

Jon Cleary's Philthy Phew - Quick Center for the Arts, Fairfield, CT, USA

Jon Cleary's Philthy Phew brought a little bit of **New Orleans Funk** and **Soul** to the [Quick Center for the Arts at Fairfield University](#) in **Fairfield, Connecticut**, all that was missing was the jambalaya and beignets. Described as "born in England, bred in New Orleans" **pianist Jon Cleary** nailed the 'Nawlins feeling with his band, **Philthy Phew**, playing with **drummer Raymond Weber** and **bass player Cornell Williams**.

Sitting at the grand piano, Jon Cleary explained that New Orleans has many terrific musicians, and when touring, he will call up select musicians and ask them if they want to go on the road and play as part of his Philthy Phew (pronounced Filthy Few) band. Playing with him on April 13, 2013 was bass player, Cornell Williams, and if the name seems familiar, it might be because he was on the television show, Treme, and plays with Jon's band, Jon Cleary and The Absolute Monster Gentlemen, and the talented Raymond Weber who played with Mac "Dr. John" Rebbenack's band.



Cornell Williams

Jon and the band opened the first set by taking the Fairfield, Connecticut audience down to New Orleans, with the song, **Mardi Gras in New Orleans**, which he said he likes to play when he is a long way from New Orleans and homesick, and to get the juice up. He advised the audience that it was okay to get up and shake your thing if you want. Hard to sit still when the catchy lyrics proclaim, "Well I'm goin' to New Orleans, I'm gonna see the Mardi Gras ... I've got my ticket in my hand, I'm gonna go to New Orleans, I've got my ticket in my hand, I'm gonna go to New Orleans, When I get to New Orleans, I wanna see the Zulu Queen."



Jon Cleary and the Philthy Phew

Created by: Debra C. Argen and Edward F. Nesta

Shifting gears, the band segued into a bit of New Orleans shuffle with stellar piano work, followed by the 1953 song, **Help Me Somebody**, by The "5" Royales, which showed Jon's dexterity and versatility simultaneously playing the piano and keyboards, with great harmonies by the trio, and Raymond Weber contributing a nice drum solo.



Jon Cleary

After playing what Jon described as "sweet" music, the band shifted to "philthy music" playing New Orleans Funk, with the song, **People Say**, which had nice harmonies and closed out the first set.

The band returned for the second set, and opened with the Earl King song, **There's Been Some Lonely, Lonely Nights**. Jon explained that the song was very sentimental to him as he heard it on his first night in New Orleans, just off the plane from the UK as a teen, at the [Maple Leaf Bar](#), with Earl King belting out the song. The song starts out slow and sultry with a steady, pulsating beat, and then progresses to Jon's fingers trilling over the keys at times, or walking them down at others, closing out the number with a big finish, and a showpiece of a song for a pianist.

Another great song in the funk line-up was **Let's Get Lowdown**, a song popular in the 1960s, which is on his latest release, **Occapella**. "Get low down 'til you can't get low down no more ..." kicked it up a notch with a duet by Cornell Williams playing six-string bass and Raymond Weber on drums before Jon joined in to stretch the funk. **When You Get Back**, a sly and sexy catchy tune with playful lyrics, "When you get back, we're gonna cha cha all night long ...," had a distinct Steely Dan feel with smooth harmonies.



Raymond Weber

Throughout the evening's performance Jon Cleary's Philthy Phew kept the New Orleans vibe going playing songs by various artists including **Allen Toussaint**, as well as some more obscure, yet worthy songs. Jon

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answered the oft-asked question, as to what makes New Orleans music difference. He explained that the root of New Orleans music is R&B and eight bar blues, opposed to 12 bar blues, and is closer to the Caribbean island sound of Haiti and Cuba. As examples, the band segued into the 1952 Lloyd Price sing, **Lawdy Miss Clawdy**, followed by the song, **Tee Nah Nah**.



Cornell Williams, Jon Cleary, Raymond Weber

After playing **Wrong Number**, off Jon Cleary's **Occapella** release, the band closed out the evening with a 100-year old New Orleans song by **Jelly Roll Morton**, to leave the audience with some "good time music."

Conveniently located in Fairfield, Connecticut, the [Quick Center for the Arts](#) is on the campus of Fairfield University, is a 30-minute drive from Greenwich and New Haven, a 60-minute drive from Hartford, and a 90-minute drive from New York City.



Edward Nesta, Jon Cleary, and Debra Argen

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Listen to a clip of **Jon Cleary** and band performing: *When You Get Back*

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