



Henry Butler

A four-time **W.C. Handy “Best Blues Instrumentalist - Piano”** award nominee, Henry Butler knows no limitations. Although blinded by glaucoma since birth, Butler is also a world class photographer with his work displayed at exhibitions throughout the United States. Playing piano since the age of six, Butler is a master of musical diversity. Combining the percussive jazz piano playing of McCoy Tyner and the New Orleans style playing of Professor Longhair through his classically-trained wizardry, Butler continues to craft a sound uniquely his own. A rich amalgam of jazz, Caribbean, classical, pop, blues and R&B influences, his music is as excitingly eclectic as that of his New Orleans birthplace.

Mastering baritone horn, valve trombone and drums, in addition to the piano, at the Louisiana State School for the Blind in Baton Rouge, as a youngster, Butler began formal vocal training in the eleventh grade. He went on to sing German lieder, French and Italian art songs and operatic arias at Southern and Michigan State Universities, earning a Masters degree in vocal music. He has taught music workshops throughout the country and initiated a number of different educational projects, including a residential jazz camp at Missouri State School for the Blind and a program for blind and visually impaired students at the University of New Orleans.

Mentored by influential jazz clarinetist and Michigan University teacher Alvin Batiste, Butler was encouraged to explore Brazilian, Afro-Cuban and other Caribbean music. He studied with Harold Mabern, pianist for the late Lee Morgan, for a summer and spent a long afternoon studying with Professor Longhair.

While his early albums were jazz trio recordings featuring such top-notch instrumentalists as Charlie Haden and Billy Higgins, on “**Fivin’ Around**” in 1986, and Ron Carter and Jack DeJohnette, on “**The Village**” two years later, Butler has increasingly turned to New Orleans music and the blues. His 1990 album, “**Orleans Inspiration**”, recorded with Leo Nocentelli of the Meters, was followed by “**Blues And More**” in 1992. Although he briefly returned to jazz with “**For All Seasons**” in 1996, he’s remained immersed in the blues since releasing “**Blues After Sunset**” in 1998.

Collaborating with Corey Harris on a duo album, “**Vu-du Menz**”, in 2000, Butler spent the next three years touring with the Delta blues-influenced guitarist/vocalist. That fascination with the blues has continued to be reflected in his solo work. After releasing a power-packed, all electric, blues-rock, album, “**The Game Has Just Begun**”, in 2002 on the New Orleans based indie label **Basin Street Records**, Butler takes things even deeper with his latest outing on that label, “**Homeland**”, released in April 2004. “This album is a real turning point,” he said. “It was the first time that I’ve brought a blues and R&B band into the studio with me. On this record, I’m feeling closer to my roots.” The CD is on the final ballot for a possible Grammy nomination for Best Contemporary Blues Album, to be announced on Dec. 7th, 2004.

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