



The Story of Electronola

I first had the idea for Electronola in late 2000, while I was living in New York. I was putting together a set of music to perform at the upcoming Mardi Gras rave (that year not dubbed "Zoolu" like it was in years before and after) to be held at the legendary State Palace Theatre in New Orleans, and it occurred to me that the crowd would go nuts if I worked in samples of popular Mardi Gras music. So while weaving in the trumpet intro from Stop Inc.'s *Second Line*, samples of Fess, Mac, and The Meters into glitchy electronic dance mayhem, the gears in my head started turning.

After spending Mardi Gras weekend in New Orleans, I realized what I wanted to do: move back down and be the person to introduce the New Orleans flavor to electronic music. I convinced my friend, Perry Chen, to leave NYC and take an apartment in the French Quarter w/ me. I flew up to NYC, packed, and came back almost immediately. Soon after, I tracked down fellow NOCCA grad Jason Marsalis, booked a session with him, and the project was underway.

I spent a few weeks of tweaking material from Jason's session and adding some piano/keyboard parts, then I set up a session w/ James Singleton to play bass. That session went better than I could have even imagined, but afterwards I realized something - getting the large number of high-caliber musicians I wanted on this project was not something I could afford, and I had almost no means of finding and contacting these performers. So, other than occasionally twiddling with the material from those early sessions, the project was relegated to the back burner.

Fast forward to Mardi Gras weekend 2004 (Whoa... I just realized how much Mardi Gras played a role in all this). I was walking down Dauphine St. and a bike came to a screeching halt beside me. On it was Ben Jaffe, creative director of Preservation Hall. Ben said "I've been looking all over for you," and with that sentence my life changed. He wanted me to help set up a recording rig and make recordings for Preservation Hall Records.

My subsequent work with Ben & Pres Hall had me recording some of the best musicians in New Orleans: the many players who comprise the Preservation Hall Jazz Band family, Clint Maedgen & Bingo!, George Porter, Jr., Topsy Chapman, Herlin Riley, Davell Crawford... the list goes on and on. Gradually, and almost without realizing it, I was building the kind of relationships and getting to know the people I'd need to know in order to put together a record of the magnitude that Electronola should be.

In the aftermath of Katrina, I was introduced to Joe Rink. Joe is an entrepreneur with a variety of successful business ventures, and he'd just bought the building that housed the former studio of B.G. (of Cash Money/Hot Boys fame). Joe enlisted me to revive and set up this beautiful studio which I now run under the name Big Easy Recording. Having a studio at my disposal and connections with the well-established New Orleans musicians, the only missing piece of the puzzle was funding the project.

It just so happened that while I stayed in New Orleans making records, my old French Quarter roommate, Perry, moved back to NYC to work on a business idea - a platform to get funding for creative projects and build communities around them. His company, called Kickstarter, launched in early 2009, and I jumped on the opportunity to use it (I think Electronola was the 4th or 5th project ever launched on the site). With Kickstarter, and the support of 114 project backers, I had everything I needed to finally create the album that I'd been dreaming about.

I write this now almost exactly a year from when I got the funding, dusted off the recordings from 2001, and broke ground on new material. The mastering will be done within the next day, and the record will be available shortly thereafter. It feels like a dream. I almost can't believe that I've finally completed this project. I'm so happy to have it done, and I'm incredibly excited to share it with the world. It's been almost 10 years since its inception. I hope you all enjoy it. I know I've enjoyed making it for you.

-Earl

The Musicians

George Porter, Jr



Bass - *The Days, What It Was*

A pioneer of funk, George is probably best known as the bass player for the Meters. He's also teamed up with a plethora of other greats including [Paul McCartney](#), [Dr. John](#), [David Byrne](#), and [Tori Amos](#).

<http://www.georgeporterjr.com/>

John Boutte



Vocals - *Let It Go*

New Orleans' favorite male vocalist, John's song "Treme Song" is now the theme of the HBO hit series, Treme.

<http://www.johnboutte.com>

Charmaine Neville



Vocals - *Good Enough Alone, The Days*

The daughter of Charles Neville of the Neville Brothers, she is currently the leader and lead singer of the jazz/funk sensation, the Charmaine Neville Band.

<http://www.myspace.com/charmaineneville>

Carl LeBlanc



Vocals - *Inches Away*

From being a founding member of the band Stop Inc. in 1968 to moving to Philly to live and play with [Sun Ra](#), Carl has played all kinds of music, and he's played with *everybody*. I've seen him call [Fats Domino](#) just to chit chat, and he kindly put me in touch with George Porter, Jr. so that I could hire him for this record.

<http://www.myspace.com/carlleblanc>

Shannon Powell



Drums - *The Days, Let It Go, Haunt*

Shannon Powell, the "King of Treme", has played all over the world with groups like [Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra](#), [Harry Connick, Jr.](#), the [Preservation Hall Jazz Band](#), and [Dr. John](#).

<http://thekingoftreme.com/>

Clint Maedgen



Sax - *The Days, Inches Away, Haunt, What It Was, Drinking Alone, Let It Go*

Best known as the singer for [The New Orleans Bingo! Show](#), Clint is also now a full time member of the [Preservation Hall Jazz Band](#).

<http://clintmaedgen.com/>

Lucien Barbarin



Trombone - *The Days, Inches Away, What It Was, Drinking Alone, Let It Go*

Lucien is an in-demand trombonist, as his years of touring with [Harry Connick, Jr.](#) and the [Preservation Hall Jazz Band](#) clearly show. Lucien is part of one of the New Orleans musical family legacies - his great uncle Paul Barbarin wrote several classic New Orleans hits, including "Bourbon Street Parade".

Mark Braud



Trumpet - *The Days, Inches Away, What It Was, Drinking Alone, Let It Go*

Grandson of trumpeter John "Picket" Brunious, Mark is among several musicians on this record whose families have shaped the sound of New Orleans music for generations. Mark is the newest leader of the [Preservation Hall Jazz Band](#), and also tours with [Harry Connick, Jr.](#)

<http://www.markbraud.com/>

James Singleton



Bass - *Intro (True Dat), Drinking Alone*

James is possibly the most versatile bassist in the world. He's played with an amazing list of people, including [James Booker](#), [Professor Longhair](#), [Natalie Cole](#), and [Gatemouth Brown](#). He gets so completely into his playing, I think I could put him in a soundproof glass box and still be mesmerized by his performance... not that I would - the sounds he gets from a bass are astounding!

<http://jamessingletonmusic.com/>

Joe Lastie



Drums - *Inches Away, What It Was, Good Enough Alone*

Joe's musical roots come from his family, steeped heavily in Gospel music. I had the pleasure of recording his album that featured his family, [The Lastie Family Gospel](#), which was a mind-blowing experience. Joe's been a regular with the [Preservation Hall Jazz Band](#) since 1989, and he's also performed with [Professor Longhair](#) and [Irma Thomas](#).

Jason Marsalis



Drums - *Intro (True Dat), Drinking Alone*

Son of [Ellis](#) and younger brother of [Wynton](#), [Branford](#), and [Delfayo](#), you had to have been living under a rock not to have heard of Jason's incredibly talented musical family. Jason and I went to [NOCCA](#) together, and he was the first person I called when I decided to begin this project.

www.jasonmarsalis.com/

Black Betty a.k.a. Carmen Barika



Vocals - *Haunt*

Another [NOCCA](#) alum with a rep that spans from Opera to Blues, doe-eyed songstress, dancer, and performance artist Black Betty has performed at [Jazz Fest](#) with [Allen Toussaint](#), at the [Essence Festival](#) opening for [Brothers Johnson](#), and as a soloist with the [Louisiana Philharmonic](#)

<http://www.myspace.com/therealblackbetty>

Thanks

So many people to thank, I hope I cover them all. In no particular order:

ALL THE MUSICIANS on the record - thank you for believing in and becoming part of my project - without your contributions, this record couldn't exist.

Myshel Terry - I have no idea how I would have pulled any of this off without your feedback, moral support, inspiration, photography/videography, ideas, transportation, and the million other things you've done to help keep me on track and get this thing done. Thanks for being so awesome.

Perry Chen - First and foremost, thanks for always being there for me and pushing me to be my best. You are truly a great friend. Also, thanks for coming up with the idea for [Kickstarter](#) - it really was the keystone that allowed me to make this project a reality.

My [Kickstarter](#) Backers - All of the friends, family, and people I didn't know who backed my project - all 114 of you - THANK YOU!

Jessica Rohloff & [Net2no](#) - Thank you for letting me into your world, for allowing me to present my project at your meeting, and for the overwhelming subsequent support from your group. It was clearly the Net2no "twitter avalanche" that boosted me to my funding goal just in time, and I've met so many amazing new friends in that bunch over the last year that it almost seems unreal. You folks have a very special thing going on, and I'm proud to have become a part of it.

Aaron Lafont a.k.a [Groovescapes](#) - Thank you for instantly supporting this project & helping connect me to Net2no. Also, thank you for your sheer enthusiasm about music in general. To see someone as excited about music as you are is inspiring. It's good to know that there are people out there, like you, that really listen intently and try to get what it's all about. That makes all the hard work worthwhile.

Ben Jaffe - You believed in my engineering skills when nobody even knew who I was. You gave me a chance to hone my craft while working with some of the greatest musicians in the world. Thank you so much, Ben, for helping me find myself and opening so many doors. It's been a wild ride so far. How much more surreal can it get? I can't wait to find out.

[Monty](#) - The cover art you created for this is astounding. Thank you for putting in all the time and hard work to make that happen. I really love it!

Chris Schultz - Thanks for asking me to speak about this project at [Tribecon](#). That was a great experience.

Angela Gail - Thanks for coming out and shooting photos & video. The images you captured are fantastic.

Nick Fidanza - Thanks for all the encouragement, advice, & moral support, for the rides to the studio, and for listening to my IM rants.

Ron Rona & J Lloyd Miller - Thank you for all the 8 million little things you guys have done for me that have made a big difference. The blog entries, twitter support, being a general hub of information... the overall kindness and generosity you guys put forth is astounding. You guys are fantastic. I would. Bubbles, blowing drapes, no breakfast... well, maybe continental breakfast.

Bruce Barielle - Your mastering is truly magical. Thanks for making my recordings sound so stellar.

Evan Wilson - Thanks for the inspiration for "The Days" even though you don't remember saying it. I say that's a sign we were doing it up right.

The [Kickstarter](#) Team - Thanks for your genuine interest in my success, for featuring my project on your site, for including me in your press, & for letting me crash w/ you guys at SxSW. You guys are great, and your company's going to take over the world.

Joe Rink & Darren Smith - Thanks for working with me to get [Big Easy Recording](#) up & running. You guys are fantastic.

Gary King - Thanks for being the 1st person to hire me as a recording engineer. I mean... just look what you started! :)

The Muffins - You guys have been awesome through all of this. Thanks for the feedback & support... and special thanks to the several of you that even got your parents to back this project.

Rion Harris - Thanks for putting up with the relentless odd-hour editing and mixing, you're a very tolerant roommate.

Mom, Dad, & Krishelle - Thank you all for being so supportive and encouraging me in my musical endeavors.

Mark Ellis - Thanks for your support, honest feedback, and for letting me borrow Myshel to help me with all of this.

Mary Martin - Thanks for your amazing enthusiasm in supporting my music. It's meant a lot to me.

Clayton Smith - Thanks for going with me on the last-minute mission to rescue the bonus material.

About the Bonus Material

Stuff that didn't quite fit:

There were 3 or 4 tunes from those early sessions that I did not revive for the final record, because I determined their overall mood to no longer fit with the new direction I was taking the project. Here are 2 that were reasonably more complete and listenable than the other abandoned tunes.

Whatcha Know Good? 2003 (Bonus Track)

Preserved exactly as it was when I last worked on it in August 2003.

Where Y'at? 2004 (Bonus Track)

Preserved exactly as it was when I last worked on it in Feb 2004.

The evolution of a song:

I thought it might be interesting for people to see the different permutations a song can go through from the time it's written to the time it actually goes out into the world. I included several early versions of *What It Was*, starting with a terrible recording of me banging early ideas for the song out in a college practice room, and wrapping up w/ a later, production-heavy dance version of the tune.

What It Was Sketch 2004 (Bonus Track)

This is the 1st recorded sketch I did of this song, recorded via laptop mic in a practice room at the University of New Orleans. The file is dated 9/27/04. Of note, the lyrics below are from a file dated 9/9/03:

you can stay - but i won't kiss you
you can leave - but i won't miss you
you're lookin so so sad
but baby that's just too bad

it ain't what it was anymore
it ain't what it was anymore

you can write me - a million letters
but that won't make - shit any better
you keep on keepin on but i'm
out i'm off i'm _____ i'm gone

cuz it ain't what it was anymore
in fact it never really was before.

i won't play - the games you're playin
i'm not say-yin i'm just sayin
you scream you beg you cry but
babe you just wastin your precious time

it ain't what it was anymore
it ain't what it was anymore

What It Was Nov 2004 (Bonus Track)

This was one of the first drafts of bringing this tune to the dance floor. It's rather fast & kind of sparse. The file was dated 11/03/04.

What It Was March 2005 (Bonus Track)

This was the final version of this song before I essentially abandoned it. It's a little slower than the version I'd done a few months before (the final album version is even slower than this), and the arrangement is much more complete.

Early version:

Haunt 2003 (Bonus Track)

I originally recorded the vocals for "Haunt" in 2002 for a very different version of the song. When I decided to redo it for Electronola in 2009, I pulled up the original vocal track as a place holder as I created the new version. As the tune developed, I liked the way the original vocals sounded so much that I decided to keep them. The file this is from is dated 08/05/2003.