



FILM SCORING IN NEW ORLEANS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY GARY MICHAEL SMITH,
SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

As New Orleans' film industry grows day by day, we're adding more production services, allowing us to keep more of our work locally. For instance, Panavision has had a camera distribution center in Harahan for a few years now, new production companies such as Maven Entertainment are setting up locally, construction of Second Line Stages is well underway and due to be completed by the end of 2009, and a newly up-and-running CineWorks lab now develops 16mm and 35mm film stock, making for one less post-production process that needs to be shipped out of state.

While the film industry is expanding in New Orleans, so is the music scoring business. Although the city has always been home to many world-class musicians and recording studios, some are now using their talents to accompany the stars on the silver screen.

Local performer Deacon John Moore is president of American Federation of Musicians Local 174-496, which covers New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, and surrounding areas. Not only has he written and performed for locally shot productions such as *Angel Heart* and many national television commercials, he's also active in helping to protect songwriting and film scoring rights for others.

"As a member of SAG and the NARAS (National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences), I work to help Congress in its efforts to pass the Performance Rights Act to give musicians involved in film productions royalty payments," says Moore. He adds, "This is done in numerous other countries but not the United States. In the U.S. only the publisher of the music and the songwriters are paid, but not the actual musicians. We're working to change that."

One facility that's active in local music production for the film industry is **Fudge Recording Studio** in the Lower Garden District off St. Charles Avenue. Jack Miele has a background in television, having scored music for PBS specials, and also in providing music for educational programming in New Orleans.

"I started out providing audio tracks for educational video games and public broadcasting television," Miele says, "and even wrote music for children's toys such as a talking/singing kitchen set and a singing ATM." He continues, "All these original songs were used to help children learn, and [I] now use that past experience to provide music scores for television and film productions."

Fudge not only provides state-of-the-art recording equipment, but also name brand instruments such as drums, drum machines, and percussion; guitars; pianos and keyboards; and amps. Some of their musician clients include Anders Osborne, Cowboy Mouth, Tab Benoit, Rebirth Brass Band, John Fohl, Better Than Ezra, Blondie, and Mötley Crüe, among many others. But as with any progressive business in Louisiana these days, Fudge has also worked to score such films as *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, *Family Guy*, *The Dukes of Hazzard*, *Dirty Politics*, and *Zombie Farm* (aka *Macumba*).

Another local facility is **The Music Shed**, also in the Lower Garden District. The Music Shed is making strides to score films, striving to provide a distinctive recording environment that complements and enhances the work of New Orleans musicians, while serving as a creative incubator to musicians and film producers alike.

With such capabilities as multitrack, mobile, and mastering, film industry professionals are availed a variety of services. In addition to local musicians such as Fats Domino, Cowboy Mouth, Allen Toussaint, the Meters, and George Porter Jr., to name just a few, the Music Shed has also worked with notables Spike Lee, Robert Plant, Norah Jones, Taj Mahal, Dave Matthews Band, and others. A recent film project was music scoring for Walt Disney Pictures' *The Princess and the Frog*.

With such facilities as Fudge Recording Studio and the Music Shed, Louisiana, and New Orleans in particular, is just one step closer to cinematic independence. The more we do here, the less we have to outsource to out-of-state producers for the myriad of technical and artistic components that make the television and film industry work.