

**PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND AND DEL McCOURY BAND**



***AMERICAN LEGACIES***

**(McCoury Music)**

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The evolution of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band into a conveyor of hip is one of the musical successes of post-K culture. We can no longer point to the band (or the hall) as simply a bastion of tradition; we must recognize it as an innovator of tradition. As invaluable as his father's contributions were to our culture, Ben Jaffe is quite important to the now.

On their new collaboration with the Del McCoury Band, we find the band swinging with and around McCoury's silky tenor. Though it's doubtful anyone in the world was losing sleep over the dangers of mixing bluegrass with trad, this isn't a simple suture job. Wicked mandolin runs, clarinets in skyward races with fiddles, percussive banjos and snares — this is one mean band. Check out "Banjo Frisco" for some very new/old music.

McCoury and family have shared the stage with Phish and recorded with Steve Earle, making them as accustomed to crossover as the current Pres Hall. More importantly, we're listening to two types of traditional music that blossomed alongside each other in the first half of the 20th Century, nurtured by two different sets of poor folks — urban African Americans and rural whites — who shared a talent to swing and a fondness for celebration and mourning. Everything comes down to blues and banjos, after all.

The wise move here was to allow Mark Braud and Clint Maedgen to sing lead almost as often as McCoury, and thus really test out the conflagration. "The Sugar Blues" hands you a what-if question involving Bob Wills and Fats Waller, Grand Ole Opry and Preservation Hall, 1931 and 2011. Good answers abound.