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**LOUISIANA BOOSTER:** "It's never going to be the same as it was," Dr. John says, "but New Orleans is still a special, spiritual place."

## POP &amp; HISS

## A fierce defender of New Orleans

Dr. John takes several shots at BP in his performance at the Grammy Museum.

## RANDY LEWIS

Nearly two months into the worst oil spill in history, a Facebook group has sprung up for people who support British Petroleum and think the company has gotten a bad rap. Don't look for Dr. John's name on that page's friends list.

"Let BP foot the bill," he interjected into "Black Gold," a song about the consequences of the "Drill, baby, drill!" mentality from his 2008 post-Hurricane Katrina album, "City That Care Forgot," which won the Grammy Award for best contemporary blues album.

The inscible pianist-singer-songwriter-producer worked several jobs at BP into his performance and Q&A on Monday night at the Grammy Museum while

skipping through his half-century career as one of the chief ambassadors of Louisiana music and culture. He was in full sartorial splendor in a vibrant purple suit, a satiny silvery-gray paisley shirt, a smart fedora, several necklaces of beads and animal teeth and a voodoo-ish walking stick.

He said the recent spill is just the latest, albeit the most egregious, of hundreds of such incidents in the region in recent years as exploration has expanded. "Nobody [outside of Louisiana] heard about those," he said, "because they weren't as completely ridiculous as this one."

The occasion was a preview of "Tribal," an album coming Aug. 3 and whose title reflects Dr. John's belief that "the whole world is one tribe," he told an audience of about 200 in the museum's performance space, newly crowned the "Civic Davis Theater." "We're all one. All the rest is confusion. The rest is jive."

In between about a dozen songs spanning his career,

for which he was accompanied by the furiously funky Lower 90' trio, the artist also known as "The Night Tripper" spoke with Grammy Museum executive director Robert Santelli about what makes New Orleans unique, and about its ability to bounce back from adversity.

"It's never going to be the same as it was," he said, "but New Orleans is still a special, spiritual place."

Backstage after the performance, he told me he's been gratified at the empathy shown for his beloved hometown in the HBO series "Treme," rooted as it is in the daily lives of members of the musical community in the Tremé neighborhood just outside the French Quarter.

Given New Orleans' stature as the widely acknowledged birthplace of jazz as well as one of the musical breeding grounds that gave rise to rock 'n' roll in the 1950s, Dr. John, a.k.a. Mac Rebennack, said, "People need to know about this place. It's important."

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## A tony flagship event

[Media, from D1] ferences a year. They dot the globe, from Monaco to Beijing.

The Business of Luxury Summit, now in its sixth year, has become the flagship event, and a handsome moneymaker because of tony sponsors like Jaguar and Lebus Hotels & Resorts and support from about 350 "delegates," who pay from \$2,200 to \$3,950 to spend two days with business icons like Diane von Furstenberg and Leonard Lauder, chairman emeritus of the Estée Lauder Cos.

Also on the agenda this Monday and Tuesday at the Beverly Hills Hotel — Disney boss Robert Iger, Creative Artists Agency poobah Bryan Lourd, Calvin Klein Chief Executive Tom Murry, Van Cleef & Arpels exec Nicolas Bos and Jimmy Choo founder Tamara Mellon.

Lauder said he was willing to fly from Paris to deliver a keynote so he could spend time with other executives he respects. He hoped to inspire and be inspired. "America has been built on ideas," he said in an interview on a sunny patio lined with banana trees. "When we stop seeking out new ideas, that's the end."

Like most of the other speakers, Lauder said he did not receive an honorarium nor did the Financial Times pay for his flight. It's that sort of economy combined with the high entry fee and corporate sponsorships of \$25,000 and much more that helps Financial Times special events produce profit margins of 40% and more.

Bradford Rand, a luxury-showcase and special-event producer, said the Financial Times' luxury event has special allure because it's not for everyone. He and many others at the conference normally would have struggled to pass the velvet rope at the hipster Bar Marmont.

"There were no rock stars there last night, but I think people who went felt like rock stars," Rand said.



Oli Scarff/Getty Images

**ENTERPRISE:** Conferences have helped the Financial Times strengthen its high-end brand.

"There were heads of companies and top marketing people... You are getting real access. That's what people pay for."

The privileged access regimen extends to the Financial Times' website. The outlet does not charge for the first 10 visits to the site, with the reader required to subscribe after that. More than 126,000 readers have, some for premium \$299 subscriptions that come with extra updates. That's 15% more paid users than a year prior.

Most publishers fear that if they adopt a paid site, readers and advertising revenue will shrink. But by registering its online users and being able to show their high-end, free-spending ways, the Financial Times has been able to justify higher rates.

"I think in general journalists and analysts have been too worried about 'volume metrics,' circulation numbers," said Ridding, a former foreign correspondent, who speaks in the sort of expansive terms that make strong new people feel the sentiment of times past. It's about total readership and it's about engagement "with a quality audience."

Many other newspapers, including the New York Times and the Times of London, plan to begin charging for online content. The New York Times said it will erect a paid wall next year.

But will the people pay for content that until now has been almost entirely

free? The Financial Times and Wall Street Journal, which also charges to read its digital edition, have a clear advantage because they cover specialized subject matter that many business people believe they can't get elsewhere. Employers often pay for the subscriptions. Many people write off the cost of the publications on their income tax as a business expense.

Despite those advantages, Ridding insists more general newspapers have been "too slow and too timid" about changing for their unique information.

It was not just the newspaperman, now based in London, who argued for the unique value of traditional journalism. Jonathan Newhouse, chairman of the Condé Nast magazine empire, told the conference that the cacophony of voices on the Internet made brand names like Vogue "count more than ever." Von Furstenberg told the stylish crowd that "the value of editors will only increase."

It's almost to the point, Ridding contended, that publishers don't have a choice. "They kind of have to change," he said, "because advertising alone is not going to sustain the kind of professional newswomen that... readers expect."

We really want everyone inside the velvet rope, you see. But the day may be coming when Club Journalism is no longer free.

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