

Hillyer Interviews
Interview with Leigh Carrole III

H: Ok, give me your name please.

LC: My name is Leigh Carrole.

H: When were you born and where?

LC: I was born on October 11, 1938, in New Orleans.

H: Have you lived in New Orleans all your life?

LC: No, I lived in Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi, about 60 miles from New Orleans, for 7 years.

H: From what age to what age?

LC: From the age of, from the age of 10 to the age of 16.

H: When did you first become aware there existed such a form of music as New Orleans jazz?

LC: Well, when I was about 12 years old, I heard for the first time Papa Celestin's band and I believe it was at the old (...)yacht club.

H: What did you think of the music?

LC: Oh, I thought it was very good. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

H: What about your sons?

LC: They all like it too. As a matter of fact, we used to make a point of going to all the dances that they had to hear Papa Celestin.

H: What about your parents and their friends? Do you know what they thought of it?

LC: Well, my parents of course had heard Dixieland since it first began back in the early 20s and everything, and they, I'd say they liked Dixieland; I mean, they wouldn't go out of their way, though, to hear it.

H: But you would go out of your way to hear it? And you said your friends liked it too?

LC: Yes, they all liked it.

H: Did they think it was just something, music to enjoy listening to, to dance to or did they think of it as an art form?

LC: Well, of course, for us, it was the only kind of music we would listen to. I don't know, at that age, I don't believe we ever really considered things as art forms, but that was all we wanted to listen to, certainly.

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H: And you said you first started listening to it in about 1950, you would say?

LC: Yes, 50 or 51.

H: And your group, uh, did they continue to like it, you'd say?

LC: Well, I myself like Dixieland well enough. I like some progressive music more, and a lot of my friends have switched to liking what they call "rock and roll" more than Dixieland.

H: Could you say about when they stopped liking New Orleans jazz and started liking rock and roll?

LC: I'd say when rock and roll, or rhythm and blues, what it used to be, when it first came out, about 5 years ago, in 1953.

H: When they did like it in 51-52, did they prefer jazz to popular music.

LC: Oh yes! Of course!

H: Do you know that many people now who really like jazz?

LC: Dixieland you mean?

H: Yeah.

LC: Yeah, I think quite a few people like Dixieland. When I say they like rock and roll, I don't mean they have totally given up Dixieland or anything like that. They just prefer the uh... Say like, if there were 2 dances in a night, and one of them had a rock and roll band and the other had, say, Celestin, I think most of them would go to the dance that had the rock and roll band. But if there was a dance with Celestin, they wouldn't avoid it.

H: Would you say the idea of most of the people that listen to New Orleans jazz think that it's just something to dance to, kind of a company of good time, or do they think of it as great music? Something like classical music?

LC: I think some people think of Dixieland, when you say Dixieland, I take it you mean New Orleans music --

H: New Orleans jazz.

LC: I think some of them would, would listen to it as an art form which is (...). But I think the majority of them would just listen to it as good time music, just in more or less the same spirit they'd listen to rhythm and blues.

H: Anything else to add on the subject of social acceptability of New Orleans jazz?

LC: Oh, uh --

H: You said at dances, would you say the majority of social functions in, say 1950 to 1953 would have New Orleans jazz bands --

LC: Certainly, everybody was trying to get Celestin. He was in great demand.

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H: Did they ever get anybody else, or was it just Celestin?

LC: Not that I know of. If they didn't have Celestin, they just had a pops band, which nobody could stand.

H: And would you say that now-a-days they tend to have rock and roll bands?

LC: Yes. Some people still do have Celestin for parties.

H: What about debutante parties? High (class) social functions? What did you notice mostly?

LC: Well, I think they tend to, kept people like Celestin, if they intend to have that kind of music.

H: Do you think that they have more of a, New Orleans jazz than a sweet band, or a band that played popular music? Which would they tend to get more?

LC: Yeah, I think they probably tend to get more pop music.

H: Can you think of anything else you can add to the subject?

LC: No, not really.

H: Thank you very much.