

## Master of Ceremonies

# ISAAC HAYES

Blaxploitation films.

Not far away from the radio station, over in the Peabody Place Entertainment Center a block from Beale Street, Hayes holds forth on a regular basis in the centrally located 'Owners Booth' of his acclaimed restaurant, Isaac Hayes Music-Food-Passion (a partnership with Lifestyles of Memphis). He often performs with whoever's on the bandstand there, or at the sister restaurant of the same name up in Chicago, which is located on North Clark Street in the trendy River North section. The best in *gag* music, real home style cooking (barbeque ribs shipped overnight anywhere in the country!), lots of Isaac Hayes memorabilia to catch the eye, and select drop-ins and performances by Hayes and many of his celebrity friends have made the restaurants wildly popular.

Doors away from both restaurants is a busy Isaac Hayes Cooks & Wares store, where you can pick up Ms. Pearlle Biles' latest sauce creations, or the double-boiler needed to prepare a batch of Chocolate Salty Balls at home, according to the recipe in *Cooking With Heart & Soul: Making Music in the Kitchen with Family and Friends*. The autobiographical cookbook, published by Penguin-Putnam and now in its third printing, is a treasury of personal memoirs and recipes, not just the author's favorites but also others from such friends as John Travolta (Hamburger Royale With Cheese), Lisa Marie Presley (Banana Padding), Wesley Snipes (Rum-Glazed Cornish Hens With Apple-Sourdough Stuffing) - and Chef, the irrepressible ladies man, dispenser of wisdom, and voice of mischief and higher learning on South Park.

2003 is the seventh season on cable tv's Comedy Central that Chef is cooking up scheme after scheme on South Park. He is the perfect alter ego for Hayes and provided him with a solid #1 single in England back in '98, when "Chocolate Salty Balls (P.S. I Love You)" became the flagship hit for *Chef Aid: The South Park Album* (Columbia). Since then, Hayes has established himself as the familiar voice of Nickelodeon's "Nick At Nite" program block. At the same time, 2002 marked his sixth and final year on New York's KISS-FM in the morning, the city's top-rated Urban radio show since '96 - the same year Hayes contributed "Two Cool Guys" to the *Beavis and Butt-Head Do America* movie soundtrack. If anyone knows a thing or two about bridging both sides of the generation gap, it is Isaac Hayes.

### SOULSVILLE

Isaac Hayes was born in the rural poverty of a sharecropper's family on August 20, 1942, in Covington, Tennessee, about thirty miles south of Memphis. Orphaned in infancy, he and his sister Willette were raised up by their maternal grandparents, Willie and Rushia Addie-Mae Wade. They instilled love in Hayes for the simple pleasures of country life. "We raised our own foods," he says, "we raised most of our crops, we had cattle, we had pork. Our corn was ground at the grist mill and we had molasses at the sorghum mill. A sack of flour would last several months. My grandmother did a lot of canning, preparing food and putting it up in the winter. My grandfather would go hunting and bring in a bunch of rabbits, so we were good. When we came to the city of

Memphis, we didn't have anything to compare it to."

Memphis was supposed to represent new opportunity, and it did for awhile, as the 7-year old saw his first supermarket and enjoyed his first Popsicle, and grandfather found work at a tomato factory. But soon his health failed, he became disabled, and when Hayes was 11, his grandfather died. "That's when we really fell on hard times," Hayes remembers, "when I started doing the agricultural work like picking cotton." Ironically, his stately home today in East Memphis looks out on those same fields where cotton grew for nearly two centuries. As a youngster he ran errands, cut lawns, delivered groceries and wood to homes for fuel, cleaned bricks for two cents apiece, and shined shoes on Beale Street.

Later on, working as a bus boy and dishwasher at a restaurant, "one day it was kinda slow and I told the cook, 'I been watching you, lemme do a hotdog.' And he said, 'ok, come on do it,' so I prepared an artful hot dog, stuck it up in the window, tapped the bell and stepped back, watched the waitress deliver it, the guy ate it, and it was cool. I started doing some catfish, some hamburger steak, and the guy loved it. I eventually began doing a little short order cook stuff."

To an adolescent, the poverty was stifling; combined with the self-consciousness brought on by puberty, believing he wasn't dressed sharp enough to attract the girls, Hayes secretly dropped out of Manassas High School. After six weeks, a delegation of teachers arrived at the house and told his grandmother the news. "God, I felt like I had gone through the floor, but they said, 'This young man has too much to offer, we cannot afford to lose him.'" The teachers gathered their hand-me-down clothes for Hayes, who resolved to stick it out and get his diploma. The experience left an indelible mark on him for life, and Hayes' dedication to literacy, education and teaching initiatives is an outgrowth of what those teachers did for him. Years later, when the State Of Tennessee honored him with a marker, Hayes chose to place it at Manassas High.

Hayes sang in church since age five, but stopped when his voice cracked in adolescence. Years later, "when I started back singing, my voice was in the basement." He was persuaded by his high school guidance counselor to enter a talent show, singing "Looking Back," Nat King Cole's 1958 hit. "When I finished, the house was on its feet, man, and I was a hit." Overnight the girls, even those a couple of grades ahead, were sending lunch invitations. "Career change! So I started pursuing music big time."

He joined the school band and learned to play saxophone from Lucian Coleman (brother of hard-bopper George Coleman). Hayes sang gospel with a group called the Morning Stars, doo-wop with Sir Isaac & the Doo-Dads, the Teen Tones, and the Ambassadors, even some jazz with the Ben Branch house band at Curry's Club Tropicana out in north Memphis. He started playing sax and singing blues with Calvin Valentine and The Swing Cats, and doing prom dates with The Missiles. He took a crash course learning piano by literally faking it for the first time on a New Year's Eve R&B job at the Southern Club with Jeb Stuart, "because I needed the money."



### PROLOGUE

In the spring 2003, one year after his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and a celebrated move back home to Memphis, the public persona of Isaac Hayes is surging forward with a momentum usually associated with teen popstars and visiting royalty. In fact, Hayes is *resident* royalty for more than a decade, a coronated King of the Ada coastal district of Ghana in western Africa where he is a member of the Royal Family. Instead of a palace, he built an 8,000 square foot educational facility through his Isaac Hayes Foundation (IHF). He is most certainly the only King on earth with an Oscar, Grammy awards, #1 gold records, his voice on an animated tv series, a radio show, two restaurants, a best-selling cookbook, and top secret barbecue sauces.

In Memphis, his five-hour nightly radio shift on WRBO Soul Classics 103.5 FM is still the #1-rated show in town in its third year on the air. The city has taken to a new slogan: "Memphis: Home of the Blues, Birthplace Of Rock 'n Roll," underscored by the Smithsonian's Memphis Rock 'n Soul Museum just off Beale Street, the institution's first permanent exhibition outside Washington, DC, and New York. On May 2nd, Hayes presided over the opening day ceremonies of Soulsville, the Stax Museum of American Soul Music, a \$20 million redevelopment project. It is located at a legendary address, 926 East McLemore Avenue, the revitalized original site of the record company where Hayes got his start in 1962. He has also been an integral fundraiser (and consciousness raiser) on behalf of the Stax Music Academy next door, a facility where he and others will develop and teach future Memphis musicians.

Back on 'RBO, you're likely to hear a number from one of the stars of *Only The Strong Survive* (Miramax), which premiered on May 9th, D.A. Pennebaker's documentary film tribute to Hayes and his contemporaries including Sam Moore (of Sam & Dave), Rufus & Carla Thomas, Jerry Butler, William Bell, Wilson Pickett, and others. Stay tuned and you might hear a track from *Isaac Hayes At Wintax* (Stax/Fantasy), an hour-long CD of unreleased music from 1972's historic concert movie event. The new CD was issued in April in advance of the 30th anniversary restoration of the film which opened on June 6th, *Wintax - The Special Edition* (Sony Pictures Repertory). It was just three years ago when the new Shaft movie soundtrack was released, featuring Hayes' "Shaft 2000" theme, on the eve of the 30th anniversary of the granddaddy of