

NEWS RELEASE

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MILLENNIUM PARK PRESENTS "SING ME BACK HOME," A SPECIAL AWARENESS CONCERT FEATURING THE NEW ORLEANS SOCIAL CLUB AND SPECIAL GUESTS



New Orleans Social Club



Irma Thomas



John Boutté



Koko Taylor

FEATURED ARTISTS INCLUDE IVAN NEVILLE, LEO NOCENTELLI, RAYMOND WEBER, TONY HALL, HENRY BUTLER, IRMA THOMAS, TROY (TROMBONE SHORTY) ANDREWS, JOHN BOUTTÉ, HOT 8 BRASS BAND, AND CHICAGO'S OWN KOKO TAYLOR AND MUCCA PAZZA

The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, Millennium Park, is proud to present "Sing Me Back Home," a free concert celebration of the music and culture of New Orleans, on Friday, August 24, 2007 at 6:30 pm at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park. Six weeks after Hurricane Katrina, a group of legendary musicians from New Orleans gathered in Austin, Texas, to record the monumental album *Sing Me Back Home*. Over seven magical days and nights, The New Orleans Social Club was born. For this **debut performance in Chicago**, we salute the musicians and culture of New Orleans. The New Orleans Social Club features musicians Ivan Neville of the Neville Brothers, Leo Nocentelli of the Meters, Raymond Weber, Tony Hall, and Henry Butler. Special guests include Irma Thomas, Koko Taylor, Troy (Trombone Shorty) Andrews, John Boutté, the Hot 8 Brass Band and more. Chicago's own circus punk marching orchestra, Mucca Pazza, will kick off this special evening of music. For more information, call 312.742.1168 or visit www.millenniumpark.org.

About the concert

"Like Chicago, the city of New Orleans is a renowned cultural center, home to people everywhere who cherish its musical, artistic and culinary traditions," said Helen Doria, Executive Director of Millennium Park. "We want people to enjoy the wonderful music of New Orleans and to hopefully be moved to help any way they can in recovery efforts for this great city."

As the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina approaches, this special concert will bring Chicagoans together to reflect on the past, recognize the amount of work that remains to be done, and, most importantly, look to the future with hope and optimism. In the days and weeks following Katrina, thousands of Chicagoans opened their hearts, homes and wallets to help the victims of Katrina. Not only will Chicagoans be treated to some of the best music coming out of New Orleans, but they will be able to find information about organizations that are making a difference in the lives of people of New Orleans, like Sweet Home New Orleans, KaBoom!, and Habitat for Humanity. See the last page of this release for more information about these organizations.

About the artists

The Neville Family is considered by many to be one of the most gifted musical and creative families in America. **Ivan Neville** began absorbing the musical attitudes of his family at birth and learned to play keyboards, guitar, bass and drums. It wasn't long before he became a pivotal member of Bonnie Raitt's band, Rufus, Keith Richards & the Xpensive Winos and the Spin Doctors. Ivan launched his solo career with the acclaimed *If My Ancestors Could See Me Now* and *Thanks*. Ivan also wrote

and co-produced *Saturday Morning Music*, which includes a timeless hybrid of Soul, Rock, and New Orleans Funk that translates into an incomparable modern musical gumbo.

Leo Nocentelli is known throughout the music industry as the "funkiest, fast-fingered" guitarist there is. He is also the lead guitarist, composer, innovator and the musical originator of the syncopated funk-style that won international acclaim for him and the band known as the "Pioneers of Funk," The Meters, the Grammy's 2001 Lifetime Achievement Award Winners. In the two decades plus, Leo's sound and styles, ranging from Funk, Blues, Jazz, Hip-hop, Rap to Rock, have added to the creation of his own unique brand of blazing musicianship. Leo has gained the respect and demand that has led him to become a "featured" guitarist. In addition to recording with a distinguished list of his peers, Leo has recorded with a list of Grammy Award Winners such as, Stevie Wonder, The Supremes, The Temptations, Paul McCartney, Dr. John, Sting, Peter Gabriel, Robert Palmer, and many more.

John Boutté's smoldering, spirit filled tenor is one-of-a-kind. John's talent and voice stand above and beyond others, even in New Orleans, home to some of the world's greatest musicians. His was recently named OFFBEAT Magazine's 2003 Male Vocalist of the Year and received the 2001 Big Easy Entertainment Awards Male Performer of the Year honor. His CD's include several jazz projects, a gospel recording with a one thousand-member Danish choir, and a collection of piano and vocal duets. He has also contributed lead vocals to a disc by the Havana-based, Cubanismo! and to a *Grammy*-nominated record by Los Hombres Calientes. Despite the celebrated recordings and performances, Boutté has always been content to keep a low profile on the national scene as he mastered his craft. He is now ready to sing out.

A five-time W.C. Handy "Best Blues Instrumentalist - Piano" award nominee, **Henry Butler** knows no limitations. Although blinded by glaucoma since birth, Butler is also a world-class photographer with his work displayed at exhibitions throughout the United States. Playing piano since the age of six, Butler is a master of musical diversity. Combining the percussive jazz piano playing of McCoy Tyner and the New Orleans style playing of Professor Longhair through his classically-trained wizardry, Butler continues to craft a sound uniquely his own. A rich amalgam of jazz, Caribbean, classical, pop, R&B and blues influences, his music is as excitingly eclectic as that of his New Orleans birthplace.

As the beat of the New Orleans Social Club, a collective of legendary New Orleans musicians, **Raymond Weber** has helped to create the album *Sing Me Back Home*, which was recorded in Austin just six weeks after the hurricane. As the drummer on the Social Club project, Weber got to represent all the great New Orleans drummers he grew up in the shadow of, like Joseph "Ziggy" Modeliste and Fred Staehle. "Any time I do a record or play live, I feel like I have to represent my city's sound," Weber says. "You can hear the New Orleans beat on this album clearly on the Creedence Clearwater Revival cover, 'Fortunate Son.' It's all New Orleans."

She's one of the most enduring soul survivors in contemporary music, a New Orleans icon whose artistry is firmly rooted in her skill as a potent musical storyteller and lyrical interpreter **Irma Thomas** is, quite simply, one of a kind: a soulful, down-home natural woman who has sustained a career for a remarkable four decades. A two-time Grammy nominee and recipient of a Pioneer Award from The Rhythm & Blues Foundation, Irma's triumphant teaming with Marcia Ball and Tracy Nelson for the 1998 best-selling album *Sing It!* further expanded her audience, exposing a new group of music fans to one of the music industry's most vibrant performers. As captivating as she is onstage, Irma Thomas is just as potent as a recording artist. "If someone would have told me that music would be my life's career way back when I first started 'she says, "I'd have said, 'you gotta be kidding!' I consider myself a blessed person to still be recording and performing and enjoying it more than ever!"

"Blues is my life," says Grammy Award-winning blues singer **Koko Taylor**, Chicago's—and the world's—undisputed Queen of the Blues. Live, she simply cannot be matched in her power and raw talent. Her long, storied career includes singing with Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Willie Dixon, B.B. King, Buddy Guy, Robert Plant and every other imaginable legend. Over the course of her almost 50-year career, Taylor has received just about every award the blues world has to offer and then some. She's received Grammy nominations for seven of her last eight Alligator albums, and she won a Grammy in 1984 for the live multi-artist album *Blues Explosion* on Atlantic Records. A major feather in her cap came on March 3, 1993, when Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley honored Taylor with a Legend Of The Year Award, and declared "Koko Taylor Day" throughout Chicago. In 1998, Chicago Magazine named her "Chicagoan Of The Year," and in 1999, Taylor was inducted into the Blues Foundation's Hall Of Fame. "There are many kings of the blues," said The Boston Globe, "but only one queen. Koko's voice is still capable of pinning a listener to the back wall."

The **Hot 8 Brass Band** has been central to New Orleans street music for over a decade. Members include Bennie "Big Peter" Pete (tuba and band leader), Terrell "Burger" Batiste (trumpet), Harry "Swamp Thang" Cook (bass drum), Jerome "Baybay" Jones (trombone), Alvarez "B.I.G. AL" Huntley (trumpet), Dinerral "Dick" Shavers (snare drum), Raymond "Dr. Rackle" Williams (trumpet), Keith "Wolf" Anderson (trombone), Jereau "Cousin" Fournett (trombone), and Wendell "Cliff" Stewart (saxophone). Founded by Bennie Pete in 1995, the band continues to play in traditional Second Line parades. They've toured across the globe and have played regularly at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, the Zulu Parade, San Antonio Zulu Association Festival, the City of New Orleans New Year's Celebration and Mo' Fest. The Hot 8 have been the featured band in an important relief project following Hurricane Katrina and the devastation wrought upon New Orleans. SAVE OUR BRASS! is a local grass-roots project that has brought music to evacuee shelters, temporary trailer parks, and communities that have reached out to New Orleanians.

Tony Hall's career as a bass guitarist began with the *Neville Brothers*. After 5 years of touring and recording with the Neville's, Tony was offered a spot in *Harry Connick Jr.'s* band. Between these two gigs he has played on numerous albums from the likes of *Bob Dylan* and *Emmy Lou Harris* to name a few.

Some have called them "circus punk," some say they're "geek love," but no one calls them dull. **Mucca Pazza** is a 30-member, indie-rock marching band that plays bizarre, scattered, glorious music—in mismatched band uniforms. They play everything from Gainesbourg to Le Tigre, Bar-Kays to Ali Hassan Kuban and lotsa original compositions. One would think that only in Dr. Seuss' imagination could a marching band perform in 10 canoes going down the Chicago River, but Mucca Pazza was there.

About the organizations

In December 2005, **KaBOOM!** launched Operation Playground, an initiative to build 100 playgrounds in Gulf Coast communities devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Since then, KaBOOM! has built nearly 60 playgrounds at schools and parks from New Orleans to Biloxi, Mississippi, in an effort to provide Gulf Coast children safe and fun places amid the debris and rebuilding effort to run, jump, play...and just be kids again. Each KaBOOM! playground is designed by the children who will use it, planned by local community members and built by hundreds of volunteers in just one day. For more information on KaBOOM!, to make a donation or to learn how you can help bring play back to the Gulf Coast, visit www.kaboom.org.

Sweet Home New Orleans (SHNO) is an umbrella organization whose mission is to revitalize the music and cultural community within the neighborhoods of New Orleans. New Orleans music has always grown out of the relationships between master and apprentice, often within families and neighborhood institutions like churches and schools. The depopulation of the city after Katrina, and the consequent fractures in these communities, has threatened these lines of cultural transmission. SHNO's task is to facilitate the return of our tradition bearers and rebuild the institutions that allow them to inform future generations. For more information, please call 1-877-933-8466 or visit www.SweetHomeNewOrleans.org.

Habitat for Humanity provides capital – not charity – to its Partner Families. Through the **New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity's** (NOAHH) unique program, low-income families who may not be able to secure a traditional bank home loan are given a chance to attain their dream of homeownership. For more information, please visit www.habitat-nola.org.

About Millennium Park

Millennium Park is located in the heart of downtown Chicago. It is bordered by Michigan Avenue to the east, Columbus Drive to the west, Randolph Street to the north and Monroe Street to the south. Convenient parking is located in the Millennium Park Garage (entrance on Columbus at Monroe or Randolph) and at the Grant Park North and East Monroe Garages, all located within a short walking distance to Millennium Park.

Millennium Park is an award-winning center for art, music, architecture and landscape design. The result of a unique partnership between the City of Chicago and the philanthropic community, the 24.5-acre park features the work of world-renowned architects, planners, artists and designers. Among Millennium Park's prominent features are the Frank Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion, the most sophisticated outdoor concert venue of its kind in the United States; the interactive Crown Fountain by Jaume Plensa; the contemporary Lurie Garden designed by the team of Gustafson Guthrie Nichols, Piet Oudolf and Robert Israel; and Anish Kapoor's hugely popular Cloud Gate sculpture. Since its opening in July 2004, Millennium Park has hosted millions of people, making it one of the most popular destinations in Chicago.

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