

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELIEF\***

### **Historic Cruise to Launch Tribute to Home-Grown Music**

LOUISVILLE, KY (May 27, 2005)—A century after the fact, this community, widely credited as the birthplace of "[\*America's Happiest Music\*](#)," will initiate a tribute to that unique jug band sound.

The *Belle of Louisville* will serve as the appropriately historic setting for the **National Jug Band Jubilee** launch party, the [\*Blue Jeans River Ramble\*](#), at 6 p.m. Friday, July 1.

"Whenever jug bands and their fans begin to discuss the history of this now-famous music style, Louisville and Kentucky become essential words in the conversation," said Jack Pignatello of New Jersey's *Dirty Birdies Jug Band*.

The launch party grew out of a March 17 meeting of arts, business and civic leaders, hosted by the [\*Metro Mayor's Office, Greater Louisville Convention and Visitors Bureau\*](#) and the [\*Kentucky Department of Tourism\*](#). The event is intended to (a) bring Louisville's rich jug band history to the community's attention and (b) serve as a launching pad for the **National Jug Band Jubilee** as an annual weekend festival.

**National Jug Band Jubilee**, Inc., is a volunteer organization dedicated to making Louisville America's focal point for jug band music, as it was at the start end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The community's jug band history is commemorated in:

- "[\*The Jug Bands of Louisville\*](#)," a book published in England in 1993, detailing the history of jug musicians, bands and recordings, all of which flourished in America in the 1920s and 1930s and have since spread worldwide.
- An Austrian record company's 1994 release of a CD of jug band tunes recorded in 1924-1926, named "[\*Clifford Hayes & the Louisville Jug Bands\*](#)."

\* Fact, NOT a typo

"The book and the CD are milestones in yet another revival of jug band music," said **National Jug Band Jubilee** President Rod Wenz. "The world is ready for a little relief from the disasters and mayhem that we read, hear about and view on TV in this post-9/11 era. The lilting rhythms and hilarious lyrics of this novelty music provide that kind of relief—nonsense that we can keep time to."

Cleveland independent film producer Todd Kwait agrees. He is producing a documentary on jug band music and its history.

"Once I heard about the *Jubilee's* launch party aboard the *Belle of Louisville*, I changed July 4 weekend plans and will come to Louisville instead," Kwait said. He'll be bringing to Louisville his wife and their two children—and a film crew.

The crew will interview jug band musicians, local historians and others associated with the movement to make Louisville the 21<sup>st</sup> century home of jug band music. Among bands to be filmed is Louisville's *Juggernaut Jug Band*, the only fulltime touring jug band in America today. The *Juggernauts* and the *Cincinnati Dancing Pigs* will provide entertainment aboard the *Belle* July 1.

Mayor Jerry Abramson commended this movement.

"Jug bands are known for creating '*America's Happiest Music*' for good reason," Mayor Abramson said. "It is impossible to hear this music without feeling the urge to clap your hands, kick off your shoes, and dance.

"Jug band music is a crowd-pleasing art form that deserves preservation," he added.

With that objective, **National Jug Band Jubilee** leaders have recommended that jug band pioneer Earl McDonald (1885-1949) be nominated to the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame, headquartered in Renfro Valley. He organized a jug band while still in high school and brought this music to Churchill Downs on Kentucky Derby Day early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The unique music caught the ear of visiting racing fans and led to contracts to play in New York and elsewhere.

"For historical reasons and for just plain fun, Kentucky needs to return this delightful music to the forefront in the 21<sup>st</sup> century," said Lindy Casebier, executive director, Arts & Cultural Heritage, Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The Filson Historical Society and the University of Louisville Photo Archives both have jug band historical material on file and the Kentucky Center for African American Heritage expects to feature historic jug band material and information as part of its ongoing schedule of temporary exhibits.

The schedule and venue for the first full **National Jug Band Jubilee** weekend festival have not yet been determined, Wenz said.

"The Frankfort Avenue Business Association (FABA) has expressed interest in seeing its neighborhood as the Jubilee venue and we've had other inquiries," he added. "Several bands around the country are eager to participate. We will use the feedback from the Belle cruise to help develop this plan to put Louisville back on the map for music that it nurtured a century ago."

"We consider the jubilee an excellent fit for Frankfort Avenue," said FABA President John Johnson, owner and operator of The Wine Rack. "This area already is filled with opportunities for fun and blossoming with art and antiques. A little fun-filled antique music would be a great addition.

"A musical genre as historic in nature as jug band music deserves a venue that also has a strong sense of history," Johnson added. "The Frankfort Area in historic Crescent Hill would logically make an ideal fit. I believe the community would happily embrace the opportunity to host a Louisville based Jug Band Jubilee with open arms."

Few 21<sup>st</sup> Century Americans know about or have the opportunity to enjoy America's Happiest Music, to understand and appreciate its history as the product of the children of former slaves, or how this unique sound meshes with the dawn of today's serious efforts to eliminate discrimination and to promote racial equality. The **National Jug Band Jubilee** mission is to encourage diversity and to preserve, promote and provide, in a joyous environment, appreciation for an extraordinary form of music and its Louisville roots tracing back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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