

NEW ORLEANS

SOUNDING OUT

New Orleans' famous Bourbon Street during Mardi Gras



Our man in New Orleans, Roger Hahn, profiles a world-class American city whose native music traditions are deeply rooted in cultural renewal and community celebration

Known before the American Civil War as 'Paris on the Bayou,' this historic port city has been attracting, and charming, international visitors for more than 250 years. Home to America's first resident French opera company, the Crescent City was also the only place in North America where African slaves could gather on Sunday afternoons in what is known today as Congo Square in the Tremé neighbourhood (see box) to trade goods and dance in large drumming circles. The 20th century musical history of the city is legendary: the birthplace of jazz, an early contributor to post-World War II rhythm & blues, and at the dawn of rock'n'roll, an independent recording centre and wellspring of top-shelf musical talent.

What else can you say about a city with such a towering musical reputation? Just this: New Orleans is also the place where the notion of a 20th century musical revival movement first took root, producing a traditional New Orleans jazz revival in the years leading up to World War II that continues to this day. In 1970, a series of celebratory events combining music, food, and displays of local indigenous culture created the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival – a forerunner of revival festivals

around the world. Also inherent in New Orleans' music culture is the notion that revivals can remain vital only by incorporating modern influences. So when you hear blues, jazz, rhythm & blues, funk, or even rap that's been born and bred in the Crescent City, you're listening to music that might be considered commercial but is actually far more concerned with tradition and, especially, community celebration.

More than five years after Hurricane Katrina, many outlying neighbourhoods are still rebuilding, while tourist-friendly areas are nearly all recovered, and tourism activity, for the most part, has returned to pre-Katrina levels. Visitors will discover that

TREMÉ

America's oldest African-American neighbourhood is the focus for a new TV series in which music plays a large part as it follows the lives of struggling musicians and locals post-Katrina. There's also a great soundtrack, see p13 for more info.



Treme was co-created by David Simon, the man behind the hit TV show, *The Wire*



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New Orleans is a bustling little port city with a small-town feel – historic homes ranging in appearance from awe-inspiring to run-down funky; too many cultural, culinary, and musical choices to keep track of; and an informal atmosphere where animated conversation with complete strangers, especially those native to the place, are much more the rule than the exception. The music scene reflects the city's character perfectly – a few sit-down venues with hard-and-fast set times; many more bars-and-dance floors where set times are less precise; and lots of outdoor settings where informal concerts or even the performance of a French Quarter street musician may turn out to be the surprising delight of your day.



ESSENTIALS

OffBeat Magazine

This monthly guide to music, food, and culture in New Orleans and south-west Louisiana offers an information-rich website containing articles, reviews, and, best of all, monthly music listings, searchable by day or venue.

www.offbeat.com

The Times-Picayune

New Orleans' daily newspaper and the best source for detailed music and event listings, especially the Friday standalone insert called *Lagniappe* (local vernacular for 'a little something extra').

www.nola.com/music

Louisiana Music Factory

New Orleans and Louisiana CDs in all conceivable categories. Two substantial banks of in-store listening stations, plus a small stage for Saturday in-store performances. They also stock books, videos, DVDs, used CDs and classic vinyl. Extremely knowledgeable staff.

www.louisianamusicfactory.com

WWOZ 90.7-FM

Your pipeline to the heartbeat of the music community. Listener-supported, volunteer-programmed, the station features a daily music calendar, frequent guest drop-ins, and live streaming around the world.

www.wwoz.org

CLUBS

Preservation Hall

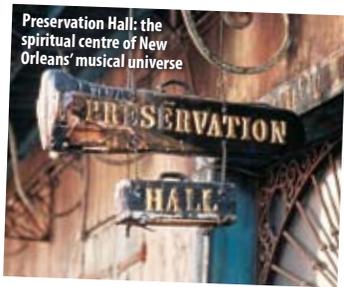
The 'shrine' of traditional New Orleans jazz and, really, the spiritual centre of New Orleans' musical universe. A younger generation raised in the tradition now carries on where their elders left off. Ancient building, no air-conditioning, no seats, no refreshments, no rest rooms, a different band every night, three 45-minute sets, and the queue begins to form an hour before doors open.

726 St Peter St, +1 504 522 2841,

www.preservationhall.com/hall

Tipitina's

Conceived more than three decades ago in tribute to local blues singer and pianist Henry Roeland Byrd Jr (aka Professor Longhair), Tipitina's is now a multi-faceted foundation supporting music



FESTIVALS

New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival

This monster-sized event has become, according to one local journalist, 'a smart, contemporary music festival' superimposed on a showcase of indigenous, regional culture. Seven eight-hour days spread over two consecutive weekends; ten major music stages every day; 60-plus regional food booths; daily attendance in the multi-ten thousands, with non-stop music throughout the city every day for nearly two weeks.

April 28-May 8, www.nojazzfest.com

French Quarter Festival

A kinder, gentler version of Jazz Fest. One weekend, free admission, with stages and food booths located on the Mississippi riverfront and throughout the historic French Quarter. It's primarily Louisiana-based music acts but with some traditional jazz bands from Japan and Europe.

April 7-10, www.fqfi.org/frenchquarterfest



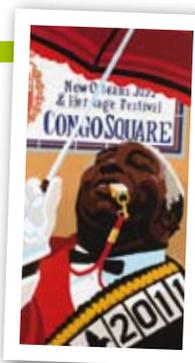
Jazz Fest, as it is informally known, has taken place every year since 1970

504 895-8477, www.tipitinas.com

The Maple Leaf Bar

Tucked away at the end of small, neighbourhood commercial corridor, The Maple Leaf is a scene unto itself, crowds milling around outside, pressed-tin walls and ceiling inside, reverberating nightly to the city's best blues, R&B, funk, and brass band music.

8816 Oak St, +1 504 866 9359, mapleleafbar.com



Satchmo Summerfest

Produced by the French Quarter Festival organisation to celebrate Louis Armstrong's birthday – August 4 1901. Friday night single-ticket event providing access to 20 local music clubs, followed by two days of music on four stages, all featuring exclusively local traditional jazz musicians.

First weekend in August

www.fqfi.org/satchmosummerfest

New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation Festival Series

A series of free weekend festivals locally nurturing the cultural elements of Jazz Fest: a Cajun-zydeco Festival (June); Crescent City Blues & BBQ Festival (October); Fiesta Latina (November); Congo Square Rhythms Festival (November); and Tremé Creole Gumbo Festival (December).

www.jazzandheritage.org/festival-roundup

Audubon Zoo Swamp Festival

Two-day music, food, craft, and culture event featuring Cajun and zydeco bands. Cultural immersion amplified by access to Audubon Zoo's wonderfully authentic Louisiana swamp exhibit. Family-friendly fun, free with Zoo admission.

First weekend in November

www.auduboninstitute.org/swamp-festival

Wednesdays at the Square/ Harvest the Music

Located just across St Charles Avenue from historic Gallier Hall, cosy Lafayette Square plays host on Wednesday evenings (5-7.30pm) to free concert pairings of local acts in two seasonal programmes.

Twelve weeks in the spring; eight weeks in the autumn. www.wednesdayatthesquare.com

www.harvestthemusic.org

Rock'n'Bowl

Celebratory atmosphere combines bowling alleys and a wide-open dance floor with the best musicians, the most fun, and weekly Thursday zydeco nights featuring truly top-notch dance bands that attract a dense crowd of polished two-steppers showing off their cowboy hats, cowboy boots, and zydeco dance moves.

3016 S Carrollton Ave, +1 504 861 1700,

www.rockandbowl.com

Chickie Wah Wah

The new kid on the block, located in close proximity to the French Quarter and quickly establishing a reputation for great acts, good food and a friendly atmosphere. Don't be fooled by the venue's diminutive storefront appearance – inside are plenty of tables and an open-air patio.

2828 Canal St, +1 504 304 4714,

www.chickiewahwah.com