

Squirrel Nut Zippers Biography

Sparked by the flames of 1920s jazz, klezmer, and vaudeville, the Squirrel Nut Zippers blazed onto the music scene in the mid-1990s at a time when big band music was having a resurgence and the doors were wide open for curious leader Jimbo Mathus and his caustic crew of rollicking, ragtime musicians.

Formed in 1993 by Mathus (vocals, guitar, trombone) in 1993 in the Chapel Hill area of North Carolina with former vocalist and banjo player Katherine Whalen, the eclectic group of diverse local artists quickly gelled and wove together a tapestry of sounds comprising elements of early jazz, blues and southern roots, that are still evident today. The Zippers quickly made their live debut in Chapel Hill and thanks to their truly unique and original music and energetic, almost carnival-like stage performances, they developed a large fan base throughout the South within just a few months.

This momentum continued to gain speed and between 1995 and 2005, the Squirrel Nut Zippers sold more than three million albums. Their watershed album, *Hot* (Certified Platinum, 1996), was recorded in the heat of New Orleans, fueled by a smoldering mix of booze and a youthful hunger to unlock the secrets of old-world jazz. *Perennial Favorites* (1998) followed *Hot*'s success, peaking at #18 on the Billboard Top 200 and was certified Gold the month after its release, as well as their iconic holiday record *Christmas Caravan*, which was released that same year and debuted at #12 on the Billboard Holiday Albums Chart.

The band's next chart-topping album would come a decade later, after the group took a hiatus and changed its lineup with Mathus serving as the only original member. *Beasts Of Burgundy* (2018) debuted at #4 on the Billboard Jazz Albums Chart proving that the Zippers were back and that with Mathus at the helm, that the band was continuing to explore its own musical universe, evolving all the while.

Today, the Zippers continue to tour, performing over three decades of their music to sold out audiences across the country. In addition to their career-retrospective shows, they also perform their wildly popular "Christmas Caravan Tour," featuring the best of Christmas past, including songs from their *Christmas Caravan* and *Mardi Gras for Christmas* albums, and the "Jazz From The Back 'O Town" show, which offers a glimpse into the songs that inspired the band from the birthplace of jazz – otherwise known as New Orleans' "Back 'O Town."

For more than 30 years, the Squirrel Nut Zippers have proven that their truly unique and original sound has not only stood the test of time but also that no other artist of this generation has embraced and synthesized such eclectic influences in such a seamless, authentic manner.