

# Neville Brothers on track with 'Yellow Moon'

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Is it live or Nevilleized?  
For several years the Neville Brothers have had difficulty getting

that high energy of their stage show documented on vinyl. That is until now. "Yellow Moon" (A&M) is the group's most successful album to date in terms of sales and critical raves.



Neville Brothers are Charles (back row, left) and Aaron, Cyril (front row, left) and Art.

Enter a young Canadian producer, Daniel Lanois, who has worked with the likes of Peter Gabriel and U2 in the past. Lanois' approach is somewhat different compared to most knob-turners in the studio.

"When he came to New Orleans, he wanted to hear everything each Neville Brother did individually, as well as the stuff we had did together as a group," said Cyril Neville, vocalist with the group. "Immediately, that endeared him to each one of us. "Nobody — I mean nobody — had ever approached us in that way before. He said, 'What's in your heart? What do you want to do?'"

"Lanois did other things to make himself at home with the Neville Brothers. Instead of a sterile setting of a conventional studio, the band and producer took residence in an abandoned apartment building in New Orleans. Lanois lived there along with members of the band. Tracks were recorded in a live setting, which Cyril Neville likens to "a church revival of the soul."

"YELLOW MOON" certainly benefits from it. The album highlights the political side to the Neville Brothers, a side that other record people wanted to downplay in the past. "My Blood" is a track on the al-

bum that touches upon the situation in South Africa as well as the plight of North African Americans in the United States.

Another number, "Sister Rosa," is a tribute sung by Cyril Neville to civil rights activist Rosa Parks. Discussion about the song gets the usually soft-spoken Neville brother quite impassioned, revealing the spark that makes the group one of the best in America.

Cyril Neville was particularly appalled at the number of people he found who didn't know about Rosa Parks, or even the Civil Rights Movement for that matter. "We have nieces and nephews in school. We saw that they weren't being taught this in the schools in American history," he said. "I didn't say Afro-American history... I said American history. What these people did was good for everybody."

"That's why there's so much youth violence today," he added later. "They don't know who they are. The black kids don't know who they are. The white kids don't know who they are. They're all getting mis-educated."

In his heated explanation, Cyril Neville lets slip a mild profanity. "Oh, excuse me," he said. "I tend to get carried away."

Orleans was Creole long before Cajuns arrived.

"It's more like gumbo. It's a mixture of all the humanity that's been there: French influence, Spanish influence and African influence. Few people realize that it was one of the busiest slave ports. It gets played down a lot of times, but there is a lot of African blood there."

THOSE AFRICAN rhythms are one component of the Nevilles' sound, which like New Orleans music, doesn't fit snugly into any particular funk. Cyril Neville gets a laugh when a person tells him he found their latest album under the Cajun section at the record store.

Again, the performer becomes the educator. Cyril Neville tears down some of the misconceptions about New Orleans music.

"A lot of people have trouble classifying New Orleans music, period," he said. "New Orleans is so diverse that there's no one label to put on it. It's a waste of time trying, really. It's like the food. Everyone thinks all the food is Cajun. Actually, New Orleans was Creole long before Cajuns arrived."

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