

*Every city has its share of minor superheroes and civic-minded troublemakers, operating out of earshot of the mundane...*

# Hungry March Band



The Hungry March Band blows through the city on the shoulders of Chaos, careening among ecstatic melodies and torrential rhythms, leaving a unique residue of delight in its wake. A spitfire band of both Main Street and the side street, the HMB is likely to show up at any number of places: community demonstrations, dog parades, fancy weddings, jazz funerals, famous New York City clubs, Mardi Gras in New Orleans, Mediterranean islands, and the luckiest subway cars on the planet.

The band was born in 1997 on the Brooklyn waterfront, just in time for the Coney Island Mermaid Day Parade, and is now a booming ensemble of saxes, trombones, trumpets, sousaphones, and a full percussion section. They are often joined by the Pleasure Society, a troupe of baton twirlers, hula hoopers, and dancers, who blur the boundary between band and audience.

Vigorously digesting music from wherever brass bands are heard — the Balkans, India, New Orleans, Latin America — and combining it with a knowledge of big band, free jazz, and punk rock, the Hungry March Band blares forth with one of the most original musical voices in NYC.

*“This feisty bunch gets down with some monster grooves, New Orleans-like funeral & marching music, foot-stomping cartoon-like hilarity, post-klez and other ethnic music mayhem. A complete blast.”*

—Bruce Gallanter, Downtown Music Gallery, NYC,  
on “Critical Brass,” the band’s most recent CD

[www.hungrymarchband.com](http://www.hungrymarchband.com)

contact: Theresa Westerdahl, 917-676-8813

[taraball@earthlink.net](mailto:taraball@earthlink.net)



*A fine-tuned combination of careful planning and openness to serendipity has always guided the HMB in the direction of the Marvellous, like a second-line parade sponsored by the Surrealists. A history of the band can be read in the tours and recordings produced along the way...*

**Tours and Recordings**

# Hungry March Band



Official Bootleg (2000)

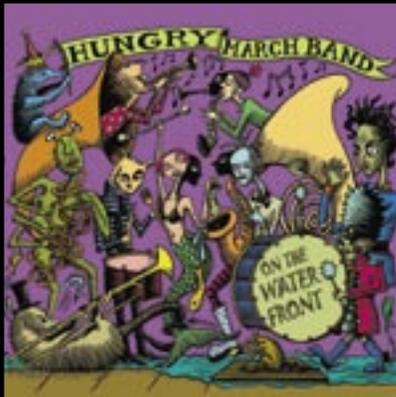
HMB's first recording, "Official Bootleg" (2000), sets all the early elements in place — the band's noisy fascination with improvisation, a love of field recordings, a curiosity about the music of other cultures, and a desire to expose itself in public. These elements come through most clearly in a field recording of an East Village funeral parade for a prominent noise musician, one of many tracks on the album experimenting with what it is to be a brass band in NYC.

The next spring, a Saturday-evening parade to CBGBs caught the ear of a neighborhood saxophonist, who would soon join the band and later oversee production of the band's second CD in the fall of 2001. "On the Waterfront" captures the band stretching into world-brass territory while stretching out its own musicality. Original tunes with Latin, funk, and circus flavors are interspersed with the band's renditions of the global brass band repertoire — Goran Bregovic and Fanfare Ciocaria tunes, traditional pieces from New Orleans jazz funerals, Indian wedding music, and Italian revolutionary anthems.

Perhaps the most fortunate accident in the band's history came in 2002, when an HMB trombonist stumbled upon a demonstration in Rome where a local brass band was playing "Bella Ciao." He joined them, made fast friends, and eventually brought the HMB to a convergence of renegade brass bands in Rome. The subsequent tour through Italy, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, and France exposed the band to obscure networks of similar brass bands who inspired the HMB to forge such networks back home.

Hungry March Band's latest recording, "Critical Brass" (2004), was made in the wake of the tour. This album explodes with a controlled chaos of influences, from the Bollywood backlot to the Balkan hinterland, the heavy metal thunder of Black Sabbath to the expansive cosmos of the Sun Ra Arkestra, served with HMB originals that resound with the collective experience of New York City. "Critical Brass" is also a long technical leap in production. Recorded at Loho Studios in Manhattan and produced by Jason Candler, it is perhaps the only example of recorded music where Duke Ellington and Ozzy Osbourne make any sense together.

In 2005, HMB travelled to New Orleans to play in several Mardi Gras parades, stepping with the Krewes of Excalibur, Tucks, Thoth, D'Etat, and Poix. In the Spring they played themselves in a film by director John Cameron Mitchell, then mounted a second European tour in June and July, spending six weeks of self-organized mayhem in the south of France, Sardinia and mainland Italy. 2006 will see the band musically produce a show at PS 122 and assemble a giant April Fools Day event, but as usual they can really only guess what's coming next!



On the Waterfront (2002)



Critical Brass (2004)

**[www.HungryMarchBand.com](http://www.HungryMarchBand.com)**

There are a million and one places you might hear the

**Kinds of Gigs**

# **Hungry March Band**



**CONEY ISLAND:** Many shows, including serenading the Polar Bears on their annual New Year's Day swim; the Mermaid Day Parade, where they've won "Best Musical Group" many years in a row; Opening Day at Astroland, where they play for the inaugural ride of the Cyclone roller coaster; the Siren Festival, the Circus Days festival... Coney Island is the most natural place in the world to hear the Hungry March Band.



**LINCOLN CENTER:** In 2002, composer Neely Bruce invited the HMB to play in his Charles Ives-inspired piece "Convergence," in which six marching bands, a dozen choruses, a West African drumming ensemble, a Javanese gamelan, West Indian steel drums, bagpipers, and a fife and drum corp played, most often simultaneously, around Lincoln Center's plaza and environs.



**PARADES:** Many years in the Greenwich Village Halloween Parade and East Village "Rites of Spring" community-gardens Parade, four major Mardi Gras parades (and one unofficial party-crashing parade) in New Orleans, the annual Dog Parade benefitting a Brooklyn animal shelter, an Asparagus Parade and a Trout Parade, the inclusive St. Patrick's Day parade, and bunches of spontaneous rambles, walks, and strolls.



**WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS:** Weddings in high-society places like the Metropolitan Club and the Puck Building, as well as aboard the Frying Pan research vessel in the Hudson, at Socrates Sculpture Park on the East River, and along the Gowanus Canal (where the bride and groom were actually welded together during the ceremony); a traditional Jazz funeral uptown for a man who'd introduced New Orleans brass-band music to his son at a young age; a funeral march and wake for a neighborhood bookstore dog in Brooklyn, and another for a well-known Lower East Side noise musician with parade to Tompkins Square.



**REGULAR (BUT NOTABLE) NYC CLUBS:** The Knitting Factory, CBGBs and CB's 313 Gallery, Galapagos (residency), Bowery Poetry Club (residency), the Continental, Joe's Pub, Zebulon.



**PUBLICIZED COMMUNITY EVENTS:** Demonstrations against Williamsburg rezoning, power plant construction, and garbage disposal; Earth Day celebration in Central Park; monthly Critical Mass bike rides and afterparties; Opening Day for the East Harlem Little League; a Paris Review reading at the New York Public Library; the NYC Marathon, where we play for hours on a street corner in Brooklyn.

**UNDERGROUND COMMUNITY EVENTS:** "Spontaneous" parties on various subway lines and the Staten Island Ferry; the First Warm Night party throughout Red Hook; a soccer match on Ludlow Street involving a flaming ball; lots of warehouse loft parties and fundraisers.

**GREAT CONTRADICTIONS:** Playing the massive opening of the 2003 Tribeca Film Festival, then two days later playing the much more modest Bicycle Film Festival in the East Village, with parade; playing an anti-consumerism demonstration with Reverend Billy, then the next day playing the opening of a mini-mall in Williamsburg; rallying French radicals in their mountain utopia, then playing a street music festival in Berlusconi's Alpen summer paradise.

**REMARKABLE WEEKENDS:** Driving to DC to play a NYC-themed Cardiologists' Convention, then returning to Brooklyn Heights to play a wedding on the Brooklyn Promenade, then leaving right away for a 24-hour party celebrating the spirit of Tom Waits at a farm in upstate New York; playing in the 2003 Halloween Parade, then running over to ABC No Rio in the Lower East Side for their Kids' Haunted House, and then running to Long Island City for a massive Halloween party.

**[www.HungryMarchBand.com](http://www.HungryMarchBand.com)**

# Hungry March Band

“...the irrepressibly entertaining Hungry March Band takes over the club.” — The New Yorker

**VOICEMAGAZINE** The Best of NYC [2004]  
**Best Anarchist Parade Group - HUNGRY MARCH BAND - Jason Gross**  
 Born from a group of non-musicians who wanted to participate in the Mermaid Parade (where they've marched into the ocean), the HUNGRY MARCH BAND now have a repertoire that includes bhangra, Latin, and Gypsy music. You'll find them not only at Lincoln Center and Lollapalooza, but also at a dog parade, a gay underwear party, a Harlem block party, and numerous benefits (gardens, food co-ops, art communities). Oh, and they're available for weddings!

“The Hungry March Band is a mix of quirkiness and tradition.”  
 —Andy Newman, *New York Times*

DECEMBER 29, 2004—JANUARY 4, 2005 VOICE CHOICES

**PICK HUNGRY MARCH BAND**  
 Galapagos, 70 N 8th St, Bklyn, 718.782.5188  
 For an anarchist brass band, they're a pretty lively bunch, going beyond John Philip Sousa to include their version of techno and bhangra into their heady brew. If you've missed them at their preferred locales (a parade or demonstration), here's a good occasion to see them in the confines of a club. At 10. \$6888

**The Hungry March Band** Brass Attacks Brooklyn! People Dance!

**Critical Brass**  
 Now available at [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com)  
 HMB Records

like Barbes and Zebulon] the H.M.B. borrows liberally from a whole gamut of traditions, including both the aforementioned New Orleans and Balkan styles, to more offbeat reinterpretations of Indian big band raga and the music of Charles Mingus and Sun Ra. After a recent European tour, on which the H.M.B. forged countless international alliances with other brass bands, all 12 or 13 (or how ever many there are) in the band, decided to take their spontaneous brilliance into the studio. [If the brass bands of the world ever unite as one force, a terrible beauty could be born: anarchy in the streets...]

Known mainly as a live-action phenomenon, the H.M.B.'s bustling, energetic sound translates remarkably well to record, from the get-up-and-shake-your-ass groove of 'Choli Ke Peeche' to the get-up-and-shake-your-ass groove of 'Bubamara' — ok, so those songs are back to back and have similarly infectious rhythms, but the H.M.B. are at their finest when they keep it up tempo. In fact, the best way to listen to this record is to invite over 30 of your closest friends, crack open your Eastern European liquor of choice [vodka will do, but Becherovka or Slivovice would be better] stage an elaborate inter-clan Balkan-style wedding, and dance for three consecutive days. And maybe if you pay for the booze, the Hungry March Band will come by in person...

*Jonny Diamond*

There is yet no word I know to describe the moment in music culture when a formerly dorky, specialized niche genre breaks through into the realm of avant geek chic: it happened for klezmer, it didn't happen for polka [sigh], and it's happening right now for big brass — particularly for Brooklyn institution, the Hungry March Band. Among other things, this sprawling collective has lined the streets during the NYC Marathon to cheer on the runners, led a New Orleans-style funeral parade for a beloved neighborhood pooch, played at the wake of the Q train, and provided the soundtrack for countless protests and political actions, including famed bicycle resistance movement Critical Mass [from which I assume the album takes its name]. In short, the H.M.B.'s hi-jinks are legendary.

Though often associated with the quirky resurgence of Balkan-style brass lies, there has been a resurgence, largely at Brooklyn venues

“Brooklyn phenomena the Hungry March Band... with the power of a Bourbon Street hurricane.”  
 —Dan Aquilante,  
*New York Post*

“Dirty Dozen Brass Band crossed with... the Sun Ra Arkestra.”  
 Laura Shin, *Time Out NY*

**CDHotList: New Releases for Libraries**  
 Exclusively from Baker & Taylor

Dancing out of Williamsburg, Brooklyn by way of everywhere else, comes what must be one of the funnest group of renegade band geeks around. The Hungry March Band has played everywhere from Lollapalooza to your nephew's bar mitzvah, all the while dazzling with showmanship and originality. What could be seen as a joke is really no laughing matter, music-wise. This ever-expanding ensemble is hot. With mixtures of swing, ska, African rhythms, Indian marching bands and Sun Ra, Ellington and Mingus thrown in for good measure, this CD aims high and hits the mark. Any academic library that collects band music could use this to show some of those horn majors that the future may contain mermaid costumes and CBGB's, but the repertoire is a lot more eclectic than they may have thought. All other libraries should buy this CD because it is just plain excellent. (DC)

“hippest marching band ever!”  
 —Public Radio Weekend