wavelength**. Don't miss out on a job because a club owner can't find you!

To get your band listed, fill out the form below (use an index card if you don't want to mutilate your copy of **Wavelength**) and send it to us as soon as you can, along with a black and white photo (non-returnable) if you have one. A listing in the Band Guide is free, of course. **Deadline: January 1.**

Wavelength, P.O. Box 15667, New Orleans, LA 70175

Please list our band in your 1983 Band Guide.

BAND NAME _____
TYPE OF MUSIC _____
BOOKING AGENT-PHONE NO. _____
MEMBERS NAMES _____

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It takes a lot of pull to get the funkier band in the world to play on your birthday, but Ziggy Modeliste, being the drummer for the Meters, has a little pull with that group, so on Zig's birthday, December 28, there will be a Meters reunion at Tipitina's. Everybody's invited...Earl King and Walter Washington are back from Holland where they played to sold-out audiences at an outdoor music festival...Tommy Ridgley has released his own single, "Live While You Can," and "Sometimes You Get It Some Times You Don't" on his Tudor label...Definitely check out Chuck Simmons' new single "Love Motivation" and "Love You Like Me," both sides great rocking R&B. Get it...That Johnny Adams session for Rounder that we reported was to happen in the summer will finally take place this month. The session had to be postponed because of contractual problem with another record company...Eddie Kirkland, a bluesman who has made a number of great records since the 1950's with John Lee Hooker among others, has been a recent regular attraction here in New Orleans. Don't miss him if you have the chance...Mighty Sam moved back to Pensacola after his band Brownsville disbanded.

Doug Kershaw was named Louisiana's official ambassador of music by the World's Fair during his Blue Room stint...Rock and Country Rec-

ords, Box 83, S-310 58 Vessigebro, Sweden, has reissued the 1950's Spade sides recorded by Bogalusa rocker Vern Pullens...Sound Engineers Roberta Grace and Skip Godwin have left Sea-Saint Studios...Some of Elvis Presley's Louisiana Hayride shows will be released in album form, but will be available only through mail order—thanks, Marshall.

Recent attractions on Cox Cable's Music Makers, besides Mason Ruffner and the Blues Rockers and Boogie Bill Webb, were Tuts Washington and The Wild Magnolias...Speaking of The Wild Magnolias, they recently visited Washington, where they entertained at the Smithsonian and New York and were enthusiastically received...A new Dr. John album should be on the market by the time you read this...The Dirty Dozen's first album should be on the shelf soon, too.

Kenner Mayor Aaron Broussard has joined pal Ronnie Lamarque at Studio In The Country to record a 1960's style single. Apparently singing is nothing new to either of the artists; Broussard was lead vocalist with The Other Guys from 1965 to 1968 and Lamarque sang with The Nobles, a Fifties group that is still performing today. The Kenner Community Theatre will receive benefits from the record, which will be sold, naturally, at the Kenner City Hall and Lamarque Ford.

The Raffey's have recorded a "hot rockin' version" of "Silent Night" for

1983 Christmas release. (Remember, boys, that got Huey "Piano" Smith in trouble way back when.)...Red Shift (a displacement of a spectrum toward longer wavelengths, something we can relate to) is a new magazine from the Midwest that "seeks to increase one's spectrum to a higher degree of understanding in the realms of alternative music and to combat the mediocrity and blatant commercialism that runs rampant in today's music scene." Members of the Lionel Ritchie fan club can subscribe for \$6 a year at R.S., P.O. Box 513, Dekalb, IL 60115.

Ellen DeGeneres won Showtime's local "Funniest Person In America" contest and Wynton Marsalis was written up in Time Magazine...We knew them when!

Ramsey McLean, heard lately playing in the Survivors with Ziggy, Charles Neville and Reggie Houston, received a call from punk idol Richard Hell last month. Hell is looking for a couple of New Orleans musicians to help him record—you're not going to believe this—Benny Spellman's "Lipstick Traces."

The Sponges—Rick Connick, Mick Fisse and David McGee—have regrouped and will debut around the end of December...Lady BJ is moving to Houston late this month to perform in a long-running tribute to Billie Holiday. There'll be a farewell concert for her at The Saxony December 18.

One of the most popular bands in New Orleans, Persia, has broken up. Lillian Axe has acquired Persia's drummer...Traci Borges Knight Studio chief, has a new progressive country album out under his stage name The Dynamic Beau Jazz (B.J. is T.B.'s stage name). Borges just recently finished writing an album for one of Sha Na Na, Donnie York, entitled Louisiana Hey! Rides Again.

Prestige Records has a new double album in the works called The Jazz Singers featuring the vocal gymnastics of Satchmo, Fats Waller, Bessie Smith and twenty other jazz greats...One of Ivan Neville's recent tunes has found its way onto an upcoming Boz Scaggs release...Marcia Kavanaugh's new show on WYES, New Orleans Survival and Celebration, aired last month with a theme song by Allen Toussaint performed by her band The Lost Boys.

News from the band Atchafalaya: "On Sept. 13 we played a celebration at the Butte La Rose exit of Interstate 10. The party was to commemorate the signing of a bill, by the Governor, to purchase and save parts of the Atchafalaya Basin for protecting wilderness areas in the state. We played at around 12 noon. People from all over the U.S. were pulling in at this rest area and staying to dance and party with us. We were announcing to them that Louisiana has bands that play at rest areas every day at 12 noon, and we had some people believing it!!!"

What do The Sheiks and The Fabulous Thunderbirds have in common? They're both on Miller Beer's Rock Network. "What that means is free beer for everybody!" boasts the recent Sheiks newsletter, quickly followed by a "Just Kidding!" We've got the time...

Mac Rebennack is currently playing in England and Clarence "Frogman" Henry is going back to Great Britain in March to tape a television special...Clark Vreeland is in Boston, home of the bean, doing studio work...Legendary New Orleans drummer Earl Palmer was in town recently for a national union meeting. Earl is treasurer of the Los Angeles Musicians Union.

After reading a news item in the New York Times about Gotham's "Jazz On The Ferry" celebration (which often includes ersatz New Orleans Dixieland combos such as "The Band From Rampart Street," who actually hail from Port Washington, Long Island), Jesse Core suggests New Orleans counterattack with a group called the Real Rampart Street Band and have an inner city playoff on (North) Rampart Street.

The Fanzine Spotlight this month falls on T.B.S. Publications, 4 Costley Ct., Kent, Ohio 44240, whose fall '83 catalog lists a wide variety of music/art/lit 'zines from "Flipper, NO!" (stories, poems, pictures about a dog named Flipper and all her furry friends) to "The T.B.S. Calendar 1984, Dec. '83 to Jan. '85, refund if world ends sooner."

Tipitina's

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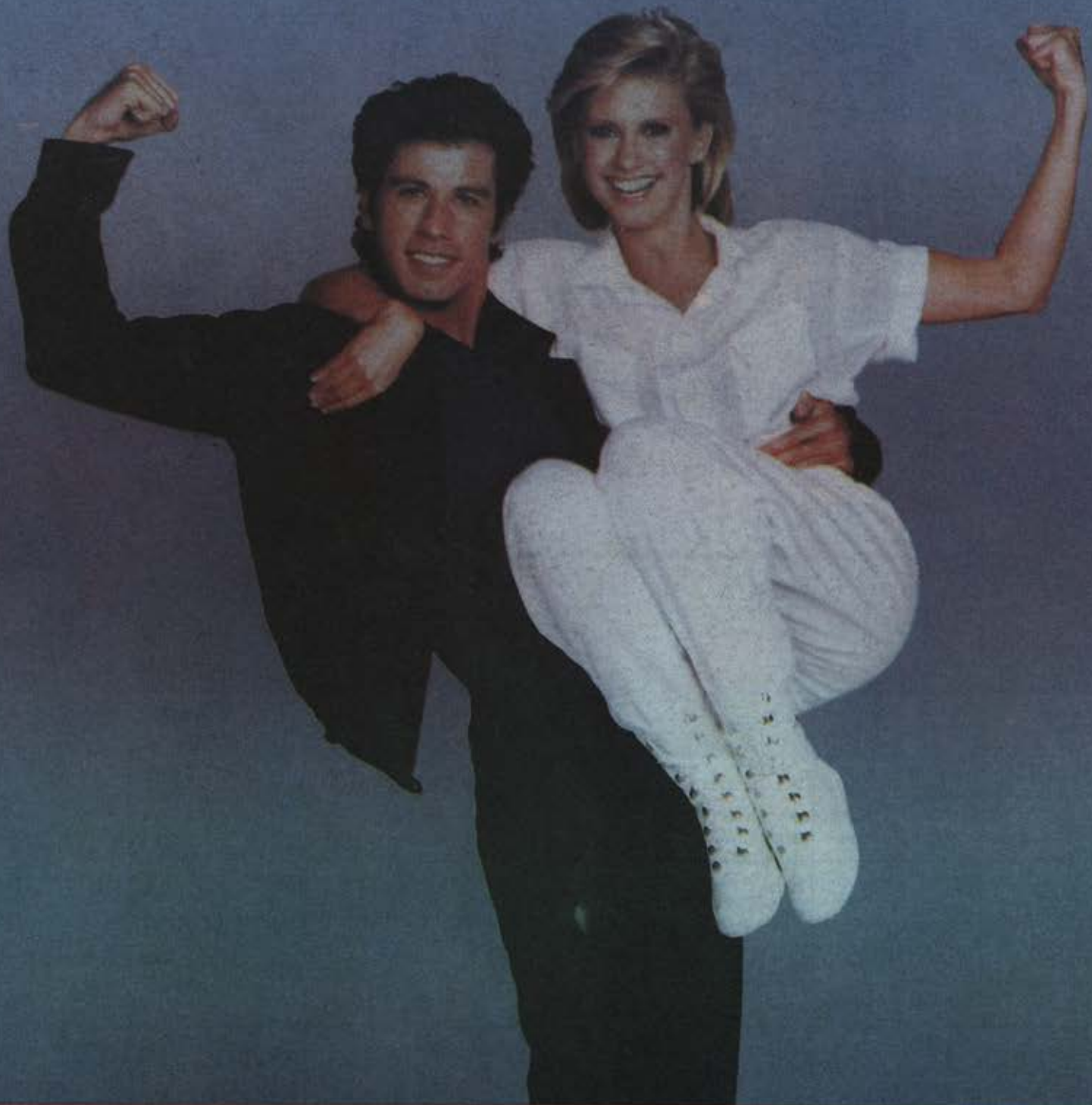
DECEMBER 1983

MUSIC STARTS AT 9:30 MONDAY—THURSDAY
10:30 P.M. FRIDAY—SUNDAY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		29	30	1	2	3
		BONNIE RAITT		ZIGANOLA	TRACY NELSON	DEACON JOHN'S BLUES REVUE <small>featuring Earl King, Walter Washington, J.D. Hill, Sadie Blake & J.Monque'D.</small>
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
KIDD JORDAN'S ELEKTRIK BAND <i>Africa Suite</i> 9 p.m.	SPENCER BOHREN	ALLISON & THE DIS-TRACTIONS	SLEEPY LABEEF	8 ALL WE ARE SAYING A tribute to John Lennon in a benefit for CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament)	LOS LOBOS plus special guest BOURRE	THE RADIATORS
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
CLOSED	SPENCER BOHREN	THE NIGHTHAWKS		GREEN ON RED	BUDDY GUY & JR. WELLS	THE NEVILLE BROTHERS
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
"PROFESSOR LONGHAIR'S MEMORIAL MAMBO"	TUTS WASHINGTON	TBA	TBA	WOODEN-HEAD	THE RADIATORS	TBA
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
CLOSED	SPENCER BOHREN & JOHN MOONEY	TBA	The Original METERS	DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND	THE NEVILLE BROTHERS	THE RADIATORS

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