

Healing for the Music Force

by John Swenson, Brooklyn Daily Challenge

May 27, 1999 – *Bethany Ewald Bultman* grew up in Natchez, Mississippi, during the 1960s, a time when the KKK held sway and the telephone poles in her hometown were pasted with flyers reading “Negro Music corrupts white youth.”

Bultman reacted to such rhetoric by searching out this music. She discovered a copy of “Home of the Blues New Orleans” – an album featuring *Ernie K-Doe*, *Irma Thomas* and *Oliver Morgan* – and began a lifetime finding out about blues first hand.

More recently Bultman has been involved in founding the **New Orleans Musicians’ Clinic** at the LSU Medical Center, a charitable organization dedicated to providing medical service to uninsured New Orleans musicians.

One of Bultman’s fundraising ideas was to organize local New Orleans musicians to record a benefit album. The result of these efforts, *Get You A Healin’*, is a stunning success, one of the finest compilations of New Orleans music assembled in recent memory.

Some of the biggest names in the Crescent City’s rock R&B communities chipped in to realize this marvelous project. The title track appears in two forms. The first is a lengthy instrumental track performed by *The Funky Meters* and members of the rock group *Phish* (though not from New Orleans, *Phish* supports the Big Easy’s music scene and has performed at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Fest).

The second is a gospel-inspired sing-along featuring members of the popular New Orleans rock band *Tiny Town*, the R&B Big Easy diva, *Irma Thomas*, and legendary songwriter/keyboardist/producer *Allen Toussaint*.

The Funky Meters also do an encore, a version of the *Huey “Piano” Smith* classic “Rockin’ Pneumonia and the Boogie Woogie Flu.” *Dr. John* and Meters keyboardist *Art Neville* combine for an outstanding duet on “Virus Called the Blues.”

Several performances are in tribute to lost friends who could have benefitted from the clinic if it had been around when they were. *Smilin’ Myron and Friends* dedicated “Sugar Butt” to the memory of one of the band’s founding members, guitarist *Tim Guarisco*, an uninsured musician who died of cancer at age 27. ❖

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Founders of the Kelly Keller Memorial Foundation joined forces with the NOMC in June 2005 to honor Kelly’s memory with a series of benefit concerts for the support of New Orleans musicians.

New Orleans’ Councilwoman Jackie Clarkson and NOMC Co-Founder Bethany Bultman are enjoying the evening at a benefit for the New Orleans Musicians’ Clinic.



Local Jazz at Perilous Crossroads

by Lolis Eric Elie, Times-Picayune

August 11, 2004 – When the *Jazz Journalists Association* held its annual awards ceremony in June, the awards included a novel but necessary category: The “*A Team Awards for advocates, altruists, aiders and abettors of jazz.*” It was the organization’s acknowledgment that jazz, perhaps more so than many other art forms, requires such ancillary support. The winners include our own *Bethany Bultman*, co-founder and outreach chairperson of the New Orleans Musicians’ Clinic, which provides low-cost health care to the music community.

You might expect that, on an evening dedicated to recognizing excellence in jazz, New Orleanians would have figured prominently on the list of award recipients. We didn’t. The New Orleans Musicians’ Clinic award to Bultman was the only recognition the city received. My concern with the awards

is not that individual New Orleanians weren’t recognized. My concern is that traditional New Orleans jazz wasn’t recognized.

The art form that is at the base of jazz itself has now been relegated to also-ran status. This is not a new phenomenon. For decades, fans of “serious” jazz have tended to see our music as a cute novelty rather than a serious art form.

If traditional New Orleans jazz continues to be marginalized, it will have a significant impact on this city and its image. This music, more than any other, is emblematic of our city. As its image goes, so goes ours.

If musicians who seek to play this music risk being viewed as oddities and throwbacks by the “serious” jazz communities, our city’s image as a jazz capital will decay further. ❖

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