

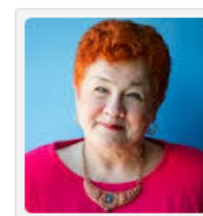
Festivals, Festivals, Festivals

MARCH 1, 2017 by: JAN RAMSEY

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Welcome to the *OffBeat* “spring festival” issue.

Since last year, so many new festivals have sprung up: the Fried Chicken Fest, New Orleans Bourbon Fest, Top Taco NOLA, Beignet Fest. While not exactly a festival, the “Bean Madness/Final Fork” tourney is certainly a month-long celebration of that creamy-delicious staple of New Orleans cuisine.



I hear there’s even going to be a macaroni and cheese festival in the fall. Count me in for that one.

We certainly have a few music fests in March: the Congo Square New World Rhythms Festival (another production of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation) and Buku. Plus cultural events like St. Paddy’s Day parades and celebrations, St. Joseph’s Day and Super Sunday, the Tennessee Williams Festival and Hogs for the Cause at the end of the month.

I’d like to see a Frenchmen Street Festival, a Brass Band Festival, a Singer/Songwriter Fest... Hey, how about a Bounce-A-Thon? Or a Funk-A-Thon?

It would also be wonderful if any and all of these events could include an education component. This would continue to solidify New Orleans’ reputation worldwide as a music city.

With the new airline services to London and Germany, we’re bound to get a lot more world visitors to the city. If there’s anything that Europeans appreciate a lot more than Americans, it’s our music, and we should be planning on how to present even more of our world-class musicians to a market that’s opening up to the city and state.

There are still a lot of issues we have to remedy in the city to make it more visitor friendly: traffic problems, crime, sanitation. But these are problems that have always dogged us.

I believe it’s a good thing for local universities or the community colleges to develop programs that educate our young people on the music business in all of its aspects. Festival development, promotion, booking, production and operations would be an interesting line of study for young people who want to make more money than the low-paying jobs that many of our workers have to endure in the hospitality industry.

Why don't we pursue an entity like Full Sail to open a branch in New Orleans?

We have the events, and they're increasing in number every year—as they should be. There's an opportunity out there for developing a specialized workforce that is exceptionally capable at putting together festivals and events. Did you know that the Jazz Fest routinely imports many of their production people because we don't have enough experienced people in the city to work the event?

Maybe it's time we consider live entertainment as a homegrown industry.