

**FIFTEENTH ANNUAL JAZZ ALLSTARS****INSTRUMENT:** Trumpet**BIRTHPLACE:** Toledo, Ohio**AGE:** 36**PRESENT WORK:** Duke Heitger's Steamboat Stompers, Duke Heitger's Big Four, Crescent City Joymakers, Thais Clark & the Palm Court Jazz Band**PAST WORK:** Butch Thompson, Banu Gibson, Jacques Gauthe (2001 All-Star), Arvell Shaw, Franz Jackson, Topsy Chapman, Juanita Brooks**RECORDINGS:** As leader, Lars Edegran (1996 All-Star), Butch Thompson, Joe Muranyi, Hal Smith, Jacques Gauthe, Squirrel Nut Zippers**WHERE TO SEE:** Riverboat Natchez, Palm Court.

"My father loved New Orleans-style jazz." Duke Heitger explains of his early exposure to and love of traditional jazz. His father was also a clarinet player, and Heitger's first gigs at the early age of 12 were subbing in his father's band. He continued to play with the group as well as participating in his high school's marching, jazz and concert bands. Heading to the University of Toledo with a music scholarship, Heitger, perhaps surprisingly, majored in geology. The trumpeter's New Orleans connection occurred when he traveled with his father's band to perform at a festival in Colorado. The French-born, New Orleans-transplanted clarinetist Jacques Gauthe (2001 All-Star) heard Heitger play and offered him a job. With one semester of school left, he temporarily declined but headed south as soon as he could. For two year, he blew with Gauthe's band at Hotel le Meridien. Naturally, he met a lot of fellow traditional jazz musicians and picked up spot jobs. He continues his studies and is working on his master's in geology at the University of New Orleans. "They cut me some slack because they know I have a career," says Heitger, calling his extended schooling his "10-year plan." In 1993 he joined vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Banu Gibson's band and says through the years he's made "endless gigs with other band leaders." The year 1998 officially marked his entrance as a bandleader. He has worked steadily on the Natchez, heading his Steamboat Stompers, and has traveled the world with his music. The furthest the trumpeter has stepped away from New Orleans classic jazz is when leading a swing band that performs a repertoire from the late 1930s to 1940s. He poetically describes his specialty as the music from the "twilight of jazz to the 1940s." The one huge aside form jazz came when the quirky rock group Squirrel Nut Zippers was recording in New Orleans and needed a trumpeter. He played on the band's release Hot and now has a gold and platinum album hanging on his wall.

**Quotable:** *"Not to state the obvious, but I always try to play as musically as possible. Louis Armstrong epitomized that philosophy."*



*Duke in the French Quarter*