

MOVING WORKS OF ART



In his most recent portrait assignment, Litchliter attempts to capture the joyful and talented essence of Pete Fountain.

Artist exudes all of what he takes in

Flowing strokes of beautiful and sometimes unexpected colors grace the canvases of **Matt Litchliter's** most recent New Orleans' jazz musician series. He seems to absorb the environment of his surroundings and then share his ensuing insights of the liveliness, talent, culture and movement of the city and its people in his paintings.

Not only does he capture the expressions of his subjects, but he also captures the intensity and movements of the musicians via scattered and repeated lines and shapes. This technique produces animated characters that are realistic and captivating. This is an especially unique energy of his works. Rather than create a frozen scene in time, his works continue beyond the frame of the canvas and into the viewer's senses.



ART EAST

Kathleen DesHotel

"I want to show the feeling one would get walking down the streets communing with the ghosts, listening to the music. I want to capture the vibrant music with paint as it moves through the skin of the performer and onto the instrument and into the surrounding air," he poetically explains.

He has had what he de-

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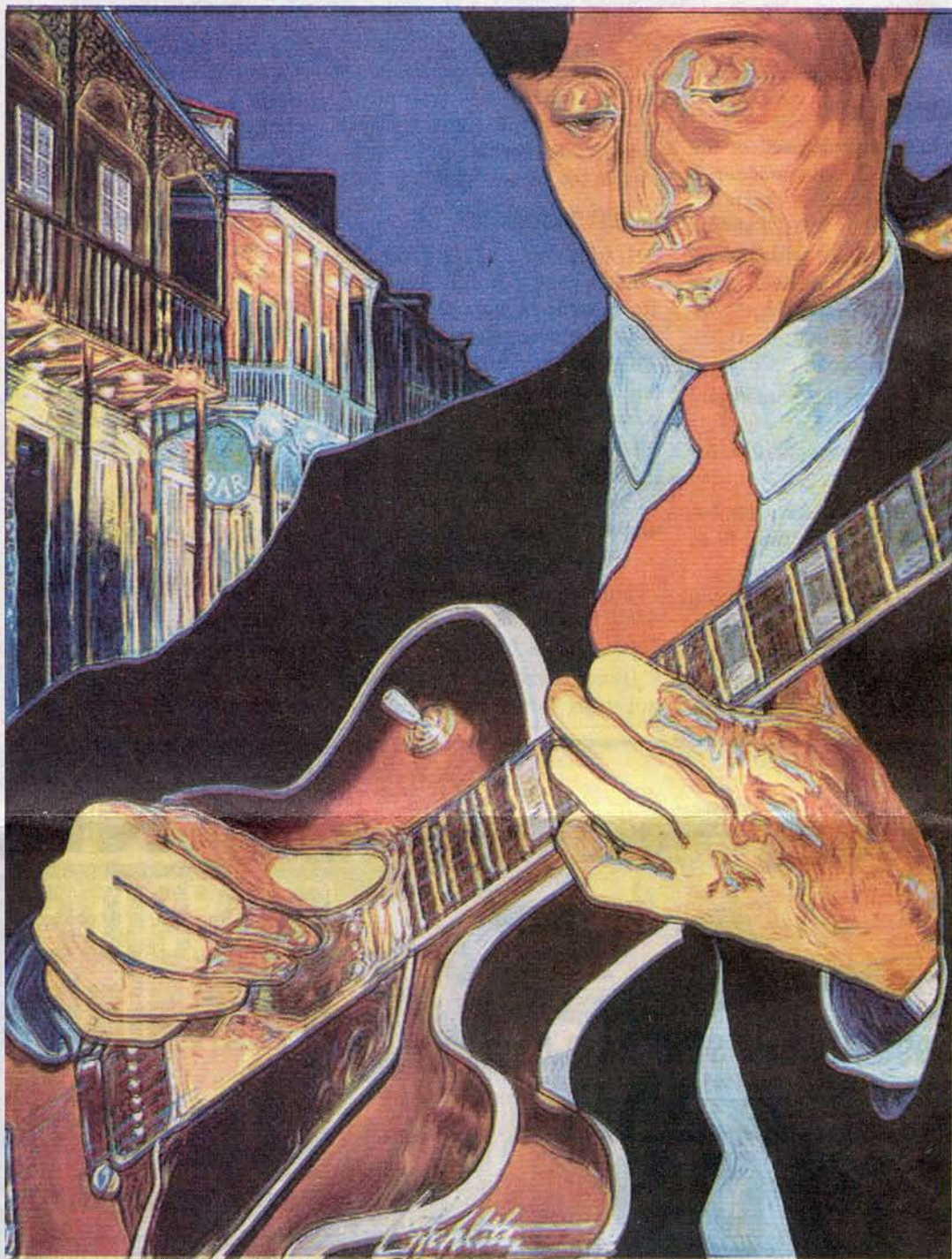


PHOTO BY KATHLEEN DESHOTEL

'Guitar Player' places musical talent in the streets of the French Quarter.

Artist's teachers have been inspiration to him

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scribes as "an artistic challenge" ever since he was 5, in preschool, where he lived for an opportunity to use crayons and paints. He recalls that the daycare teachers made a special art award for him, a recognition that reinforced his desire to create art.

"I have been fortunate in that the people I have met have all encouraged or influenced me," he said.

When he was 11, he took art classes from **Diane St. Germain**. He credits her with teaching him technique and how to gain an understanding of what he is portraying with his art.

St. Germain, Louisiana Watercolor Society member, said, "Matt is and always was a fine and very talented person."

Litchlitter said the best teachers allow students to do what they do and let them flourish. In high school, his art teacher at Pope John Paul II Catholic High School, **Tom Sheehan**, took him aside and told him that he recognized his special gift and encouraged independent projects from freshman to junior year.

Sheehan then recommended his student for Talented Art, and Litchlitter attended art classes with art teacher **Christine Bandera** during his senior year at Northshore High. "Mrs. Bandera was an outstanding artist herself, and

seeing her art inspired me to offer my best work in school," he said.

Bnadera and Litchlitter are mutually complimentary of each other. After all these years, she remembers his work as always being imaginative and outstanding. Specifically, she recalls his Gumbo Ya Ya project in which students worked with a piece of furniture to express a personal interest. "For Matt, the interest was movies. He just loved them and decided to create a chair dedicated to this. It was covered with scenes from 'Jaws' and 'Titanic' and had a snake from 'Anaconda' wrapped around the chair leg," she said.

He carried this imagination with him to college where he ultimately met Southeastern Louisiana University Professor **Gail Hood**. "Her influence and teachings made me get really serious about my art," he said.

At the same time, he understood advice that his father, **Fred**, had always given his only child, "Life is just better when you are doing what you love. Make sure you truly love what you do."

To appease his father, Litchlitter added graphic design studies to his fine art pursuits for the sake of future employment potential.

It turned out to be good advice.

Litchlitter graduated from Southeastern in May 2005 with



Matt Litchlitter currently has work from his jazz musician series showing at Teri Galleries in Metairie.

career aspirations that Katrina put on hold. He ended up juggling several jobs to make a living. Those jobs included carpet cleaning for two years while teaching homeschooled students and creating advertising designs for Chiliwear.

His classes in print design, logo and typography did come in handy, though. After the design is sold, an artist gives up all rights to it. Some of those that he sold for from \$50 to \$300 still are in use, but he can no longer claim them as his. Yet, the money earned paid bills at the time.

Today, he works for ASI Modules, an architectural signage company, where he designs signs that represent how companies express their brands.

"The job allows me to think creatively for myself and for a client," he said.

Through a series of fortuitous events in trying to create a Web site for his art, he met **Bondilyn Jolly** of Slidell, owner of New Millennium Designs. She admired his work so much that she introduced him to **Sandy Kasten**, the owner of Teri Art Galleries in Metairie.



The banjo player shows an intricate style of movement from instrument to hand to sound in the air.

"I saw his work, and it clicked," Kasten said.

She immediately invited him to show some of his New Orleans jazz musician pieces in her gallery. Through that acquaintance, two of his pieces already have sold.

"I guess my Catholic upbringing has taught me two things, and that is to be humble and to believe that the hand of God guides us," he said of his progress.

To top it all off, Kasten asked Litchlitter to paint a photo of her friend, **Pete Fountain**.

Litchlitter described the oppor-

tunity as an honor. He has been studying photographs of his subject for months to capture the essence of Fountain. "I think I have the plan for it now. I hope to capture his joy, his talent and his roots," he said.

Litchlitter feels that he is fortunate to be in this place at this time in his life. Nonetheless, he describes himself as a worrier. "It is my support group that keeps me balanced," he said.

His mother, **Grace**, encourages him to allow himself to enjoy each success rather than constantly worrying about the next step.

He recently announced his engagement to **Rachel Solice** who he said is the perfect partner because she "gets me," understanding that without art, his life would be meaningless.

Future plans beyond his marriage include working with different textural mediums, owning a home with his own studio, someday being lucky enough to design a Jazz Fest poster, and ultimately having people see his work and immediately describe it as a "Litchlitter."

Obviously, he's on his way.

Litchlitter's works can be seen at <http://www.terigalleries.com>. For information, contact Teri Galleries by calling 504.887.8588 or via e-mail at info@terigalleries.com.

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