



Dave Bartholomew

BY JEFF TAMARKIN

HE NEVER MADE THE POP charts under his own name. Most rock encyclopedias afford him, at most, a paragraph or two. But as an artist, producer, songwriter, arranger, and bandleader, Dave Bartholomew of New Orleans was a key figure in the transition from the jivin' jump and big-band sounds of the '40s to the rhythm & blues and rock & roll of the '50s.

"If Dave Bartholomew were never to play another note," wrote New Orleans music historian Jeff Hannusch in *I Hear You Knockin'*, "he could sit back and bask in the knowledge that he was very much responsible for shaping today's music."

Dave Bartholomew's name is permanently linked with that of Hall of Fame charter inductee Fats Domino—he produced all of the Fat Man's Imperial hits and co-wrote most of them. But Dave's career was already in full swing when he first spotted Domino at New Orleans' Hideaway Club in December, 1949.

Born December 24, 1920, in Edgard, Louisiana, Dave Bartholomew was encouraged musically by his father, a Dixieland tuba player. Young Dave studied trumpet and performed with local marching bands throughout the '30s. He learned the rudiments of songwriting during an Army stint, returned to Louisiana to form his first band, and by the late '40s was leading one of the most popular outfits in New Orleans.

With its lineup deploying such great N.O. musicians as tenor saxist Red Tyler and drummer Earl Palmer, the Bartholomew band proffered a funky brand of pre-R&B jump blues once removed from the big-band swing of its era. The extra added ingredient was Bartholomew's beloved Dixieland; the result was the genesis of "the big beat" of New Orleans rock & roll.

Bartholomew recorded first for DeLuxe and scored his only R&B chart hit, "Country Boy," in early 1950 before moving on to Lew Chudd's Imperial Records as both artist and A&R man—and eventually producer, arranger, and songwriter as well. It was Bartholomew who brought Fats Domino to the label, and by February 1950, the first of more than a dozen Domino/Bartholomew classics, a rollicking altered blues called "The Fat Man," had topped the national R&B chart.

By the close of the decade, the team had forged such rock & roll cornerstones as "Blue Monday," "Walking To New Orleans," "Let The Four Winds Blow," "I'm In Love Again," "Whole Lotta Loving," "My Girl Josephine," and "I'm

Walkin'." Nor was Bartholomew's hot streak confined to his work with a single artist or record label. Freelancing for such labels as Aladdin and Specialty, he produced Lloyd Price's "Lawdy Miss Clawdy" and Shirley & Lee's "I'm Gone" in 1952. For Smiley Lewis, he co-wrote and produced "I Hear You Knocking" and "One Night." New Orleans artists Earl King, Roy Brown, Huey "Piano" Smith, Bobby Mitchell, Chris Kenner, Robert Parker, Frankie Ford, Snooks Eaglin, and the Spiders all benefited from Bartholomew's hummable, good-time melodies and simple, sturdy rhythms.

"I always tried to keep things as simple as possible," he told writer John Broven in *Walking To New Orleans*, "and we always wanted something the kids could sing." Bartholomew's songs kept "the kids" singing along for decades. Elvis Presley took Smiley Lewis's "One Night" into the Top Ten in 1958. Dave Edmunds remade "I Hear You Knocking" in 1970, and at Number Four it remains the biggest U.S. hit of his career. And in 1972, Chuck Berry recut Bartholomew's "My Ding-A-Ling" and scored his only Number One pop hit.

Bartholomew, who says he's written over 4,000 songs, continued to record and perform under his own name throughout the '50s; but it's as a shaper and molder of other talents that he made his most lasting contributions. He continued to work with Imperial until the early '60s and with Fats for a few years after that. At the age of 70 Bartholomew still leads his big band at special events like the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. He cut his own Dixieland album, finally, in 1981, but these days prefers the stage to the studio.

Reflecting on his heyday with Fats Domino, Dave Bartholomew recalled to Jeff Hannusch the times when "I could turn on the radio and hear five or ten records I produced playing at once." It is a sign of Dave Bartholomew's innovative greatness and of the durability of his music that, more than 30 years later, those same records still blare daily from speakers around the world—and never fail to bring on a smile.

JUST SOME OF THE SONGS OF DAVE BARTHOLOMEW

<i>Ain't That A Shame</i>	Fats Domino, Pat Boone
<i>All By Myself</i>	Fats Domino
<i>Blue Monday</i>	Fats Domino
<i>Bo Weevil</i>	Fats Domino
<i>Country Boy</i>	Dave Bartholomew
<i>The Fat Man</i>	Fats Domino
<i>Going To The River</i>	Fats Domino, Smiley Lewis, Dave Edmunds
<i>I Hear You Knockin'</i>	Fats Domino, Dave Edmunds
<i>I'm Gonna Be A Wheel Someday</i>	Fats Domino
<i>I'm Gone</i>	Shirley & Lee
<i>I'm In Love Again</i>	Fats Domino
<i>I'm Walkin'</i>	Fats Domino, Ricky Nelson
<i>It's You I Love</i>	Fats Domino
<i>Let The Four Winds Blow</i>	Fats Domino, Dave Bartholomew
<i>My Ding-A-Ling</i>	Chuck Berry
<i>My Girl Josephine</i>	Fats Domino, Smiley Lewis
<i>One Night</i>	Elvis Presley
<i>Poor Me</i>	Fats Domino
<i>Sick And Tired</i>	Fats Domino
<i>So Long</i>	Fats Domino
<i>Tend To Your Business</i>	James Wayne
<i>Valley Of Tears</i>	Fats Domino
<i>Walking To New Orleans</i>	Fats Domino
<i>Whole Lotta Loving</i>	Fats Domino
<i>Witchcraft</i>	Elvis Presley

