



## Walking with Legends: Barry Martyn's New Orleans Jazz Odyssey

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Drummer, record producer, bandleader, jazz researcher, and cigar-chomping raconteur Barry Martyn is a New Orleans original who happens to have been born in England. Implausible though this may seem, it makes perfect sense to members of the New Orleans traditional jazz community, who view themselves as an extended family based on merit as much as nativity. For more than forty years, Martyn has been a fixture in the Crescent City's jazz scene, laying down the beat for generations of celebrated musicians and avidly promoting the city's unique musical heritage around the world. In *Walking with Legends*—based on over forty hours of interviews with Martyn by fellow British jazz enthusiast and author Mick Burns—Martyn reflects upon his life in jazz and offers a window into a musical world that few have understood, let alone witnessed from the inside.

At the age of nineteen, jazz fanatic Martyn found his way to the Crescent City and began working as a professional drummer in clubs and studios. The first white man in the United States to join a black musician's union, he eventually started his own record label and recorded hundreds of jam sessions that today are regarded as classics in Europe. In 1972, he formed the Legends of Jazz, an old-style New Orleans jazz band that toured the world and took New Orleans jazz into the American showbiz mainstream.

Martyn's life story provides unique intimate glimpses of a vanished generation of New Orleans musicians, including Louis Armstrong, Kid Sheik Cola, Harold Dejan, Joe Watkins, Albert Nicholas, Kid Thomas, Andrew Blakeney, and many others. Throughout his chronicle, Martyn highlights the continual clash of cultures that arose from an avid British pupil learning lessons of life and music from elderly African American strangers who take him under their wing both out of curiosity and self-interest. Together, they find a way to connect through music, even if the road gets a little bumpy at times.

A standard-bearer for New Orleans's jazz drumming tradition, Martyn remains one of the city's busiest musicians and most avid promoters of New Orleans music. In *Walking with Legends*, he honors the legacies of the African American musicians who taught and inspired him and affirms the importance of the human relationships that make the music possible.

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