

## NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

*Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions*

*By Ned Hémard*

### Mad Dogs and Englishmen

One of my readers contacted me recently on trying to locate the article I wrote on seersucker suits. "Can you point me in the right direction," he asked. After reminding him it was the one in the archives entitled "Civil Suits," he thanked me and replied, "I had some British clients in town a year or so ago and our opponent showed up in a seersucker suit. One of the Brits asked him if he had forgotten to take off his pajamas and I told him that if he stayed here for more than a day or so in the summertime, he would buy one."



We in New Orleans have learned to adapt to the hot weather with air conditioning, ceiling fans, sno-balls, wide covered porches and knowing how to travel several blocks downtown by taking short cuts through the lobbies of high-rise buildings. We also wear the proper attire, including seersucker, 100% cotton and linen. But our cousins from the British Empire seem to boldly go where and when the blazing sun is at its hottest.

"Mad Dogs and Englishmen" is a humorous song written by Noël Coward (December 16, 1899 – March 26, 1973) while driving in Vietnam from Hanoi to Saigon, and first performed at the Music Box Theatre in New York, on June 1, 1931, by Beatrice Lillie. In 1932, Romney Brent sang it in the revue *Words and Music*. "Since then I have sung it myself ad nauseam," wrote Coward, who thereafter made it a signature number in his cabaret act.

There was even an occasion when the song “achieved international significance,” according to Coward. At a dinner party attended by both Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the two leaders argued over whether the words “In Bangkok at twelve o’clock they foam at the mouth and run” came at the end of the first or second refrain. FDR “held firmly to the latter view,” and was indeed correct. “Mr Churchill,” wrote Coward, “admitted defeat like a man.”

Below is my take on Sir Noël’s famous song, New Orleans style:



*Mayor Landrieu in pedicab*

## **Mad Dogs and Englishmen**

In the tropical sun  
There are times to shun  
Its rays,  
When New Orleans folks perspire,

And shed all their warm attire.

It's a southern rule  
That the biggest fool  
Obeys,  
Since the sun is much too sultry  
And one must avoid its ultry-  
Violet rays.\*

Ooh-poo-pah, ooh-poo-pah, ooh-poo-pah-doo. (Repeat)  
Jock-a-mo, Jock-a-mo, Jock-a-mo fee-nah-nay. (Repeat)

Those in Gretna grieve  
when the British leave  
Their huts,  
Because they're obviously, absolutely nuts!

Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.  
Chal-mee-tians wouldn't do it.  
On the Westbank they eschew it.  
Comus queens and some Algerines  
Take naps from twelve to one,  
But Englishmen detest a  
Siesta,  
Down in New Orleans there are men of means,  
Who have special threads to wear  
In their suits of white  
They can dance all night,  
And go on without a care.  
From twelve to three  
In Arabi,  
Going outside's seldom done,  
But Mad Dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.

It's such a surprise for the Uptown eyes to see,  
That though the British are effete,  
they're quite impervious to heat,  
When it starts to burn down in English Turn,  
They flee.  
When it's time to go down in Westwego,  
Anglos stay behind with glee.

Hey, Hey, Hey, Hey, Hey Pocky-way. (Repeat)  
Who shot the La La? Waitin' for my Ya Ya, um hum. (Repeat)

It seems such a shame  
When the English claim  
The earth,  
That they give rise to such hilarity and mirth.



Mad Dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.  
A grandee from Gentilly  
Keeps his bungalow quite chilly.  
In Terrytown when the sun beats down,  
People head for the bridge and run.  
They like their fabric puckered,  
Seersuckered.  
In the Marigny, the humidity  
Is the rage of man and beast,  
But the English sort at the Windsor Court  
Merely gets a bit more creased.  
At my mama 'n nem,  
When it's twelve pm,  
Seems da yats get nuttin' done,  
But mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.

Mad Dogs and Englishmen, go out in the midday sun.  
Each Garden District lady finds a spot where it is shady.  
In the CBD, they all agree, linen suits for everyone  
To cool off every big shot, who feels hot.  
In the *Vieux Carré*, where the tourists play,  
There is peace from twelve till two.  
They all go inside  
So they won't get fried,  
But the English have no clue.  
And yet Chalmette, when people sweat,  
It's seldom if ever done,  
But mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.



*Sno-Ball choices on Plum Street*

Mad Dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.  
 The Sliver by the River  
 Run their A.C.'s till they shiver  
 In Carrollton  
 'Neath the noonday sun,  
 There's no further work that's done.  
 When the mercury is cresting,  
 they're resting.  
 And in Kenner, too, what the men will do  
 Just to stay completely cool,  
 But an English gent seems to be hell bent  
 To go out when the heat is cruel.  
 And the Metairie  
 Jet settery  
 Takes off where the skiing's fun.  
 But mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun,  
  
 Go out in the midday,  
  
 Out in the midday,

Out in the midday sun.

\*Ultra Violet, the lowermost part of St. Bernard

**NED HÉMARD**

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