



A DOCUMENTARY ON RHYTHM AND BLUES PIONEER VANN "PIANO MAN" WALLS

Featuring: Vann Walls, Dr. John, Ahmet Ertegun, Jerry Wexler, Ruth Brown, Ry Cooder, Smokey Robinson, Joe Burrell, Craig Morrison, Howell Begle, Stephen Barry Band and Michael Jerome Browne.

SYNOPSISVann "Piano Man" Walls: The Spirit of REB

Vann "Piano Man" Walls: The Spirit of R & B is a film for anyone interested in Rhythm and Blues. Harry Vann, alias Vann "Piano Man" Walls, was one of its pioneers. He was the East Coast's finest Rhythm and Blues pianist, became composer and arranger at Atlantic Records from 1949 to 1955, came to Montreal, fell in love and lived happily ever after in obscurity... until a fateful night at the Festival International de Jazz de Montréal!

The documentary follows Vann and several of his peers, including musicians Dr. John, Ry Cooder, Ruth Brown – the original "Queen of R&B", Atlantic Records founder Ahmet Ertegun, legendary record producer Jerry Wexler and more, as it wades through his adventure of musical history and performance.

From New York City to Montreal the viewer takes an intimate voyage in to the studio as Vann produces the final album of a career that spanned more than sixty-five years. Wrapped around this recording project is the story of Vann's fascinating life and his lasting contribution to a musical form now heard all over the world.

Contact:

Steven Morris

stevenmorris@vannpianomanwalls.com + 1 514 274-8875

Martin Bolduc

martinbolduc@annpianomanwalls.com +1 514 518-6346

<u>Synopsis</u>

Vann "Piano Man" Walls: The Spirit of R&B

Synopsis

Vann "Piano Man" Walls was born at the dawn of the jazz age, grew up with Rhythm & Blues, and was one of its great pioneers, innovators and exponents. He faded from view as R&B itself fell prey to changes in musical fashion. Just before he died he enjoyed a comeback and renewed creativity.

He lived in Montréal, played the piano like a fallen angel and had more than 65 years of music at his fingertips. With a few deft chords and well-chosen words he showed, as in time-lapse photography, how the music that was his life emerged, developed, evolved, influenced, was influenced, and how it established itself as a genre. Walls is the microcosm, R&B the macrocosm, and one illuminates the other.

Rise and fall and rise: this is the story in a nutshell. But guests such as singer Ruth Brown, Atlantic Records co-founder Ahmet Ertegun and producer Jerry Wexler, as well as Dr. John, a former student of Vann's, Ry Cooder and others drop by to help tell his tale. And in a rare occurrence, Vann allowed a crew in to film the making of his final album, nominated for a Juno Award, Canada's most prestigious music award.

Vann, born in Kentucky, begins his career in 1945 with the father of R&B, Louis Jordan, at a time when the form is just beginning to develop. He joins Atlantic Records in New York City in 1949, is their house piano player until 1955 and records some of their biggest hits. All during R&B's heyday he is one of its shining lights. At

the end of the fifties he meets his future wife, a Canadian, and settles in Montreal.

Meanwhile, rock and roll and soul music begin to erode the popularity of R&B. With the emergence of disco in the 70s, it seems relegated to the wastebasket of musical history. By this time Vann Walls is reduced to playing in taverns and legion halls.

In the early 90s the tide begins to turn. Ironically, rap and hip-hop have emerged as rhythm based forms, sampling, amongst others, the R&B beat and syncopation. A popular Atlantic Records box set is released (featuring Vann Walls in the liner notes) and Vann opens for Dr. John at the "Festival International de Jazz de Montréal." Vann records one last album. He is recognized as a pioneer by his peers at The R&B Foundation Awards. He dies.

Vann was one of the few there at the beginning. He lived to experience and profit from the R&B revival, and to contribute to it. He rode a big wave the last few years of his life and played the piano in the cancer ward every day almost up until the moment he passed away.

Vann "Piano Man" Walls: The Spirit of R&B is the portrait of a man who embodied the history of rhythm and blues music, the sound that became rock and roll.

View the trailer for Vann "Piano Man" Walls: The Spirit of R&B at:

www.vannpianomanwalls.com

Production Notes

From Montreal to Florida, from Boston to New York City, from 1990 to 2011, filming of the feature length documentary, Vann "Piano Man" Walls: The Spirit of R&B, a Mate & Orchard Productions endeavour, has taken more that two decades, spanned analogue to digital technology, covered tens of thousands of kilometres of road trips, and exhausted the patience of more than a few fans of the musical form known as Rhythm and Blues, the father of Rock and Roll.

Director/Producer Steven Morris met Vann "Piano Man" Walls in 1990. The first filming of him was in a small club in downtown Montreal, the quality of which was so bad that the footage was immediately discarded. Two years later, in 1993, with a professional film crew, two super 16mm cameras and a twenty-four track mobile sound unit in tow, the first proper images of Vann Walls were recorded for posterity at L'Air du Temps, in Old Montreal. That would be the "official" beginning of the project.

The next major step was filming Vann with piano legend Mac Rebennack, aka Dr. John. Vann had given him piano lessons when the Dr. was an upand-coming artist in New Orleans. In 1994, Dr. John was performing at Place des Arts as part of the program of that year's Montreal International Jazz Festival. Vann wanted to meet up with his old buddy, "to chat," as he explained it to Mr. Morris. The Festival employees were more than accommodating and as 2800 people waited in the Salle Wilfred-Pelletier for the show to begin, Mr. Morris and crew filmed the meeting of the

two great musicians seated in front of the piano in the green room.

Steven Morris said, "The concert at L'Air du temps was a success in Vann's eyes, as well as the meet-up with Dr. John at the Jazz Fest, so Vann opened up to me a bit, started to have faith in me, and finally agreed to be interviewed in a formal setting, something he had been resisting since I'd met him in 1990."

That interview took place in a recording studio with a grand piano. When finished, on his way to the exit, Vann Walls asked to visit the control room. Looking at the forty-eight-track console he announced to all around him that he had, "one album left in him."

As it turned out, this would be the pivotal shoot of the project because, once established in an editing suite years later, it was determined that the film's narrative structure would be "hung" on the making of Vann Walls' album, In the Evening.

Director of Photography John Sleeman looks back on the shoot, "It was a golden opportunity to film an album in the making, something that is rarely documented. And as a visual person, I felt that Vann and the Grand Piano on which he was playing, were made for one another visually. It was as if Vann did not know that I existed so he allowed me total access as I hovered over him, and around him and the piano."

PRODUCTION NOTES

Production Notes (Continued...)

Seasoned Recording Engineer, Louis Hone, was so pleased to work on the album that he actually took time off his summer vacation to capture all the music. "It was an honour to record an R&B pioneer so everyone involved made a determined effort. The Stephen Barry Band-a fine bunch of musicians-was backing Mr. Walls so I knew it was going to a fantastic session musically. Later I was given the opportunity to mix the album too and the entire process was a delight."

All this activity led to Vann Walls being granted a Pioneer Award by the Rhythm and Blues Foundation in New York City in 1997. Aretha Franklin was the master of ceremony that evening. Other award recipients that night were Smokey Robinson as well as The Four Tops. Steven Morris recalls, "A terrific guy at Montreal's CFCF 12, the late Bill Merrill, gave me some funding to film the NYC event in return for a license for a television hour. Without his support we would never have picked up that footage. It was in New York that we interviewed Ruth "Miss Rhythm" Brown, an Atlantic Records star, Ry Cooder, part of the house band, and others."

As time unfolded, Vann Walls, a man well in his eighties, became gravely ill and died of cancer in the year 2000. This threw the project in to abeyance as potential investors wanted nothing to do with a documentary about a musician now referred to in the past tense. Undeterred, Steven Morris continued to film people important to Mr. Walls' story, including influential Atlantic Records producer Jerry Wexler and entertain-

ment lawyer Howell Begle. "There was no way I could make a film on R&B and not have Jerry Wexler in it," said Mr. Morris. "Besides, not only had Wexler coined the term R&B, he had also produced Vann back in the day at Atlantic Records. After ten years of turning me down he finally granted me an interview at his home in Florida. When we walked in to his living room to set up there were photos of Wexler with Bob Dylan, Ray Charles and Sam Philips on the coffee table. For some reason this put me immediately at ease."

When asked about lawyer Howell Begle, Mr. Morris was unequivocal. "Howell was a guy like me, a fan. But he had forced the creation of the Rhythm & Blues Foundation working "pro bono" on behalf of R&B artists, so he had to be in the film too. He made every gesture to accommodate me and the crew in his home in Boston."

There was all this footage, hours and hours worth, gathering dust in a professional vault.

Enter two essential players: Executive Producer and independent Toronto businessman Peter Dowbiggin, and Producer Martin Bolduc.

Peter Dowbiggin, "Since 1966 I'd known Steven. After we'd finish our newspaper deliveries we would go out and buy 45 rpms together. From a young age the red and black label of Atlantic Records, Vann's label, appealed to us. Neither one of us came to know Vann Walls until years later but it was exciting to learn about a guy who helped establish the Atlantic sound living in Montreal."

PRODUCTION NOTES

Continued...

Production Notes (Continued...)

Martin Bolduc, "I'd met Steven at a radio station in Quebec City, CKRL. That would have been around 1986. Morris spun Rock and Roll on his show and I Jazz on mine. We just kind of gravitated to one another."

Martin Bolduc, a Grammy and Emmy winning Montreal producer, created a twenty-minute promo in 2009 with some of the existing footage. "Steven and I had had lunch one day and I discovered that R & B, as we were calling it in those days, was in suspension, so to speak. I looked at Morris and told him straight that the content was important and that it had to be finished."

Said promo led Peter Dowbiggin to invest in 2010. Lengthy discussions ensued amongst Bolduc, Dowbiggin and Morris about the film being a musical time capsule, a film about respect and a man finally finding respect.

Armed with these and other concepts, the production entered the editing stage. On and off it took a year, what with complications regarding music rights and essential archival footage rights. But it slowly came together. Veteran editor Heidi Haines had created a work environment in her home and recalls, "It was the fist time I had ever cut a film in my home office. I loved being free to work when I wanted as well as sharing some of that musical history with my

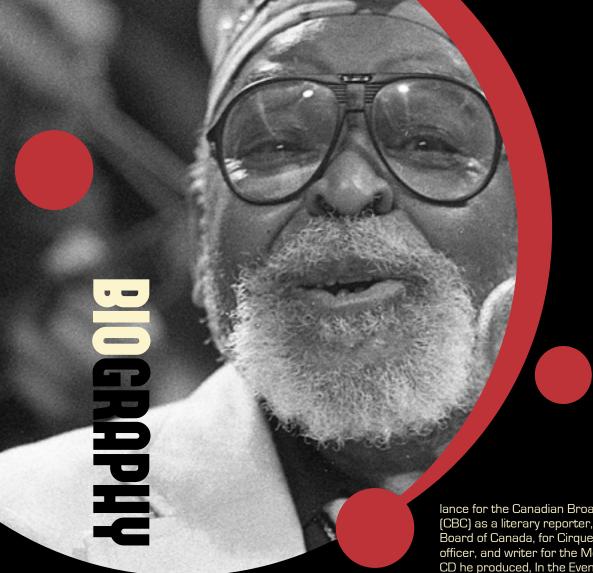
teenage son. Everyone falls in love with Vann. It fascinated me that this frail, elderly man was transformed into this energetic powerful artist the moment he sat down at the keyboard. He entertained me throughout the whole process. The first assembly was long and we took our time to cut it down."

The last crucial stage was the music mix, essential for this kind of film. The very experienced Daniel Toussaint, long a Bolduc collaborator, was chosen. "Like a lot of people working on this project I knew the history of Atlantic Records, that this small, independent label in the 1940s became a corporate "megahouse" that signed the likes of the Stones, AC/DC and Led Zeppelin. After an invitation to an early test screening in 2012 I just knew I had to be part of this film."

In the fall of 2013, all these years later, countless meetings, discussions and endless hours of work, the film master was finally struck; the film became a reality. And the rest, as they say, is musical history.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Continued...



Director | Producer Steven Morris

After graduating from Bishop's University, in Quebec's Eastern Townships, Steven Morris managed a Book Store for ten years in Quebec City. In this period he became a freelance arts reporter and broadcaster.

From that point on he has worked predominantly in Imax production and distribution. He cut his teeth distributing films entitled Mystery of the Maya and The First Emperor of China. The Maya film played theatrically in every major museum in the world with a large format theatre, including the Smithsonian Institution.

Mr. Morris was then one of the producers, and distributor, of the Imax film entitled Le Grand Nord (Great North), for Montreal-based TVA International. This entailed developing the idea, finding international investors, including Imagica Japan, finishing the film, and taking it to market. The film won "Grand prix du jury" at the large format film festival in Paris the year of its launch. Over the years of a career spent in the arts and communication, Mr. Morris has worked free-

lance for the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC) as a literary reporter, for the National Film Board of Canada, for Cirque du Soleil as a film officer, and writer for the Montreal Gazette. A CD he produced, In the Evening, by Vann "Piano Man" Walls, was nominated for a Juno Award. At present he is one of the owners of Mate & Orchard Productions Inc., based in Montreal, Canada.

Vann "Piano Man" Walls: The Spirit of R&B is his first film as a director.

Producer | Martin Bolduc

Martin Bolduc (producer, Cirque du Soleil Images), known for producing the 2003 Primetime Emmy Award winner, Cirque du Soleil: Fire Within, a 13-episode documentary television series which also garnered two Gemini Awards, has had a multi-faceted and distinguished career as a Montréal-based producer, executive producer and production director/coordinator.

In 2005 he won the Gemini for Best Performing Arts Program or Series for the feature length documentary, Lovesick. And in 2010, he took home a Grammy Award for Best Long Form Music Video for producing All Together Now.

Bolduc joined Cirque du Soleil in 1995, working on the company's live entertainment show O in Las Vegas. In 1999 he became part of the Cirque du Soleil Images team, producing numerous documentaries. He was also involved in the recent Touch the Sky, a feature documentary following Cirque du Soleil's owner and founder Guy Laliberté as he embarked on his journey to the International Space Station.

His most recent work, as one of the producers of Cirque du Soleil-Worlds Away, by director Andrew Adamson, is his first 3D production. Martin is now a freelance producer based in Montreal.

Vann "Piano Man" Walls: The Spirit of R&B is Monsieur Bolduc's first R&B adventure.

Executive Producer | Peter Dowbiggin

Peter Dowbiggin, Toronto-based independent businessman and investor, has long cultivated an interest in Jazz and R&B. He was one of the founders of McMaster University's FM Radio Station, CFMU 93.3, among the first university Student Union-run stations in Canada to apply to the CRTC and be granted an FM broadcasting license.

Peter holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from McMaster University.

In his business career Peter has founded and run several successful private companies and currently is president and CEO of Dowbico Limited in Toronto.

He is an avid collector of vinyl and compact disc recordings, as well as devoting time to the pursuit of rare, fine wines.

Long a discrete patron of the arts, Vann "Piano Man" Walls: The Spirit of R&B is Peter's first public involvement in documentary film.

AHduado



Editor | Heidi Haines

Heidi Haines' film studies started at CEGEP and after finishing a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a major in Film Animation from Concordia University, she began editing music videos for renowned artists such as Céline Dion, Daniel Bélanger (Félix Award for best video of the year), Corey Hart, The Barenaked Ladies (winner of the MuchMusic People's Choice Award) and Jim Corcoran. This led to her editing commercials for clients such as Volkswagen, Molson and MacDonald's.

It was a natural progression to then work in short films and television, and eventually documentaries and feature-length films. Over the last few years she has concentrated her love of the craft predominantly on documentary films; among them Tim Southam's Danser Perreault, which won the Gemini Award for Best Director in 2006, Gracien Gélinas; Un géants aux pieds d'argiles, Karsh is History, Les Acadiens du Québec and more.

Heidi edited two feature films with Adrian Wills, the Grammy Award winning All Together Now and Touch the Sky, both Cirque du Soleil productions. Her latest work saw her cutting a film on Ron Turcotte, the Acadian who road thoroughbred racehorse Secretariat to fame and fortune.

Alantic Records

Founded in 1947, Atlantic Records is one of the most important and successful record companies in history. Atlantic was born out of co-founder Ahmet Ertegun's genuine love for black American music: jazz and blues, and a \$10,000 loan from his dentist. In less than a decade, it would become the leading R&B label and home to such pioneering stars as Big Joe Turner, Ruth Brown, The Clovers, Ray Charles, and many others. Vann Walls' signature piano sound is instantly recognizable on many of those records.

With the help of Jerry Wexler, the former Billboard journalist who coined the term "rhythm and blues," the label shaped the R&B sound into one of the most powerful musical forces of the 1950s and '60s and ultimately brought black music to the masses.

Over its first 20 years of operation Atlantic Records earned a reputation as one of the most important American independent recording labels, specializing in jazz, R&B and soul recordings by African-American artists. In 1967 it became a wholly owned subsidiary of Warner Music and expanded into rock and pop music, signing Cream, Led Zeppelin and Crosby, Stills & Nash.

Still part of the musical landscape to this day, Atlantic has at one point in its storied history housed Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, Dr. John, AC/DC and, The Rolling Stones, to name but a few, on the label.





CREDITS

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY

Steven Morris

EDITOR

Heidi Haines

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

John Sleeman

PRODUCED BY

Martin Bolduc & Steven Morris

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Peter Dowbiggin

FEATURING

(in order of appearance)

Vann Walls Dr. John

Ruth Brown

Joe Burrell Ahmet Ertegun

Jerry Wexler

Craig Morrison

Michael Jerome Browne

Stephen Barry

Ruth Walls Howell Begle

Smokey Robinson

Ry Cooder

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Allan Jolicoeur

CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Barrie Howells Mark Zannis

CO-PRODUCERS

David Morris et Donald Morris

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS

Mathieu Boutin, Olivier Ferrante, Louis Hone, George Ungar

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Mathieu Boutin, Bobby Breault. Jean-François Hayeur, Barry Howells, Barry Perles, Simon Prévost, Paul Rickards, George Ungar

TIME-LAPSE PHOTOGRAPY

Jean-Francois Hayeur

RECORDING ENGINEER

Louis Hone

SOUND RECORDING

David Ballard, Mathieu Boutin, Andrew Harder, Nathalie Morin Steven Morris, John Sleeman

RESEARCHER

Terri Foxman

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Teresa Deluca, Sarah Geledi

MULTIMEDIA PRODUCERS

Sarah Geledi, Jason "Red" Clarke

STORY EDITOR

Gary Evans

POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

Claude Joli-Coeur

END TITLE SEQUENCE EDITOR

Gordon Hashimoto

ADDITIONAL EDITOR

Teresa Deluca

COLOURIST

Gary Chuntz

ON-LINE EDITOR

François Bonelly

POST PRODUCTION FACILITIES

GRAPHIC DESIGN & ANIMATION

Kebecweb - Jason "Red" Clarke, Katharina Gebhardt, Jeffery Vuorela

SOUND EDITING MUSIC MIX & MASTERING

Daniel Toussaint

MUSIC EDITING

Ginette Bellavance

SOUND EFFECTS EDITOR

Luc Raymond

AUDIO POST PRODUCTION FACILITIES

Studio Megaphone - Anders Arben Harder Sound

Developed in Part with the Financial Assistance of:

CFCF-12, Montréal, Cirque du Soleil, Jacque Bournival, Rachel Brodeur, Jacques Méthé, Michael Roy, Stéphane Simard

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BLUE SENDER (Harry Eugene Vann Walls) Publiée par Unichapel Music Inc. Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls Gracieuseté de Warner Music Canada

CHAINS OF LOVE

CHAINS OF LOVE (Harry Eugene Vann Walls, Nugetre) Publiée par Unichapel Music Inc Interprétée par Big Joe Turner Gracieuseté de Warner Music Canada Gracieuseté des Disques Bros

ST-LOUIS BLUES William C. Handy Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls

BOOGIE WOOGIE COUNTRY GIRL

[Reginald Ashby/Doc Pomus] Publiée par Unichapel Music Inc Interprétée par Big Joe Turner Gracieuseté de Warner Music Canada

SLOW PLAYING BLUES (George Moonigan/Harry Eugene Van Walls) Publiée par Les Éditions Bros Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls Gracieuseté des Disques Bros

WATERMELON MAN

(Herbie Hankock) Publiée par Hancock Music Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls et le Stephen Barry Band

THEY CALL ME PIANO MAN

(George Moonoogian / Vann Walls) Publiée par Les Éditions Bros Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls

LIFE'S A ONE WAY TICKET

(Joseph Pleasant) Publiée par Universal Music Publishing Group Interprétée par Dr. John et Harry Eugene Vann Walls

IN THE EVENING (When the Sun Goes Down)
[Leroy Carr / Don Raye]
Publise par Universal Music Publishing Group
Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls et le Stephen
Barry Band

LOUD TALKING PAPA

(Harry Eugene Vann Walls) Publiée par Les Éditions Bros Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls et le Stephen Barry Band

SUPERMARKET BABY
George Moonoogian / Harry Vann Walls
Publide par Les Editions Bros
Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls et le Stephen
Barry Band

MUSIC

HONKY TONK

(Billy Butler, Bill Doggett, Shep Shepherd, Clifford Scott)

Publiée par: SDNY/ATV et W and K Publishing et ISLIP MUSIC

PUBL (c/a Herman Leibowitz Esq)

Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls et le Stephen Barry

Band

Censiquenté des Disques Ress

Gracieuseté des Disques Bros

In the Garden (chanson traditionnelle) Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls et le Stephen Barry Band

5 10 15 HOURS

[Rudolph Toombs] Publiée par UNICHAPPELL MUSIC INC. Interprétée par Ruth Brown Gracieuseté de Warner Music Canada

LET'S DO IT [Garnville McGhee] Publiée par Microhits Music Corp. Interprétée par Sticks McGhee et Harry Eugene Vann Walls Gracieuseté de Warner Music Canada

ANYTIME ANYPLACE ANYWHERE

(Joe Morris, Laurie Tate)
Publiée par Unichapel Music Inc
Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls et le Stephen Barry Gracieuseté de Warner Music Canada

DRINKING WINE

Harry Eugene Vann Walls]
[Harry Eugene Vann Walls]
Walls of Medals/ Editions Bros
Publiée par Les Éditions Bros
Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls et le Stephen Barry
Band

LUCKY LIPS (Jerry Lieber, Mike Stoller) Publiée par Sony / ATV Tunes LLC Interprétée par Ruth Brown Gracieuseté de Warner Music Canada

[Lemon Overton]
Publiée par Sony / ATV Tunes LLC
Interprétée par Spider Sam et Harry Eugene Vann Walls
Gracieuseté de Warner Music Canada

LEAN BACK AND LICK YOUR CHOPS

(Harry Eugene Vann Walls) Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls

AFTER HOUR SESSION

Harry Eugene Vann Walls) Publiée par Les Éditions Bros Interprétée par Harry Eugene Vann Walls



Atlantic Records

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

Howell Begle

Lyne Charlebois

Succession de Charlie Biddle

Corbis

John Detcheverry

Getty Images

Historic Films

©Jean-François Leblanc, Festival International

de Jazz de Montréal

Craig Morrison

Library of Congress

Office national du film du Canada

Nils Nichols (Spectacle de Dr. John à l'église

St-Ann's, Brooklyn)

Franceen Palevsky-Breault

William « PoPsie » Randolph

Runyon (Robert) Photograph Collection

Showtime Music Archives (Toronto)

Archives de la famille Vann Walls fournies par

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