

## History Under Water After Natural Disaster Strikes

**Christina Green**

Today, the city of New Orleans suffers from the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. There has been so much controversy over the evacuations, the rescues, and the rebuilding that we have perhaps forgotten the history that was almost completely under water. As the largest city in the state of Louisiana, and one of the principal cities of the South, New Orleans has been the melting pot of many ethnic groups and musical genres in America.

New Orleans was founded in 1718 by Jean Baptiste Le Moyne and remained a French colony until 1763 when it was transferred to the Spanish. In 1800, Spain relinquished it back to France; and in 1803, New Orleans, as part of the Louisiana Purchase, was sold to the United States. It was the site of the Battle of New Orleans in 1815 in the War of 1812, and during the Civil War was besieged by Union ships.

The city of New Orleans became a major port for the United States in exporting petroleum products, grain, cotton, paper, machinery, iron, and steel. It was also a port that welcomed immigrants to America. Following the Civil War, New Orleans' population was comprised of Acadians (French speakers later known more colloquially as "cajuns"), Africans, Cubans, English, German, French, Irish, Italians, Spanish, and West Indians.

This melting pot of cultural backgrounds created an international music mecca. The musicians of New Orleans developed musical genres, including jazz, blues, rock and roll, Cajun, gospel, country, and classical, which have shaped America's music culture into what it is today.

Jazz music was born in New Orleans. The "New Orleans Jazz" style emphasizes collective improvisation, while the modern jazz style emphasizes solo improvisation. New Orleans brass jazz bands play anything from Latin jazz or the street sounds of "bounce," a combination of rap and brass band jazz. Louis Armstrong, one of the best known jazz artists to this day, began his music career in the streets of New Orleans.

Blues, or rhythm and blues, was developed in the plantation fields which were part of Louisiana culture in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The songs that workers sang became known as "field hollers" that could spark great joy and dancing in one song, and then great sorrow and pity in the next. The workers then added the guitar, drums, and horns to their blues.

Perhaps as an extension of the instrumental part of field hollers, rock and roll evolved in New Orleans in the 1940s. Singer Roy Brown recorded the first song that used the word "rock" to describe the unique style which later became known as rock 'n roll. The Beatles are just one of New Orleans' rock and roll legends.

Cajun, gospel, country, zydeco, and classical music were all developed directly from certain cultures. Cajun is a blend of French folk music with Native American, German, Anglo-American, and African styles. Gospel is associated with hymns and songs traditionally performed in spiritual ceremonies in the Anglo-American and African-American culture. Country is an extension of the fiddling and ballad-singing Anglo settlers who moved to New Orleans in the early 1800s. Zydeco is a dance music

blended from African-French and African-American styles. Lastly, the first opera performed in North America was in New Orleans in 1796, which sparked the popularity of classical music in the South.

The many cultures which make up New Orleans are part of what makes the music culture of Louisiana so unique to the development of musical genres throughout all of the United States. Before the hurricane, musicians of all performance types could be found performing on the streets, just as in early days when musical genres were first being developed. Hopefully, as the city of New Orleans recovers from disaster, the musical culture will also revive itself and continue to add to a history that represents the strong diversity of our country.

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Elizabeth Stiles, a sophomore in Associates in Letters, Arts and Sciences, says, "Some [online] classes I learned more in, because of the completeness of the curriculum. Others, however, I felt I would have learned more with a professor's direct knowledge and expertise in the classroom."

The main problem students, and professors, have with online courses is the lack of student-teacher and student-student interaction. Students feel they are not able to build a relationship with a professor like they could in a classroom setting. Jeremy Naugle, a fourth semester English student, says, "Maybe it is just my way of learning, but I feel like people think from discussion and then ask from their confusion. At home on your couch" you have no one to answer your questions.



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One professor brought up the point that the instructor has no way of knowing if the student is taking the test, or having someone else take it for them.

Another widely acknowledged problem is that the program is still new and there are still kinks that need to be worked out. Integrative Arts Professor Nancy Funk notes that, "because the whole course is online, all of the internet links have to be constantly updated."

However, online courses do have a lot to offer. Students enjoy the flexibility of the courses offered and the pace at which each lesson is set. Students get to work on the course anywhere they want, any time they want, in any environment they want. This offers students with families the

ability to spend time with their children and spouses without having to drive out to campus several times a week. With the recent increase in gas prices, this option is increasingly appealing.

Online courses also give shy students an opportunity to ask questions without having to worry about other students' reactions. They may feel more comfortable talking to their professors through email rather than in a classroom setting.

A strong advantage of online courses is that they are in constant revision, which keeps the information they offer up-to-date without lessening the quality of the course. Stiles says that several of her courses had very "user friendly" course pages to work on and that it

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