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LOUISIANA FESTIVALS

The latest fair and festival news from New Orleans and Louisiana

LOUISIANA FESTIVALS
with *The Times-Picayune*

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FESTIVAL PHOTOS

Times-Picayune



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Essence Fest to celebrate its 15th anniversary with Beyonce and more

by **Keith Spera**, Music writer, *The Times-Picayune*
Friday July 03, 2009, 5:00 AM

At 15 years young, the Essence Music Festival continues to respect the past while focusing on the future.

Tonight and Saturday in the Superdome, artists who came to prominence in the past 15 years dominate the main stage: Beyonce, John Legend, Ne-Yo, Maxwell, Robin Thicke.

On Sunday, the festival's final night, the old school is represented by Teena Marie, Al Green, Lionel Richie and Maze featuring Frankie Beverly.



Danny Bourque / Times-Picayune Archive

Frankie Beverly and Maze will celebrate 15 years as Essence Fest's closing act on Sunday, July 5.

"To mark the Essence Music Festival's 15-year anniversary, we wanted to really celebrate all the forms of music that have been central to the event's history," said Michelle Ebanks, president of Essence Communications Inc., the festival's parent company.

"We made every effort to come up with a special lineup that's multi-generational and spans diverse genres. It brings together heritage artists, new acts and local favorites in New Orleans."

Local talent -- Ivan Neville's DumpstaPhunk, Irvin Mayfield, Big Sam's Funky Nation, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band revue, Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, the Rebirth Brass Band, Little Freddie King and more -- inhabits the four "superlounge" stages in the corners of the Dome.

2009 LOUISIANA FESTIVAL CALENDAR

2009 Louisiana Festivals

- [August](#) | [September](#) | [October](#) | [November](#) | [December](#)

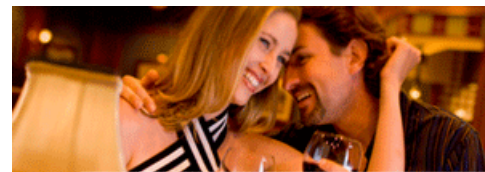
2010 Louisiana Festivals

- [January](#) | [February](#) | [March](#) | [April](#) | [May](#) | [June](#) | [July](#)

- [The Times-Picayune's 2009 Louisiana Fairs and Festivals Guide](#)

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FORUMS

Jazz Fest

- [The Disco Biscuits](#), by [DiscoBiscuit](#) 08/25/2009 9:41 p.m. CT
- [Jazzfest holhgraphic car...](#), by [cristo420](#) 06/24/2009 5:05 p.m. CT

[More Jazz Fest forum >](#)

Mardi Gras

- [Back on the Track](#), by [SwissVampire](#) 09/13/2009 7:20 a.m. CT
- [Best Saint's Game...](#), by [brundl](#) 09/13/2009 12:57 a.m. CT

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VOODOO MUSIC FEST



[Green Music Festival](#)

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[2009 Southern Decadence at St. Ann and Bourbon Streets](#)



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FESTIVAL VIDEOS

Times-Picayune



Danny Bourque / Times-Picayune Archive

Big crowds are expected in the Superdome for the Essence Music Festival, July 3-5.

They're joined by the likes of Zap Mama, the Blind Boys of Alabama, Raphael Saadiq, the Brand New Heavies, the Sierra Leone Refugee Allstars and Sharon Jones & the Dap Kings.

Additionally, free, daytime Essence empowerment seminars at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center feature Bill Cosby; former "Apprentice" star Omarosa; a panel discussion with Rev. Al Sharpton, Tom Joyner and Marc Morial; and a tribute to pastor and motivational speaker T.D. Jakes with Tyrone Foster & the Arc Singers, CeCe Winans, the Mortons, Ledisi, Smokie Norful and Kirk Franklin.

Since its 1995 inception as a celebration of Essence Magazine's 25th anniversary, Essence Fest has evolved into the world's premier showcase of urban contemporary music. Memorable moments abound. The well-dressed, discriminating audience delivers standing ovations or silence based on the quality of each act.

There have been growing pains along the way. R. Kelly refused to perform following a backstage altercation in 1996; three years later, mortified Essence officials cut short his risque show. In 2003, four main stage acts -- Luther Vandross, Nelly, Babyface and Sean "P. Diddy" Combs -- canceled weeks before the event.



Alex Brandon / Times-Picayune Archive

John Legend returns to Essence on Friday, July 3.

Entertainment, the firm that stages the Voodoo Experience in City Park each fall.

Months after Hurricane Katrina, with the Superdome still a construction zone, the 2006 Essence relocated to Houston's Reliant Stadium. Fans complained about everything from Reliant's acoustics to its inconvenient location to Houston's last call for alcohol.

Those same fans cheered the festival's return to the Dome in 2007, the swan song for Essence Magazine founder Ed Lewis and longtime editorial director Susan Taylor.

With Ebanks in charge, Essence underwent a major behind-the-scenes overhaul. Quint Davis and George Wein, producers of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival presented by Shell, had conceived and developed the festival with Lewis. In 2008, Essence officials replaced Wein and Davis' company with Rehage

New Orleans Voodoo Music Fest news, blogs, photos, videos and forums



- [2009 Voodoo Fest day-by-day music lineup released](#) 10:42 a.m. CT

- [October festivals in Louisiana](#)

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VIDEOS FROM THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

Louis Armstrong's New Orleans

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ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL

Essence Music Festival in New Orleans with lineups, food, seminar information, photos and videos



- [Show us how you did Essence Fest](#) 2:16 p.m. CT

- [July festivals in Louisiana](#)

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MARDI GRAS IN NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans Mardi Gras news, with videos, photos and parade schedules

- [125 year old 'Young Men](#)



[VIDEO: Saying goodbye to Bill Hemmerling](#)

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Stephen Rehage's team gave the main Essence stage a makeover, ditching the standard curtain in favor of a giant video screen. Look for additional flash this weekend courtesy of stage designer Stefan Beese, an architect who worked on the Make It Right Foundation's "pink house" project in the Lower 9th Ward.

Last year, Rehage stationed popular local DJ Soul Sister on the main stage to spin vinyl between acts. She returns, with fellow deejays Captain Charles, Dave Soul, Jubilee and EF Cuttin in the superlounges.

One 15th anniversary present to the ladies in the house: All permanent bathrooms on the Dome's ground floor will be designated women-only. Men -- who in years past breezed in and out of restrooms as women cooled their high heels in long lines -- must make do with portable trailers.

Additionally, producers are working with police to ease post-concert congestion between Poydras Avenue and Canal Street. Cross streets between Claiborne Avenue and the Mississippi River may be closed 30 minutes before the last act finishes each night, typically between midnight and 1 a.m.

And based on pre-sales, big crowds are expected, despite a sluggish economy. Tonight's show, headlined by superstar Beyonce, is expected to sell out.

After appearing with Destiny's Child, Beyonce made her solo debut at Essence in 2007 with an eye-popping spectacle of song and dance that reaffirmed every accolade she's collected.

Tonight she won't use the custom set from her "I Am...World Tour" -- she'll be on the same stage as everyone else -- but is expected to deliver her full show of costume changes, fierce dancing and hits spanning Destiny's Child to the present.

Frankie Beverly and Maze, the closer for the first 14 Essence fests, was not listed on the initial '09 talent roster. After his representatives and Essence could not come to terms, a Beverly spokeswoman said the band would not appear.

Rehage eventually contacted Beverly directly and made a deal. As part of a "tribute" on Sunday, Beverly and Maze will perform a full set augmented by surprise guests and an encore featuring the St. Augustine High School Marching 100.

One name not on the '09 roster that likely will figure prominently: Michael Jackson.

Since Jackson's death on June 25, Essence producers have considered how to honor his legacy. When Essence favorite Luther Vandross died on the opening day of the '05 fest, every act on the main stage that night eulogized him.

Even if a formal Jackson tribute does not materialize, individual artists will likely pay their respects. Ne-Yo, for one, contributed songs for a proposed Jackson comeback album last year; he and Jamie Foxx closed out the recent BET Awards with the Jackson 5 hit "I'll Be There."

In spirit, at least, Jackson will inhabit the Dome this weekend.

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Posted by **xaviergrad02** on [07/03/09 at 11:58AM](#)

lorek64,

What's stopping you?

If u wanna organize a redneck festival...then organize a redneck festival..with all the b-list celebrities you can imagine..



[Olympian' second line Sunday 12:58 p.m. CT](#)

• [February festivals in Louisiana](#)

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NEW ORLEANS JAZZ FEST

New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival updates with lineups, interviews, photos and more



• [Catch your breath, then relive New Orleans Jazz Fest 2009 4:47 p.m. CT](#)

• [May festivals in Louisiana](#)

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FRENCH QUARTER FESTIVAL

Your French Quarter Festival guide with music lineups, menus, photos and videos



• [Saints tailgaters thrive in a hostile barbecuing environment 7:50 a.m. CT](#)

• [April festivals in Louisiana](#)

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HAUNTED NEW ORLEANS

News and updates surrounding Halloween in New Orleans and our haunted history



• [Relive Halloween weekend around New Orleans 10:27 a.m. CT](#)

• [October festivals in Louisiana](#)

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ST. PATRICK'S DAY IN NEW ORLEANS

All things green, Irish and Italian including parades, block parties and recipes



• [Photos: The Downtown Irish Parade rolls through the French Quarter 3:28 p.m. CT](#)

• [March festivals in Louisiana](#)

[COMPLETE ST. PATRICK'S COVERAGE >](#)

HOLIDAYS IN NEW ORLEANS

Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Eve celebrations



• [All lanes of Huey P. Long Bridge to open during holiday weekend 11:11 a.m. CT](#)

• [December festivals in Louisiana](#)

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SATCHMO SUMMERFEST

New Orleans Satchmo Summer Festival updates with lineups, interviews,

Be proud of who you are..don't be ashamed of it..

Take your father and grandfather for instance..

If they can be together all oiled up wearing leather and chaps during Southern Decadence, then surely you can embrace your inner redneck..

GIT Ur DONE*

Inappropriate? [Alert us.](#)

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Posted by **DrKeyvorkian** on [07/03/09 at 5:53PM](#)

L hope they have a lot of Glade deodorizer at the Dome.Whew!

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photos and more

- [Photos: Lovers of Louis Armstrong flock to Satchmo Summerfest](#) 8:43 a.m. CT

- [August festivals in Louisiana](#)

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