



# blues brethren

**A**lthough their styles vary, what unmistakably connects the stellar musicians who appeared at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival this year is their ability to make an audience feel the power of music. Some highlights: Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown's country-tinged blues, Allen Toussaint's and the Reverend Al Green's gospel-inflected soul, Clarence Fountain and the Blind Boys of Alabama's straight-up, traditional gospel, and the bluesy pop of Irma Thomas, the Soul Queen of New Orleans. Here they sing the praises of the people who have inspired them and the roads they've traveled.

**CLARENCE "GATEMOUTH" BROWN, left**  
 Count Basie was one man I'll never forget. It was in Orange, Texas. He was playing and I was standing at the back door, watching him, every time he was playing I was right there. So, one night he said, "Come here, boy." I went to him, he slid over on his piano seat and I sat next to him. That was the greatest thrill of my life. I was a really young person. I have loved him from that day to the day he died. Then, the year I won a Grammy, I was playing at the party afterward and it was like déjà vu. He walked in, and he looked at me, and came and sat down. It was just before he died, and I said, "Hello, Papa," and he said, "Well, I'll be darned, I'm gonna get off of this piano and whoop yo' ass." And I said, "Go ahead, I wouldn't even raise a finger."

Mr. Brown's black leather vest and jeans by Agnès B.; hat, shirt, belt and boots are his own.

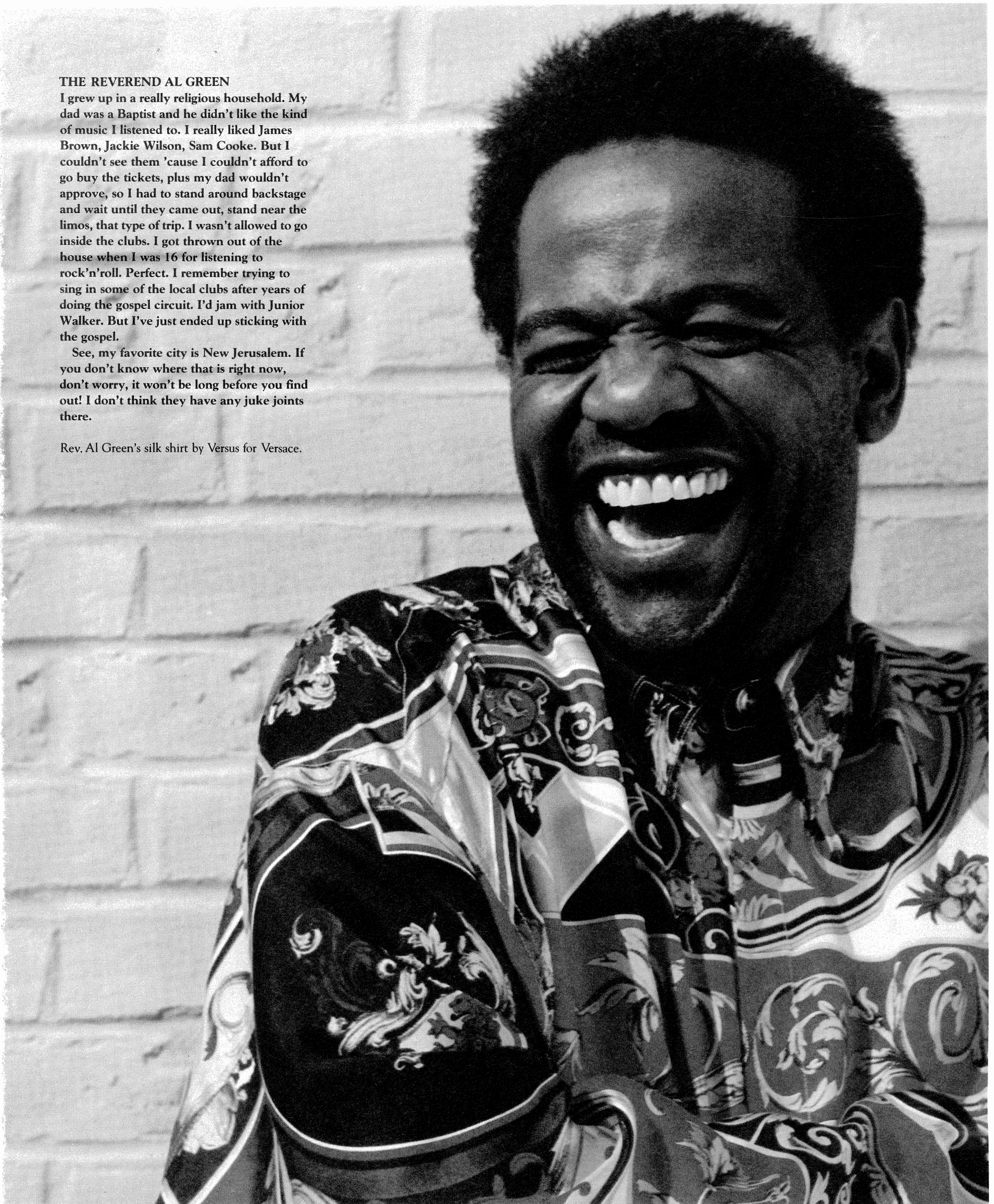
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LOREN HAYNES

**THE REVEREND AL GREEN**

I grew up in a really religious household. My dad was a Baptist and he didn't like the kind of music I listened to. I really liked James Brown, Jackie Wilson, Sam Cooke. But I couldn't see them 'cause I couldn't afford to go buy the tickets, plus my dad wouldn't approve, so I had to stand around backstage and wait until they came out, stand near the limos, that type of trip. I wasn't allowed to go inside the clubs. I got thrown out of the house when I was 16 for listening to rock'n'roll. Perfect. I remember trying to sing in some of the local clubs after years of doing the gospel circuit. I'd jam with Junior Walker. But I've just ended up sticking with the gospel.

See, my favorite city is New Jerusalem. If you don't know where that is right now, don't worry, it won't be long before you find out! I don't think they have any juke joints there.

Rev. Al Green's silk shirt by Versus for Versace.



**ALLEN TOUSSAINT, left**

In the early days, a few of us would jam at the Dew Drop Inn—a club here in New Orleans. Earl King, Irma Thomas, and myself . . . I'd write songs for them and we'd just sit down and play them, very spontaneous. I'd like to make that happen again, but we all went our separate ways. I remember Professor Longhair as the biggest influence on me. Watching and listening to him was such an experience because he was eccentric. He did everything the way he wanted and it wasn't about making money. I think pure genius comes along every once in a while. It's pure talent and you never know where you're going to find it. There could be genius in the gutter.

Mr. Toussaint wears his own clothes. Her rust-colored Lycra dress by Liza Bruce; necklace by Tutzi May for Fragments.

**IRMA THOMAS**

The one person I always wanted to meet, I never got a chance to—her name's Pearl Bailey. I like her, just her presence on the stage was very relaxed and warm. I get more excitement out of the reactions of my fans.

One event that really sticks in my mind was playing the Apollo Theatre. I had heard all these horror stories about what would happen when you went out onstage if they didn't like you. So, of course, I was quite nervous when I walked on, but they didn't throw anything at me, so I got up there and made it.

Once I did a concert and sang "Time Is on My Side," and this kid came up to me and said, "Oh, you're singing the Rolling Stones song." And I said, "I beg your pardon, I did it first." Because theirs made the Top Ten and mine didn't, so of course they equate them as being first, but it was the other way around.

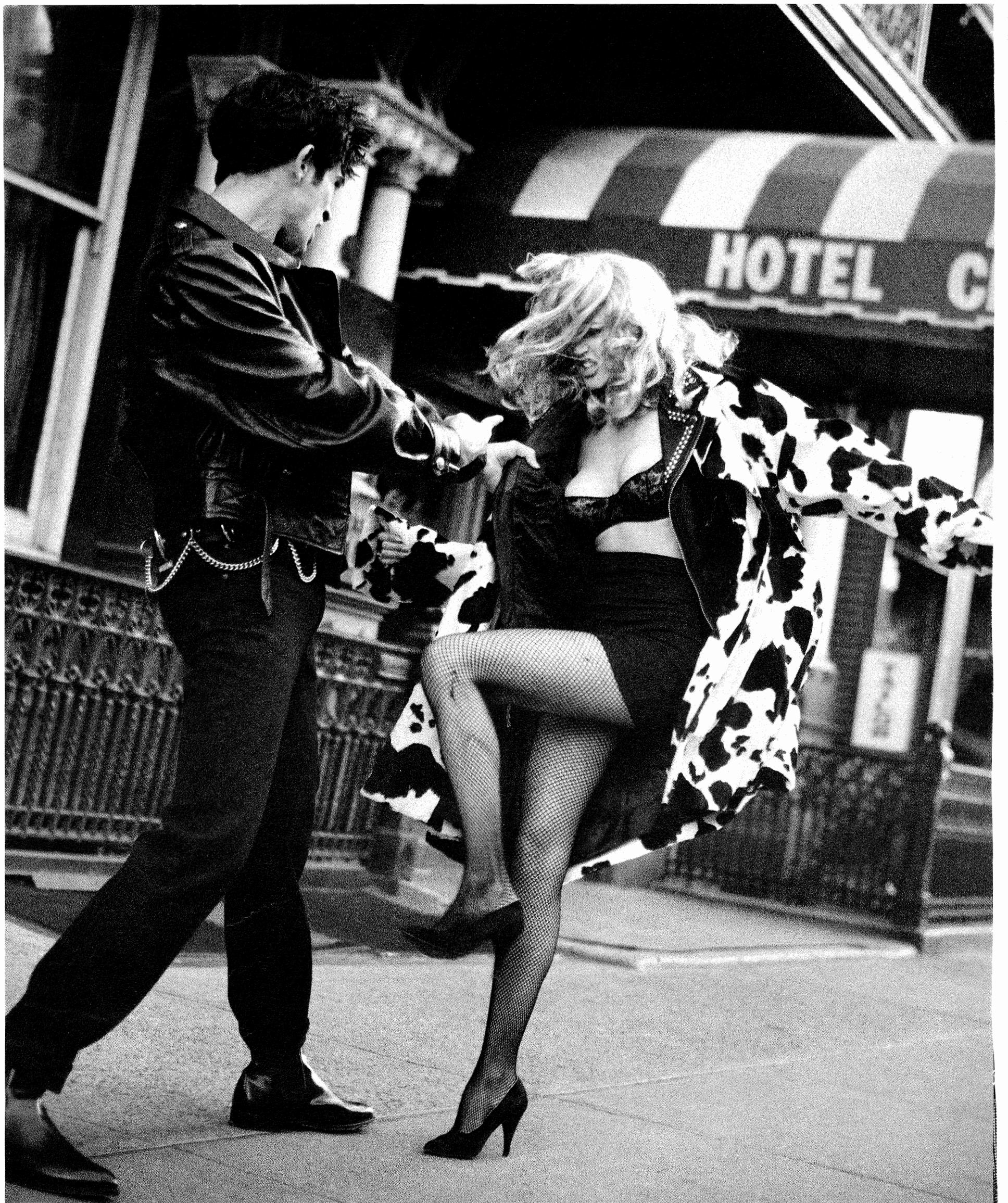
Ms. Thomas's gold-sequined jacket by Moschino Cheap Chic; earrings by Deanna Hamro for Fragments; leggings and shoes are her own. His two-tone shirt by Artichoke Design; black stretch jeans and belt by Versus for Versace; shoes by To Boot.

Text and interviews by  
Lauren Spencer

Fashion by David Burnett

Makeup by Robert Hudson for  
Salonsenoj. Hair by Blake Pablovich  
for Guy Keefer; Al Green's hair by  
Lawrence Moran for Salon JKL.





**FROM ONE-NIGHT STANDS TO PERMANENT VACATIONS, THE WALLS OF NEW YORK'S CHELSEA HOTEL HAVE WITNESSED SOME OF THE STRANGEST STORIES IN ROCK 'N' ROLL.**

## **Tales From the Rock Hotel**

The Chelsea Hotel, built in 1884, is more than just a landmark building (it was declared one in the 1970s): The hotel has shaped rock history. Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen played out their romantic end game within the Chelsea's walls; Janis Joplin, a regular client, partied heartily with the Grateful Dead there; Bob Dylan, domiciled at the Chelsea with wife and child, wrote "Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands" (an event commemorated in "Sara"); the more literal-minded Jefferson Airplane offered "The Third Week at the Chelsea." Even the hotel's hazy myths are larger than life: The Red Hot Chili Peppers are said to have skateboarded through her ample hallways, and reggae ruler Bob Marley, on a trip from Jamaica with wife Rita, surveyed the New York City skyline from the Chelsea's wrought-iron balconies.

In 1964 Andy Warhol checked in to make the *hommage à ennui* "Chelsea Girls," and the following decade saw Patti Smith—often seen there with then-boyfriend Sam Shepard—hosting the Robert Mapplethorpe nipple-piercing session immortalized in the underground flick *Robert Having His Nipple Pierced*. During Leonard Cohen's stay he popped in to Edie Sedgwick's room (to borrow clean towels, no doubt) and predicted disaster, noting that her candles were "arranged all wrong." And sure enough, her apartment caught fire two days later. Noted surrealist Alice Cooper caused a stir in the '70s, parading through the lobby during an FBI raid with his pet python, which escaped amid the commotion.

Stanley Bard, manager of the Chelsea since 1964, has seen all of this unfold. Bard describes the Chelsea as a sanctuary for artists, but deflates the heady tales of debauchery revealing that these artists' private lives were rather normal. Sid and Nancy were, he says, "as quiet and nice as any people you could imagine. During the day Sid was nothing like his onstage persona." Bard describes the couple's infamously messy affair as "a modern-day *Romeo and Juliet*, a love story. They were supposed to commit suicide together; he didn't, but she did."

Through the one-night stands and permanent vacations the Chelsea endures, continuing to foster an ambiance inviting to would-be rock'n'roll animals. "The vibes are unbelievable in this building," concludes Bard. "The heritage and history is just incredible; it's like no other place around."

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