

PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND

Preservation Hall was founded in 1961 to promote traditional New Orleans jazz in all its authenticity. Legendary players like George Lewis, Sweet Emma Barrett and Kid Thomas Valentine, all rooted in the formative years jazz, were its original stars. That generation is long gone now, yet the hall is still in business and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band continues to tour the world.

Therein lays a paradox: how does an institution based on an early 20th century musical culture prosper in the 21st century? When asked that question on the occasion of the Hall's 50th anniversary, Creative Director Ben Jaffe had a ready answer: "This anniversary is about the next fifty years."

For Jaffe, 41, this not just a business question: he's carrying on a family tradition started by his parents, Allan and Sandra Jaffe, who were instrumental in founding the Hall and turning it into an internationally known cultural icon. When Ben took over the operation in 1995, he faced the challenge of keeping it going with a dwindling band of veteran musicians and an aging audience base. His solution has been to inject the touring band with new blood, bringing in some younger players with fresh musical ideas and to form collaborations with groups and musicians from outside the New Orleans tradition. In recent years, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band (PHJB) has performed and recorded with a wide array of musicians, ranging from groups like My Morning Jacket, Tom Waits, Merle Haggard, Pete Seeger, and the Del McCoury Band. The culmination of this collaborative effort was the sellout 50th anniversary concert that the PHJB hosted at Carnegie Hall in January 2012.

This album breaks new ground for Ben and the PHJB: it's the first time in the history of the band that it has recorded an album made up of entirely original material—most of it composed by Jaffe and members of his group. The album was co-produced by Ben Jaffe and Jim James, leader of My Morning Jacket, and encouraged by songwriters Paul Williams, Dan Wilson and Chris Stapleton, who co-wrote three of the titles with the band.

Band members Charlie Gabriel, Rickie Monie, and Clint Maedgen also pitched in on some of the compositions. Once the material was written and rehearsed, Jim James and his sound engineer Kevin Ratterman drove down from Louisville with a van full of equipment and set it up among the splintery wooden benches and smoky paintings in Preservation Hall. That recording session produced the eleven tracks on this historic album.

Though it was not unheard of in the past for Preservation Hall musicians to compose some of the music they performed—drummer Paul Barbarin wrote "Bourbon Street Parade" and clarinetist George Lewis wrote "Burgundy Street Blues," for example—this album marks the first time that a substantial body of new music was created by the band and entered the Preservation Hall repertoire. This constitutes a rich lode of fresh material not only for the current members of the touring PHJB, but also for other musicians who play at the hall and may be inspired to pick up on some of these songs. In the heyday of the Jazz Age, New Orleans musicians learned new tunes all the time by listening to what their peers were doing in the dance halls and on their recordings. One of the aims of this album is to stimulate that kind of cross-pollination among today's New Orleans jazzmen.

Though some traditional jazz purists may be surprised, the broader public will hopefully find this music engaging, enthralling—and irresistibly danceable. No one who hears Jaffe's funky tuba lines, Joe Lastie's backbeat drumming and the band's groove on tunes like "The Darker it Gets" could doubt the group's traditional New Orleans roots.

On the other hand, Clint Maedgen's boozy "August Nights," with its haunting tenor sax riffs and sultry muted trumpet work by Mark Braud, is a Tom Waits-like hymn to urban despair that would be at home on any barroom jukebox in the world. The punchy horn-section riffs on "Come With Me" and "That's It" have a bite and exuberance that recall the Ellington big band sound. "I Think I Love You," is a pop tune with a Caribbean beat and a smooth, sexy vocal by 80-year-old reedman Charlie Gabriel (with Jim James singing backup).

In addition to Charlie Gabriel and Ronell Johnson ("Dear Lord Give Me the Strength," "Halfway Right, Halfway Wrong"), Fred Lonzo ("Rattlin' Bones") turns in strong vocal performances that underscore the wide variety of talent this band embraces.

In short, "That's It" is an eclectic album that draws on the collective experience of players nurtured in the New Orleans tradition, but determined to build something fresh and exciting on that foundation. It marks an important milestone in Jaffe's crusade to carry forward the Hall's original mission while making it relevant to today's audiences. For his part, co-producer Jim James is convinced that the PHJB has a future as vibrant as its past: "The music will speak forever," he says. "Will people stop listening to Beethoven? Will people stop listening to Bob Dylan? Will people stop listening to the Preservation Hall Jazz Band?"

Not if Ben Jaffe can help it. "My parents were never preservationists in any strict sense," he says. "They simply presented the music the way the old jazzmen wanted to play it. This is the music we want to play today. We'll continue to do the old standards, along with new material that allows us to be creative and relevant. With this album, I wanted to do something that would challenge us and make us proud." That's it.

ALLEN TOUSSAINT

Allen Toussaint (born January 14, 1938) is an American musician, songwriter and record producer, and one of the most influential figures in New Orleans R&B. Toussaint has crossed many paths in his illustrious 40 years plus career in music. He has produced, written for, arranged, had his songs covered by, and performed with music giants The Judds, Paul McCartney, Paul Simon, Elvis Costello, Patti LaBelle, Mac "Dr. John" Rebennack, Aaron and Art Neville, Joe Cocker, The (original) Meters, Glen Campbell, The Band, Little Feat, The Rolling Stones, Devo, Ernie K-Doe, Lee Dorsey, Irma Thomas, Etta James, Ramsey Lewis, Eric Gale and countless others.

His songs/productions have been featured in numerous films, including but not limited to, Casino, Moulin Rouge, and Maid in Manhattan. He served as Musical Director for the off Broadway play, Staggerlee, which won the prestigious Outer Circle Critics Award.

Toussaint's career began in his early twenties when hired by the local Minit Records to supervise its recording activities, awaiting their arrival of Harold Batiste. Toussaint quickly accumulated an amazing string of hits for the label; producing, writing, arranging and often performing on tracks by Ernie K-Doe, Irma Thomas, Art and Aaron Neville, Chris Kenner, and Benny Spellman, putting his signature New Orleans sound on the map, an obvious continuation of the Domino/Bartholomew era. Toussaint got his shot as a solo artist with a record for RCA. Two of his earliest tunes, "Java," which became a mega-hit for trumpeter Al Hirt and "Whipped Cream," the Herb Alpert hit, became instrumental standards. Toussaint then went on to team up with Lee Dorsey who was often backed by the funky rhythm section known as The Meters, turning out a string of hits that included "Working in the Coalmine," "Holy Cow," "Ride Your Pony" and many others. "Working in the Coalmine" was then recorded by The Judds; "Yes We Can" became a smash hit by The Pointer Sisters; "Sneaking Sally Though the Alley" was recorded by both Robert Palmer and Ringo Starr. Toussaint continued to put his mark on the music business with his arrangements on LaBelle's

hit, "Lady Marmalade," continuing on with Patti through the early stages of her solo career. After establishing himself as one of the greatest songwriters, accredited to him by BMI Music, Toussaint was honored with a Grammy nomination for the 1977's song of the year, "Southern Night," performed by Glen Campbell. Years later, "Southern Night" was featured on the MCA's Grammy nominated compilation CD – *Country, Rhythm, and Blues* – where Toussaint teamed up with Country legend Chet Atkins, to perform his hit.

His career has spanned over 40 years, all adding up to include being inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. After years of writing, producing, recording, arranging, performing and conducting, Toussaint's music is continuing on. Several of his songs are commercial themes, "Yes We Can" (Slim Fast) and "Working in the Coalmine" (Wal-Mart). His productions are continuously sampled, introducing it to an entire new arena of listeners (Louie – ODB and Lady Marmalade (Christina Aguilera, Lil Kim, Missy Elliot)). Songs "Java" and "Southern Night" have both been credited and cited for over 2 million airings. The most recent of Toussaint's long list of honors and accolades is the Grammy nominated pop/vocal album of the year, *The River in Reverse*; Toussaint's collaboration with Elvis Costello followed by *The Bright Mississippi* nomination for Best Instrumental Album. Toussaint was also awarded the Grand Prix from France's Academia du Jazz, making Toussaint the first non-traditional jazz artist to be awarded such an honor. For Toussaint, Hurricane Katrina was the best booking agent and with that he has started to tour and perform before a whole new audience.

In 2012, Toussaint was inducted into the Song Writers Hall Of Fame and The Blues Hall Of Fame. 2013 has not slowed down either –Toussaint received an honorary doctorate of Fine Arts from Tulane University along with Dr. John, Natasha Trethewey and his Holiness, the Dali Lama.

The truly amazing part is that there's more to come...