Southern University’s “Marching Band from Jaguar Land!” Simply mention their names and fans are highly captivated, flocking to catch a hopeful glimpse of one of the most electrifying performances in the world.

Seven directors have been bestowed the honor of creating the legacy that is the Southern University Marching Band. Ella Amacker Patty formed the first ensemble. J.O.B. Mosley created the first marching ensemble. T. Leroy Davis was responsible for the pageantry drill concept. Ludwig Freeman introduced the block letter concept and patterns in motion to the band; he also is credited for designing the uniforms still worn today.

The man who was credited with starting the Southern University Marching Band was T. Leroy Davis. His assistants were Milton Cooper, Assistant Band Director and Arranger and James A. Cato, Assistant Band Director and Choreographer. Davis served as the band director from 1947 to 1964. He organized the Southern University Band Festival and Band Day. He was nationally known for his achievements in the areas of bands as a scholar, adjudicator, clinician, arranger and conductor. In 1957 the band was just a group of students that he developed into an impressive band. The band was very proper and sedate. They marched traditional, which was the style at that time. He also had a very fine concert band which performed each semester along with the marching band.

In 1964 the Southern University Band, better known as “The Marching Counts of Sound” proved its superiority in many half-time performances during that school year. The Southern Belle Ballet Corps had begun its second season with the band. The lovely lasses coordinated dances to the arrangements played by the band. The 130-member band gained fame and success and won a place among the best bands of the land. Davis taught the majority of African-American band directors in Louisiana. Davis retired from Southern in May 1987 and was awarded the title of Professor Emeritus in May 1989 in recognition of forty years of service to Southern. On October 25, 1992 Davis passed away at the age of 76.

The Southern University Marching Band, after the retirement of Leroy Davis hired Ludwig Freeman as its new director and James Alvin Cato as the assistant director in 1965 to 1969. The Southern University Band proved itself to be the best in the land during its “superior” performances through-out the year. Freeman, proved his capable leadership by making the band live up to the quotation “Not as good as, but better than.” During the course of the season the “Marching 132” was given the opportunity to show its skills against numerous other bands. Perfection comes from long hours of practice and rugged drills, along with determination to do a good job with every performance according to Freeman. This has helped the marching performers of Southern University to be crowned, “The King of Bands.” In 1966 the Southern University renowned “Marching 150” Band reached the peak of perfection. With 60 new freshmen, 90 upperclassmen, and two new assistant directors, Paul Irvins Adams and Alvin Batiste the band came to a point not easily distinguished from that of total perfection.
The highlight of the 1966 year was the appearance of Lionel Hampton, renowned jazz band leader, who with the accompaniment of the band performed four of his greatest tunes. Dr. Ludwig F. Freeman, who retired in 1969, passed away on Sunday, September 15, 2013, at the age of 80.

The Southern University marching band, became a 170-piece ensemble of greatness-unique in impact, precise in execution and enormous repetitious success it can only be described with words such as “astounding and majestic.” Dr. Isaac B. Greggs, who became director of the band in 1969 is the guiding force for a compilation of strong, dedicated and talented young group of musicians, and the scientist behind which a superlative legacy was created. The name; Human Jukebox was applied to the band because they could play the current “top 40’s.” Its symbols, the Columbia blue and gold uniforms with a cape, the gold and white caps, the white gloves, the white spats and the 360 steps per minute cadence work together to produce energy charged atmosphere that attracts admiration from its many fans.

Dr. Isaac B. Greggs, who became director of the band in 1969, is the guiding force for a compilation of strong, dedicated and talented young group of musicians, and the scientist behind which a superlative legacy was created. The name; Human Jukebox was applied to the band because they could play the current “top 40’s.” Its symbols, the Columbia blue and gold uniforms with a cape, the gold and white caps, the white gloves, the white spats and the 360 steps per minute cadence work together to produce energy charged atmosphere that attracts admiration from its many fans.

A 1948 Southern University graduate, and director of the band Dr. Isaac B. Greggs, moved crowds with a well-planned mixture of old school and soul and a current hip-hop flavor. Greggs, as director, and a sheer genius, had laid a foundation which had made Southern University’s marching machine one of the most sought after bands in the world. Isaac Greggs introduced the Precision Drill Concept, flash and world-wide recognition to the band, including the uniforms’ capes and Columbia Blue overlay. Greggs was an accomplished trumpet player and has traveled the world conducting performances in Japan, England, Russia, Mexico, France, and Italy and throughout South America. He has shared billings with such notables as Bob Hope, Jackie Gleason, Lionel Hampton, Al Hirt, Doc Serverenson and Glen Campbell. Joining Greggs on this world famous staff were associate director, Lawrence Jackson; and assistant director, Carnell Knighten. Carnell Knighten, 60, passed away on Wednesday, January 25, 2012. He was a 1969 graduate of Southern University Laboratory School and a graduate of Southern University, receiving his undergraduate degree in music education and a master’s degree in mass communications. He was a longtime assistant band director and instructor of music at Southern University, and a marching band arranger at South Carolina State University.

In 1975 the band performed for the first time in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome (formerly the Louisiana Superdome) in New Orleans, Louisiana against arch rival Grambling State University at the annual Bayou Classic.

Six Super Bowls, four Sugar Bowls, presidential inaugural performances in 1981, 1985 and 1997, The Rose Bowl Parade, The Special Olympics, a highly lauded Radio City Music Hall of New York City performance in 1972 and requests to perform on foreign soil (Mexico and Costa Rica), most recently for the New Orleans Saints of the National Football League (NFL), proves beyond comparison that the Human Jukebox is “often imitated but never duplicated.” Included in the six Super Bowls was the 2003 season performance on the MTV for the “Rock N Jock” Super Bowl Party.

In the summer of 1972 the Marching Band joined the famed Rocketts and the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra for the entire six weeks run of “Black Tie”. Black Tie, a musical revue produced, directed and choreographed by Peter Gennaro, the internationally acclaimed New Orleans born dancer.
In the summer of 2000 the Southern University Marching band was featured in the Bermuda Day parade and also performed a live concert for the citizens of Bermuda.

In 2002, the band out performed more than 20 college bands to win Motown Record's marching band competition for black college bands. Southern took home the top prize of $10,000 cash.

On June 18, 2003 Dr. Greggs was acknowledged on a grand scale as being the first living person to have a state (Louisiana) building named in his honor. The building on Southern’s campus was formerly known as The Music Building, has now been renamed the Isaac Greggs Band Hall.

In 2004, the Southern University Marching Band was the only band in the country ever featured on ABC’s Nightline.

At the 32nd Annual Bayou Classic (2005) game was the last for Dr. Isaac Greggs. His 36 years as director of the Southern University Marching Band came to an end when he retired on December 31, 2005. In 2013, Greggs was inducted into the Louisiana Black History Hall of Fame. Greggs, 85, passed away on Monday, April 28, 2014 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Lawrence Jackson, associate director, was appointed to take the band’s helm effective January 1, 2006. During his career, Jackson managed to accumulate over 30 years of experience in directing bands, serving as a director at Clinton High School, Clinton Middle School and Clinton Elementary School, then as an arranger and associate director of Southern’s band. Under Jackson the band expanded, performed before international audiences and was ranked by the NCAA as the No. 2 (and only HBCU) marching band in the nation. Joining Jackson as member of his staff was Nathan Haymer, assistant band director since 2006.

Listed below are some of the accomplishments of the Southern University Band under Lawrence Jackson’s tenure.

- In 2006 the Southern University Marching Band performs before some 70,000 fans on August 25, 2006, in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome for the New Orleans Saints’ first home game in the Mercedes Benz Superdome after the team was displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

- 2007 the band performed at the halftime of the National Basketball Association’s (NBA) Dallas Mavericks game.

- 2008 performed in California against the University of Southern California Trojan Marching Band; featured on the CBS Sports website with the Ohio State University Marching Band as the top two college marching bands in the nation.

- In 2008, the Human Jukebox was named "Best Dressed Band" in the nation by fashion magazine, followed by the marching bands at Ohio State University and the University of Michigan; The band took pride in its appearance and performance.

- 2009 – Featured on a sports website for performance captivated the audience at the Southern vs University of Louisiana at Lafayette game with its halftime tribute to Michael Jackson. The YouTube video received more than 250,000 views.
2010 – The Southern University Band Department expanded from the two concert units; this was the first for the bands program. They performed at halftime for the New Orleans Saints’ first National Football Conference (NFC) Championship game between New Orleans Saints and the Minnesota Vikings; performed at Honda Battle of the Bands, an invitational showcase of performances for black college marching bands, in the Atlanta’s Georgia Dome.

In 2010, the band performed for the NFC Championship Game between the New Orleans Saints and the Minnesota Vikings.

2011- The Southern University Drumline performed in the North African countries of Morocco and Algeria. The band also performed at the Washington, D.C., Mardi Gras Ball.

2012 – Pop music icon Madonna selected Southern University’s Dancing Dolls to perform with her during the Super Bowl halftime show; Madonna discovered the Dancing Dolls through a performance on YouTube; the band performed with Doug E. Fresh and Chaka Khan at the Atlanta Classic and performed with Trombone Shorty at the Bayou Classic.

2013 – The Southern University Marching Band performed at the Super Bowl pregame show, marking the eighth time the band or an auxiliary of the band, had its part of the Super Bowl; featured in the Jonas Brothers video, “Pom Poms.” The video began with SU drum major blowing his whistle as he would on any of the band’s halftime shows. The band closes out the video with one of its patented dance steps. Then Norman (drum major) performs the famous SU drum major back bend where he leans back until his head touches the ground. In addition, the band performed at the swearing-in ceremony for Bernette Johnson, the first black woman to serve as chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court. Bishop Joseph Walker, III, surprised officials with a $10,000 donation to the school’s world famous “Human Jukebox” Marching Band. Walker, a Southern alum and pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. Walker, a former member of SU’s marching band, said his time at Southern was among the best periods in his life. He said the money would be used for the band and scholarships for students.

After 38 years of band directing, eight of them as Southern’s director of bands, Lawrence Jackson, 60, officially retired on July 1, 2014. Jackson played tuba in the SU’s Human Jukebox when Isaac Greggs was in charge, while earning his bachelor’s degree in music education. Jackson not only was directing the high school band but teaching band in the elementary and middle school in Clinton, Louisiana. Greggs kept in touch during that time, hiring Jackson as a part-time music arranger in 1996 while Jackson continued his job in Clinton. Jackson retired from Clinton High School and was named assistant band director at Southern, stepping up to the top position upon Greggs’ retirement in 2005.

On June 6, 2014 Southern University’s Board of Supervisors named Nathan Haymer as the interim director of the Southern University Marching Band. Haymer recently received an endowed professorship in the Department of Visual and Performing Arts and is charged with conducting research and developing innovative strategies to secure grants and other funding. October 20, 2014 Haymer was officially named Director of Bands. Haymer, was the future of the Southern University Marching Band, taking the reins to lead the Human Jukebox into unchartered educational, performance and sponsorship territories, including an unprecedented corporate partnership with Yamaha.
Under the tutelage of the late, great Southern University Marching Band Director Isaac Greggs, Haymer thrived in the ensemble's brass section and excelled as a trombonist, an instrument he taught himself to play. He became Trombone Section Leader of the marching and symphonic bands. All of his efforts reached climax during his senior year when he was awarded the coveted Bandsman of the Year Award.

Haymer finished from Southern University with a Bachelor in Instrumental Music Education that secured the groundwork to become a helmsman of bands. He was immediately selected as the band director at Washington-Marion Magnet High School (WMHS) (Lake Charles, La.).

During his five-year tenure at WMHS, he developed a band program that has now become a comprehensive model for other prep directors to follow. Under his direction, the band received numerous accolades throughout Texas, Louisiana and Tennessee and garnered over $20,000 in prizes. He created WMHS's first concert band, which performed at the 2001-02 District Festival of the Louisiana Music Educators Association. The Concert Band, along with his esteemed Win Ensemble received many Superior and Excellent ratings throughout the 2001-05 academic years.

Haymer's leadership perspicacity grew while at WMHS, along with his goal to grow as an administrator. He later received a Master’s in Leadership for Higher Education from Capella University and earned his Plus 30 in Music Education from McNeese State University. It was then, in 2006, Haymer returned back to Southern as the Assistant Director of Bands. He was tasked as the chief arranger for the marching band, leader of band rehearsals; supervisor of the committee for the famed Dancing Dolls; director of the Jaguars basketball team’s pep band; instructor of the sight-reading and development courses, and conductor of the well-regarded symphonic band.

He also taught orchestration, band arranging, music technology and principles of teaching music in secondary schools. He is nearing completion of his doctorate, having only to present his dissertation.

Listed below are some of the accomplishments of the Southern University Marching Band under the direction of Nathan Haymer.

**2014 – Southern University Marching Band ranked No. 2 marching band in the nation** by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The band was the only Historically Black College Marching Band ranked; the band also became the first marching band to perform at the New Orleans’ Krewe of Zulu’s Ball.

**2014 –** The Southern University Marching Band assists in a marriage proposal during halftime of the annual Bayou Classic rivalry game between Southern and Grambling at the Louisiana Superdome, the Jaguars’ band took part in a very special moment involving former Southern fullback Calvin Mills. (November 29, 2015). The Human Jukebox spelled out the words “MARRY ME”. Calvin Mills, Southern alum proposed to his fiancée Brittany Ramsey during the half-time S.U. band performance in 2015.

**2014 –** Southern University’s Garrett Edgerson was listed among the top five watched YouTube Channels showcasing a marching band in a Huffington Post article, “Five Must-Visit Sites for HBCU Marching Band Fans.” Edgerson’s YouTube Channel, which predominantly features video highlights and performances of the Southern University ‘Human Jukebox’ Marching Band, was the most watched in SWAC Conference and beyond. Edgerson is the official videographer for the Human Jukebox.
**2014** – SU Dancing Doll, **Prentice Garrett** makes the NFL’s Saintsation dance team.

**2015** – Autistic brothers excel in Southern’s Human Jukebox. The fact that they are members of the "Human Jukebox," declared by many to be one of the best, if not the best, college marching band in the country is a testament to the brothers, the university and their mother. (January 22, 2015). The Southern University Marching Band Performed at the welterweight boxing match between Boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao in Las Vegas. (April 28, 2015). Southern University Human Jukebox App. (March 13, 2015).

**2015** – The HBCU Sports ranked the Southern University ‘Human Jukebox’ preseason as the #1 HBCU band.

**2016** – The Southern University “Human Jukebox”, performed in the McDonald’s Queen City Battle of the Bands in Charlotte, North Carolina, Charlotte’s Memorial Stadium (August 27, 2016).

**2018** – Beyonce’s performance at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, was an ode to Southern University. There was a particular sequence of moves that was executed by Beyonce. The dance sequence of one dancer followed by other dancers repeating the same sequence is called a **catch-on**, and the Dancing Dolls have been performing their own version at football games for years. At the Coachella Festival, Beyoncé seemed to have taken some inspiration from the Dancing Dolls’ moves. Breaking YouTube’s live streaming record with more than 450,000 live viewers, the entertainer took the dolls’ signature style to mainstream culture, which she has subtly done before.

**2018** – A frequent invited guest of the NFL New Orleans Saints, the Southern University Human Jukebox and Fabulous Dancing Dolls will perform during halftime as the Saints face the Atlanta Falcons on Thanksgiving Day, November 22, 2018.

One historic moment for the band hit very close to home. It was when the New Orleans Saints returned to the Louisiana Superdome on Aug. 25, 2006 to play their first home game since Hurricane Katrina destroyed the dome. The Human Jukebox ushered in the rebirth of the Saints, as it entertained more than 75,000 attending fans and millions of viewers during a very emotional halftime.