

## LEAF's work in New Orleans

by Pete Zamplas

The Neville family and the local healing-arts festival are developing a new connection: LEAF volunteers helped rebuild the Katrina-destroyed house of Ivan's cousin Charmaine, and are in a program with Tipitina's Foundation that helped Ivan and others replace a total of \$74,000 in instruments lost in the storm.

"For several days, we pulled and scrapped and dug," Festival Executive Director Jennifer Pickering says. "After driving around each day, seeing so many destroyed homes, it gave us hope to go to Charmaine's and see a house come back to life."

On New Year's weekend, ten LEAF volunteers delivered instruments in five trucks to musicians in Atlanta, Tuscaloosa (Alabama) and New Orleans. Three weeks ago, they transported three pianos.

In fact, instruments went to members of several LEAF acts here this weekend – including the Klezmer All-Stars, Zulu Connection (African stilt walking, dance), Rebirth Brass Band and Little Rascals Brass Band, and Mardi Gras Indian drum soloist Imhotep, who relocated to Asheville.

The project helped Ivan Neville replace a Hohner E6 clavinet keyboard (an instrument heavy on percussion, with distinctive guitar-like sounds). "They don't make that anymore," he points out. "They put on a Web site I lost it. A generous gentleman saw that, called and donated one. I felt really warm about it. Many people gave time and effort to make this happen. It's amazing."

### Rebirth Brass Band

The LEAF-Tipitina's endeavor also helped some musicians find homes: Rebirth Brass Band drummer A.J. Mallory and family are house guests in Texas, after two weeks in a tent. And local TC Roberson students donated band uniforms.

Other New Orleans-rooted performers slated to perform include the Red Stick Ramblers (Cajun fiddle, etc.), Sunpie Barnes and the Louisiana Sunspots (Zydeco), the Mardi Gras Indians, and Nightingale (Celtic, contra dance). Cajun sounds also come from Donna the Buffalo (Zydeco) and Maria Muldaur & Her Red Hot Bluesiana Band.

– Contributor Pete Zamplas is based in Hendersonville.

## LEAF boosts Bayou musicians

### Spring lineup draws deep from the Crescent City

by Pete Zamplas

#### **Living the Asheville/NOLA**

**connection:** Mardi Gras Indian drummer (and LEAF performer) Imhotep moved here post-Katrina.

Ever in the fray, Lake Eden Arts Festival will honor New Orleans' tentatively-boiling-again gumbo with a novel Neville family adventure. Three prominent members of the Crescent City's crown musical family will perform this weekend.

They'll help celebrate South Louisiana music, dance and culture and reflect the fallout of the hurricane-ravaged Bayou, whose resident musicians LEAF volunteers have helped recover (see sidebar).

But restoration of possessions is just one bit of the battle.

"Our vibe is about keeping spiritualized – being optimistic about the whole situation," headliner Ivan Neville said in a recent phone interview.

The keyboardist son of four-time Grammy-winning pop-soul-funk legend Aaron Neville says his music reflects New Orleans-style resiliency, in extra "urgency" since the disaster. "The spirit of the New Orleans music is alive and well. And we are doing our best to keep that going."

He and his first cousin and band mate Ian Neville realize that, despite all the goodwill pouring in, resurrection begins at home.

"It's definitely up to us to keep pushing the New Orleans music forward, to spin the crowd," says Ian. "The community of music in New Orleans is taking a good first step in people's mind frames."

New Orleans funk, jazz, blues and Zydeco have long been part of LEAF's multicultural menu. Saturday night will feature Ivan Neville's Dumpstaphunk (with Ian) and percussionist Cyril Neville's Tribe 13, with a fourth Neville, Ganielle, among guests. (Cyril contributed to the *Sing Me Back Home: Songs of Faith and Funk* benefit CD for New Orleans musicians.)

**Ivan Neville's Dumpstaphunk**, including newest Neville Ian, second from left.

Both acts won best-band honors last year – Tribe 13 in Austin and Dumpstaphunk taking the Big Easy Award as New Orleans' Best Funk Group. Their stars, however, have been long in the rising: Cyril (with the Meters) opened for the Stones more than 30 years ago, and Ivan recorded on two Stones LPs

(*Dirty Work* and *Voodoo Lounge*), four Neville Brothers CDs, and his own four solo discs.

Ian, 24, is the low-key son of "Poppa Funk" Art, 67, eldest Neville Brother. "I've seen the young cat grow the last four years into an amazing musician. He's a joy to watch," Ivan says. As guest of the Funky Meters, the cousins have wowed Asheville in recent editions of Warren Haynes' annual Christmas jams.

And they take pride in gritty Dumpstaphunk's own improvisational forays. "The band has a lot of chemistry, energy, freedom and spontaneity," Ivan brags. "We take turns driving. There's no telling what might happen."

Says Ian: "We don't know where it'll get to, but it's somewhere very funky and fun."

Even pre-Katrina, seizing the day was the *raison d'être* of the Neville Brothers' work, including 2004's *Walkin' in the Shadow of Life* that Ivan co-produced (his youngest brother Jason raps on it).

"Live like it's your last," stresses Ivan. "You don't know how long you're going to be here."

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