

## GLEN DAVID ANDREWS

**GLEN DAVID ANDREWS** hopped down from an outdoor stage at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival in May, leaving his trombone behind. He sang in a powerful raspy voice, inflected with just a hint of Louis Armstrong. Segueing from one song to another - the controversial 1920s classic "**Black and Blue**" to the more recent brass-band tune "**Cell Block Nine**," for example - he sprinkled each with improvised lyrics. "It's my time," he shouted between numbers.

Andrews, 28, has a lanky 6-foot-4-inch body and a mercurial personality. The brass-band music and traditional jazz he was raised on are still his greatest loves. "The musicians that played in my neighborhood, they brought me out of the womb," he says, not by way of metaphor. According to his mother, Vanna Acker, when she was pregnant, Anthony "Tuba Fats" Lacen, a traditional-music icon and mentor to many musicians, came by and blew his horn outside the house. He said the sound of the tuba would induce labor. Glen David was born the next day.

As a young boy, whenever a second-line parade passed by, Andrews tagged along with his older brother, Derrick Tabb, who is now the snare drummer with the Rebirth Brass Band. Back then, Andrews played bass drum. At 12, he picked up the trombone. Rather than studying formally, he absorbed musical skills from neighbors such as "Frogman" Joseph, Harry Nance, Harold DeJean and other local heroes - "the cream of the crop," Andrews says. Soon he was playing for money alongside Tuba Fats in Jackson Square, in the middle of the French Quarter.

He was recruited into a brass band led by his younger cousin, Troy Andrews, and has since played in both the New Birth and Tremé brass bands, among others, lending equal measures of musicianship and showmanship to each. Occasionally he still lights up the Jackson Square scene.

"Aside from being a great musician, Glen David has absorbed a fading tradition," says Ben Jaffe, who runs Preservation Hall, where Andrews used to play regularly on Sunday nights. "He's a link for his generation to something important. But he also has a rare enthusiasm and energy that makes it all special and exciting for even casual listeners." Though most contemporary brass-band musicians have embraced the more funk and pop-oriented sound of say, the Rebirth band, a shift that began some 30 years ago, Andrews sticks mostly to the old hymns, spirituals and trad-jazz tunes. He performs a stirring version of "**Over in the Gloryland**" with his Lazy Six band on his *Dumaine Street Blues* CD. (Putumayo's *New Orleans Brass* compilation also features the track.) Still, no one has yet adequately captured on record the entrancing quality of Andrews' performances at Preservation Hall or the Mid City Lanes Rock 'n' Bowl or, most powerfully of all, on the streets.

He's appeared in two documentaries performing **I'll Fly Away**, each time evoking a different meaning. He appears in the documentary *Shake the Devil Off*, Swiss filmmaker Peter Entell's chronicle of the controversial, post-Katrina proposed closing of St. Augustine Church, which was founded in Tremé in 1841 by slaves and free people of color. Near that film's climax, after footage of Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson riling up protesters, the camera closes in on Andrews, who raises his trombone and plays the traditional hymn. The song seems offered as a call-to-arms, rather than a memorial. And at the very end of Spike Lee's *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*, Andrews holds his horn at his side and sings the hymn, just as he did on the night of his arrest. But on the final verse, instead of singing "I'll fly away," he sings "New Orleans will never go away." This was no improvisation; it was Lee's idea. And when Lee was syncing music to film, he thought that last line got buried in the mix. He brought Andrews in for a voiceover.

"I want everyone to hear that," Lee said.

"Like a declaration?" Andrews asked.

"Yeah," Lee said, "a declaration."

**By Larry Blumenfeld, Jazziz 9/08**



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