

ON RECORD: THE DAP KINGS

The Funky Band Returns with Jon Batiste

BY LEE VALENTINE SMITH

FOR NEARLY TWO DECADES THE Dap Kings were best known for their soulful collaborations with the late Sharon Jones. After the Augusta native's death in late 2016, the band continued, working with a number of artists including their latest endeavor, a string of live shows with multi-instrumentalist Jon Batiste, the musical director of Late Show with Stephen Colbert.

But creative alliances are nothing new for the band. Their work with Amy Winehouse on Back To Black in 2007 and their 2012 project with Booker T Jones, The Road To Memphis, both won Grammy Awards. The current tour will find the funky outfit delving into the rich musical heritage of Louisiana as well as selections from Batiste's own catalog of rock, soul and roots music.

Recently INsite spoke with the leader of the Dap-Kings and their label Daptone Records, bassist-songwriter Bosco Mann (aka Gabriel Roth) about the new tour, the last days of Sharon Jones and the music of New Orleans.

You guys started out playing tiny clubs. How does it feel to work the big festival stages?

Well you don't have that sort of compression of energy at a festival like in a club or a house party. The stage is so much bigger and you're further away from each other. With Sharon, she had the ability to turn a festival into a house party and somehow connect with each person. For this, it's a little different. We've only done one show so far with Jon. We'll be getting into these New Orleans grooves so we'll be figuring out the pacing of the set as we go along.

How did the collaboration with Jon happen?

We've worked together a little before. When we played the Colbert show with Sharon and Jon sat in with us and played some piano. He's obviously a really talented guy we started to talk about what we could do together musically and got really excited because we're into a lot of the same music.

Sounds like it's a pretty cool meeting of the minds.

It is. Jon's got a lot of respect for the music and the history. He's not the kind to just take a song and tear it up and smash a bunch of solos into it. He has a certain reverence for the details of the arrangements and he really takes a second to respect what makes some of these songs so beautiful. He takes that same approach when he's working on his new songs.

What was it like once you got in the rehearsal room?

It was exciting. Not just to pick covers, but to work on some his new tunes. We were able to get in there and tweak some arrangements with him and that's when it really became fun, working on the music and learning where he's coming from. He's from New Orleans and there's a certain feel and a certain way things swing. To me, if you're not from there, you really can't do it right.

Is this becoming a full-time band already?

We get questions all the time about, are you looking for another singer? Will you try and replace Sharon? That can't happen.

can recognize it. You could say that about Philly or Memphis too, but I don't think any other place has such a definitive feel.

You can feel that culture the second you step foot in the city.

It's like a different country.

Music is such a part of our lives. You were lucky enough to witness that firsthand in the final days of Sharon Jones.

It was pretty deep being with her in the hospital and the whole band was there. It was pretty crazy, she'd had these strokes near the end and wasn't able

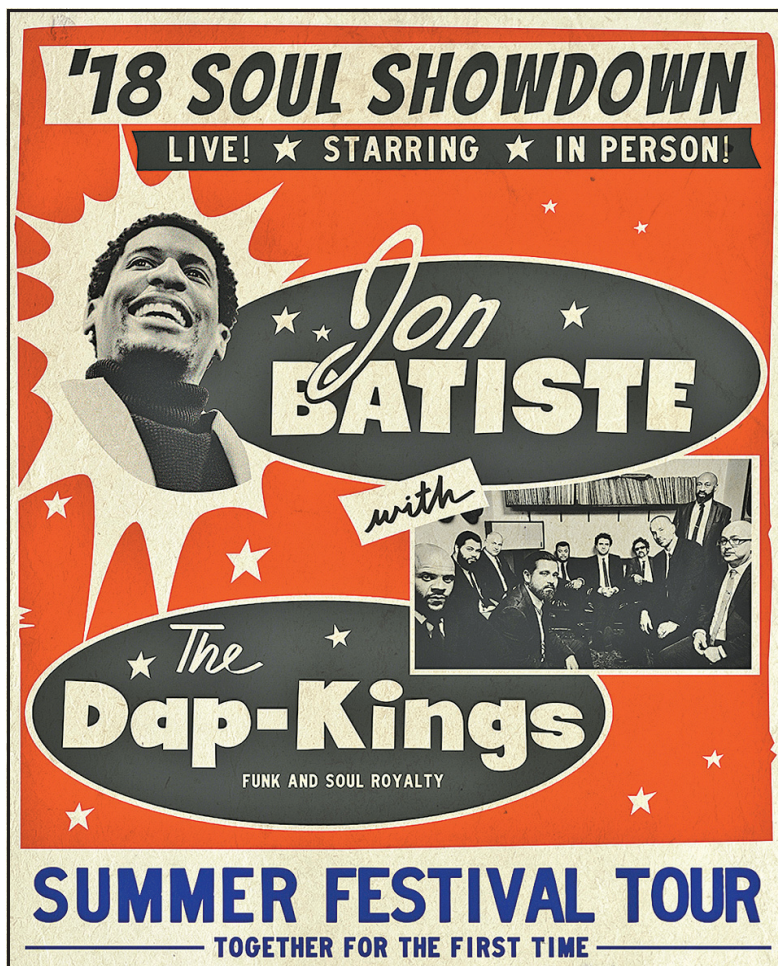
to talk. But she started moaning and her moans turned to melodies and it turned into "His Eye Is On The Sparrow" and "Go Tell It On The Mountain." Eventually we were all singing. She was really singing but she couldn't talk. She couldn't tell us if she was in pain, couldn't say yes or no, couldn't communicate. But she could sing. It was heartbreaking and it was beautiful. Definitely one of the most memorable things I'll ever go through. It just shows that music, and those gospel songs in particular, were so deep in her. You talk about singing until the wheels come off, she was barely alive and still singing her heart out. It was amazing to have her last moments filled with music and I was very lucky to have been there with her.

You've been doing vinyl releases long before the recent boom [with Desco and then Daptone Records].

Oh yeah, since the '90s. At first it was just vinyl but then we went begrudgingly into CDs and then downloads and now we're in the total matrix. But the format we love the most is vinyl. Every time we're making a record, we're thinking about the LP. The sequence, the sides, the cover. But a lot of people are listening to music now in the worst, most transient ways, with sound worse than AM radio ever was. But I think our most loyal fanbase are the people who truly enjoy playing a record. That's who we're making records for.

You're definitely an analog guy.

Yeah, but I'm not dogmatic about it. It's always about the process. We mostly record on eight tracks because it forces you to get the music right. It's such a different experience to record digitally, but it's a much more satisfying experience to actively play a record. You have to have a record player and maybe a room for it, or some place where you're dedicating a certain amount of effort to it. As opposed to just playing music in the background on the computer while you do your emails. It's how you experience it. We make music that's worth the experience.



There's never gonna be so and so and the Dap Kings. But we love playing music with Jon, and I hope more comes from it.

Do you think a record will come from this collaboration?

It's possible. Musically, we're all willing but he's got his own band, too. But it'd be fun to do and I think we have so much common ground, we could do it right.

But for now, the live show is the thing.

Yeah and there's so much to look at with the music we've selected. New Orleans is the deepest pocket of music America has ever had. The conversation of the different influences has always gone back and forth from funk to soul to country and rock. And we've talked to Jon about this too. The Jamaican influence is strong. It's just in the air there.

Such strong roots. It's interesting to think of the influence of just Alan Toussaint.

He wrote so many good songs. A lot of things you might of as "New Orleans" in style is really his style. His songwriting style is so unique and recognizable. You can hear it. Really, the second you drop the needle on a New Orleans record, you

NEW RELEASES

THE LATEST DVD, BLU RAY & VOD RELEASES

BY JOHN MOORE

KILLING FOR LOVE (IFC Films)

If the March 1985 murder of Derek and Nancy Hanson in their Lynchburg, VA home had happened in the Internet era it would have been major news for months on end. The suspects were their daughter and her German, college boyfriend (a diplomat's son, no less). Add to that rumors of sexual abuse from Nancy; the young couple fleeing to Europe after the crime and it would be our next murder mystery obsession. *Killing For Love* takes a sober eye look at the case, 30 years later, and brings up the likelihood that the boyfriend, Jens Soering, was likely set up by his girlfriend to take the blame for a murder she set up and possibly committed with someone else. This compelling doc switches between decades old videotaped courtroom testimony and current interviews with Soering, his attorneys, investigators and the team that prosecuted him.



HEARTWORN HIGHWAYS REVISITED (MVD Visual)

Just a couple years past the 40th anniversary of the iconic documentary, *Heartworn Highways*, filmmaker Wayne Price sets out to recreate, at least in spirit, one of the best documents



out there on the Outlaw Country music movement. *Heartworn Highways Revisited*, much like its predecessor, focuses on a handful of country (or at least country-ish) musicians creating their own path, outside of the mainstream. There are fantastic interviews with folks like Robert Ellis, John McCauley, Shovels & Rope, Shelly Colvin and others. He also brings back Guy Clark, Steve Young and David Allan Coe, all subjects of the first documentary, to check in. One of the best music docs to come out in years.

MY FRIEND DAHMER (Filmrise)

My Friend Dahmer, based on the autobiographical graphic novel by cartoonist John Backderf, is an unnerving look at the making of a serial killer. The movie zeros in on the senior year of high school of the odd and increasingly morbid Jeffrey Dahmer in his Ohio town in the late '70s. He is befriended by a few boys in the school, including Backderf, thanks to his habit of acting out in class. Dahmer is played impressively by former Disney actor Ross Lynch, in the time-honored tradition of actors rebelling against their Disney roots, but the best acting comes from Anne Heche, playing his mentally unstable mother. Creepy, unsettling, but strongly compelling, *My Friend Dahmer* does a solid job of depicting a burgeoning psychopath.