

BEACHES & BARS ISSUE

Where to Party, Wakeboard, Slurp Oysters, Slam Tequila & Swim Naked

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GROWING UP MANTLE
MICKEY'S SONS TELL THEIR STORY



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BEACHES**
(And Supermodel
Marisa Miller!)



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From Key West
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Jimmy Buffett

The Man Who Never
Left Paradise

Barbecue Buyer's Guide, Best Massages, New Road Bikes



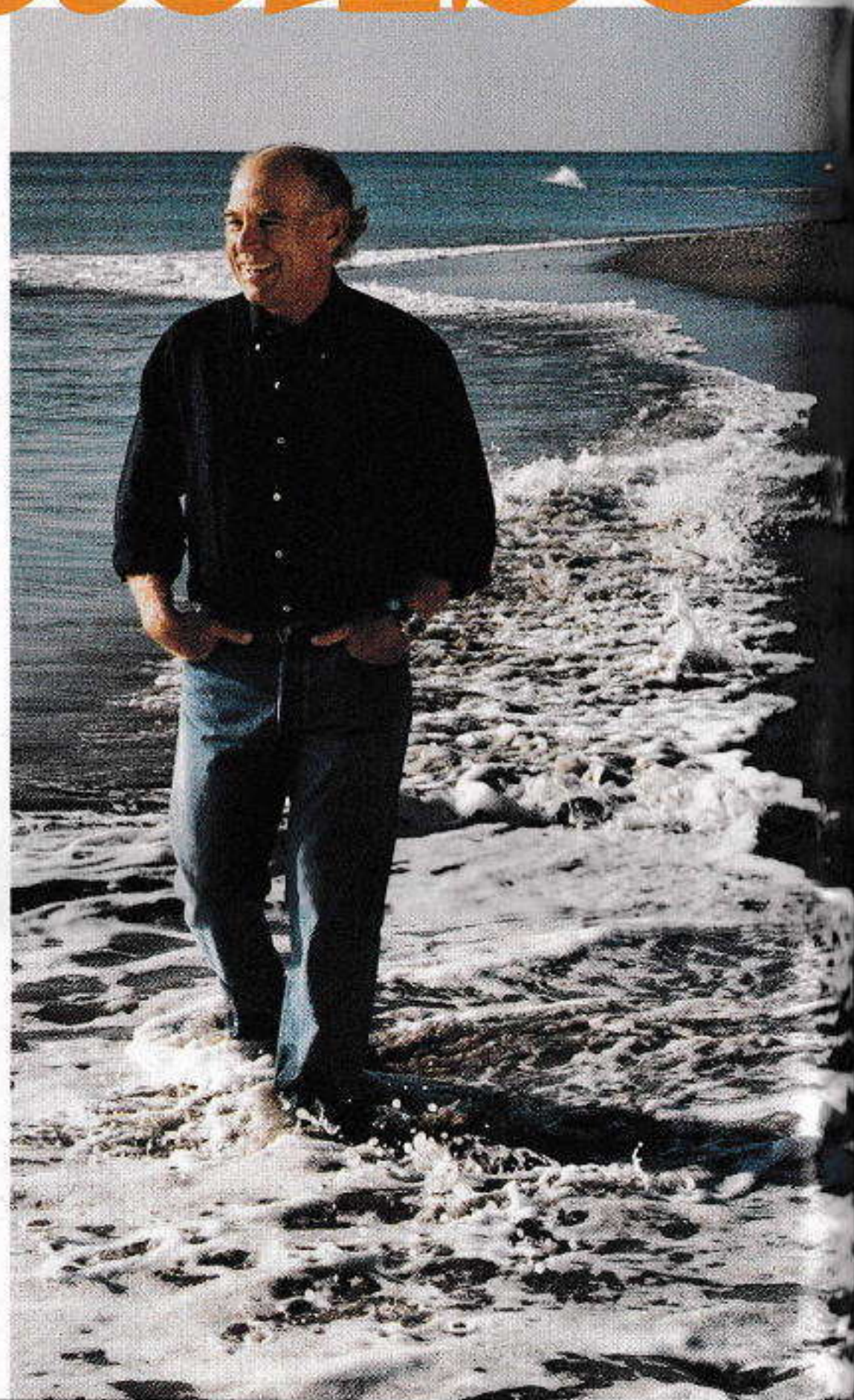
Life could be worse for Jimmy Buffett, patron saint of the beach and the world's foremost expert on drinks with umbrellas

BY JONATHAN MILES

The Man Who Never Left Paradise

WHEN LITERARY CRITIC HAROLD BLOOM WROTE that William Shakespeare “invented” humanity, he didn’t mean, of course, that humanity didn’t exist pre-Shakespeare; what he meant was that we humans didn’t know how to *think* about being human until Shakespeare came along. Ditto with Jimmy Buffett and beach bars. Sure, beach bars existed pre-Buffett; we hardly need the archaeological record to tell us that mankind discovered, early on, the sublime pleasures of an oceanfront beverage, to which some enterprising proto-capitalist added live music, shaded tables, and a primitive bar-tab system. But beach bars were just one component of the lazy, Coppertoned beach experience — in the way that gas stations are part of the driving experience — until Jimmy Buffett came along. What he did with his 33 breezy albums, his notoriously rummy live shows, and, most of all, with that song (you know the one) was to invent an entire philosophy — nay, a bona fide theology — that put the humble beach bar firmly at its center. Sunburned hedonism, romantic dissipation, expat utopianism, dimly remembered tattoos, blown-out flip-flops, Mexican cuties: Buffett blended all these and more

BEACH BUM: Buffett strolls along Palm Beach, Florida, April 2003.



into an idyllic vision of life that has become, for many, a holy dream.

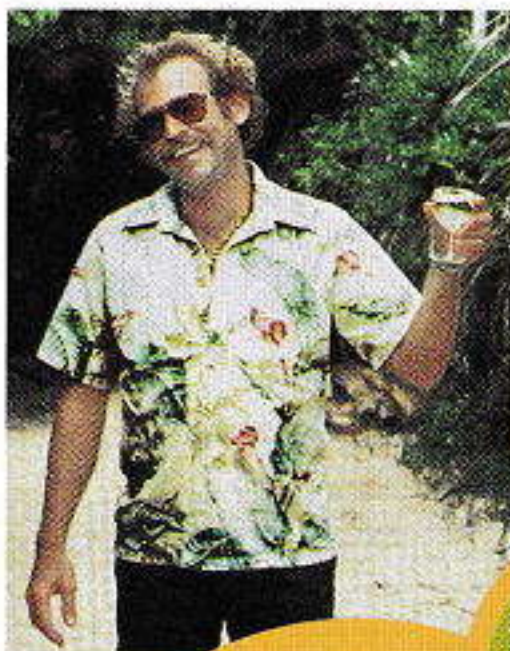
When I put some of this to Buffett recently — heralding him, memory serves, as the “patron saint of beaches and bars” — he laughed, an easy southerner’s laugh, and said that of all the things he’d been called over the years, “saint” was a new one on him. (“Commit a little mortal sin,” he once sang. “It’s good for the soul.”) But Buffett — who, at 56, with his beachcomber’s tan and elfin grin, seems more like a jovial flats guide than a seen-it-all rock ‘n’ roller — knows full well the holy dream. For more than three decades now, he’s been preaching its tenets in sold-out stadiums and arenas and, before that, in little waterfront dives, and living it all the while. “For me,” he says, “it all started down on the Gulf when I was a kid. There were always little shacks along the water that I’d go to with my parents; there’d be crab boils, and they’d always have beer. There was one on the Mobile Bay Causeway called the Blue Grill that sat next to the wreck of my grandfather’s old sailing ship. So I grew up with that casual, on-the-coast sense of what time was about, and I think you either possess that or you discover it — and when you discover it, you really like it.”

Yeah: Think late afternoons of saltwater fly-casting, drinks with umbrellas, women buttered with suntan lotion, a landscape of pillowy sand dunes and “the soft-pencil edge of sea and sky,” as the novelist Thomas McGuane, Buffett’s brother-in-law, once described it. This is Buffettland, or, more properly, Margaritaville, a semifictional stretch of sand ‘n’ surf that’s become embedded in the national imagination. “It’s in the tropics somewhere between the Port of Indecision and Southwest of Disorder,” according to Buffett’s liner notes to his recent greatest-hits album, *Meet Me in Margaritaville: The Ultimate Collection*, “but no parallels of latitude or longitude mark the spot exactly.”

Which ain’t a lot of help, obviously, if you’re trying to book plane tickets. Buffett in person is less circumspect, however, rattling off a list of his favorite beach bars — the Trade Winds in Saint Augustine, Florida; Domino College in Jamaica; the Compleat Angler in Bimini; the Admiral’s Inn in Antigua — with a tender nostalgia, the way a gourmand recalls prized suppers.

“The ideal beach bar?” he says. “It’s when you get to a place and it’s what you’ve always envisioned it to be. When I first went to Tahiti, I found this place called Bloody Marys. They were roasting lobsters on an open-pit fire, there was a sand floor, and they were all watching *South Pacific*. You’ve seen the whole thing in your head, you know: the beach bar, the palm trees, the hammock. It was there, it was definitely there. I wound up hanging out for a while, then hooked up with some fishermen — it was one of the great just-showing-up moments at a beach bar, when it turns out to be exactly what you’d hoped it would.”

Not that the genuine Margaritavilles are always so easy to find; in fact, says Buffett, they’re rarely found, unless you’re looking in the right places.



Beach Bar Classics

Waste away a few hours at a beach bar, says Buffett, and you’re bound to hear songs by three artists: Bob Marley, James Taylor, and Jimmy himself — a rum-soaked lot to which we’d add the following:

“Under the Boardwalk”

THE DRIFTERS

“The Tide Is High”

BLONDIE

“The Girl From Ipanema”

ANTONIO CARLOS JOBIM

“4th of July, Asbury Park”

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

“I Can See Clearly Now”

JOHNNY NASH

“Woolly Bully”

SAM THE SHAM AND THE PHARAOHS

“Brandy (You’re a Fine Girl)”

LOOKING GLASS

“In the Summertime”

MUNGO JERRY

“Rockaway Beach”

THE RAMONES

“Good Vibrations”

THE BEACH BOYS

“The funky local joints are off the beaten path,” he says. “You’re not going to find them if you’re just jetting to places and checking in. If you’re a traveler, you’re going to find them, but if you’re a tourist, you probably won’t. Look into the cruising guides, like the *Bahamas & Caribbean Pilot’s Guide* — the people who put those together have a good sense of what makes a good spot. Exotic spas on distant islands where you can get croissants and *The New York Times* delivered each day: Yeah, that might be someone’s idea of a beach bar, and that’s fine, but mine happens to be like this funky little place in Martinique where you have to speak French if you want to order food and you can sit on a beach and eat a roasted lobster under the palm trees where Gauguin used to paint. Or this little place I was just down at in Santa Cruz, in the Galápagos Islands. It looked like Cabo 30 years ago. You feel like you’re sitting on the equator, and you just have to find a shady place to have a cold beer.”

BEST DRINK

The **Michelada** is sweeping up from south of the border this summer. Fill a salt-rimmed glass with ice and the juice of half a lime; add a dash each of Tabasco, Worcestershire, and soy sauce; and fill to the rim with beer, preferably a Mexican lager like Corona. *Mojito who?*



BARD OF THE BEACH: Top left, Buffett, in 1979, enjoying a drink on St. Bart’s during a break in recording. Above: Jimmy Buffett and the Coral Reefer Band in Palm Beach, rehearsing for their 2003 Tiki Time U.S. tour.

And that’s the moment — that flash of thirst, be it real or metaphorical, followed by its sublime equatorial gratification — that Jimmy Buffett has been singing about: The skies are too clear, life’s easy today. The beer is too cold, the daiquiri’s too fruitful. There’s no place like home when it’s this far away. “Everybody has their own version of Margaritaville,” he continues. “The guy in the Bronx who takes three days off and goes to Aruba may have just as much fun as I do when I go halfway around the world to the Galápagos. But if you want to explore, and find where the local people and the best stories are, the great places are still out there. They’re not easy to get to, but I think that’s great.” Isak Dinesen once put it this way: “The cure for anything is saltwater: sweat, tears, or the sea.” Jimmy Buffett subscribes to that, so long as you add a salt-rimmed glass. And a little music, naturally. And spongecake, perhaps, and tourists covered in oil . . . but then you know the rest of the prayer.