



A Summary Report on the Activities
of the
Louisiana Music Commission
1992-2003

**Under the Direction of
Ellis L. Marsalis Jr.
CHAIRMAN**

**Bernie Cyrus
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**Steve Picou
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

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Ellis L. Marsalis Jr.
Chairman

A Message from Chairman Ellis L. Marsalis Jr.

In late 1991 I was asked by Bernie Cyrus to accept an appointment as Chairman of the Louisiana Music Commission. I did not know much about the LMC except that it had a budget of only \$56,000 and, other than Bernie, no staff. We set out to do what we could with our limited resources to help the Louisiana music industry prosper. Our approach was simple: if musicians are thriving, then the industry thrives.

We accomplished quite a bit during those first years, often due to Bernie's ingenuity in being a catalyst for events and his relationships within the media which allowed virtually free access to radio and television. In 1994 our budget grew enough to appoint Steve Picou as the first full time assistant director. Later, under Governor Foster, we were able to add support staff and expand our offices.

Over the past 12 years, the LMC set many precedents and made history. We went to the Legislature to strengthen support; we successfully challenged radio to play more Louisiana music; we created a television show that brought live music into tens of thousands of living rooms; we participated in national and state efforts to enshrine our music history; we created new nonprofits to address our educational needs to preserve our music legacy; we attacked the 60 year old City of New Orleans Amusement Tax on live music, and 10 years later, won; we expanded our role as a valuable reference resource via the Internet and the media; we created new links to commerce for retail music businesses via our website and advertising campaigns; we helped raise investment capital for new Louisiana music businesses; we generated worldwide press and publicity for Louisiana music; we created and participated in historic events; and we worked collaboratively with both the public and private sectors to achieve these myriad accomplishments.

I am proud of my role as Chairman. Currently, my tenure exceeds that of any of my predecessors. But, I feel like we are just getting started.

The years we put into killing the Amusement Tax on live music in New Orleans, and into the effort to secure the Grammy Expo and Hall of Fame, are prime examples of our steadfast commitment to our mission. Bernie Cyrus and Steve Picou, our leadership team, have been critical to the fulfillment of that commitment. This consistency of leadership over two gubernatorial administrations has allowed the commission to maintain its projects, develop strategic plans and meet the plethora of challenges presented by new age technology.

As the Louisiana Music Commission heads into its 25th year, I look forward to continuing my service as its chairman with the Honorable Kathleen Babineaux Blanco's administration.

Introduction

The mission of the Louisiana Music Commission (LMC) is to promote and develop Louisiana's popular, commercial music and related industries to produce the highest possible economic and cultural benefit for the People of Louisiana.

Since January, 1992, the LMC has been directed by Chairman Ellis L. Marsalis Jr. and Executive Director Bernie Cyrus. This unprecedented tenure allowed the LMC to build momentum for myriad projects leading to many historic accomplishments.

This Summary Report reviews the work of the LMC in a shortened format. A more complete report analyzing the work of the LMC as compared to its strategic plans, goes into much greater depth. This document is an attempt to create an easy to read snapshot of the many accomplishments of the LMC.

1992

- Bernie Cyrus is tapped by Governor Edwards to direct the LMC.
- Ellis L. Marsalis Jr. accepts an appointment as Chairman.
- Steve Picou, a Lafayette Parish music veteran with more than 15 years experience in the music industry, joins the LMC staff as a part time assistant.
- Formulated a committee to create a jazz centennial.
- Reached semifinalist and then finalist status in becoming the home of the National Music Center, a \$28 million retirement home for musicians and music library affiliated with Dick Clark.
- Helped stop HB632 which would have caused great harm to the Louisiana music industry.

1993

- Attended and helped stage a booth at the MIDEM conference in France, the largest music licensing event in the world. The LMC worked cooperatively with other state and city departments, and with private businesses. Conceived the Louisiana Music Trail while at this event.
- Began producing and hosting the Louisiana Homegrown Show on WCKW FM92.3, a station with 2 towers that covers more of the state (2/3 of the population) more than any other FM station. Expanded the show to 2 hours and kept it on the air for 2 years.
- Successfully fought to reinstate the LMC budget (\$56,000) which had been eliminated by the Commissioner of Administration.
- First year of the Cutting Edge Music Conference & Roots Music Gathering in New Orleans. The LMC partnered with the City of New Orleans and other organizers to stage the event.

1993, continued:

- Revived the Louisiana Music Network to serve as a cooperative between the LMC, radio, TV, retailers and the general media to assist artists and labels.

1994

- Stopped an attempt to unfairly impose workers compensation fees on live music clubs who hire contract music groups on an irregular basis.
- Created *Louisiana's Alternative* radio show on WZRH FM. The show is credited with launching a hit record by Louisiana's Deadeye Dick which spent 8 weeks in the Top 50 and was featured in the movie *Dumb & Dumber* and with giving Better Than Ezra their first commercial airplay.
- Created, produced and hosted *LTV* (Louisiana Television) on Cox Cable, a one hour, live show featuring 3 acts per show, performing live in the studio. The show also featured music news, guests, call-ins and more. The series ran for 100 episodes, garnering national press in *Billboard Magazine* and other publications, and in 1997 is nominated for a CableAce award. The show is considered to be the parent of the currently running *Louisiana Jukebox*.
- Secured a \$100,000 budget increase for the LMC, making the budget \$156,000.
- Steve Picou is tapped as the first person to become Assistant Director of the LMC after serving 2 1/2 years as a part time employee.
- Created New Orleans Jazz Centennial Celebration Inc. a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to develop a yearlong series of events celebrating 100 years of jazz.
- Developed the LMC strategic plan for 1994-97.

1995

- Developed the Sugar Bowl's 100 years of jazz halftime theme to help launch New Orleans Jazz Centennial Celebration. More than 600 band members spell out the word "jazz" as a special montage of historical jazz images are shown on the Superdome screens and national television.
- Secured *Billboard Magazine* coverage of *LTV*.
- Authored and secured a Presidential Declaration signed by President Clinton declaring that 1995 was the Jazz Centennial Year.
- Began working on the Grammy Expo & Hall of Fame.
- Secured and helped stage US Postal Service issuance ceremonies for the Louis Armstrong stamp. Produced, using private funds, a parade featuring 7 brass bands and 7 social aid & pleasure clubs.
- Staged a 3 day Jazz Symposium on the Origins of Jazz, the first international symposium of its kind, and garnered international press coverage.
- Produced a performance at the New Orleans Museum of Art by Doc Cheatham, Nicholas Payton and Kermit Ruffins.

1995, continued:

- Credited by the producers for saving the Aaron Neville/Linda Rondstadt Christmas television special which was the highest rated show on the Family Channel that year.
- Acting on a request by Commissioner Ken Shepherd, an “A” team (including Commissioner Art Neville, former War drummer Harold Brown and others) of top New Orleans musicians is brought into the studio by Bernie Cyrus to do a demo with 16 year old blues guitarist Kenny Wayne Shepherd. The demo nets young Shepherd a major recording deal with music mogul Irving Azoff and his debut album sells more than a million copies. Cyrus received a platinum certification plaque in appreciation.

1996

- Economic impact of LMC work since 1992 reaches \$5 million.
- Working with the Louisiana Office of Tourism, helped create and develop the Louisiana Music Trail brochure and database which Bernie Cyrus conceived at the MIDEM conference in 1993.
- *LTV* expands to Shreveport and Monroe. The show reaches a new milestone when it features its 200th artist.
- Created a city by city analysis of the economic impact of the music business in Louisiana.
- Staged a formal presentation on the Grammy Expo & Hall of Fame at the Pan Am building which is attended by more than 100 business and political leaders.
- Because of the *Louisiana Homegrown Music Show* on WCKW FM and *LTV* on Cox Cable, the LMC can claim to have put more Louisiana artists onto radio and television than anyone in history.
- The Cutting Edge Music Conference and Roots Music Gathering reaches its 5th year making it the longest running music conference in the state.
- Helped raise \$50,000 to stage live music performances called Jazz Feasts in malls, schools and at Lafayette Square in New Orleans which helps revive music at that site.
- Joined the advisory committee which developed the Loyola Music Business Degree program.
- Successfully lobbied the New Orleans City Council to repeal the Amusement Tax on live music. However, the council reversed its vote after the LMC staff and supporters left the chambers.

1997

- Economic impact by city updated.
- 100th and final episode of *LTV* airs. A total of nearly 300 Louisiana musical acts appeared, an unprecedented number for television and it appeared in New Orleans, Shreveport, Monroe, Lafayette, Opelousas and Eunice. The show receives a CableAce nomination.
- KBON "Louisiana Proud" radio launches in Eunice. The LMC press release gets picked up by *Billboard Magazine* which runs it, unedited, as a column for the magazine's 2 million readers.
- Participated in the University of New Orleans Goals 2000 effort. The LMC helped formulate a plan to establish studio facilities on the main campus.
- *Gambit Weekly* does a cover story on the LMC's work to end the Amusement Tax.
- Begin working with the Louisiana Alliance for Arts Education to get Louisiana's school systems to adhere to the National Standards for Arts Education.
- Partnered with *Fortune* magazine to produce the Fortune 500 forum in New Orleans.
- Co-produced a documentary with an Italian film crew and worked with press from Russia, England, Ireland, Japan and Australia.
- Appeared on nationally broadcast *Kid's Court* television who on a panel discussing music censorship.
- Partnered with the National Park Service on the Lower Mississippi Delta Heritage Study.
- The LMC website is launched and includes a Newsflash page to help keep visitors informed about important issues both within the state and nationally.
- Staged a booth at the Gavin convention, a confab of radio programmers.
- Launched *New Orleans After Midnight (NOAM)*, a tv show on WDSU in a time slot just after *Saturday Night Live*. The show runs for 5 season and racks up the highest ratings ever for a locally produced tv show.
- Louisiana artists sell over 20 million CDs, totaling more than \$250,000,000 in retail sales in the world market, a measurable percentage of both North American and international sales. It is the beginning of a multiyear run of sales.
- Created a 1992-97 report on the LMC.

1998

- The LMC's work has now produced a \$9 million economic impact since 1992, a more than 15:1 ratio when compared to the LMC's budget.
- Organized a forum of club owners to discuss the impact of the Amusement Tax and get input.
- Helped author a bill introduced by Rep. Steve Scalise to kill the Amusement Tax.

1998, continued:

- Chairman Marsalis appears before a Legislative committee in support of the bill to kill the Amusement Tax. Mayor Morial, who opposes the bill, serves beignets and cafe au lait just outside the committee room as part of New Orleans Day at the Legislature. The bill dies in committee.
- Supported and sponsored via a financial commitment, the LMNOP music conference.
- Working with a former director of the LMC and a representative of MIDEM, the LMC organized an effort to create a strong Louisiana presence at the event.
- Saved the more than 100 year old Dew Drop Social & Benevolent Hall in Mandeville, a major early jazz site, by bringing together civic and governmental leaders and the donor.
- From January to May, Jazz Informance reach more than 8000 elementary school students. More than \$30,000 is paid to the artists who do the informances. The program goes statewide in the Fall.
- The LMC and Delgado share in a Golden Bullfrog award from a national public relations magazine for the Buddy Bolden Memorial, beating the 100th anniversary of Jello and a Wheaties campaign.
- The City of New Orleans Zoning Department stops live, in-store music performances during Jazz Fest (and the LMNOP conference). The LMC, with the assistance of City Council member Troy Carter challenges the action. It takes court action by the record stores to end the ordeal.
- A radio survey, the first ever by a state agency, is conducted using student interns to determine which stations are playing Louisiana artists including information about shows, timeslots and the number of songs being played weekly. This information is added to the LMC website.
- Attended the MIDEM Latin America conference in Miami as part of a joint effort with the City of New Orleans to lure the event to Louisiana.
- Updated the LMC Strategic Plan and extended it to 2003.
- Kenny Lannes of Gretna patents designs for KJL Amplifiers and the LMC initiates efforts to assist his company in finding economic development support, artist endorsements and investment.
- Worked with the producers of the PBS television show *River of Song*.
- The City of New Orleans loses a lawsuit brought by the Cat's Meow and represented by attorneys Mitch Landrieu and Justin Zitler, the City of New Orleans lowers the Amusement Tax from 5% to 2%.
- LSU opens the country's first Musicians Clinic dedicated to serving the special health needs of the state's musicians. It becomes a model for similar efforts in California and Tennessee. The clinic is strongly supported by the American Federation of Musicians, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation, the LMC and private benefactors.

1999

- Again deal with a Workers Compensation issue and clubs. LWCC tries to enforce rules on several clubs. The LMC confronts LWCC lawyers who say that it will take legislative action to stop them. The LMC lobbies LWCC board members and several legislators. Plans are made to draft a bill for the 2000 legislative session to deal with the problem.
- The agency begins raising money for a feasibility study for the Grammy Expo.
- The LMC works with the Vision 2020 planners to add music components.
- The LMC again supports the LMNOP music conference.
- The agency stages Louisiana Music Day at the Legislature, holds a meeting in the Governor's Press Room and showcases several state companies and their products in the lobby of the State Capitol.
- After being contacted by the LMC, Gatemouth Brown agrees to work with KJL Amplifiers as an endorsee and tester.
- The LMC hires its first full time Civil Service administrative assistant.
- The LMC helps in the formation of the Memphis & Shelby County Music Commission and begins a series of initiatives with music and civic leaders there to develop a music corridor. The first thing the new commission does is develop a health care effort patterned after the New Orleans Musicians Clinic.
- The LMC garners press from France, Germany, the United Kingdom and China.
- The Grammy Expo project is revived when a local developer secures a strong financial commitment contingent upon the results of a feasibility study. The LMC is asked to raise funds for the study.
- In addition to the Legislature and the Office of the Governor, the agency is working actively with many other state agencies including: Tourism, Film, Labor, Insurance, Education, State Museums and Economic Development.
- The LMC institutes weekly press releases via broadcast fax announcing new CD releases by Louisiana artists.
- The National Park Service stages a traditional jazz performance at the newly restored Dew Drop Inn in Mandeville and videotapes the show.
- The LMC partners with NOSACONN, the New Orleans-South Africa Connection, which stages a major concert in South Africa featuring several Louisiana musical artists. The LMC is one of the sponsors of this worldwide outreach which seeks to build business ties between the two countries.

2000

- The LMC prompts both a column and a full story in *Billboard Magazine*.
- A public forum is staged by the LMC in Lafayette to gather information and encourage efforts to strengthen the Acadiana music industry. The forum sparks an effort to create a television show in the area.

2000 continued:

- Jazz informances have now reached nearly 100,000 elementary students in Louisiana. More than 2/3 of the money raised for the informances is paid directly to the specially trained musicians.
- The LMC launches an effort to create a Louisiana music history CD ROM, author and historian Tad Jones is hired to develop a script.
- The LMC partners with Bluestock 2000 in Memphis which features a special Blues Train on AMTRAK which brings fans to the event. Dozens of Louisiana musicians perform at Bluestock.
- The agency begins research and lobbying efforts to create a branch of the Jean Lafitte National Park in the Shreveport Municipal Auditorium, former site of the *Louisiana Hayride* radio show.
- The LMC launches BuyLouisianaMusic.com, a web page that features connections to Louisiana music retailers, new releases and others selling Louisiana music via the Internet.
- Preliminary construction of the Jazz Walk of Fame is completed. At more than \$1 million, this is the largest music-related memorial in Louisiana. The LMC raised funds from a broad range of federal, state and local sources.
- The Low Power Radio initiative is started by the Federal Communications Commission. The LMC, which sees the effort as having enormous potential to get Louisiana music into new markets, begins working with the Future of Music Coalition and other national organizations, to lobby federal officials to support the plan. The initiative is strongly opposed by the National Association of Broadcasters and a very watered down version is eventually passed. More than 60 applicants from Louisiana seek the new licenses.
- The LMC raises nearly \$50,000 from a variety of state and local sources for the Grammy Expo & Hall of Fame feasibility study. The numbers confirm that the potential site is strong enough to warrant major investment. Financial aspects of the project take shape with more than \$60 million committed by a division of GMAC. A \$10 million commitment is sought from the state.
- The LMC secures a \$10 million commitment for the Grammy Expo & Hall of Fame from the Foster Administration and leaders of the Legislature. The Capital Outlay will be part of the 2001-02 Legislative Session.
- CA Guitars, a Lafayette-based manufacturer utilizing advanced composite materials, begins making guitars and secures a \$300,000 Workforce Development grant from the state. The LMC initiated dialog with the company, helps promote them and begins seeking potential investors and artist endorsements.
- The agency raises \$5,000 from the RIAA for the New Orleans Musicians Clinic.
- The LMC brought together two of the state's most significant companies working to create secure delivery of content via the Web.

2000, continued:

- Joined an effort to save the buildings in the 400 block of South Rampart where 4 of the most important buildings in jazz history sit, empty and awaiting rejuvenation. The LMC works with the National Park Service on an effort to create a plan for preservation and utilization.

2001

- LMC legislative agenda includes Grammy Expo & Hall of Fame funding, clarification of the Workers Compensation rules, a House Concurrent Resolution (HCR 154) regarding the music industry and plans to enhance the Rampart Street corridor and support for other historic preservation efforts.
- The LMC helps author and pass HB 1811 by Rep. Scalise which declares that musicians working under contract are exempt from Workers Compensation provisions. This bill brings Louisiana in line with most states in declaring most musicians are contract workers, not full time employees for which premiums must be paid.
- The LMC helps secure a \$9.9 million commitment from the state's Capital Outlay budget for the Grammy Expo & Hall of Fame.
- The LMC gets a unanimous vote from the state Bond Commission which agrees to up to \$90 million in tax free bond sales for the Grammy Expo & Hall of Fame.
- 15 of the Jazz Walk audio vignettes are produced by the LMC. Featuring the voice of legendary (and now, the late) Tex Stephens, the state's first black radio announcer.
- The LMC initiates a forum in Shreveport with the mayor and regional federal and state officials to discuss possible National Park participation in saving the Municipal Auditorium and revival of the Louisiana Hayride.
- Working with new jazz station WSJZ, the LMC develops a special "All Louisiana Music Day" and other local programming.
- The LMC participated in the annual Music Business Educators Annual Conference, held at Loyola University.
- The Dew Drop Social & Benevolent Hall is placed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The Cutting Edge Music Conference achieves its 9th year.
- The first Louisiana FolkRoots Dewey Balfa Cajun & Creole Heritage Week is held at Lake Fausse State Park. Boozoo Chavis performs his last Louisiana gig before his death. The LMC serves as a consultant to the organization to strategize fundraising and development plans.
- The agency gets national press for efforts to stop Pay for Play (payola) in radio. The LMC calls for a Congressional investigation.

2001, continued:

- The LMC partners in its first Louisiana CrossRoads performance in Lafayette with the Acadiana Arts Council and the Lafayette Economic Development Authority.
- 150,000 elementary students across Louisiana have now participated in the living jazz history of Jazz Informances. NOJCC has also produced extensive printed and online teaching materials.

2002

- The LMC helps facilitate a more than \$300,000 donation from Ms. Jeri Nims for the Jazz Walk of Fame, now named the Robert E. Nims Jazz Walk of Fame. This will allow for final development of the interactive components and installation of more than 60 lamps and signs.
- The LMC appears before the Faculty Review Committee and assists Peter Cho and Delgado Community College in securing a Certificate Program in Louisiana Music Business Studies, the first step to an Associate Degree Program.
- The LMC joins the MetroVision Entertainment Cluster.
- The LMC assists in staging the 10th Annual Cutting Edge Music Conference & Roots Music Gathering. The event has built a treasure trove of videotaped interviews and speeches by legendary artists and has succeeded in helping to educate literally thousands of music professionals in Louisiana.
- The LMC participated in the Future of Music Coalition Policy Summit at Georgetown University in Washington DC.
- The agency works with Loyola University to stage a Future of New Orleans Music conference at the university.
- The *South Bank Show*, the UK's most popular talk show, works with the LMC to produce a 2 hour focus on Dr. John.
- The LMC successfully defends the rights of musicians at both local and state levels by helping stop anti-music ordinances and statutes.
- The LMC began working on the development of a CAPCO-like plan to create venture capital for entertainment projects.
- The LMC helps get music placed on the newly minted Louisiana quarter and helps stage the historic ceremonies marking its launch. A once-in-a-lifetime assemblage of musical artists contribute to the ceremonies.
- The LMC works with the Louisiana Secretary of State to stage the Louisiana Cavalcade, a 9 city tour of the state showcasing Louisiana musical talent.
- The LMC, after more than 10 years of fighting, finally succeeds in killing the much-hated Amusement Tax on live music in New Orleans. Working with City Councilmember Scott Shea, an ordinance was introduced and passed by a 4-3 vote after then mayor-elect Ray Nagin, whose campaign platform called for ending the tax, called in with his support for the measure. The tax was cited as the Number One impediment to live music in the state.

2001, continued:

- Since 1992 the LMC's overall economic impact has now reached nearly \$20 million, maintaining and often exceeding its 15:1 ratio of projected positive economic impact when compared to spending.

2003

- The LMC assists CA Guitars of Lafayette in securing a \$1 million grant from the Louisiana Economic Development Corporation, the single biggest investment in music manufacturing by the state in history.
- Partnered with offBeat Magazine to co-host the Best of the Beat Awards.
- SB 749, the Louisiana Arts & Entertainment Development Fund is passed by the Louisiana Legislature. Despite strong efforts by the LMC, no money is set aside for the bill, but the mechanism is in place. The LMC is working with both public and private funding sources to create a pool of money for the fund.
- Acting on a request by a local label, the agency helps spur a joint effort by national and local organizations and law enforcement to stop counterfeit and bootleg CD sales in the New Orleans area.
- NARAS signed a new agreement to allow the developers to submit a revised plan for the Grammy Expo & Hall of Fame, keeping the project alive.
- The Robert E. Nims Jazz Walk of Fame opens on the Algiers Levee. After more than \$1.5 million and 5 years, the walk's first 15 interactive lamps are up and with another 16 vignettes in production.
- The LMC continues to lobby the FCC and the federal government to deal with Pay for Play and to slow the consolidation of ownership of radio. The agency is invited to participate in meetings in Washington DC and San Antonio.
- The agency helps facilitate the formation of the Louisiana Independent Music Merchandisers Association, an affiliation of more than two dozen of the state's record labels into a trade group.
- NARAS praised the deal presented by local, state and national business leaders, but killed the Grammy Expo & Hall of Fame.