

NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

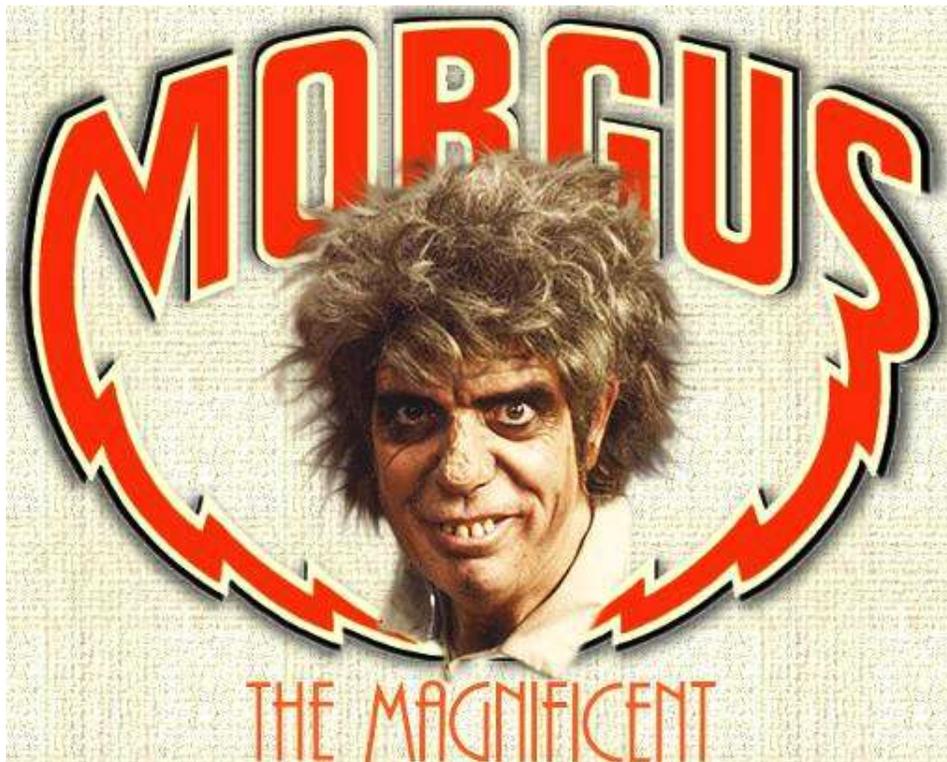
Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions

By Ned Hémard

Back in 2006, hungry for a candidate not part of the regular political establishment, I wrote the following article in praise of the Crescent City's favorite son, Morgus, the Magnificent. Although not a member of either political party, he is a member of "the Higher Order."

Morgus For Mayor

The two greatest mute comedians were undoubtedly Harpo Marx and Chopsley, long-suffering lab assistant to Dr. Momus Alexander Morgus. Chopsley quietly endured with impeccable comic timing the verbal and physical abuse from New Orleans' favorite scientific genius. With his henchman's hood, he was presumably the world's first unsuccessful face transplant, another Morgus experiment gone awry. Chopsley (at least subconsciously) must have been the inspiration for the baghead craze, the act of accepting with serene anonymity similar humiliation by the Saints (back in those un-winning pre-Drew Brees days).



Chopsley is the New Orleans "Everyman", where "all fleeth save Good-Deeds" - but Good-Deeds is incompetent. He quietly sticks around to take the same abuse he knows he must endure again. Morgus is much like elected officialdom (federal, state and local) and the Saints (before Sean Payton) rolled into one. The "House of Shock" is a metaphor for New Orleans and comic relief for its long-suffering populace. Although guinea pigs in some mad experiment, the people love Morgus as they love their city. The Crescent City is in a love-hate relationship and, like Scaramouche, "born with a gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad".



Chopsley, with hands up, telling Morgus "Oh no, please don't!"

Played deftly by the late Tommy George, Chopsley was never really at a loss for words. On one show, when asked his name, he wrote on the blackboard: "Chopsley, You Idiot."

Tommy was a member of the New Orleans band known as The Saxons who played from 1957-1965. The band would play at the Sacred Heart and St. Anthony dances and his Chopsley alter-ego would play electric guitar in live performances with Morgus. Tommy was also a St. Bernard Parish sheriff's deputy who hurt his leg very badly in a motorcycle accident. Wearing a heavy metal brace, he was always in a great deal of pain, but he brought his audience much joy.

Inept and egotistical, Morgus, The Magnificent, has always been entertaining in that he seems to make as much sense as any of the other authority figures around. With his computer-connected sycophant skull, E. R. I. C. (the voice of Ed Hoerner), crooked overbite, wildly abandoned hair and soiled lab coat with a bloody

handprint on the back, Morgus oozes scientific charm. With a laboratory above the old city icehouse and a degree from Vasco da Gama Medical School, one knows his pronouncements can only be of the highest intellectual caliber. He claims to have discovered the "speed of dark", coined the phrase "outside the box" and that it was he and not Al Gore who invented the internet.



Krewe of Mid-City Float had the right idea: "Morgus For Mayor"

First appearing on January 3, 1959, on WWL-TV, Morgus took the city by storm. A song entitled *Morgus the Magnificent* was released by "Morgus and the 3 Ghouls", two of whom were cousins Frankie "Sea Cruise" Ford and Mac "Dr. John" Rebennack. The song sold the idea that teens did not "go out to roll and rock" but stayed home to "get their kicks from the House of Shock". By Halloween, 1959, Morgus was part of the culture. That same day Lee Harvey Oswald announced in Moscow that he would never return to the United States and Billy Cannon ran his famous 89-yard punt return.

Morgus continues to rail against those "idiots of the scientific community" for, after all, he was descended from the architect of the first pyramid in Egypt and a member of "the Higher Order". With such credentials he still has trouble paying his landlady, Mrs. Fetish, the rent on time. In his earlier days, Morgus and Chopsley would perform at Pontchartrain Beach, pep rallies, parties and local events. This author remembers fondly the appearance of Morgus, with Chopsley on guitar, at a Jesuit High School Pep Rally. And who can forget Morgus' weather program? Long before the introduction of Doppler radar, Morgus had the ultra-scientific "humidity rag."



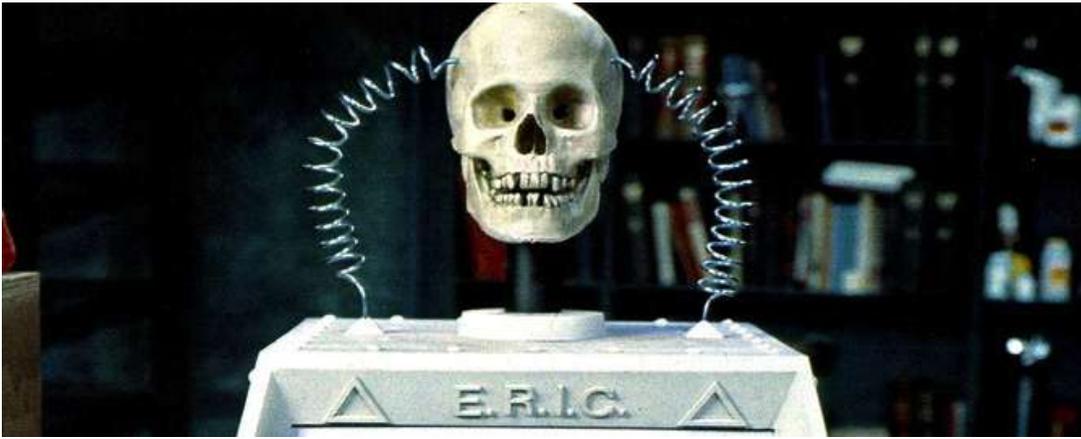
Morgus the Magnificent by "Dr. John" and Frankie Ford

In 2005, Morgus was back on the air for Cox Cable airing classic past episodes. Then came Katrina and Rita. Fans feared he was a victim of the powerful hurricane since he had gone missing. Even more, they craved his sagacity, self-confidence and ideas for the future. Where was the "humidity rag" when it came to predicting these storms? Why wasn't Morgus there to solve the city's pressing problems? Why didn't he run for mayor?

His official website soon confirmed he was safe and experimenting again. As for Morgus as the people's choice, he would probably say:

"Après le deluge, Moi!"

P. S., Since first writing this article in 2006, the very same year Sean Payton and Drew Brees joined the Saints, the Saints earned their first Super Bowl win in 2009, defeating the Indianapolis Colts by a score of 31-17. And Drew Brees, since joining the Saints, has led all NFL quarterbacks in touchdowns, passing yards and 300-yard games.



E. R. I. C., an acronym for Morgus' Eon Research Infinity Computer

In October 2011, Morgus the Magnificent was picked up by WVUE Fox 8 in New Orleans. Morgus, portrayed by Actor Sidney Noel Rideau (Sid Noel), is still much beloved by the people of New Orleans and by countless others living far beyond the city limits.

Perhaps, we should be demanding: "Morgus for President!"

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