

PR CONTACT:

Maryann Ridini Spencer
Ridini Entertainment
818.884.0104
maryann@ridiniertainment.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AMERICAN CREOLE: NEW ORLEANS REUNION
DEBUTS ON PBS NATIONWIDE
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 10:00 p.m. ET/9:00 p.m. Central/7:00 p.m PT**

**The rollicking documentary follows Creole jazz musician and bandleader,
Don Vappie, as he rebuilds his career after Hurricane Katrina**

Los Angeles, CA, August 7, 2006 -- In the new documentary, "American Creole: New Orleans Reunion" premiering on PBS, Thursday, September 7, 2006 (10 p.m ET/9:00 p.m. Central/7:00 p.m. PT), Don Vappie -- musician, bandleader, Creole -- struggles to find work and his cultural identity in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. It follows Don as he tries to keep his band together and bring musicians back to the city. Through his journey, Don begins to question what makes a community, and whether the culture he grew up in can survive not just the storm, but also the social crosscurrents of modern America.

Don, a rising star of New Orleans jazz, finds his sidemen scattered by Katrina, his flooded-out Mom sleeping on his couch, and his 8 year-old grandson clamoring to join the band. Tour the front lines of a devastated city's cultural rebirth: offstage, where race is infinitely more nuanced than black or white; backstage, where which instrument you play can be a political statement; and joyously onstage, where the only thing that matters is music, and local legends make it cook for a benefit concert.

While Don was displaced by Katrina for only a month, more than half of his eight sidemen saw their houses destroyed. All were forced to evacuate to distant cities. Don scrambles to keep his band alive by taking what gigs he can. On the road, Don wonders if he would be better off living somewhere else, like New York. But can he really leave New Orleans, his home?

-more-

Page Two of Two

”American Creole: New Orleans Reunion”

In the doc, Don’s questions lead him to friends, mentors, and fellow musicians, each affected by Katrina in his or her own way. They offer views on what it means to be from New Orleans and what it means to be a Creole of Color, a racial and cultural mix of African-American, French, Spanish, and Native American ancestry, with a rich history in Louisiana. With even his family members unable to agree, the answers he finds are as varied as the cultures that make up his heritage.

In the city, the major festivals go on, but it’s not enough. If the musicians are going to come back, they need gigs, and if the city is going to come back, it needs its musicians. So Don decides to host a Rent Party and later a musical family reunion, gathering together the cream of the local jazz scene and his scattered musician-relatives, because “When the music comes back, everybody’s gonna come back!”

MORE ABOUT DON VAPPIE

Don has played with Wynton Marsalis, Beausoleil and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, along with fronting the Creole Jazz Serenaders, who were recently booked at Carnegie Hall. Rich with music, the film features performances by numerous stars of New Orleans jazz, as well as Don’s far-flung, talented family, including a cousin who wrote hits with Ray Charles, another who was a band mate to Paul McCartney, and a third who recorded with Frank Sinatra, Barbra Streisand, Quincy Jones, and others.

ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

American Creole was produced and directed by the award-winning husband-wife team of Glen Pitre and Michelle Benoit, whose movies (Belizaire the Cajun, The Scoundrel’s Wife), documentaries, books, and museum design have won them an international reputation. In 2002, film critic Roger Ebert acclaimed Pitre “a legendary American regional director.” Their production company, Côte Blanche Productions, has been telling the stories of southern Louisiana for 30 years, first in 16mm format now in Hi-Def. Milly Vappie and her company Vappielle, Inc., producers of recorded music and cultural programming, are also co-producers along with Côte Blanche Productions and Louisiana Public Broadcasting. The documentary was made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and by grants from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, the Southern Media Fund, the Louisiana State Arts Council through the Louisiana Division of the Arts, and the New Orleans Musicians’ Clinic Gig Fund, through the Cheniere Hurricane Centennial.

###