

Fats Domino, Rock 'N' Roll Pioneer, Has Died at Age 89

Domino, who sold more than 110 million records, was one of the first 10 honorees named to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

By Janet McConnaughey and Kevin McGill
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS— Fats Domino, the amiable rock 'n' roll pioneer whose steady, pounding piano and easy baritone helped change popular music while honoring the traditions of the Crescent City, has died. He was 89.

Mark Bone, chief investigator with the Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, coroner's office, said Domino died of natural causes early Tuesday.

In appearance, he was no matinee idol. He stood 5-feet-5 and weighed more than 200 pounds, with a wide, boyish smile and a haircut as flat as an album cover. But Domino sold more than 110 million records, with hits including "Blueberry Hill," "Ain't That a Shame" — originally titled "Ain't It A

Shame"— and other standards of rock 'n' roll.

He was one of the first 10 honorees named to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the Rolling Stone Record Guide likened him to Benjamin Franklin, the beloved old man of a revolutionary movement.

"We've lowered the flag and we're playing his music all day," said Greg Harris, CEO of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He said artifacts including original manuscripts of "Walking to New Orleans," "I'm Walkin'" and "Blueberry Hill" were on display.

"Fats is the godfather of rock and roll," Harris said.

"On behalf of the people of New Orleans, I am eternally grateful for his life and legacy," New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu said in a news release Wednesday morning." Fats Domino

added to New Orleans' standing in the world, and what people know and appreciate about New Orleans."

Domino's dynamic performance style and warm vocals drew crowds for five decades. One of his show-stopping stunts was playing the piano while standing, throwing his body against it with the beat of the music and bumping the grand piano across the stage.

His 1956 version of "Blueberry Hill" was selected for the Library of Congress' National Recording Registry of historic sound recordings worthy of preservation.

Domino became a global star but

stayed true to his hometown, where his fate was initially unknown after Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005. It turned out that he and his family were rescued by boat from his home, where

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Fats Domino at piano.

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