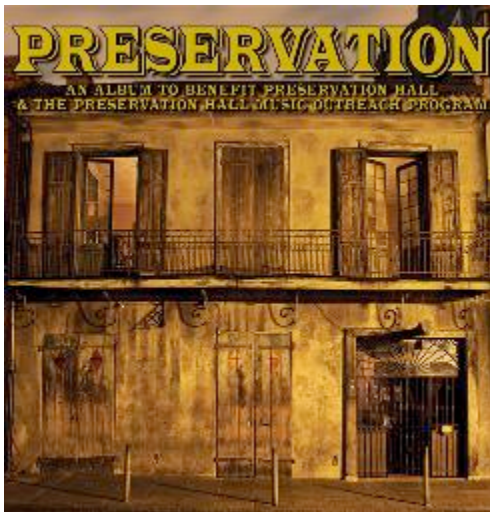




A 'Preservation' CD for New Orleans' Preservation Hall

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By **Edna Gundersen**, USA TODAY



An all-star lineup contributed music to *Preservation*, which is a benefit CD for historic Preservation Hall in New Orleans.

Angelique Kidjo, Paolo Nutini, Brandi Carlile and Andrew Bird aren't typically linked to the roots of New Orleans music, but they jumped at the chance to preserve them.

Preservation, a benefit compilation released today to coincide with Mardi Gras, finds the [Preservation Hall Jazz Band](#) recording songs with diverse contributors ranging from [Tom Waits](#), [Pete Seeger](#) and [Richie Havens](#) to [Merle Haggard](#), [Blind Boys of Alabama](#) and [Buddy Miller](#), plus native sons [Terence Blanchard](#) and [Dr. John](#). The project aims to sustain the city's struggling historic Preservation Hall and ancillary music outreach program.

A Spanish tavern in the 1800s, Preservation Hall

opened in 1961, establishing a humble jazz spot with no running water or air conditioning and a few benches for patrons. Only its pedigree has seen upgrades.

"A lot of people don't care about the past," says participant [Jim James](#), singer/guitarist of [My Morning Jacket](#). "They'd bulldoze the Notre Dame to build a parking lot if it made more money. So much great music came up in Preservation Hall, and people sometimes forget to trace the roots, to realize what you wouldn't have today without those roots."

Recording under the moniker Yim Yames, James and the PHJB recorded [Fats Waller's Louisiana Fairytale](#), one of 19 New Orleans classics (25 on the deluxe edition). James was so enthralled by the experience that he invited the band to be the opening act on Jacket's upcoming tour.

"New Orleans is on fire with ghosts and energy," he says. "It's a sacred place, and we have to stand up and help out."

The hall "to this day limps along to survive," says Ben Jaffe, the hall's artistic director, its band's tuba player and son of the French Quarter landmark's founder. "It's given our country so much joy and been so central to the (post-Katrina) rebuilding process. We've been the cheerleaders for this community."

Jaffe, who produced *Preservation* to raise both money and recognition, says, "How do you portray a city known for beer, booze and beads in a new light, the regal tradition of New Orleans jazz? Sometimes, we've

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had to fight for respect."

He found no shortage of respect from artists he petitioned. "Originally, I wondered if anyone would want to do another favor for New Orleans," Jaffe says. "But immediately, everyone said yes, I want to be in that number."

Why save this storied hole in the wall? Jaffe watched several *Preservation* guests beam as they entered the drafty hall for the first time.

"As the world changes and people are more connected to the Internet and technology, organic places like Preservation Hall, where you can smell the history, become much more valuable. You're not re-creating it at an amusement park."

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