

On January 6th 2001 I walked into the C-Note Lounge on St. Charles Avenue for the first time. I thought it was a piano bar – after all there was a baby grand piano at the front door. And the piano was very good too, in tune, with nice action. This place was news to me, but it seemed perfect. A piano bar for me to frequent. But no, it was actually a bar with a piano. There's a difference.

So I asked if I could play that piano and the guy behind the bar said sure. Then an older man with a thick French accent strolled over to me and told me that not only do I play well – but would I like to be the bartender here, too? Bartend? I had never been a bartender. Sure I'll be the bartender. I started the next day.

What followed was 8 of the weirder months of my life. I wound up not only being the bartender, and often six and seven nights a week and double shifts and barely ever going more than a few blocks from there – ah, but what a bar it was. Filled with crack whores, lunatics, ex-cons, drunks, slovenly bums and cretins of all sorts. The clientele was off the normal charts. Every person who hung out there was a social workers dream and nightmare. Dream because it would ensure their jobs forever, nightmare because it was a sisyphian task – it could never be solved.

I lived upstairs from the bar – there were 11 rooms numbered 1-14. That's how strange it was. My commute was to trundle down the stairs in the morning – often to find the same drunks sitting in the same stools as they were 9 hours ago, only a little drunker.

Jim Hlavac -- Amazing



Jim Hlavac

Amazing

V Solo Neo-Classical
Piano Fantasies

A Bartenders Fantasy
King Cake Baby
A Night at the C-Note
Hangover Lullaby
Their Royal Majesties Arrive
Red Alert
The Lincoln

Ah, but that piano – what a fine instrument. I played it every day. In fact, I had told Michel, the guy who owned the place – no piano and I'm out of here. And he did what he could to make me happy that's for sure. Though his “wife” Alana did what she could to make things difficult. She was just a bitch.

But for at least these 8 months I do believe I was the only piano playing bartender in the city of New Orleans. Sure, there were both – but at the same time? Nope, I was it.

This is a musical exploration of the C-Note Lounge, on St. Charles Ave, New Orleans, Louisiana. The bar is a hotbed of crazed lunatics, drunks, crack whores, ne'er-do-wells, bikers, rednecks, scoundrels and other assorted lowlifes that is well known by the police of that city. The bar has been owned by Michel F. Melle for nearly 30 years, and he still holds court daily at the front of the bar, up near the beautiful grand piano which first attracted me to the bar. Michel offered me a bartending job; I took it. It was an amazing 8 month journey through the bottom of our society. Yet when I played this melodic peaceful music I received a constant flow of encouragement to make this CD. And so this music is dedicated to the denizens of this rascalion hedonistic rathole. I have few people other than them for helping to launch my piano career. Out of drunken mouths: amazing.

Jim Hlavac
Amazing

7 Solo
Piano Fantasies

A Bartenders Fantasy
King Cake Baby
A Night at the C-Note
Hangover Lullaby
Their Royal Majesties Arrive
Red Alert
The Lincoln

Cover portrait is a 24 x 30 inch oil painting by Deanna Chauvin, denizen and former bartender at the C-Note.

Jim Hlavac



AMAZING

I had only dabbled a bit on the piano up until this point. I did record, back in the early 1980's some 80 hours of piano music – but I think I'm the only one who every listened to it. I still have those astounding tapes with the more astounding music engraved on them. No one – and I mean No One – believed me when I said I could play – and there never seemed to be a place for me to play. The few pianos I encountered from 1980 to 2001 were private, or I dabbled for a few short minutes or so before being hustled off to do something else. No one wanted to listen to me play piano. No one had an inkling of what I could do – everyone concentrated on the fact that I had no lessons – and not that I could play. And I was too involved in other things. This, then, became my great regret – that I never pursued my piano talent when I discovered it – but instead hid it like everyone I knew said I should. Indeed, to this day, it is people that I know who try to downplay the piano and stop me from engaging in that rather peaceful pursuit (they never shoot piano players right?) -- but now I can't be stopped – I live for it – and I have to live afar and afield to do it then so be it. But it was these drunks at this C-Note Lounge who encouraged me – with every bit of seriousness they could muster, which was quite a lot – to go out and play for the world. “Man, you got the talent man, you got it...” they said. And yes, I think I do.

1. *A Bartenders Fantasy* — you'd be amazed at the fantasies bartenders have. What do we think of when we're serving people? What would we do with drunks? Don't ask!
2. *King Cake Baby* — isn't it amazing that they bake a little baby into a cake? And then people willingly chomp into a piece hoping they don't find it. That's odd, no?
3. *A Night at the C-Note* — it's an amazing amalgam of drunks, scoundrels and tourists that never quite settles down, served by an ever-changing stream of bartenders, in a bar with literally no door.
4. *Hangover Lullaby* — it's amazing, we do it every time. Drink all night, then swear we'll NEVER, ever, do that again. Yeah, right. Can I buy you a cocktail?

I'd like to thank these people for their help in making this CD possible:
 My sister Karla; Duchain Cazedessus for letting me 'practice' on his piano;
 George White for his musings on my music; Nate Riverness for his inspiration.
 Recorded on Jan 9th 2002 from 2 to 3 in the afternoon at
 Stonee's Studio, Kenner, Louisiana on a Yamaha C-7 grand piano.

5. *Their Royal Majesties Arrive* — it's amazing that every one believed they were royalty and demanded the undying attention of everyone else while they were in the bar.
6. *Red Alert* — she was an amazing little crack whore who loved this song so much it was a guaranteed \$5 tip everytime I played it for her. And play it I did!
7. *The Lincoln* — the most amazing tip I ever got: in one of those stories that's too strange for fiction, a drunken sailor gave me a 1973 Lincoln Continental in excellent condition, almost ready for a car show. It goes Vroom!

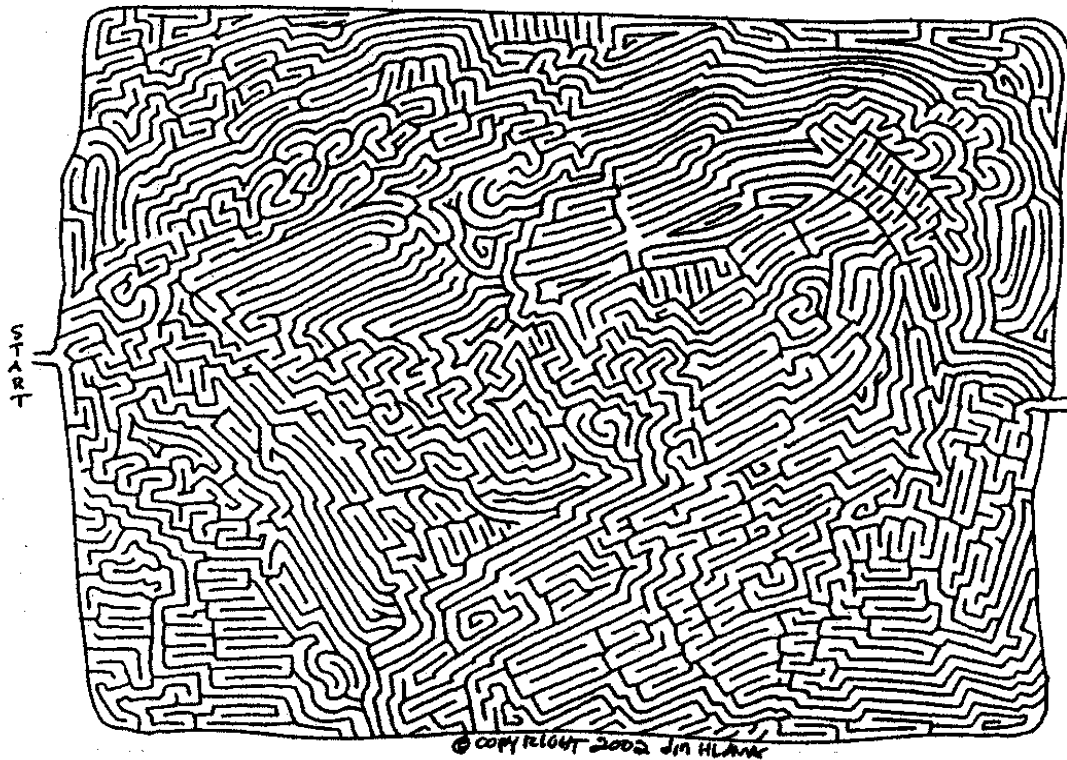
A word about my music: one day in 1999 I sat down at a friend's piano and started to play. I never had a lesson, and really still have no idea what I'm playing. I go into a trance, yet what comes out is a beautiful cascade of neo-classical melodies and variations. I have now played at more than a dozen venues and in each setting the listeners are surprised that someone with no training can create this music live, without any pre-thought or planning. The music is not composed in any traditional sense, but rather is improvisation on new themes. There seems to be an endless flow from me.

When I produced my first CD I named the songs after the denizens of the C-Note and I dedicated the music to them. While they were not your church folk, they had some inner connection to life that is hard to define. In the cop out version, I guess you could say that they figured out that life wasn't all that it was cracked up to be, and so they decided to say the hell with it and go get as drunk as they could to anesthetize themselves against the onslaught of charltons who rule the world.

But all this music was created at the C-Note – and so much more that'll never be heard again – for what is not recorded is lost, most often.

Amazing: now blow this up!

This is a real, workable maze -- if you put it on a copier and blow it up about 300% or more you can do the maze.



Jim Hlavac --Amazing

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Sure, I think so; why not? I'm available for parties.
Currently Appearing Nightly at Tortorici's Restaurant.

The title of the CD is a pun because it's about Mazes, it's amazing that I made a CD and it's amazing that there's a maze on the CD – and that's that. Enjoy.