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THE

Defender Picks

LUNDI

December 1st

The Sirens
Circle Bar, 10p.m.
*Three female metal singers forge for
metal equality;* Liv Kristine,
Anette van Giersbergen & Kari
Rueslatten

Last Days of Vietnam
Zeitgeist, 5:30
*About the denouement of the
Vietnam War*

The Way He Looks
Zeitgeist, 9:30
A love story about a gay teen

**Walter Isaacson - The
Innovators**
JCC, 7p.m. (brought to you by
Octavia Books)
*Author of Steve Jobs sings his new
book about how a group of geeks
created the digital revolution*

Melissa Etheridge
Saenger, 7:30p.m.
*Grammy award winning artist
comes to New Orleans' window*

Jazz Vipers
Spotted Cat, 10p.m.
*Five-piece swing band plays every
other week*

The Hunger Games:
Mockingjay (Part 1)
Prytania Theatre, 5p.m. &
10p.m.
*First in the trilogy about dystopian
heroine Katniss Everdeen; plays
thru Dec 1*

Land Ho!
Indywood, 7p.m.
*Ex-brother in laws in their sixties
go on a road trip*

Laggies
Indywood, 9p.m.
*Keira Knightley stars in a tale
about discovering adulthood*

John Fohl
Dos Jefes, 9p.m.
*Blues roots with guitarist, singer,
songwriter*

Leroy Jones
Saint Louis Cathedral, 6p.m.
*Leroy performs his new album
"Wonderful Christmas" with a
trumpet trio and his Quintet*

Washboard Rodeo
Three Muses, 7p.m.
*A posy of strings complimented by
Scrubboard Chuck on the
Washboard*

MARDI

December 2nd

Mason James Cole and Alex
Jennings

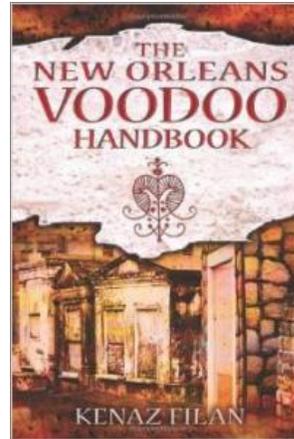
ARTS

VOODOO REVIEW

The New Orleans Voodoo Handbook is Surprisingly Interesting, Accurate

by Anthony Maranise, OblSB

Before jumping into Kenaz Filan's book on voodoo, a little context is necessary. I am a self-proclaimed "religion nerd." Not only are the concepts, truths, and commonalities amongst the various religions of the world of interest to me; they are, in fact, my livelihood and life's work as I am also a religious studies scholar. During my undergraduate years, I studied Religion & Philosophy, and now, as a graduate student, I am studying Catholic theology. For my [senior thesis as an undergraduate](#) – having the deep love for and connection to all things New Orleans that I maintain to this day – I jumped at the opportunity to pursue a project in "comparative religions." More specifically, what topic did I choose to focus on? None other than the syncretic relationship of Catholicism and Voodoo in New Orleans, Louisiana.



For the next 2 months (Spring 2011), I lived, researched, wrote (and of course, played) heartily in "The City that Care Forgot." During this time, I absorbed as much as I could of the New Orleans Voodoo tradition and practices – from meeting, dialoguing, and attending ceremonies with houngans (male priests in the Voodoo tradition) and mambos (or priestesses) to separating the "things of myth" from the "things of truth" in a tradition that is largely orally transmitted and without any substantive sacred text to guide it. As a lifelong and still practicing Catholic (who is even discerning a calling to priesthood), I was and remain to be deeply intrigued by New Orleans Voodoo, seeing within this deeply misunderstood spiritual tradition distinctly Catholic elements and also a still very active, thriving group of practitioners, believers, and adherents in and around the city of New Orleans.

On my most recent trip back to New Orleans (November 2014), I stumbled across a book titled, *The New Orleans Voodoo Handbook* by Kenaz Filan. Given my own personal history with the New Orleans Voodoo scene, I decided to read it to see whether or not I could learn further from it... or, if it was in fact, accurate.

Filan, a Haitian Voodoo priest himself, writes from a position of knowledge, authority, and familiarity. *The New Orleans Voodoo Handbook* is carefully divided into six parts through which Filan explores the history, traditions, spirits (or lwa), and practices that typify New Orleans Voodoo while simultaneously explaining its uniqueness in the larger pantheon of spirit-centered traditions (such as Santeria, Candomblé, or Haitian and African Vodou) that comprise what comparative religion scholars refer to as 'family resemblance.' His introduction serves as a valuable caution to religious-seekers ultimately looking for ritual, practice, or doctrine grounded in sacred



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HIP SCENE.
HISTORIC SETTING.



THE FRENCH
MARKET DISTRICT

Octavia Books, 6p.m.
New Orleans writers discuss the dos and don'ts of genre literature and will read and sign their works Buster Voodoo and Here I Come and Other Stories

Yo Gabba Gabba! Saenger, 3p.m. & 6p.m.
Popular puppets and Leslie Hall joins the cast with hip-hop legend Biz Markie who teaches kids how to beat box

Common Howlin Wolf, 10p.m.
Plus Jay Electronica and Fly Union

text, noting that, "New Orleans Voodoo is not about adhering to a doctrine or script; it's about working with the spirits." Building on this foundation, he goes on to explain that because the religious and spiritual tradition is so dynamic, his book merely serves as a sort of 'field-guide' to readers who may, in their visits to "The Big Easy," encounter material-culture (like dolls, statues, masks, books, etc.) These props can make Voodoo as an authentic religion appear to be something of fiction rather than metaphysical and personal reality to its own adherents and practitioners.

Part one serves as much as a general and rather fast-paced, history lesson on the establishment of the city of New Orleans as it does an overview of Voodoo's origins in Louisiana as a result of the Afro-Caribbean slave trade. Filan does well to practically illustrate how Haitian Voodoo became syncretized with Roman Catholicism due to French and Spanish colonialism as well.

"New Orleans 101" may have been a more-fitting sub-title for Part Two as only two of five chapters in this section are explicitly devoted to treatment of Voodoo. However, the other three chapters are interesting in their own way, detailing both the history and present-day highlights of major cultural features of the city including its cuisine, music, and Mardi Gras. Parts Three and Four both discuss both the role of spirits and ritualistic practices, respectively, in the New Orleans Voodoo tradition. The subject matter makes it the most valuable portion of the book for religious or cultural aficionados.

Though not necessarily key to understanding or even appreciating the city of New Orleans for all it offers, no "Crescent City" themed book published after 2005 would be complete without some attention devoted to the ways in which Hurricane Katrina impacted the city. Filan's book contains such insights, but thankfully without dwelling on it ad nauseam. He concludes the book in Parts Five and Six with practical suggestions for those visiting or looking to relocate to the City of New Orleans. His suggestions, while well-intentioned, focus on elements of the city which are likely to be appreciated more by tourists rather than those who have lived-in or are native to the city itself.

Though clearly written for a non-scholarly audience, this is a meaningful contribution to the literature-base on New Orleans Voodoo and an excellent means by which to disabuse the majority of persons who mistakenly view Voodoo as "evil" and to reorient such views to its numerous positive attributes.

THE NEW ORLEANS VOODOO HANDBOOK. By Kenaz Filan. Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books, 2011 (Reprint, 2013). Pp. 255 + Appendices. Paperback, \$19.95.

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