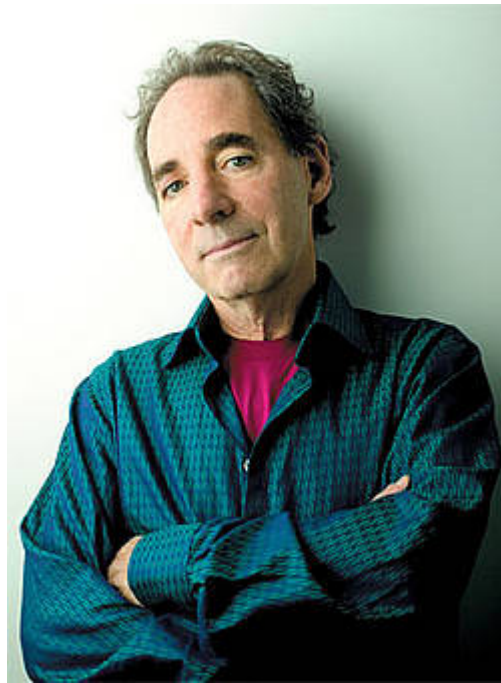


# HARRY SHEARER

10/25/2006 by [Sue Strachan \(https://www.myneworleans.com/author/sue-strachan/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/author/sue-strachan/)



You've met Harry Shearer before, but probably never knew it. Well, maybe not in person, but you've either heard him speak and sing, or seen him on TV and movie screens. Derek Smalls. Mr. Burns. Ned Flanders. Sound familiar yet? Shearer is one of the few performers who has managed to crossover to other creative realms successfully & he's a musician (bass guitar), actor, writer, radio show host, director, producer, composer and satirist. A chameleon, no doubt, but one that stands out in whatever he's in.

Maybe it was because he started young: his first big break came at age 7, when his piano teacher-turned-agent cast him in Abbott and Costello Go to Mars. (Of note: Abbott and Costello think they are on Mars when they are really in New Orleans during Mardi Gras.) He was the original Eddie Haskell in the pilot for Leave it to Beaver, yet he has never seen an episode. Other credits? A member of the late 1960s, early & 70's, comedy group Credibility Gap, guest star on several TV on shows, including Miami Vice and Dawson's Creek and was

in the cast of Saturday Night Live for two seasons; originated the role of Derek Smalls in the rockumentary, This is Spinal Tap and Mark Shubb in A Mighty Wind, and is the director, writer and actor of Teddy Bear's Picnic ... This is a very small sampling.

But let's check in on what Harry is currently doing:

- Hosts Le Show; on the radio for 22 years.
- Is the voice of about 17 characters, give or take, on The Simpsons.
- Writes for Arianna Huffington's blog, The Huffington Post (and actually responds to people's comments to his articles.)
- Is going to be a contestant on Celebrity Jeopardy this month.
- Appearing as Victor Allen Miller in the latest Christopher Guest film For Your Consideration, which premieres this month.
- Publication of his satirical novel, Not Enough Indians this month.

He's a staunch lover and defender of New Orleans; and you've got to admire a man who wants to be interviewed at dinner at Bayona. Over a bottle of wine; or two. So yes, I must admit I'm wild about Harry.

Age: 62 Born: Los Angeles, Ca. Grew up: Los Angeles, Ca. Resides: Los Angeles and the French Quarter Family: Judith Owen, wife, who is a singer-songwriter; Shearer was an only child Education: Los Angeles High School and UCLA Favorite book: A Confederacy of Dunces by John Kennedy Toole Favorite movie: Dr. Strangelove and To Be or Not To Be; the version starring Jack Benny and Carole Lombard. Favorite TV show: Sergeant Bilko Favorite food: Braised beef tongue Favorite New Orleans restaurant: I would hurt too many feelings,; he says. Favorite musician:

Sonny Landreth

You're going to be on Celebrity Jeopardy. That sounds intriguing [Ed. note: His episode will be airing some time Nov. 4-21). I'm doing it for two reasons. One: Michael McKean is an old-time Jeopardy player and I know I'm smarter than he is. And two: They [Jeopardy] said the money goes to charity. I made a commitment to the Tipitina's Foundation last year on the behalf of a corporation that didn't come through, and so I felt an obligation to make it right.

Why the Tipitina's Foundation?

Through the Tipitina's Foundation I'm helping a culture survive; especially through its' ;Instruments A Comin; program that puts instruments in the hands of public school students;

and keeping the street culture of music alive. I [also] wanted to donate to a group that's addressing the rental market problem in the city; but I'm not aware of any program that's doing that.

Who are your opponents? Soledad O'Brien and Isaac Mizrahi.

How long have you been in New Orleans? I've been coming here since 1988. We finally bought a place 10 years ago. I figured I subsidized the hotel industry enough.

What first brought you to New Orleans? I had always intended to come to New Orleans; always heard great stuff, but put it off. Then I was working on a movie in Seattle and some friends said, ;Heh, we're going to Jazz Fest, we've got an extra ticket.; And I thought; not knowing, I thought it was a big deal to have a ticket; it was a special thing and I didn't want to waste it.

I arrived in New Orleans at 8 a.m. Saturday. I stayed at Prytania Park Hotel, as it was the only place that had a room available, went out to Jazz Fest. I had breakfast at Brennan's, flew back Sunday night. I was just blown away. It was one of those classic moments & it didn't take me more than a day and a half to get it.

Tell me about For Your Consideration. It's created by Christopher Guest. It's largely improvised. Although there's a movie within a movie, so that part is scripted. And it's the same general group of people, [as star in most Guest movies] except with the addition of Ricky Gervais, who's from the English version of The Office & the original.

To me the highlight of it was & after having had this absolute fan-like, adoring attitude towards Catherine O'Hara for years I finally got to do a lot of scenes with her in a movie for the first time. We've been in the same movie, but had never done a scene together before. It was one of those pictures where it was fun to come to, and watch other people work too. You couldn't give me anything better than that.

What's the movie within a movie about? Catherine O'Hara, Parker Posey, Christopher Moynihan and I are in the cast of a demented little independent film called Home for Purim and at some point during the filming there's a rumor on the Internet that one or another of us are being talked about as a possible Oscar nominee.

How many voices do you do for The Simpsons? I read somewhere that you do about 17. I don't think it's that many, but over a dozen. It depends on whether you count the dead characters' or not.

Do you have any creative leeway with your characters? Mainly we do the lines as they are written. The writers are very proud of their work and in some cases deservedly so.

We; and by; we; I mean all of us in the cast; sort of operate as the institutional memory of the show. We've all been there since day one, so new writers will come in and write jokes that aren't appropriate for a character to say. [For example,] they'll have Ned Flanders cursing through a joke. The main input we have nowadays is when one of those things happens, and hope we will prevail.

Do people ask you to do Simpsons voices for them? I really draw the line at one thing. When I was in Edinburgh [Scotland], I went to a radio station, because I do my radio show wherever I'm at, and the station's engineer thinks he knows me well enough to; he comes at me with his mobile phone and I know what's coming next and I say, No that's the only thing I can't do. "And he says, Really, why?" And I respond, "Because anybody calls that number and hears it, I'm going to hear forever, Why won't you do that for me you did it for his kid. And I would be doing nothing else for the rest of my natural life."

What's the Hardest Simpsons voice to do?

Otto. The voices were all choices I made in a blink of an eye without thinking about it and certainly not thinking I would be doing them for 17 years. It's a little tough on the vocal cords.

Any hope of getting the members of Spinal Tap or the Folksmen to New Orleans? One of my big frustrations is we have never been able to do another Spinal Tap or a Folksmen gig here. We tried to make it happen a couple of times.

Michael McKean came to two Jazz Fests before the hurricane. He and his wife absolutely fell in love with the city. He was like, Oh my God, now I get it. Christopher Guest was only here once when Spinal Tap played a record convention here.

Not Enough Indians addresses the corruption that can happen at Indian casinos. Did you start writing it before or after the Jack Abramoff scandal? Yes, years ago.

Is it based on Foxwoods, the Indian casino in Connecticut? I've never been to Foxwoods. I've been to other Indian casinos around the country, so I just sort of amped up the scale to what I thought a Foxwoods-type place would be doing, and now they are kind of in this leap-frog battle with the Mohegan Sun [Ed. Note: An Indian casino also in Connecticut], so they keep on getting bigger and bigger and bigger.

Foxwoods sort of inspired the idea. I read a piece in The New York Times about the Mashantucket Pequots, the tribe behind Foxwoods, and what really started me thinking about it was there was exactly only one full-blooded Mashantucket Pequot living on tribal land when they got [tribal] recognition and this allowed them to start the casino. I thought the difference between one and zero isn't that big.

How long did it take you to write the book? It happened over a period of five or six years. I wrote the first draft in about a year, then I laid it aside. I was just trying to get the story down. I don't outline. Writing is writing, and I had to kind of figure out where the story went. I gave copies to three or four author friends and got their comments. Waited until I forgot almost all of them and started the next draft. Cause I figured anything really useful to me would stick and anything that would have been distracting I would have forgotten.

How do you explain what's happening to New Orleans; why people come are coming back; to people who are not from here? Ron Reagan Jr. was interviewing me, and he asked; Would you recommend to people to move back to town or stay?"I was lucky and blessed to be relatively & besides having to get rid of my refrigerator undamaged. But I know what people are going through, you can't step into somebody else;s shoes and say, Suck it up. Give them those stupid pep talks. Everybody's got their own point of tolerance for stress and for crap.

I am enough of an optimist, a believer in the power of this town. I was on Garland Robinette's show and thought, Oh my God, maybe for the first time in my life I'm the voice of optimism in the room. I'm not the wise guy in the corner saying this sucks, this sucks, this sucks.

One of the things I love about this town, and it's certainly a major difference from Los Angeles, is just the enveloping sense of community here. That fabric, that very tightly woven fabric, has been torn, badly.

And that was a support system for a lot of folks. When it's torn, a big reason for staying here goes away, for a little while at least, until its rewoven. But I think that it's hard to say good-bye to that forever once you've known that. It's so unlike anywhere else you go to.

Still, even in this struggling period with a non-Mayor, a non-plan, a non-recovery; New Orleans still has so much more soul, more character, more sense of community than most cities who are up and running like nothing happened.

---

**CATEGORIES: [LL FEATURE \(HTTPS://WWW.MYNEWORLEANS.COM/CATEGORY/LL FEATURE/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/category/ll_feature/)**

•

## Comments

0 comments

0 Comments

Sort by **Oldest**



Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin

## RELATED POSTS:

Tops of the Town  
2019  
(<https://www.myneworleans.com/2019/02/tops-of-the-town-2019-2/>)

(<https://www.myneworleans.com/2019/01/best-spots-for-soul-warming-soups-to-beat-the-cold-weather/>)

The Best Spots for  
Soul-Warming Soups  
to Beat the Cold  
Weather

(<https://www.myneworleans.com/2019/01/best-spots-for-soul-warming-soups-to-beat-the-cold-weather/>)

(<https://www.myneworleans.com/2019/01/nixing-the-mix/>)

Nixing the Mix  
(<https://www.myneworleans.com/2019/01/nixing-the-mix/>)

## Sections

[Weekly Blogs \(https://www.myneworleans.com/weekly-blogs/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/weekly-blogs/)  
[Things To Do \(https://www.myneworleans.com/things-to-do/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/things-to-do/)  
[Food + Drink \(https://www.myneworleans.com/food-drink/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/food-drink/)  
[Life + Style \(https://www.myneworleans.com/life-style/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/life-style/)  
[Lagniappe \(https://www.myneworleans.com/lagniappe/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/lagniappe/)  
[Our Events \(https://www.myneworleans.com/our-events/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/our-events/)  
[Our Magazines \(https://www.myneworleans.com/our-magazines/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/our-magazines/)

## Renaissance Publishing

[About Us \(https://www.myneworleans.com/about-us/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/about-us/)  
[Contact Us \(https://www.myneworleans.com/about-us/contact-us/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/about-us/contact-us/)  
[Advertise \(https://www.myneworleans.com/about-us/advertise/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/about-us/advertise/)  
[Custom Publishing \(http://www.bizneworleans.com/Custom-Publishing\)](http://www.bizneworleans.com/Custom-Publishing)  
[Career Opportunities \(https://www.myneworleans.com/about-us/careers/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/about-us/careers/)

[Meet the Staff \(https://www.myneworleans.com/about-us/staff/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/about-us/staff/)

## **Publications**

[Our Magazines \(https://www.myneworleans.com/our-magazines/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/our-magazines/)

[Subscribe \(https://www.myneworleans.com/subscribe/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/subscribe/)

[Digital Editions \(https://www.myneworleans.com/digital-edition-archives/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/digital-edition-archives/)

## **Connect**

[Social Media \(https://www.myneworleans.com/follow-us-on-social-media/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/follow-us-on-social-media/)

[Newsletter \(https://list.robly.com/subscribe?a=8c5fc8b0b96d1d8cf57dbb9541bd649d\)](https://list.robly.com/subscribe?a=8c5fc8b0b96d1d8cf57dbb9541bd649d)

© 2019 My New Orleans.

[Privacy Policy \(/about-us/privacy-policy/\)](/about-us/privacy-policy/) | [Terms of Use \(/about-us/terms-of-use/\)](/about-us/terms-of-use/)

[\(http://www.gtxcel.com/\)](http://www.gtxcel.com/)