

NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions

By Ned Hémard

Jazz Fest Family Ties

The 46th annual New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival came to a close Sunday, May 3, 2015, with attendance figures the largest since before Hurricane Katrina. The festival's producers approximated the crowds at 460,000, an increase of 25,000 from the previous year. Jazz Fest even had to shut down its stages an hour early on the first Friday of the Fest (April 24) due to severe weather.

Big name acts like Elton John, The Who, Jimmy Buffett, Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga and "The Killer," Jerry Lee Lewis, performed this year. Saturday (May 2) had three highly popular headliners: On the Congo Square Stage was Clifford Joseph Harris, Jr., aka T.I., American rapper, record producer and actor. Elton John hit the Acura Stage and former London street busker Ed Sheeran wowed the crowds from the Gentilly Stage (opening with his two hits, "I'm a Mess" and "Lego House"). Great music and sublime weather on a Saturday made for a fantastic day at the Fair Grounds.

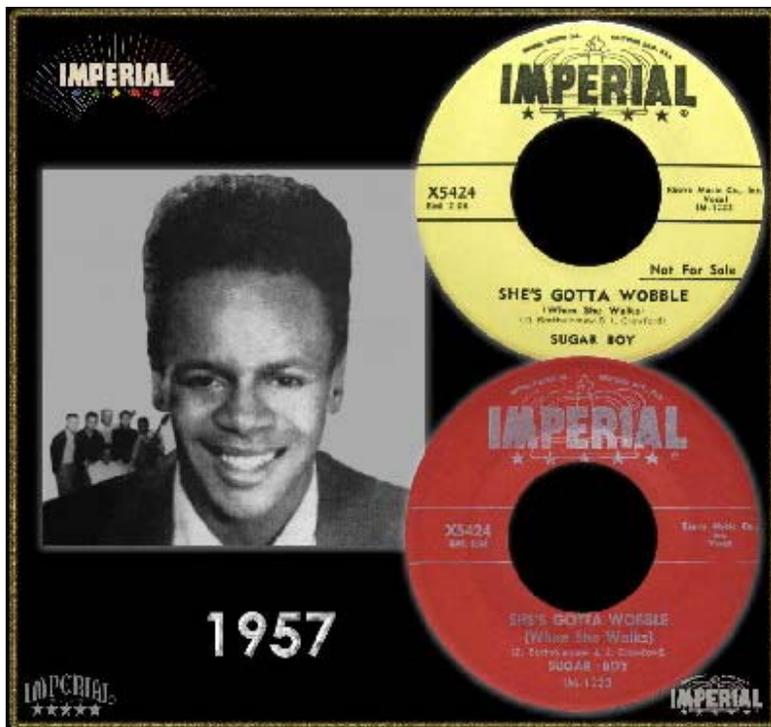


Dr. John and Davell Crawford at Jazz Fest

Other crowd favorites played the Fest, too, such as Steve Winwood, the indomitable O'Jays and Reggae icon Jimmy Cliff. Local faves were on hand to please, as well, such as Irma Thomas, The Meters and Dr. John. And on Sunday, Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue closed the Acura Stage to a greater audience than the year before.

Shorty's cousin, Glen David Andrews was back this year and Davell Crawford presented a wonderful tribute to Fats Domino, entitled "To Fats with Love." Dr. John's tribute was to Louis Armstrong and was called "Ske Dat De Dat ... The Spirit of Satch."

Jazz Fest has always been about outstanding New Orleans inspired music and some interesting family musical ties. For example, pianist and singer Davell Crawford is the grandson of 1950s New Orleans R&B star James "Sugar Boy" Crawford, who composed and recorded "Jock-A-Mo" in 1954, a hit that was later recreated as "Iko Iko" for the Dixie Cups and others. Davell carries on the important New Orleans piano tradition begun by musicians like Henry Roeland "Roy" Byrd, aka Professor Longhair, and James Booker.



*James "Sugar Boy" Crawford (way ahead of his time)
with "She's Gotta Wobble"*

To explore some additional family musical ties, let's return to the beginning. Gospel, Jazz and the rich tradition of New Orleans brass marching bands all came together back in April of 1970 at Congo Square (that's the original Congo Square) at the first Jazz Fest. It was there that George Wein, producer of the festival, handed Mahalia

Jackson the microphone as the Eureka Brass Band and its second-line contingent arrived. With hometown pride and her superlative talent she spontaneously sang along and paraded with the band. That defining moment launched the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival into one of the city's greatest cultural events.



*New Orleans born "Queen of Gospel" Mahalia Jackson
(October 26, 1911 – January 27, 1972) at the first Jazz Fest*

Jazz Fest for New Orleanians is an ever-changing feast, although some names endure. Fats Domino and Pete Fountain were at the very first Jazz Fest and they both returned to the festival stages the year after experiencing the full wrath of Katrina. They both lost their homes, valuable instruments and vintage memorabilia. For a while we were worried Fats was lost forever. But they both came back.

Some of the first year's performers (Mahalia Jackson, Al Hirt, Duke Ellington, Snooks Eaglin and Clifton Chenier) are no longer with us. New talent continues to emerge as beloved artists of the past are lost to time. And with each new star there is a wonderful history that links other great musicians to each other and with continuing musical families. The Nevilles represent one dynasty that was there at the beginning and keeps going strong, but there are others.

This year, Trombone Shorty (real name Troy Andrews) was a "headliner" at the Fest. What follows are the words I wrote about this young man and his family nine years ago:

One fascinating family tree includes an exciting talent, Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews. Appearing at Jazz Fest on April 30, 2006, he is young, dynamic, but not what one would call new on the scene. A child of Tremé and performing professionally since age four, Troy's roots are rich in Jazz and New Orleans Rhythm and Blues. His great grandfather, Walter Nelson, was a guitarist that played with Smiley Lewis. Walter, Jr., known as "Papoose" was guitarist for Professor

Longhair and Fats Domino. His brother, Lawrence, was known as "Prince La La" and cut a fantastic record entitled "She Put The Hurt on Me" in 1961. In 1964 a singer who previously recorded under the name "Nookie Boy" would earn a new and lasting nickname for immortalizing in song (albeit inaccurately) Lawrence Nelson's mysterious 1963 death: Oliver "Who Shot The La La" Morgan.



*Young Trombone Shorty at '91 Jazz Fest
playing with Denmark's "Carlsberg Brass Band"*

Lawrence and "Papoose" Nelson's sister, Dorothy, married Jessie Hill, Troy's grandfather. Jessie had a sensational national hit in 1960 with an Allen Toussaint production of "Ooh Poo Pah Doo, Part 2" on Minit, followed by "Whip It On Me" the same year. "I Need Your Love", "Scoop Scoobie Doobie" and "Highhead Blues" are also excellent cuts and featured on the famous "Home of The Blues" Album (Volume 1).



Jessie "Ooh Poo Pah Doo" Hill at the '96 Fest

Barely Twenty and playing both the trumpet and trombone, Troy Andrews, plays an up-tempo version of "St. James Infirmary" that brings down the house. He may follow that up with "Rock With You" and have the crowd dancing away. With great breathing control, he has the charisma to demonstrate his skill and versatility. The creative cauldron of family and neighborhood, as well as discipline from the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, has gained for Troy a much-followed national reputation.

Two of his cousins play with the Rebirth band and a couple more (Revert and Glen Andrews) with the Dirty Dozen. Cousin Travis Hill plays trumpet and tuba. A brother, Terry Andrews, plays snare drum with the Lil' Rascals Brass Band.

James "12" Andrews is Troy's big brother (and mentor) and also a product of the rich Tremé musical environment where brass bands and parades are commonplace. A tap dancer on Bourbon Street as a kid, he was recruited into Danny Barker's Roots of Jazz Brass Band around age thirteen as a bass drummer. After the World's Fair, James formed the All Star Brass Band and played trumpet. After that he played with the New Birth Brass Band, a fitting name for the continuing renaissance of New Orleans music and its families.

2015: Trombone Shorty has done quite a lot since then, such as recording the successful albums *Backatown* (2010) and *For True* (2011). On February 21, 2012, Troy performed at The White House.

Born January 2, 1986, Troy Andrews is now 29 years old.

In addition, the Trombone Shorty Foundation helps schools across New Orleans receive quality band instruments donated by Andrews personally.

Boston born George Wein, who was contracted to produce the first Jazz Fest was previously the producer of the Newport Jazz Festival (1954) and the Newport Folk Festival (1959) in Newport, Rhode Island. Born in 1925, he has been called "the most famous jazz impresario," quite remarkable in that he is a "non-player."

Dick Allen, curator of Tulane University's Hogan Jazz Archives, recommended Allison Miner and Quint Davis to help produce the first Jazz Fest. Rather than going directly to Bourbon Street or other tourist spots, Miner and Davis went straight to the black clubs to recruit singers and performers. The first person they booked was Snooks Eaglin, who died in 2009. Miner, who was also instrumental in the later career of Professor Longhair, died in 1995. Quint Davis presently holds the position of CEO of Festival Productions, Inc.

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