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MUSIC MAN

When I'm asked to talk about culture, I speak about following the music," Michael Smith said. "You know, they say that politicians follow the money. Well, when folklorists want to know what's going on, they follow the music. That was my way into the community."

Smith has been following the music in New Orleans for 25 years, and he's seen a lot.

Readers can share that vision in a new book, "New Orleans Jazz Fest — A Pictorial History," celebrating 20 years of the city's best known musical event.

When Smith isn't photographing corporate CEOs for a New York

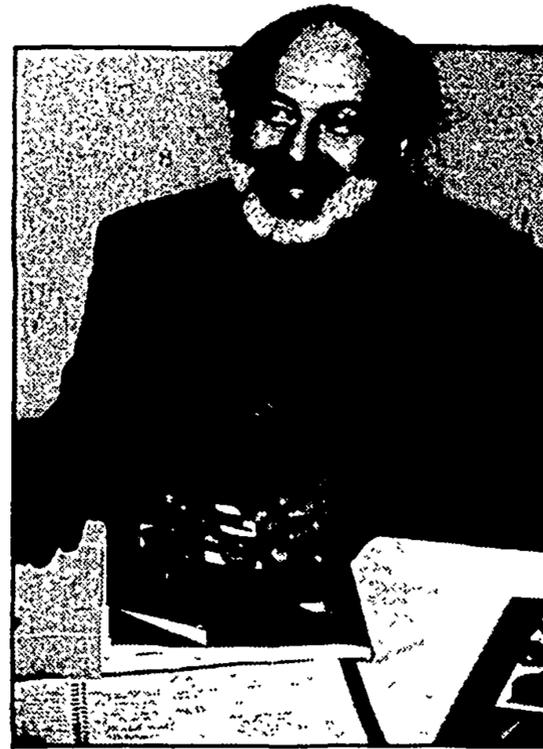


Fine Print

Susan Larson

agency, he's haunting some of his favorite places — black music clubs, second-line parades, the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival or neighborhood churches. He took time out for an interview on a Sunday morning after the Treme Community Festival and before a second-line parade.

"What drives me is this appreciation for the preciousness of these



Photographer Michael Smith
On the same beat for 20 years

things," he said. Through his work as a photographer and through his organization, the New Orleans Urban Folklife Society, Smith not only documents urban folk culture, he also is an ardent advocate for its preservation and propagation, most specifically promoting a cultural heritage center in Armstrong Park.

"We're rapidly losing our human roots," he said. "We live in a period of great homogenization, people shutting themselves into their air-conditioned houses, and we're blending into an electronic culture."

But Smith has another experience of culture — the live music scene and the neighborhoods where indigenous New Orleans culture still exists. "Friends are often astonished at the places I go — places like ghetto music clubs. They think that these

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