

ARTS & BOOKS

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LEE CELANO For The Times

"I DO THINK my dial has turned, and I'm in a happier, positive part of life," says Rickie Lee Jones, whose newest covers album, "Kicks," takes on popular songcraft.

ROVING SOUL KICKS BACK

Rickie Lee Jones still keeps people guessing and tapping their toes

By ALISON FENTERSTOCK >>> NEW ORLEANS — On several occasions in early 2019, Rickie Lee Jones could be seen hanging out at various cafes and garden parties in downtown New Orleans — sipping black coffee, flipping the pages of the local punk-rock magazine, eating crawfish that were driven in, alive in wet sacks on the back of a truck, from Cajun country. ¶ Jones seems at home here in New Orleans, which isn't exactly new stomping grounds for the Duchess of Coolsville. The pirates of her 1981 release "Pirates" were French Quarter denizens, outlaw hipsters she met here on a sojourn during which she got advice from Dr. John on how to keep at bay a spirit that was causing nightmares. He had played keyboards on her 1979 self-titled debut album, and he also knew the right herbs and oils ("dragon's blood," she once told me) with which to anoint her bedroom, to drive away the malicious haints and let her sleep in peace. ¶ Jones returned to LA from L.A. this time in the early 2010s and settled in nicely. Now 64, she has a dog, a memoir in progress and a boyfriend and plants to care [See Jones, F4]