



Presents

# JAZZ FEST: A NEW ORLEANS STORY

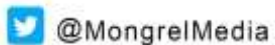
**A film by Frank Marshall and Ryan Suffern**

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## **Distribution**

Mongrel Media Inc  
1213C Bathurst Street  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5R 3H3  
Tel: 416-516-9775 Fax: 416-516-0651  
E-mail: [info@mongrelmedia.com](mailto:info@mongrelmedia.com)  
[www.mongrelmedia.com](http://www.mongrelmedia.com)



## **Publicity**

Bonne Smith  
Star PR  
Tel: 416-488-4436  
Twitter: @starpr2  
E-mail: [starpr@sympatico.ca](mailto:starpr@sympatico.ca)



## **LOGLINE**

*This soulful and heartfelt celebration of 50 years of the funky and fabulous New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival invites you to bliss out on New Orleans' unique culture, featuring Jimmy Buffett, Bruce Springsteen, Katy Perry, Pitbull, Al Green, Herbie Hancock, Aaron Neville, Earth, Wind & Fire, and many others.*

## **FILMMAKERS**

**Directed by  
Frank Marshall & Ryan Suffern**

**Produced by  
Frank Marshall, Sean Stuart, Ryan Suffern**

**Co-produced by  
Alexandra Bowen, Maren Domzalski**

**Executive Producers  
Quint Davis, Jimmy Buffet**

**Cinematography by  
Michael Parry, Justin Kane, Boyd Hobbs**

**Editor  
Martin Singer, ACE**

**Original Music by  
Ben Castle & Paul Pilot**

**Music Supervisor  
John McCullough**

**Post Production Supervisor  
Adam Boroza**

## **FEATURING**

Davell Crawford  
Jimmy Buffett  
Tom Jones  
Ellis Marsalis Jr.  
Big Freedia  
Earth, Wind & Fire  
Mdou Moctar of Niger  
Chouval Bwa Traditionnel  
3L Ifede of Benin  
Wynton Marsalis  
The Revivalists  
9th Ward Black Hatchet  
Tank and the Bangas  
Irma Thomas  
Pitbull  
Boyfriend  
Dwayne Dopsie & the Zydeco Hellraisers  
Cowboy Mouth  
Glen David Andrews  
Hardhead Hunters MGI  
Gregory Porter  
Quint Davis  
George Wein  
Preservation Hall Jazz Band  
High Steppers Brass Band  
The Dirty Dozen Brass Band

Jackson Square Allstar Brass Band  
The Rising Stars of Fife and Drum Band  
Divine Ladies  
Branford Marsalis  
Jason Marsalis  
Delfeayo Marsalis  
Herbie Hancock  
Samantha Fish  
Sonny Landreth  
Rebirth Brass Band  
Dumaine St. Gang  
Tab Benoit  
Marc Savoy  
John Hammond  
New Orleans Gospel Soul Children  
Bobby Jones & The Nashville Super Choir  
Al Green  
Katy Perry  
Crocodile Gumbo Dancers of South  
Africa  
Diassing Kunda of Senegal  
Gary Clark Jr.  
Bruce Springsteen  
Aaron Neville  
Trombone Shorty  
Dobet Gnahore of Ivory Coast

# **PERFORMANCES**

<b>SONG TITLE</b>	<b>ARTIST</b>
September	Earth, Wind & Fire
Adouina	Mdou Moctar of Niger
Chouval Bwa	Chouval Bwa Traditionnel of Martinique
La Kail Mwen	Chouval Bwa Traditionnel of Martinique
La Malanga	Preservation Hall Jazz Band
Best of All	Dirty Dozen Brass Band
Gather By the River	Davell Crawford
You Know, You Know	Rebirth & New Birth Jazz Band
Right Foot Forward	Jackson Square All Stars Brass Band
I Done Got Over – Medley (Second Line)	Irma Thomas
Iko Iko – Medley (Second Line)	Irma Thomas
Hey Pocky Way – Medley (Second Line)	Irma Thomas
Shimmy She Wobble	The Rising Star Fire and Drum Band
Nostalgic Impressions	Ellis Marsalis Jr. Family Tribute
One Finger Snap	Herbie Hancock
Bulletproof	Samantha Fish
Walking Blues	Sonny Landreth
Fireball	Pitbull
Les Veuves De La Coulee	Marc Savoy & the Savoy Music Center
It's Been a Long Time	Dwayne Dopsie and the Zydeco Hellraisers
Margaritaville	Jimmy Buffett
I Can Do Bad Myself	Glen David Andrews Band
Just Your Fool	John Hammond
Rejoice With Me!	Bobby Jones and the Nashville Super Choir
Everything Will Be Alright	New Orleans Gospel Soul Children
Let's Stay Together	Al Green
Oh Happy Day (Intercut)	Katy Perry (and the Gospel Soul Children)
Firework	Katy Perry (and the Gospel Soul Children)
Men Tô Li	3L ifbed of Benin
Crocodile Gumboot Traditional	Crocodile Gumboot Dancers of South Africa
Sadio	Diassing Kunda of Senegal
Spaceships	Tanks and the Bangas
N.O. Bounce	Big Freedia
Lean	Boyfriend
Wish I Knew You	The Revivalists
I Got My Eyes on You	Gary Clark Jr.
My City of Ruin'	Bruce Springsteen
Amazing Grace	Aaron Neville
When the Saints Go Marching In	Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue
You Can't Always Get What You Want	Jimmy Buffett

## **Errol Laborde: JAZZ FEST: THE RHYTHM OF A CITY**

Ernie K-Doe was a bonafide New Orleans born Rhythm and Blues star who achieved national fame with his 1961 recording, "Mother-in-Law," written by another genius New Orleanian, Allen Toussaint. Besides his singing, K-Doe was known for his chatter, including the revelation he made one afternoon while emceeing his show on a Jazz Fest stage. Never lacking self-esteem, K-Doe announced that he was "the best thing that ever happened to New Orleans." Now some people would respectfully disagree perhaps ranking other great moments as competitors, such as the construction of a flood protection levee system or the discovery of a cure for yellow fever. But we had to respect K-Doe's wisdom since he occasionally wore a crown and a cape and sometime proclaimed himself to be Emperor of the Universe. While we cannot contest the accuracy of his claims, we could add, that, without a doubt, his empire was a place of unparalleled discovery.

To the senses it is a distant fiddle, the spontaneity of a brass band in procession, or perhaps an electric guitar being put through its pre-performance twangs just as a sweet cloud of barbecue casts its spell. By name, it is The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, but sometimes the word "jazz" has played, if not second fiddle, perhaps second cornet. In fact, the musician who has become the festival's symbol, Professor Longhair, played rhythm and blues, not jazz.

Jazz's direct evolution began in New Orleans, many of its great musicians still come from this town. This city has often grown the raw produce to which the value has been added elsewhere.

During the '60s TV journalist David Brinkley chided New Orleans in an NBC report because many of the jazz clubs in the French Quarter had given way to striptease. The city suffered a bout of self-flagellation for not always supporting its native music though, to be fair, that may reflect the fertility of the city in nurturing so many performers rather than the lack of jobs. In New Orleans, jazz survives with the help of tourism. But since tourists are citizens of the world, that might be a tribute to the music's far-flung popularity.

Brinkley might not have ever known it, but he prompted a jazz preservation movement. In the spirit of the movement, Preservation Hall, a place dedicated solely to traditional jazz, opened in the French Quarter amid the strip clubs. Other traditional Jazz spots would follow, including the Palm Court Cafe. It is the festival, however, that has given Jazz the most visibility

in the town of its nativity. Curiously, while Jazz gave the event a name, the Fest has made big names out of other native performers:

Frankie Ford was from New Orleans too. His biggest hit was the rock and roll style “Sea Cruise” which began with a ship bell clanging followed by a wishful journey.

*Old man rhythm is in my shoes*

*It's no use to sittin' and a snigin's the blues*

*So be my guest, you got nothin's to lose*

*Won't you let me take you on a sea cruise?*

It is a cliché among many performers to introduce one of their songs by saying, “it goes something like this:” Not Ford. Refreshingly, at the 2009 Jazz Fest, he announced his hit accordingly: “This next song does not go ‘something like this,’ it goes exactly like this.” Clang, clang.

Word usage hit a rough note when the Cajun band BeauSoleil was being introduced. The stage announcer, a D.J. for a local country music station who adapted to bayou slang but obviously did not know much about Cajun pride, introduced the group by saying, “and now for some real coon ass music.....” Michael Doucet, the band’s founder and star approached the microphone and icily responded. “We are not coon ass; we are Acadian.” The crowd cheered. The D.J. retreated to a corner of the stage like a boxer staggering from a blow.

There are many great performers who have played the Jazz Fest but none who can claim to be the founder of a genre of American music, except for the late Bill Monroe. The mandolin player is credited with having created Bluegrass. Derived from rockabilly, Bluegrass sizzles with stringed instruments played so fast, especially Monroe’s mandolin, that they could be smokin’. One Sunday at the closing hour of the festival’s last day he and his band, the Blue Grass Boys, who were dressed in suits, boots and stetsons, were joyously singin’, pickin’ and cloggin’. The performance should have been preserved for the Smithsonian. Instead, the music was overlooked by the many Fest folks who walked past Monroe’s stage on the way to New Orleans’ famed Neville Brothers’ traditional closing performance.

Monroe played unfazed and even asked those few in the audience if they would like for him to come back one day. They cheered. But if there is a lesson to be learned from the Jazz Fest—never have to compete with the Nevilles. But then, there is so much else to behold:

Look at the crowd in the gospel tent. Most people in that number would probably never experience the music in the churches. Look at the

performers. Many groups, we suspect, now exist for the Jazz Fest. Sure they perform before the pews on Sundays, but the Fest is the big show in their lives. Stories have been told of record producers coming to the Fest to scout talent. Recording contracts were signed. The music found a new audience. Jazz Fest put the music on the map. And that's the gospel.

There are similar stories for other native music forms, notably zydeco, Cajun music and the chants of the Mardi Gras Indians. All survived rather exclusively in their little corner of the world. All were discovered anew at the festival's home, the specious Fair Grounds racetrack. (The same can be said about food: Many New Orleanians, and Fest followers, would not know about *cochon de lait*, *maque choux*, sweet potato pone and crawfish boudin were it not for the Fest.)

When the choruses are performing, the crowds in the gospel tent clap along in rhythm. They may be responding to the music or perhaps to the messages. Either way the tent at that moment is a temple, if not to the spirit within, than to the spirit of the festival. And in the distance, a brass band begins its march.

New Orleans is known for its Carnival Kings and Queens of which there are many, but there is also a popularly recognized Soul Queen of New Orleans and that is Irma Thomas who won a Grammy in 2007 for Best Contemporary Blues Album and whose song "Wish Someone Would Care" made it to number 17 on the 1964 national charts. In 2021 local public tv produced a 90 minute broadcast about her career that was shown nationally. With all respect to the memory of Ernie K-Doe, Thomas too could claim to be the best thing that ever happened to New Orleans. She certainly is one of the best observers of the music. In the accompanying documentary about the festival's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, "Jazz Fest: A New Orleans Story" she says, "There is no such thing as separation of the culture in New Orleans. It is blended together."

In the end, it is the blend that makes the culture.

## **SAVED BY THE FEST: NATIVE DISCOVERIES ON THE STAGE AND ON THE PLATE**

There are music and cultural forms that existed before the Jazz Fest was created but that were given a universal stage by the event. One example is gospel which reaches an audience, like the biblical multiplied loaves, far in excess of those who would have heard the music just in churches. In 2006, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Fest organizer Quint Davis talked about gospel music in a report for National Public Radio:

*"The Gospel Tent, probably more than any other, is the beacon of what is happening in New Orleans, with the community, especially the black community. Because in order to have a gospel tent, you have to have churches, you have to have a people."*

*"A lot of people up there will have lost everything, and be struggling to come back and, you know, this is a faith-based music... When they come in there, they talk about having church. So it's not a church -- but it's a place where you have church."*

New Orleanian Mahalia Jackson, one of the music's all-time greatest figures, performed at the first Jazz Fest in 1970, since then the soul has continued to reverberate.

Despite its origins tracing back to 1939 the Zion Harmonizers, referred to by music writer Gwen Tompkins as "The Elder Statesmen of New Orleans Music" would never have reached as wide of an audience were it not for the Fest. Other groups have followed rocking, rolling, praying and praising the Lord before a multi-colored crowd.

Zydeco, a fast paced and intense expression of Louisiana black French culture has a tiny home base in the vicinity of Lafayette in Southwest Louisiana, but the Fest has given it a widespread outlet as it has for Cajun music, Zydeco's generally white bayou cousin.

There was a time when the Mardi Gras Indians could only be seen on Carnival day and only in black neighborhoods. Now the Indians dance along the Fair Ground's paths. Big Chief, the leader of a tribe, is anxious to show off his group. According to his "spy boy," who traditionally searches for other tribes to show off their feathery costumes, there's usually a big crowd ahead.



All music, of course, is enhanced by the festival including Jazz itself where, if they are lucky, next generation crowds might experience the seductive powers of an ode to Basin Street or Louis Armstrong's lushly beautiful "West End Blues."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WPCBieSESI>

If music is nourishment for the soul, good food is nourishment for all else. Do not look for hotdogs and burgers at the Fest. Like the music, the food has to be culturally significant and even pass an audition. One of the classics was created for the festival, Crawfish Monica. There actually is a living, breathing person by that name. Among festival celebrities meeting her is like bumping into Elvis.

In 1983 her husband, Peter Hilzim, a chef who heads a company called Cajun Kettle Foods, had introduced a Crawfish and Pasta dish that he kindly named in honor of Monica Davidson. The dish, which includes crawfish tails with rotini pasta along with cream, wine, butter and seasonings, quickly gained fame at the Jazz Fest food vendor's area. It became the best-selling item, competing perhaps with the *Cochon de Lait* poor boy.

Prior to the emergence of Jazz Fest, most city people had never heard of *cochon de lait*. (Unless they were from the Louisiana town of Mansura where an annual festival in name of the roasted suckling pig is held.) Whomever first thought of preparing this Cajun country pork preparation as a New Orleans style poor boy combined the best of two worlds.) With souls now well-nourished, there is more native music to rediscover. And if there is still a bit of hunger, there is always the boiled crawfish.

## **A SYMPHONY OF LIFE-- JAZZ FEST: A NEW ORLEANS STORY**

In 2006 Bruce Springsteen stood on a stage at New Orleans' Jazz and Heritage Festival and introduced a song he had written about a city that had faced a disaster. Most in the crowd were still shocked about Hurricane Katrina that in the previous year had broken the levees around New Orleans and left the once glorious city as a graveyard of dead trees, downed buildings, impassable roads and broken hopes. The crowd was not prepared for what was to happen as Springsteen leaned toward the microphone.

"There's a blood red circle  
On the cold dark ground  
And the rain is falling down"

Springsteen sang forlornly

*"The church door's thrown open  
I can hear the organ's song  
But the congregation's gone"*

And now came the line that would create its own title wave.:

My city of ruins  
My city of ruins

This song was a natural for New Orleans though Springsteen might not have known that in 2000 when he wrote it for a benefit concert to support the city of Asbury Park, New Jersey which had succumbed to urban blight. A year later the song would take on global importance in the wake of the Twin Towers disaster the Manhattan. But for that moment on the Jazz Fest stage Springsteen, the audience, and the music belonged as one. In 2022 a new force would carry the song's message even further as unsuspecting viewers of a documentary produced to honor the Jazz Fest's anniversary would be drawn into the power of the song. Fortunately, the ending would bring an uplifting cry for resurrection:

*Come on, rise up!  
Come on rise up!*

Had Frank Marshall and Ryan Sufferin the directors of the film "Jazz Fest: A New Orleans Experience" stopped there and just made the

Springsteen scene a short subject they would have already provided Sony Pictures Classics with a masterpiece. The breathless viewing audience did not even know that there would be one more emotionally charged scene before the 90 minute film ended. But first:

You should know that the film is a lively presentation of music; cultural history; native color (including the Mardi Gras Indians), food and fun. Quint Davis, the festival's Executive Director is a frequent talking head telling the festival's story and revealing such facts as the festival's all-time top drawing performer being Jimmy Buffett who along with Davis are the film's Executive producers. In the documentary Buffet tells about as a young man from Mississippi frequently visiting New Orleans and being seduced by the city in so many different ways. Several bands are featured including Earth Wind and Fire, Katy Perry and New Orleans local stompers including the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and the Rebirth Jazz Band.

There is that ending. By tradition the Jazz Fest's closing act for years has been the New Orleans based Neville Brothers. Aaron Neville is a powerful acapella singer. Often the festival has ended with the audience mesmerized by Neville. Locals took a deep breath as they knew what was coming. In a world filled with music that can be steamy, playful, comic, funky, sexual, romantic and raw there are still contradictions. Aaron Neville is a big, gruff looking man who would seem to be the last one standing in a brawl. Yet his song was delivered to the hushed crowd like the words of an angel:

*"Amazing grace  
How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost, but now I'm found  
Was blind, but now I see"*

At that moment Neville's legendary falsetto could touch heaven:

*"The Lord has promised good to me  
His word my hope secures  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures"*

Those who had gathered on the fields of the Jazz Fest were once again blessed by the music.

# **BIOS**

## **FRANK MARSHALL: DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER**

A Celebration that Could Only Happen in New Orleans

*Deadline*, a music news and production trade journal splashed, in 2021, this headline that was big news in the industry:

**Sony Pictures Classics Picks Up Frank Marshall & Ryan Suffern Documentary ‘Jazz Fest: A New Orleans Story’**

For the Jazz Fest there was a lot to appreciate in that headline: First the mention of SONY Pictures Classics, an autonomous division of Sony Pictures Entertainment that distributes, produces and acquires high quality independent productions.

Then there was the mention of Frank Marshall who, along with his wife, Kathleen, run the groundbreaking Kennedy/Marshall production company.

Finally, there is the event itself made all the better because it is in New Orleans a city that is always bouncy and poetic.

Anthony Allesandro, *Deadline’s* Editorial Director wrote of the partnership that “Jazz Fest is an essential showcase of the rich heritage of the region.”

Marshall is a well decorated veteran of Hollywood projects including the Academy’s Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award in 2019, He has been nominated for five Oscars for best picture for *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, *Seabiscuit*, *The Sixth Sense*, *The Color Purple* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. He directed the HBO documentary *The Bee Gees: How Can You Mend a Broken Heart* and the CNN documentary *Carole King & James Taylor: Just Call Out My Name*.

Executive producers are Jazz Fest Executive Director Quint Davis and Parrot head in Chief Jimmy Buffett.

Featured artists include Bruce Springsteen, Buffett, Katy Perry, and Earth, Wind & Fire.

The documentary weaves together live performances and interviews from the 50th anniversary of the iconic festival, featuring some of the biggest names in the music industry, along with a wealth of archival documentary footage from the past half century. This film also delves into the rich culture of The Big Easy.

Describing his visit to the festival to prepare for the documentary Marshall was overwhelmed:

“It was a celebration that could only happen in New Orleans,” he said. “It’s an amazing mixture of music, food, art, culture and heritage that becomes a totally immersive experience.”

Both he and co-director Ryan Suffern were very high in their praise of Samantha Fish. “She brings such a fresh style to the blues, and she killed it on stage with her powerful singing and slick guitar playing. We also loved Sonny Landreth and his slide guitar and spent a lot of time in the Blues Tent.”

Was there any impression that Marshall would like the viewer of the documentary to achieve? “We could all use a little joy and happiness at the moment, so I hope that the audience will feel transported back to New Orleans to experience the sounds and spectacle of Jazz Fest, and its celebration of people, music, food and culture.”

Was there one special favorite moment? “Aaron Neville singing ‘Amazing Grace’ and of course, Jimmy Buffett summing up the resilience of the festival with ‘You Can’t Always Get What You Want’, and (Festival Co-founder) Quint Davis rocking out to it.”

Any favorites among the Jazz Fest's signature indigenous food? “Tried a different dish everyday with my favorite being the Cajun jambalaya and fried chicken combo, heavenly.”

Was there anything else he would like to mention? “Can’t wait for the next one!”

Fortunately, while waiting, there will always be the movie.

## **RYAN SUFFERN: DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER**

As a producer and director, **RYAN SUFFERN** headed up the documentary division of The Kennedy/Marshall Company from 2011-2021. He and Frank Marshall collaborated on over 20 documentaries, ranging in topics from music to sports to social causes, but always with an emphasis on the human interest at the heart of the story. As a director, Suffern helmed the award-winning Finding Oscar, as well as What the Hell Happened to Jai Alai for ESPN's acclaimed "30 for 30" series. Suffern also directed A Final Cut For Orson: 40 Years in the Making for Netflix, documenting the finishing of Orson Welles’s The Other Side of The Wind. He served as an executive producer on The Gift: The Journey of Johnny Cash, a YouTube Originals release, and on HBO’s The Bee Gees: How Can You Mend a Broken Heart, which Marshall directed . Suffern most recently executive produced the Paul McCartney / Rick Rubin docuseries for Hulu, McCartney 3,2,1, and directed and produced, with Marshall, Mr. A & Mr. M: The Story of A&M Records for EPIX.

## **QUINT DAVIS: JAZZ FEST PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR**

Music is the Force that Drives and Defines us

Quint Davis has been with the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival from the beginning. First as a scruffy student who just liked to hang around with the musicians and then as an apprentice to the late George Wein, founder of not only the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival but before that, the Newport Jazz Fest.

Davis majored in drama and ethnomusicology at Tulane University. When Wein was looking for local co-workers to produce the Jazz Fest, Davis dropped out of college to be involved.

The first Festival took place at Congo Square in New Orleans' Louis Armstrong Park. Davis worked in a world where music flowed. He became a manager of early rhythm and blues pianist Professor Longhair and road manager for Duke Ellington and B.B. King.

(Davis was such an adept manager for Longhair that in 1989 he produced an album of Longhair's selections "Houseparty New Orleans Style" which won a Grammy in the Best Traditional Blues Recording category.)

In 1993, Davis organized a party for a political party when he produced "America's Reunion on the Mall," a festival organized as a part of President Bill Clinton's inaugural events.

Davis' signature of course is as CEO of Festival Productions, Inc. and in that capacity producer and director of the New Orleans event, one of the world's greatest music festivals. (Davis, along with tropical songster Jimmy Buffett are the Executive Producers of the film, "Jazz Fest: A New Orleans Story" documentary.)

He was born into a family with a knack for enhancing New Orleans' place in the skyline. His father, distinguished architect Arthur Davis, was co-owner of a prestigious firm that designed the Louisiana Superdome. Son Quint would have his own vision for the city:

"The true heart and soul of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, as with New Orleans itself, is music," he says. "It's the force that drives and defines us. It's not just for entertainment, but it feeds our soul."

Jazz Fest began feeding the city's soul in 1970 with a modest gathering of musicians at Congo Square, an area that was once a slave dance ground. Wein brought in Duke Ellington to give the initial event some celebrity

status, plus New Orleans already had big names in its own living rooms. Fats Domino was there, so was Mahaila Jackson.

Davis would credit those two as major figures in the development of American music. Jackson's presence was prophetic because gospel would always be a part of the festival to follow:

“At that time, 1970, not many white people had seen black gospel in its full glory, Davis recalled. “Gospel was not common at blues festivals or jazz festivals. So, you know, we got on kind of a mission there to bring gospel on down to the front of the bus, as we called it.”

“Gospel music is such a raw, direct line to something that is spirit-filled, and spirit-full that you just can't help feel that gospel music can move everybody,” Davis continued.

In 2005 New Orleans needed all the help from the spirit that it could muster after the levee destruction from Hurricane Katrina devastated the city. The fallen levees created one of the worst urban disasters in the nation's history.

“A major American city is lying in ruins. Where else would nobody care and not do anything? Whatever's going to happen here is not going to happen fast. The size and scope of the devastation ... it's not going to just take years to do, it's going to take years to know what to do.” a disheartened Davis said at the time.

Yet, the music world plus corporate America (particularly Shell Oil coming in as the title sponsor) and all those who loved the Fest united, so that Davis would be able to announce that there would be a Fest in 2006.

“We're dedicating this year's festival to the people of New Orleans and inviting everybody who cares about this city to come to Jazz Fest and play a meaningful role in bringing back the city's culture, which is the soul of America,” Davis announced.”

There would be plenty joy and occasional crises ahead, particularly the COVID invasion which caused the festival to be shut down in 2020 and 2021, but all the more to stir anticipation for the event's return.

For what success the event has had, and it is enormous, credit the original vision of George Wein but most of all the leadership of Quint Davis

who truly is Mr. Jazz Fest. What he says of the musicians selected can also be said of him:

"Our bottom line is... Whatever you do, you have to be great."

acknowledgements:

Errol Laborde interview with Quint Davis  
New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival  
QuotesHD

### **SEAN STUART: CO- PRODUCER**

"An Amazing Mixture"

Asked what was one of his favorite moments while producing the documentary, *Jazz Fest: A New Orleans Story*, co-producer Sean Stuart responded enthusiastically: "Seeing Al Green return to the stage and pick up like he has never stopped was so powerful. But it is hard to have favorite moments, because so much of the festival time as a producer is spent backstage or working to capture everything. And seeing Irma Thomas performing on stage will give you goose bumps; she alone is worth the trip."

Pity the plight of the producer, near the heart of the action albeit sometimes backstage. Fortunately, a producer experiences the performance not only live but also from hours spent watching the editing. He gets to revisit. "I hope we helped bring the incredible heart and diversity of New Orleans come alive on the screen, Stuart adds. You can't capture it all, but hopefully we did enough to really bring the experience to life. "

Sean Stuart is the founder and president of Sutter Roads Picture Co., based in Culver City, Ca. where he produced the Emmy award winning documentary *What's My Name/Muhammed Ali*. He also produced the docuseries *UFO* for Showtime and the six-part *Cat People* series on Netflix. (Frank Marshall, co-founder of the prestigious Santa Monica based production company, Kennedy/ Marshall, is also a co-producer along with Ryan Suffern whose music-related credits include: *Finding Oscar*; *McCartney* and *The Bee Gees: How Can You Mend a Broken Heart*.)

Stuart's many productions have taken him many places, but the Jazz Fest seems to have given him a special buzz.

"I think Samantha Fish really caught me off guard. She has such an incredible stage presence and a diversity in her music. A diversity that really matches the diversity of the artists and the energy of the overall festival."



Music has been in his repertoire with production credits including *The Gift: The Journey of Johnny Cash*, *Tales from the Tour Bus* (biographical oral histories of musicians); and *Let There Be Drums* (stories of musicians and their struggles.)

Jazz Fest allows an opportunity to experience the music life of different genres from different settings and with the extra advantage of indigenous foods that, like the performers, have earned fan approval.

Speaking of the food. Were there any favorites: “You can’t go wrong with anything,” Stuart says, “but I might have eaten too many hot sausage po-boys for my own good. And I will never be the same after meeting my first muffuletta.

Thanks to Stuart and colleagues, now there is a film to immortalize all of the above and to make the experience increasingly tempting.

“This was my first trip to Jazz Fest,” Stuart recalls, “and you might assume it is going to be like any other festival, but it's so unique in the cultural and musical landscape.”

So, what would he say to anyone wanting to learn more about the festival? “It’s almost impossible to explain Jazz Fest to someone,” Stuart says.

“It is so tactile and immersive, you really have to experience for yourself, at least once in your life. The intersection of music, food, art and history - there is nothing like it.”