

CHESS WITH CHARLIE

"We call him 'Fourth Quarter Charlie,'" Ben Jaffe told me. "He always makes a comeback."

In January I learned this fact first-hand when I played a few games with Charlie Gabriel, the legendary New Orleans jazz musician who turns 91 this month.

Our meeting happened on "New Orleans time" — we started an hour and a half late at a recording studio owned by Jaffe and Preservation Hall. Jovial upon arrival, Charlie was all business once seated at the board, and he gave me all I could handle.

A fourth-generation musician and New Orleanian, Charlie came home to "the city that care forgot" after Hurricane Katrina, becoming a mainstay of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and releasing his first solo album, *89*, in 2022. (The title is a reference to his age when recording.)

Regular *Chess Life* readers will recognize Charlie from his September 2020 cover story, written by Michael Tisserand. "Chess is medicine," he told Tisserand. "It keeps you healthy. All the beautiful things I know that I achieved, chess had a part of it."

Playing chess with Charlie — [@chess_with_charlie](#) is also the name of Gabriel's Instagram account — was a bit of medicine for me as well. Thanks to James Cullen for the outstanding photos, and thanks to Charlie for the competition and conversation.

— John Hartmann



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