

10 Questions.

The Big Easy musician reflects on the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. **Dr. John will now take your questions**

I feel like things still aren't right around New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina. Do you think the city will ever be the same?

Christopher Gustin, ARABI, LA. Considering that over half the population is not back, I don't see how it could ever be [the same]. The Ninth Ward is still destroyed. People have nowhere to come home to. They got burned by the insurance companies. They got burned by everybody.

Do you think the people of Louisiana are in better shape now than they were in 2005?

Jose Mejia, BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS No. All of the dispersants, all of the poisons that have been put in the Gulf are killing every critter that walks, flies, swims. All of the poor fishermen out there that for generations have earned their livelihood fishing are being wiped out.

What is the one thing New Orleans needs the most post-Katrina and post-BP?

Terri Fallin, NEVADA, MO. One of the things it needs most desperately is leadership. We've never had any. This is a pathetic thing to say about my home. We're good people, but I feel like oil companies own our politicians outright.

What is it about New Orleans that so inspires musicians?

Waheed Akberzie, SIMI VALLEY, CALIF. We have a culture, for one thing. I think we're the only state in the U.S. that actually has its own culture. It overlaps into the food, into the music, into the lifestyle of our people. We live on sacred lands that are being terribly abused.



How have the spirits and ancestors of New Orleans music influenced you?

Eoghan Ballard, PHILADELPHIA I pray to them all the time, all of my musical ancestors, from Jelly Roll Morton to Buddy Bolden to Louis Armstrong. I'm proud I grew up in his neighborhood, the Third Ward. My father used to say, "That's where Louis Armstrong was born." He never called him Louie. He never called him Satchmo. "That's where Louis was born."

How would you describe your own music?

Denis Murrell, MACAU I like to think of what Duke Ellington said about music: There's only two kinds of music—good and bad.

I would like to think my music is good. I try to make music that tells truths.

What musicians would you most like to collaborate with?

Dave Krolak, BASKING RIDGE, N.J. That's an unanswerable question for a guy like me. It's not like I listen to people's music and say, "I like that. We'll write great songs together!" People who can write fast—bing, bang, boom—that's the kind of people I like to write with. I don't think I could ever write a song with Randy Newman. He takes forever to write a song and finesses it to the point where it's wonderful. That's not how I like to do it. I can write two, three, four songs in a day.

You used to be a guitar player but switched to piano. Why?

Keith Watling, MILWAUKEE One day I walked in on Ronnie Barron—he was a kid singing with our band—and this guy was pistol-whipping him. Now, his mother said that if anything happened to him on the road, she was going to take her meat cleaver and cut my cojones off. So I went and tried to get the gun out of the guy's hand. I got shot in my finger. It was sewed back on, but it messed up part of my head where I thought, Oh, I can't play the guitar anymore. I still play it a little bit, but not the way I used to.

What do you think of the HBO series *Treme*?

Jay Combe, NEW ORLEANS I don't watch television. I don't own a television. I don't want one. But I saw the premiere, and the guy who plays the teacher—oh, God, I can't even tell you his name [*Eds.: John Goodman*—he danced with my mother at her 90th-birthday party. His character on the show talks truth, about why we're constantly treated like a third-world country down here in Louisiana.

Is there any other city in the world that you could live in?

Trey Comeaux, NEW ORLEANS No. I love my roots and my heritage. I've tried living in other places—I lived in New York City once. But New Orleans is where my heart is. ■

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