

Brian Pyne Nugent, a renowned live concert sound engineer and a beloved figure in the New Orleans community, died suddenly on June 15, 2021. He was in New York City at the time, caring for his aunt while preparing to embark on his first, post-Covid music tour with the Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band after a brief stop home to New Orleans. He was 50.

Born in Coral Gables, Florida, on June 30, 1970, and raised in Dunedin, Florida, Brian -- affectionately known by all as "Griper" -- moved to the Crescent City in 1994 from Flagstaff, Arizona, a town that embraced him and always retained a special place in his heart. He would soon find New Orleans did the same. New Orleans also inspired him to thrive, both in the local music scene he loved and on tour, where he earned a stellar reputation for his resourcefulness, passion and unfailing drive to help others experience the joy he knew music could bring.

Griper came to prominence in the music industry doing front-of-house sound work at local New Orleans clubs such as DBA and on tour with award-winning acts including Grupo Fantasma, the Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band and the Black Angels. He also worked for many years as a production manager at Bonnaroo with his close friends at Superfly Presents. But Griper's New Orleans career really began on Oak Street in 1995, after he walked into a new bar called Snake 'N Jake's Christmas Club Lounge. There, beneath the tin roof, Griper met owners Dave Clements and Tony Tocco, and ordered a Jagermeister and orange juice -- a cocktail he dubbed "The Fishwater," inspired by a Widespread Panic song of the same name. He was the now-storied uptown establishment's very first customer.

It wasn't long before Griper found himself working on the other side of that bar, where his warm spirit, dry wit and intuitive, compassionate nature had a way of making strangers and friends alike feel as if they were coming home when they stepped inside the dark, Christmas light-flecked space. And in a way, thanks to Griper's steady and attentive presence, they were.

Ultimately, Griper's contributions to Snake 'N Jake's fostered much of what has made the bar a national institution. At the same time, his easy grace and seemingly effortless ability to connect with everyone helped transform a ragtag group of neighbors into a family that would last for the rest of their lives.

Within a few years, however, he became determined to reinvent himself professionally. In 2000, Griper forged a sound engineering apprenticeship at the historic music venue, Tipitina's. He took to the work quickly and musicians gravitated toward his discerning ear, his keen sense of their needs and his determined approach to problem solving. By 2021, Griper had become an internationally recognized soundman, and the favorite engineer of even the most finicky of New Orleans' performing artists.

At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, Griper was devastated not to be able to do the work he loved, and struggled with making sense of the abrupt new reality. He channeled that anxiety into volunteer work at the Broadmoor Food Pantry in New Orleans, while also ceaselessly supporting the many people he loved and who loved him.

Griper is survived by his father, Richard S. Nugent, mother, Kathleen Pyne Nugent, sister, Sheila M. Nugent, uncles William Nugent and John Pyne, aunts Sheila Nugent and Margaret Pyne, nephew, Isaac Suarez-Nugent and niece Clara Suarez-Nugent.

Please join family and friends to celebrate Griper's life at a memorial service followed by a Second Line and reception on June 30 from 6 to 9 p.m. at Tipitina's (501 Napoleon Avenue, New Orleans). Doors will open at 5 p.m. and the service will begin promptly at 6 p.m. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Broadmoor Food Pantry in the honor of Brian 'Griper' Nugent at broadmoorimprovement.com; or the [Navajo & Hopi Families COVID-19 Relief Fund](#), organized by Ethel Branch