

New Orleans Grooves

Part 2

Masterclass CD By Jason Mingledorff

Before moving to New Orleans fifteen years ago, I always thought of it as a city known for its Dixieland music and jazz funerals. I quickly learned that New Orleanians are passionate about not only their jazz, but also their rhythm and blues, rock 'n roll, and funk. As I began to play around town, I realized that the music created here in the 1950s and 1960s is still very popular with locals, even more so than with tourists. This is most evident every spring, a season when Mardi Gras floats roll down the avenues blasting out rumba boogies from 60 years ago and festivals like the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival fill the air with classics by local favorites like Fats Domino and Irma Thomas. Our citizens' fondness for New Orleans rhythm and blues comes with a proud knowledge that the roots of American popular music run deeply through this town. This local pride is best summed up in a proclamation by the unforgettably eccentric Ernie K-Doe (known for his #1 hit *Mother-in-Law*). "I'm not sure, but I think all music comes from New Orleans." While we certainly shouldn't take Mr. K-Doe, who also proclaimed himself to be Emperor of the Universe, too seriously, his statement does come from a strong belief here that New Orleans' influence on American music throughout the century is undeniable.

My previous masterclass (New Orleans Grooves, Part 1) in the July/August 2011 issue of *Saxophone Journal*, focused on the concept of the second line, a unique street groove that combines a clave-like syncopation with a slight swing feel. Please refer to New Orleans Grooves, Part 1 (July/August 2011 issue of *Saxophone Journal*) for a history of the second line and a number of different ways that it can be presented.

For this masterclass, I've written four more songs that represent styles that are also important to local music lovers. These songs, which also show the influence of the second line, feature grooves that were popularized here from the late 1940s to the late 1960s. These include the New Orleans mambo of Professor Longhair, the rock 'n roll and rhythm and blues of artists like Fats Domino and Huey "Piano" Smith, and the syncopated funk of the Meters.

Throughout this masterclass, it may seem that I use the terms rhythm and blues (popularly known as R&B) and rock 'n roll interchangeably. The R&B I'm referring to should not be



NEW ORLEANS GROOVES: PART TWO

Track Title

- 1.....Introduction
- 2.....*Gentilly Mambo* spoken intro
- 3.....*Gentilly Mambo* full performance
- 4.....*Gentilly Mambo* play-along
- 5.....*Rockin' on the Levee* spoken intro
- 6.....*Rockin' on the Levee* full performance
- 7.....*Rockin' on the Levee* play-along
- 8.....*Hideaway Hill* spoken intro
- 9.....*Hideaway Hill* full performance
- 10.....*Hideaway Hill* play-along
- 11.....*Metery Metairie* spoken intro
- 12.....*Metery Metairie* full performance
- 13.....*Metery Metairie* play-along

confused with the smoother, urban sounds of today's R&B. In the years after World War II, rhythm and blues was a label put on black music that was popularized by jump blues artists such as Louis Jordan and Big Joe Turner. There are many who believe that rock 'n roll was born out of a combination of this R&B and country in the mid-1950s, when Alan Freed popularized

the term and Bill Haley and the Comets' *Rock Around the Clock* played on jukeboxes throughout the country. However, much of the R&B recorded here in the late 1940s and early 1950s had the sound that many considered to be rock 'n roll. (It should be noted that a major reason Alan Freed and other DJs first used the term "rock 'n roll" was to avoid the racial stigma they felt was attached to R&B.) Without getting into a long discussion on the origins of rock 'n roll (there are whole books on the subject), I will simply say that anyone interested in playing popular music, especially rock 'n roll and funk, will benefit greatly from a closer listen to the styles presented here.

THE ROLE OF THE SAXOPHONE

Unlike the traditional jazz and early brass band music discussed in my last first masterclass, the R&B recorded in New Orleans in the 1950s and 1960s put the saxophone front and center, making it the solo instrument of choice for a multitude of top-selling records. There are two men responsible for the majority of these solos – Lee Allen, whose searing, explosive style propelled dozens of songs into classic hits, and Herb Hardy, whose understated and tasteful approach is featured on many of Fats Domino's best-known recordings.

THE CLASSIC NEW ORLEANS ROCK SAX SOLO

If you listen to Lee Allen's solos on Little Richard's *Tutti Frutti* or Shirley and Lee's *Let the Good Times Roll*, you'll get a good idea of what many consider to be a classic New Orleans rock 'n roll sax solo. A closer look at these solos will show attributes that became part of a formula that has been used to

great effect by many of the city's hardest working saxophonists, including lesser known greats such as James Rivers, Elliot "Stackman" Callier, Ralph Johnson, Gary Brown, and Frederick Sheppard. A survey of New Orleans R&B and rock recordings of the 1950s will show that the tenor saxophonist was almost always featured as a soloist. Many feel this is because the tenor saxophone, which was also the favored solo choice for R&B recordings throughout the country at this time, is the instrument that is closest to the male singing voice. This makes a lot of sense, especially since Lee avoided the extreme ranges of the horn, unlike popular honkers and screamers like Big Jay McNeely, and rarely played higher than a man can sing. His big, robust sound did, however, show the clear influence of his Texas tenor neighbors, such as the R&B sax pioneer Illinois Jacquet.

Lee also employed a blistering growl that he learned from Jimmie Lunceford's great tenor man Joe Thomas. In addition to his overpowering tone, it is Lee's use of simplicity. He would often just paraphrase the melody or use a basic blues scale and his uncanny sense of timing that make his solos so captivating. Because of this simplicity and their easy to manage length, Lee Allen's solos are great for beginners to transcribe. More advanced players will also benefit from learning Lee's solos by trying to capture his ability to lay perfectly in the groove (it may help to know that he always insisted on standing right next to the snare drum), make every note feel just right, and project a full sound throughout the range of the saxophone (especially in the lower middle range).

IS THERE A NEW ORLEANS SAXOPHONE APPROACH

Certain elements of these solos, like a big sound, the use of simple melodic ideas, and in-the-pocket timing, are all found in the styles of many great rock sax soloists, including masters like King Curtis and Junior Walker. But what distinguishes a New Orleans approach? My first thought in answering this question was that local players share the experience of playing a lot of traditional jazz, as opposed to just swing or bebop. However, the popularity of early jazz with the pioneers of swing and early R&B throughout the country hardly sets New Orleans musicians apart.

I recently asked Eric Traub, one of the city's most respected saxophonists, what he thought makes up a New Orleans sax style. His half-joking answer was probably more accurate than he meant it to be, "It depends on the drummer playing behind them." This sense of rhythm, often with its underlying second line feel, is an integral part of many Crescent City saxophonists' approach. It combines strong basic rhythms like quarter notes with subtle clave syncopations, values the use of space, and encourages clear phrasing. This rhythmic approach, along with the attributes described above, continues to be used by local saxophonists, exciting music lovers across the city and never failing to get audiences' feet moving.

OTHER SAXOPHONE APPROACHES FROM NEW ORLEANS

Even as I try to find similarities between classic New Orleans saxophone approaches, I must point out that there are many important New Orleans saxophonists that do not fit neatly into these parameters. Herb Hardesty told me that his secret, in a direct contrast to Lee Allen's amplified sound, was to always play quietly. One of R&B's greatest alto sax virtuosos, Earl Bostic, got his musical training in New Orleans (at Xavier University, where Lee Allen had an athletic scholarship), and Plas Johnson, one of the most recorded saxophonists in history, grew up right outside of New Orleans. However, Earl's altissimo ac-

robatics and Plas's warm, smooth sound (famously captured on *The Theme from Pink Panther*) don't immediately bring to mind their musical roots here. Many do not realize that Lester Young, whose cool, laid-back style influenced a whole generation of jazz musicians, also spent his childhood here, taking with him the city's relaxed demeanor. The city's nickname "The Big Easy" could easily describe some of his most famous solos, and celebration of individuality. New Orleans has also made its subtle, funky mark on artists as different as Cannonball Adderley and Ornette Coleman, both of whom spent significant time here.

One of the most swinging tenor saxophonists to ever come out of New Orleans was Sam Butera, who achieved fame as the bandleader and soloist for Louis Prima. Although Sam was not known for playing rock 'n roll, his approach to swing and Dixieland grabbed the listener and took hold, much like the solo work of his former band mate with the Paul Gayten Orchestra, Lee Allen. As time has passed, many other great saxophonists have, in a wonderful way, obliterated the idea of what a New Orleans saxophone approach is. However, whether you're listening to the hard bop of Nat Perrilliat, the avant-garde of Kidd Jordan, or the modern jazz of Branford Marsalis, if you listen closely, you will hear the history of this style in their sounds.

THE TUNES

Gentilly Mamba

The first tune on this Masterclass play-along CD, *Gentilly Mambo*, is an example of what many here call a New Orleans mambo, even though it is actually a type of rumba and not really a mambo at all. This rumba-boogie feel was pioneered by pianist Professor Longhair, and his recordings of *Tipitina* and *Mardi Gras in New Orleans* are classic examples of this style. His approach to playing the piano, which inspired this tune (the figure in measure 3 of the melody is a classic Fess lick), is an integral part of all the great New Orleans pianists who have come after him; including James Booker, Dr. John, and Allen Toussaint. If you read my previous masterclass text, you'll notice similarities with the second line grooves discussed there. Both styles definitely share a connection with their use of the clave and a pronounced snare drum. However, the subtle swing of the street beat is replaced with a straight eighth feel in this rumba. A great, modern-day rendition of this groove can be heard on Michael Brecker's *Delta City Blues*.

Rockin' On The Levee

From the late 1940s to the early 1960s, hundreds of hit recordings were made in a small studio on the edge of the French Quarter called Cosimo's J&M Studios. The house band included Lee Allen on tenor sax, Alvin "Red" Tyler on baritone sax, and the legendary Earl Palmer on drums. These recordings made at J&M Studios were emulated throughout the country and were a major source of inspiration for later bands such as The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. *Rockin' On The Levee* is written in a style inspired by some of the classic rockers that came from that period, including Huey Smith's *Don't You Just Know It* and Fats Domino's *My Girl Josephine*. Many of the horn parts recorded at Cosimo's were nothing more than a couple of saxes playing a simple line in unison or octaves, as the tenor and baritone do here. There is a power in this type of arrangement that can get diluted if complicated harmonies and voicings are used. Later arrangers, most notably Wardell Quezergue and Allen Toussaint, would go on to effectively introduce more complex arrangements, but the simple, two-sax lines that Red Tyler came up with on countless sessions remain an integral part of the New Orleans sound. If you listen closely to the drums, you'll

notice another important part of that sound – the second line influence of, once again, a prominent snare drum. As you solo over this, you'll find that using quarter notes and eighth notes instead of runs of 16th notes will help you capture the spirit of this rock 'n roll style.

Hideaway Hill

Hideaway Hill is inspired by one of Fats Domino's biggest hits, *Blueberry Hill*. It uses his trademarked triplet feel and a classic 8-bar blues form (which is basically a 12-bar blues without the first four bars) with a bridge. I put this song in the key of B for two reasons: (1) the original *Blueberry Hill* was in this key, and (2) I find that playing in an unfamiliar key will help keep you from falling back on licks and patterns that might come naturally in keys like C or F. This type of tune, like the previous composition, should not have a lot of runs or ii7-V7-I licks; much can be said with simple major pentatonic and blues scales. You'll also notice that I put a bit of reverb on the saxophone to give it that sound you might hear if it was recorded in the 1950s. Fats Domino, with the help of famed producer Dave Bartholomew, had over 40 top-forty hits (second only to Elvis Presley), and tunes like this were a major influence on music throughout Louisiana, especially the swamp-pop that was popularized in Lafayette and its surrounding Cajun region. The swamp-pop standard *Mathilda*, by Cookie and the Cupcakes, is a great example of this direct influence.

Metery Metairie

There has been a funky element in New Orleans long before James Brown was getting down to *Papa's Got a Brand New Bag*. The history of New Orleans' funkiness can be traced back through Earl Palmer's infectious grooves, Professor Longhair's rumbas, popular turn of the twentieth century venues like Funky Butt Hall, and the second line parades that passed their doors. I am not implying that the funk of James Brown came from New Orleans (although there are some that claim that he was inspired by the rhythms of Little Richard's drummers, who were from here). I think such an implication is short sighted and ignores that the music of Georgia and other parts of the Deep South had a deep influence on the origins of soul and funk. The funk in New Orleans is of its own kind and is best represented by the band The Meters. My last masterclass had a song, *Neutral Ground*, inspired by their approach to Mardi Gras Indian grooves. "Metery Metairie" is inspired by many other Meters tunes that also use the second line but in a more subtle way. Notice how the bass line implies a half-clave and the eighth notes have a slight swing. The Meters' hit *Cissy Strut* is a great example of this proto-funk style.

CONCLUSION

I hope you have fun playing over these different types of New Orleans grooves. You'll notice that the second line elements discussed in my previous masterclass permeate the music presented here. I want to stress that musicians working here appreciate all of these styles and love to share this tradition with younger artists. I know many guys who will play a second line parade in the morning, a modern jazz set in the evening, and a funk gig late at night, and have a blast at all of them. I should also mention that there are other styles that have become an important part of New Orleans' musical landscape: from gospel music (Mahalia Jackson is another influential native) to the Cajun and zydeco music brought in from nearby Acadiana. Many claim that New Orleanians' musical tastes are stuck in the past. While I can understand such criticism, I prefer to think that we

just don't want to totally let go of yesterday's music, perhaps because it's a part of who we are. As mentioned earlier, many great New Orleans artists have embraced modern styles. In fact, this openness to newer styles is an important part of New Orleans' history - whether it's in the famed AFO recordings of boppers like Harold Battiste and Ellis Marsalis, the modern-day experimentations of inventor/organist Quintron, or the infectious hip hop and bounce of Juvenile, Lil Wayne, and Big Feedia. I would never suggest that someone only play the older styles presented in this masterclass. However, I, like the millions of people also infected by these grooves, feel it would be sad if you weren't at least exposed to this rich history.

RECOMMENDED READING AND LISTENING

There are a number of great books that discuss the music mentioned here. Jason Berry, Jonathan Foose, and Tad Jones' *Up from the Cradle of Jazz* remains one of the definitive books on New Orleans R&B. Dr. John's autobiography, *Under a Hoodoo Moon*, is also a great read and colorfully describes the music scene here back in the 1950s and 1960s.

One of the biggest reasons New Orleans has such a thriving live music scene is the presence of a wonderful radio station, WWOZ, that is dedicated to playing local music from current artists and has popular shows dedicated to the early rock 'n roll and funk discussed here. Magazines like *Offbeat* and *Gambit Weekly* put local music in the spotlight and passionately spread the word about what's going on here. You can listen to WWOZ online at www.wwoz.org and subscribe to Offbeat at www.offbeat.com.

ADDITIONAL MUSIC LISTENING EXAMPLES

The following recordings are great examples of the music discussed in this masterclass. Like the listening recommendations in my previous masterclass, all the tracks that I've chosen can be downloaded from iTunes. The album titles are the albums that iTunes has the recordings on, not necessarily the versions you'd find in a record store. I've also made note of the saxophone soloist if they were not the leader on the recording. New Orleans, like many cities with rich musical histories, is a place that has a large number of "local hits." Many of these songs, especially the first five listed, are rarely played in other parts of the country, but are in every jukebox in town and known by everyone here. I've also listed some of my favorite New Orleans R&B sax solos, including classics by Herb Hardesty and Lee Allen. The Louis Prima medley is a great illustration of the connection between traditional jazz and early rock 'n roll; Sam Butera's solos on it would sound right at home on any of Little Richard's famed New Orleans recordings.

1. *Mardi Gras in New Orleans* – Professor Longhair, *The Very Best Of* (solo - Charles Burbank) Note: The best known version of this song was actually recorded under the name *Go to the Mardi Gras*.
2. *Big Chief* – Professor Longhair, *Ultimate Mardi Gras*.
3. "Mardi Gras Mambo" – The Hawkettes, *The History of Rhythm and Blues, Vol. 3* (solo - Morris Bachamin)
4. *Carnival Time* – Al Johnson, *Carnival Time - The Best of Ric Records, Vol. 1* (solo - James Rivers)
5. *Ooh Poo Pah Doo, Parts 1 & 2* – Jesse Hill, *Jesse Hill's Ooh Poo Pah Doo* (solo – David Lastie)
6. *I'm Walkin'* – Fats Domino, *The Fats Domino Jukebox: 20 Greatest Hits* (solo – Herb Hardesty)
7. *Ain't That a Shame* – Fats Domino, *The Fats Domino Jukebox: 20 Greatest Hits* (solo – Herb Hardesty)

8. *Let the Good Times Roll* – Shirley and Lee, *Aladdin '52-'59: Let the Good Times Roll* (solo – Lee Allen)
9. *Sick and Tired* – Chris Kenner, *The Big Beat of Dave Bartholomew* (solo – Lee Allen)
10. *Slippin' and Slidin'* – Little Richard, *The Georgia Peach* (solo – Lee Allen)
11. *Walkin' with Mr. Lee* - Lee Allen, *Walkin' with Mr. Lee*
12. *Junko Partner* – Dr. John, *Gumbo* (solo – Lee Allen)
13. *When You're Smiling/The Shiek of Araby* – Louis Prima, *Collector's Series* (solo – Sam Butera)
14. *Cissy Strut* – The Meters, *The Meters*
15. *Just Kissed My Baby* – The Meters, *Rejuvenation*

THE MUSICIANS:

Jason Mingledorff is one of the most versatile and in-demand saxophonists working in New Orleans. He's recorded and performed with some of the city's most beloved artists - including Dr. John, Harry Connick, Jr., Galactic, The Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, Papa Grows Funk, and The New Orleans Nightcrawlers Brass Band. He's also worked with national artists such as The O'Jays, The Band, Clint Black, Frankie Vallie, and Wayne Newton. He currently teaches at Loyola University of New Orleans. Jason can be found on facebook and emailed at jasonm71@aol.com.

Allyn Robinson (drums) was born & raised in New Orleans, Allyn has worked with some of the creators of the New Orleans sound, including Professor Longhair, Ernie K Doe, Eddie Bo, Frankie Ford, Irma Thomas, and Robert Parker. At 20, he joined Wayne Cochran & C.C. Riders, in which he played with musical greats such as Red Rodney and Jaco Pastorius. Allyn has also performed with Tab Benoit, Dr. Hook featuring Ray Sawyer, Chuck Berry, and Luther Kent. He's been featured in *Modern Drummer* and recently released his own album, *Full Circle*.

René Coman (bass) is a native New Orleanian who has had a career that has included recording and/or playing with Alex Chilton, Willy DeVille, Green on Red, and Charlie Musselwhite. René played on multiple recording projects with producers such as Malcolm Burn, Jim Dickinson, Glyn Johns, Keith Keller, and Ethan Allen, including Grammy-nominated albums with artists Guitar Slim Jr. and Emmylou Harris. He continues to write and perform with the Iguanas, his main group for the past 20 years.

John Fohl (guitar) has made New Orleans his home since relocating from Oregon in 1996. His eclectic style can be found on scores of recordings by a diverse roster of artists ranging from Grammy winner Dr. John and platinum-selling Cherry Poppin' Daddies to his own solo acoustic records. He tours regularly solo and with Dr. John and has also toured backing up Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown, Bo Diddley, Charlie Musselwhite, Shemekia Copeland and many more.

John "Papa" Gros (organ and piano) was recently honored with the 2011 Offbeat Award for Best Keyboard Player in New Orleans. He's played with many of the legends of New Orleans music – including George Porter Jr., Snooks Eaglin, Zigaboo Modeliste, Leo Nocentelli, and Big Chief Monk Boudreaux. For the last ten years he has led the all-star funk conglomerate Papa Grows Funk, which has won numerous Band of the Year awards. His debut solo CD, *Day's End*, was honored as New Orleans Best Roots Rock CD of 2004 (Times-Picayune).

Special Thanks

I would like to thank all of the wonderful musicians who contributed their talent and knowledge to this project. I would also like to thank the following for their contributions: my wife

Nikki, for her constant inspiration and support; Misha Kachkachishvili, who recorded, mixed, and mastered this CD at his excellent recording facility Axistudio; John Laughter and Pete Thomas, whose knowledge of the history of rock 'n roll saxophone is seemingly unending; Garnette Cadogan, and a number of great musicians that I continually learn from and enjoy making music with. including Eric Traub, Tony Dagradi, Joe Cabral, Brian Kane, The Nightcrawlers and Papa Grows Funk.

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All play-along parts in this New Orleans Grooves Masterclass, Part 2 are available in the key of Eb as a PDF file at: www.dornpub.com/download.html.

Scroll down to January/February 2012 *Saxophone Journal* issue and click on link.



CD track 2 (spoken intro)
CD track 3 (full performance)
CD track 4 (saxophone play-along)

Gentilly Mambo

(tenor saxophone part)

New Orleans Mambo (Rhumba)

Jason Mingledorff

G⁷ (INTRO) **C⁷** **G⁷** **C⁷**

A **G⁷ (HEAD)** **C⁷** **B^{b7}** **E^{b7}**

G⁷ **C⁷** **B^{b7}** **E^{b7}**

B **A^{b7} (BRIDGE)** **D^{b7sus}** **D^{b7}**

C⁷ **F⁷** **F^{#o7}**

C **G⁷** **C⁷** **B^{b7}** **E^{b7}**

G⁷ **C⁷** **To CODA** **B^{b7}** **E^{b7}** **(BACK TO A)**

B^{b7} **E^{b7}** **G⁷**

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Rockin' On The Levee

(tenor saxophone part)



CD track 5 (spoken intro)
CD track 6 (full performance)
CD track 7 (tenor saxophone play-along)

Up-Tempo Rock 'n Roll

Jason Minkoff

(INTRO) 4 **(HEAD)** D⁷

9

13 G⁷

17 D⁷

21 A⁷ G⁷ C⁷

25 D⁷

(OUTRO) A⁷ G⁷ C⁷ C⁷

29

(tenor saxophone part)



CD track 8 (spoken intro)
CD track 9 (full performance)
CD track 10 (tenor saxophone play-along)

Jason Mingledorff

Jason Mingledorff

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in treble clef, featuring a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 12/8 time signature. The score is divided into measures by bar lines, with some measures containing repeat signs. Chord symbols are placed above the staff to indicate harmonic context. The score includes several sections marked with letters in circles: (A) at measure 10, (B) at measure 14, and (C) at measure 18. The piece concludes with a double bar line and the instruction 'D.S. AL CODA' at the bottom right. The page number '30' is visible at the bottom left.

12

(A)

1

2

(B)

18

(C)

To CODA

D.S. AL CODA

30

Metery Metairie

(tenor saxophone part)



CD track 11 (spoken intro)
CD track 12 (full performance)
CD track 13 (alto/bari saxophone play-along)

Meters-Style Funk

A⁷

Jason Mingledorff



FORM: AAB

TO END: VAMP ON CODA (A SECTION)