

## Al Bernard — a few quotes.

"Al Bernard has a reputation for being the most precise bassist in New Orleans. He is in hot demand as a rhythmist because he is capable of leading the band, yet always keeping precise time."

--- liner note quote from a live Tim Laughlin CD recorded in May 1999 in Ludwigsburg, Germany.

"Al Bernard, what can I say!! Fabulous and slapin' fantastic... solid as usual."

--- Jimmy LaRocca

"Al is much like Ray Brown: steady and solid. His father anchored Leon Prima's band."

--- Rhodes Spedale

"Bassist Al Bernard came on our German tour without a nick-name, but left with one: "Professor Zinger" (later refined to "Der Zingermeister.") Throughout the tour, he had a wonderful knack for letting all the commentary on any given subject die down, then having the last word with a perfect "zinger". His rejoinder to an unjustly-irate service station attendant was a highlight of the tour for all of us, but unfortunately it is not printable here. Despite the snappy comebacks, Al was basically another quiet rider on the long van trips. He managed quite well to shut out the polemics rebounding off the ceiling as he wrote a journal about Germany in \_Japanese! He studied German phrase books before and during the trip and was able to carry on conversations in German, too. Even more amazingly, he lapsed easily into street Spanish when he recalled a childhood stay in Fullerton, California. But his New Orleans roots took over when a lazy street beat by the drummer signaled the prelude to the "Saints". Al was instantly transformed into a convincing grand marshal, ready to strut down St. Charles Avenue as he held his coat open, exposing the red suspenders inside. On all other numbers, he played rock-solid time using a courteous choice of bass notes and with minimal volume from the amplifier. And night after night, he willingly performed a string of "Big Noise From Winnetkas," which this scribe places in a class with composer Haggart's own versions. Al is justifiably one of the most respected bassists in New Orleans. As a teenager, he was privileged to sit in with Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band and later he worked with Sharkey Bonano, Santo Pecora and other New Orleans legends. More recently, he has been heard with the Dukes of Dixieland and with banjo virtuoso Amy Sharpe's trio at the Court of Two Sisters. Any band with Al "S.A." Bernard as its bassist is a fortunate group, indeed.

--- Hal Smith