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[The History of New Orleans Rhythm & Blues: Jazz, Blues & Creole Roots](#)

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Title: [The History of New Orleans Rhythm & Blues: Jazz, Blues & Creole Roots](#)

Artists: [Various](#)

Label: [Rhythm and Blues Records](#)

Format: 2 2-CD sets (issued separately as [Vol. 1](#) and [Vol. 2](#))

Release date: May 29, 2012

Rhythm and Blues Records' 4-disc compilation [New Orleans Rhythm & Blues](#) does more than tell of the city's musical heritage: it packages together the early sounds of American popular music. That music just happens to be from the Crescent City, where R&B, funk, and rock 'n' roll were birthed following the storied

birth of jazz. From ragging rhythms to grindhouse rockers, this compilation shares the lesser-known brilliance of New Orleans' rich nightlife.

Volume 1, which includes recordings from 1921–1949, represents the wildly different vernacular traditions found in New Orleans' widespread corners. “Root Hog or Die” by Harlem Hamfats is a minor-key gypsy blues number that has all the booze-cured grit and melancholy that Tom Waits has been channeling throughout his noire-jazz career. Edmond Hall's “Besame Mucho” and The Creole Serenaders' “Mo Pas Lemme Ca” draw the dark and stormy rhumba rhythms that floated up to New Orleans from its Caribbean neighbors. Meanwhile, Cajun fiddles dance atop silvery steel guitar licks on “Hackberry Hop” by Harry Choates and the Rayne-Bo Ramblers.

Volume 2's songs from 1947-1953 represent a short but momentous time in New Orleans music history: when Creole musicians got pompadours and started playing proto-rock. While Little Richard and Ray Charles got their start recording at Cosima Matassa's French Quarter studio, countless natives were pioneering rock's fevered rhythms—Fats Domino, Earl Palmer, Smiley Lewis, Dave Bartholomew, Lloyd Price, Professor Longhair, Guitar Slim, and many lesser-knowns. “Still My Angel Child” by Alan Mondy and “Hey Little Girl” by Paul Gayten reveal for once and all that Bo Diddley wasn't rock's first rattle-swagger guitarist. And James Wayne's “Junco Partner” and Papa Lightfoot's “Jumpin' with Jarvis” have the sexual bravado and fury that Muddy Waters used to set Chicago afire with his electric blues.

Dishing out a big serving of down-home sounds with all the curious flavors of New Orleans' musical cuisine (NOTE the names of the featured artists: Fats Domino, Chubby Newsome, Fat Man Matthew, and Sugar Boy Crawford), [New Orleans Rhythm & Blues](#) is a welcome indulgence for the holiday season.

Reviewed by Betsy Shepherd

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