

THE REAL DEAL

Fans of Trombone Shorty don't mince words when it comes to singing his praises. As one diehard devotee declares, "He's the real deal; cookin' with gas, grits and gravy. That man can play some music."

Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews laughs when he hears the compliment. "I've never heard my playing explained like that. All I can say is I just do what I do."

What he does is play a gritty, raucous blend of rock, funk, jazz, hip-hop and soul. It's a sound that Shorty has dubbed "supafunkrock." Fans and new converts will get a taste of Shorty and his band Orleans Avenue's musical stew April 20 when Verve Forecast releases the group's major-label debut, "Backatown."

Produced by Galactic saxophonist Ben Ellman, "Backatown" reflects Shorty's childhood roots as well as the cultural and musical influences of the multiracial Orleans Avenue, whose members include Dwayne "Big D" Williams (percussion), Mike Ballard (bass), Joey Peebles (drums), Pete Murano (guitar) and Dan Oestreich (baritone sax). All but one of the album's 14 tracks were either written or co-written by Shorty. Featured guests include Lenny Kravitz (whose band Shorty toured with in 2005 at age 19), Marc Broussard and Allen Toussaint.

"Troy is an accomplished jazz musician and skilled entertainer who has taken music to a completely unexpected place without fitting neatly into any boxes," Verve Music Group senior VP/GM Nate Herr says.

"What we do is just another word for 'gumbo,'" adds Shorty, who sings and also plays the trumpet, bass, drums and keyboards. "We make different

music fit in one mixture that has a funky and huge rock edge to it. I was brought up in jazz but my goal has been to use it as a tool to create my own fresh sound."

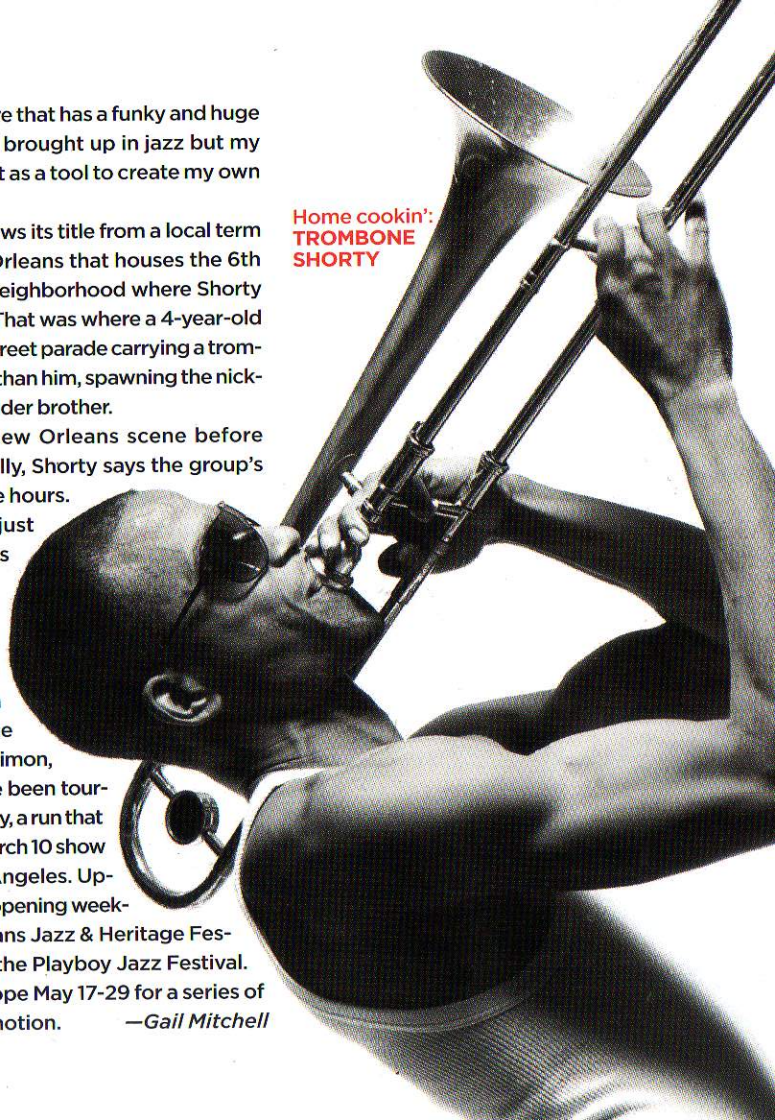
"Backatown" borrows its title from a local term for the area of New Orleans that houses the 6th Ward and its Tremé neighborhood where Shorty was born and raised. That was where a 4-year-old Shorty marched in a street parade carrying a trombone that was bigger than him, spawning the nickname crafted by his older brother.

A fixture in the New Orleans scene before breaking out nationally, Shorty says the group's longest set lasted five hours. "Nobody left so we just kept playing," he says nonchalantly.

Set to play himself on HBO's "Tremé," the upcoming new series about post-Katrina New Orleans from "The Wire" creator David Simon, Shorty and crew have been touring since mid-February, a run that included a rousing March 10 show at the El Rey in Los Angeles. Upcoming gigs include opening weekend at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, Bonnaroo and the Playboy Jazz Festival. Shorty heads to Europe May 17-29 for a series of showcases and promotion.

—Gail Mitchell

Home cookin':
**TROMBONE
SHORTY**



TROMBONE SHORTY: T. NIKK EDWARDS; DUSTY: SHIRAZI; TLEDO; DELCO; TOSTA; W. HENNINGSON