

Billy Diamond - Bass Player

Presentation Handout

Basic Information

- **Name:** Billy Diamond (William Diamond)
- **Instrument:** Bass (Upright Bass)
- **Role:** Session Musician, Studio Bass Player
- **Primary Era:** Late 1940s-1950s
- **Location:** New Orleans, Louisiana
- **Primary Association:** Fats Domino and Cosimo Matassa's studio sessions

Career Overview

Billy Diamond was a foundational bass player and bandleader who played a crucial role in the development of New Orleans R&B and the birth of rock 'n' roll. As leader of his own band, the Solid Senders, Diamond discovered and mentored a young 19-year-old piano player named Antoine Domino, whom he nicknamed "Fats" and hired for his band. This partnership would prove instrumental in shaping the sound that would later influence popular music worldwide.

As a regular collaborator on the foundational New Orleans recordings of the late 1940s and 1950s, Diamond's bass lines helped create the rhythmic foundation that would influence popular music for decades to come. His work on what many consider the first rock 'n' roll recordings established musical patterns that session musicians and rock bands would reference for generations.

Complete Fats Domino Session Discography (1949-1955)

1949 Sessions

December 10, 1949 - The Historic First Session:

- **"Detroit City Blues"**
- **"The Fat Man"** - Often considered the first rock 'n' roll record
- **"Hide Away Blues"**
- **"She's My Baby"**

1950 Sessions

January 7, 1950:

- **"Brand New Baby"**
- **"Little Bee"**
- **"Boogie Woogie Baby"**
- **"Hey! La Bas Boogie"**

Early September 1950:

- **"Korea Blues"** - Topical song reflecting the Korean War
- **"Every Night About This Time"**
- **"Careless Love"** - Traditional song given Domino treatment
- **"Hey! Fat Man"** - Follow-up to the original hit

1951 Sessions

January 1951:

- **"Don't You Lie to Me"**
- **"My Baby's Gone"**
- **"Rockin' Chair"**
- **"Sometimes I Wonder"**

June 1951:

- **"Right From Wrong"**
- **"You Know I Miss You"**
- **"I'll Be Gone"**
- **"No, No Baby"**

November 1951 / January 1952:

- **"Reeling and Rocking"**
- **"Goin' Home"**
- **"The Fat Man's Hop"** (instrumental)
- **"How Long"**

1952 Sessions

April 26, 1952:

- **"Long Lonesome Journey"**
- **"Poor Poor Me"** - Later became a major hit
- **"Trust in Me"**
- **"Cheatin'"**

December 1952 / January 1953:

- **"Going to the River"**
- **"Love Her"**
- **"Second Line Jump"** (instrumental) - Reference to New Orleans parade tradition

1953 Sessions

March 1953:

- **"Goodbye"**
- **"Swanee River Hop"** (instrumental)

April 18, 1953:

- **"Rose Mary"** - One of Domino's signature tunes
- **"Please Don't Leave Me"**
- **"Domino Stomp"** (instrumental)

June 1, 1953:

- **"Fats Domino Blues"** (instrumental)
- **"Ain't It Good"**
- **"The Girl I Love"**

September 1953:

- **"Don't Leave Me This Way"**
- **"Something's Wrong"**
- **"My Heart Is in Your Hands"**

- **"Fats' Frenzy"** (instrumental)

September 19, 1953:

- **"Goin' Back Home"**
- **"You Left Me"**
- **"44"** - Reference to caliber of gun, blues tradition

October 27, 1953:

- **"Barrel House"** (instrumental) - Piano blues style
- **"Little School Girl"**
- **"If You Need Me"**

December 14, 1953:

- **"You Done Me Wrong"**
- **"Thinking of You"**

1954 Sessions

March 14, 1954:

- **"Baby Please"**
- **"Where Did You Stay"**
- **"You Can Pack Your Suitcase"**

July 10, 1954:

- **"I Lived My Life"**
- **"Little Mama"**
- **"I Know"**

1955 Sessions

March 27, 1955:

- **"Help Me"**
- **"All by Myself"**
- **"Ain't It a Shame"** - Major crossover hit

- "Oh Ba-a-by"

March 30, 1955:

- "La-La" - Another signature Domino tune
- "Blue Monday" - Later became a massive hit

May 1955:

- "Troubles of My Own"

Musical Style and Contributions

Rhythmic Foundation

- **Walking Bass Lines:** Diamond's bass work helped establish the walking bass pattern that became fundamental to rock 'n' roll
- **Steady Groove:** Provided the rock-solid foundation that allowed Fats Domino's piano and vocals to shine
- **New Orleans Bounce:** His bass lines captured the distinctive New Orleans rhythmic feel

Technical Characteristics

- **Upright Bass Mastery:** Expert on the acoustic bass, the primary bass instrument of the era
- **Rhythmic Precision:** Known for keeping perfect time during lengthy studio sessions
- **Harmonic Support:** Provided strong harmonic foundation while maintaining rhythmic drive

Historical Significance

Rock 'n' Roll Genesis and Band Leadership

- **The Solid Senders:** Diamond led his own band, the Solid Senders, which became a crucial launching pad for New Orleans music talent
- **Discovering "Fats":** He hired 19-year-old Antoine Domino for his band and gave him the nickname "Fats," launching one of the most important careers in popular music
- **"The Fat Man" (1949):** Diamond's bass line on this recording helped create the template for rock 'n' roll rhythm sections
- **Rhythmic Innovation:** His work helped transition popular music from swing-era rhythms to the new rock beat
- **Commercial Success:** The records featuring his bass work achieved significant commercial success and cultural impact

New Orleans Sound

- **Studio Musician:** Regular collaborator at Cosimo Matassa's J&M Studio on foundational New Orleans recordings
- **Local Scene:** Part of the tight-knit New Orleans session musician community
- **Cultural Ambassador:** Helped spread the New Orleans sound throughout America
- **Musical Mentor:** His role in developing Fats Domino's career demonstrates his influence beyond just bass playing

Session Work Legacy

- **Professional Reliability:** Known for his dependability and musical excellence
- **Recording Pioneer:** Participated in some of the earliest and most influential R&B/rock recordings
- **Unsung Hero:** Representative of the crucial but often uncredited session musicians who shaped popular music

Studio Environment

- **Primary Studio:** J&M Studio (Cosimo Matassa's studio) for session work
- **Producer:** Cosimo Matassa
- **Record Label:** Imperial Records
- **Musical Collaborators:** Worked alongside legendary musicians like Ernest McLean (guitar) and others
- **Band Leadership:** Led his own band, the Solid Senders, outside of session work

Beyond the Bass: Witness to History

Testimony for Justice - *Goodman v. Lee* (1996)

- **Witness for Truth:** Billy Diamond provided critical testimony in Shirley Goodman's landmark federal lawsuit to establish her co-authorship of "Let the Good Times Roll"
- **First-Hand Knowledge:** Having been present during recording sessions and the creative process, Diamond was able to verify Shirley's contributions to writing the song
- **Doing the Right Thing:** His testimony helped secure a \$670,899.39 judgment for Goodman and established important copyright precedent
- **Character Beyond Music:** Demonstrated integrity by testifying truthfully about what he witnessed, regardless of potential industry relationships

- **Historical Impact:** His testimony helped correct the historical record and ensure proper credit for artistic contributions

Legacy and Influence

Billy Diamond's bass work provided the rhythmic foundation for what many consider the first rock 'n' roll recordings. His contributions to Fats Domino's early catalog helped establish the musical DNA that would influence countless musicians. The bass lines he created became templates that session musicians and rock bands would reference for decades.

Though not a household name like some of the artists he backed, Diamond's musical contributions were essential to creating the New Orleans sound that influenced American popular music profoundly. His work represents the crucial but often overlooked role of session musicians in creating the soundtrack of American culture.

Key Talking Points for Presentation

1. **Rock 'n' Roll Pioneer:** Present at the creation with "The Fat Man" in 1949
2. **Bandleader and Mentor:** Led his own band, the Solid Senders, and discovered/mentored the young Antoine Domino, giving him the nickname "Fats"
3. **Rhythmic Foundation:** His bass work established patterns still used today
4. **Talent Developer:** Played crucial role in launching Fats Domino's legendary career
5. **Prolific Session Work:** Regular collaborator on foundational New Orleans recordings during the crucial formative years of rock 'n' roll
6. **New Orleans Sound:** Helped create and disseminate the distinctive New Orleans musical style
7. **Witness to Justice:** Provided critical testimony in Shirley Goodman's copyright lawsuit, helping establish important legal precedent and correct historical record
8. **Character and Integrity:** Demonstrated the importance of doing the right thing by testifying truthfully about artistic contributions
9. **Unsung Hero:** Represents the essential but often uncredited session musicians who shaped popular music
10. **Cultural Impact:** His work on these recordings helped change American popular culture forever