

friday night lights in acadiana

The prep football odyssey of Hahnville High School football coach Nick Saltaformaggio was full of unexpected detours. But ultimately he arrived at his ideal Acadiana destination.

BY WILL KALEC | PHOTO BY ROMERO & ROMERO

PROMISE, YOU'LL HEAR Nick Saltaformaggio before you see him.

Blessed (or burdened, depending on if your glass is half-full or half-empty) with a hardened, jagged voice best suited for managing a noisy construction site, the

purveyor of this prep football palace wears a cap, not a crown; holds a stopwatch, not a scepter; and rules between a couple of bleachers, not over an entire kingdom.

Always busy running a team that is as much

of a brand as it is a program in local prep circles, the lifelong coach puts the infant

season on pause for just a moment. He speaks of the past before the present, of the journey that took him to this current destination, of how he traveled hundreds of miles to the place he always wanted to be,

which turns out was right down the road.

"I'm a little calmer than I used to be," says Saltaformaggio, in his second season coaching the Hahnville Tigers. "But I'm still the same guy I always was - passionate,

Hahnville High School's football games draw crowds of up to 10,000.



intense, into the moment. I jog, and when I jog I say my prayers just in case I go down, at least I'll have a shot of getting into purgatory."

Until then, he's content patrolling this 100-yard slice of heaven every Friday night.

High school football is important no matter where you go in Acadiana. In some places, it's a civic tradition. In others, it's a community reunion. Travel a little further, and it borders on obsession. And then, there's Hahnville.

Nestled on the eastern border of Cajun country, Hahnville's expansive school grounds resemble a sprawling college campus. Its athletic facilities - including a sparkling new 3,500-square-foot weight-training center - draw envy from college football coaches who stop by to recruit Saltaformaggio's players. And Friday nights - game nights - are part festival, part football.

No other high school in Louisiana has more players currently in the NFL than Hahnville. Its six state championships (the last coming in 2003) are tied for the most won by any high school within the unofficial territory of Acadiana.

"I've had the opportunity in the past to come in here and coach teams against Hahnville," Saltaformaggio says. "Come to think about it, I don't know if 'opportunity' is the right word, because it's not the easiest place to play. But you look around, and you just think, 'Wow, look at this environment. Look at this atmosphere.' It's like you're lucky and unlucky at the same time - lucky to soak up the moment and unlucky to be on the visitors' sideline.

"Every Friday night, it's 8,000; 9,000; 10,000 people in the stands," he continues. "Everything you want is right here. You can't find that anywhere else. So for a kid who loves football, it's an offer you can't refuse. It's an unmatched scenario."

The circumstances that brought Saltaformaggio to Hahnville were just as unique. A defensive coordinator for years at Chalmette in St. Bernard Parish, Saltaformaggio took over for departed Owls head coach Eric Collins in 2004. It was his first head coaching position, one he intended to stay at for a very long time.

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a common link

Though a native of Washington State, Dr. Bob Carriker of UL's History Dept. has lent his culinary two cents and left a tasty mark on his adopted home.

BY WILL KALEC | PHOTO BY ROMERO & ROMERO

SO COME ON, BOB

Carriker - critic of meat-stuffed casings, creator of our latest guilty pleasure, and curator of UL's History Department - admit it: all these links are pretty much the same. If you've had one you've had them all. Pork. Rice. Some spices. Cook it up.

Boudin is boudin, right?



"NO!" he yells emphatically through a laugh, thus disturbing the Sunday morning tranquility. "No, not even close! I swear, they're all different - the way they cook the rice, whether they use long-grain or medium-grain, whether they grind the pork up or leave it in chunks, the amount of fat, whether it's dry, wet, spicy, mild. It defies logic that there could be this much variance when the core ingredients are simple, but that's what makes it unique."

Point taken.

For more than a delicious decade, Carriker has showcased that pork-infused passion to print (well, digital print, technically) as the webmaster of *boudinlink.com*, a living, always-expanding bible of boudin. Brandishing an extensive library of reviews, Carriker's quest for the perfect "snap" has taken him from Carencro to California, from super-ritzy supermarkets to one-pump gas stations on rural routes GPS struggles to find.

A bit of a spatula-wielding mad scientist, Carriker also isn't shy to chip-in his own contributions to the Cajun culinary scene. The 9-to-5 history professor created the Johnson's Boucaniere Parrain Special, a brown-bagger's dream sandwich consisting on smashed boudin balls, melted cheese and barbecue sauce. Then, this past Carnival season, Carriker unleashed his greatest delectable hybrid - the boudin king cake. Demand for the boudin-infused

sweet Mardi Gras staple far exceeded the supply Carriker could pump out on his own, so he teamed with Twins Burgers and Sweets of Lafayette to increase production.

Asked if any of his boudin mash-ups bombed or tasted terrible, Carriker pauses for a second before replying, "No, not really" - a confident retort from someone whose left an authentic fingerprint on this eclectic region despite migrating from the Pacific Northwest.

"I much prefer to be a part of what's going as opposed to an observer of what's going on," Carriker says. "That's just always been a part of who I am. Moving here, I didn't want to be on the outside looking in. I wanted to be a part of it - embrace the community completely, which was easy because the community was so open and accepting of us."

The genesis of Bob's metamorphosis into "Dr. Boudin," happened shortly after accepting a faculty position at UL in 1997. Accustomed to co-workers bringing doughnuts, bagels or cupcakes into the office on special occasions, Carriker marveled when a peer plopped down a steaming tray of boudin instead. As he embraced the Cajun custom with a full mouth, he kept his ears open (while chewing) to those around him. Local loyalty dominated the conversation. The woman from New Iberia bragged on the boudin from the shop down the street while the guy from Cecilia dismissed

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BORN ON THE BAYOU

A powerful memoir set in the bayous and oil towns of 1970s Louisiana.

"I know well the rights of passage Blaine writes about: We don't really become men in our fathers' eyes UNTIL we buck them and go our own way."

—Matthew McConaughey

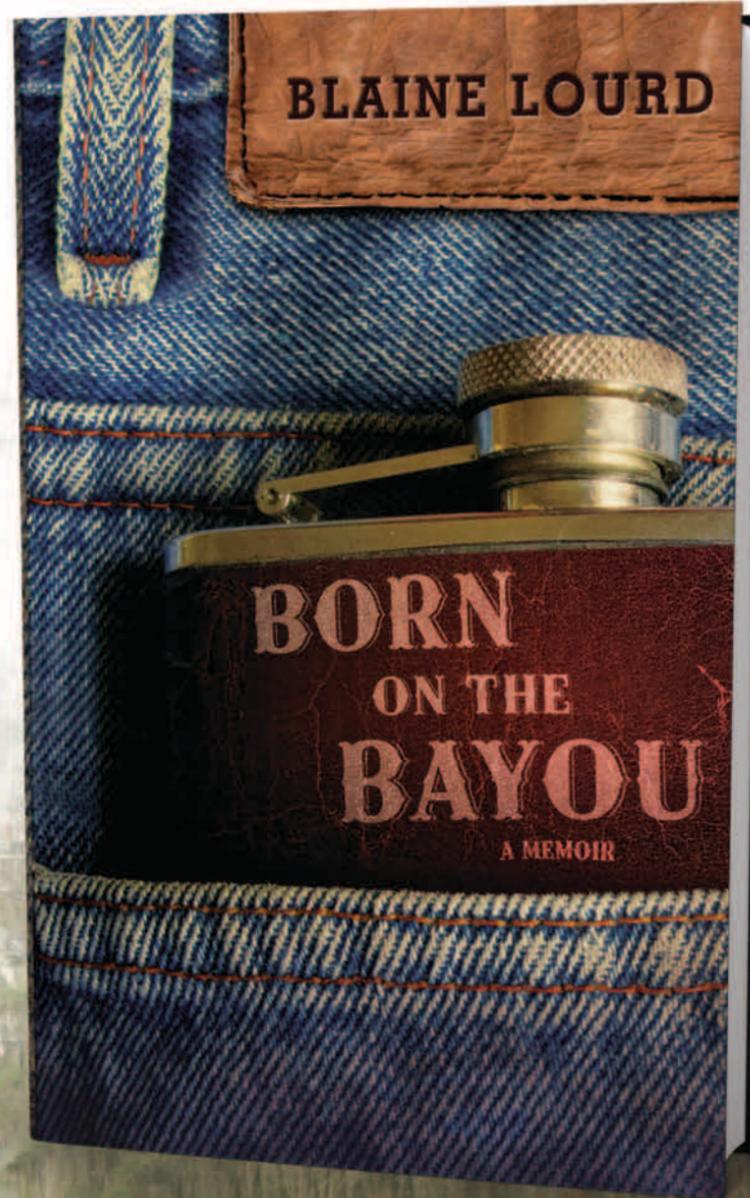
"Lourd writes affectingly of boys looking for guidance to men who were lost...plenty of heart and intelligence."

—Kirkus Reviews

A rollercoaster rags-to-riches story, Blaine Lourd's meaningful debut is both a nostalgic send-up of '60s and '70s Louisiana, and a heartfelt portrait of one family's coming of age.

From barreling down the low country roads in a shiny Thunderbird to chasing women and learning to be a gentleman, *Born on the Bayou* is one man's struggle against the forces of family love, loyalty and obligation, and the ties that keep us tethered to our roots no matter how far we run.

Available in hardcover and ebook editions wherever books are sold.



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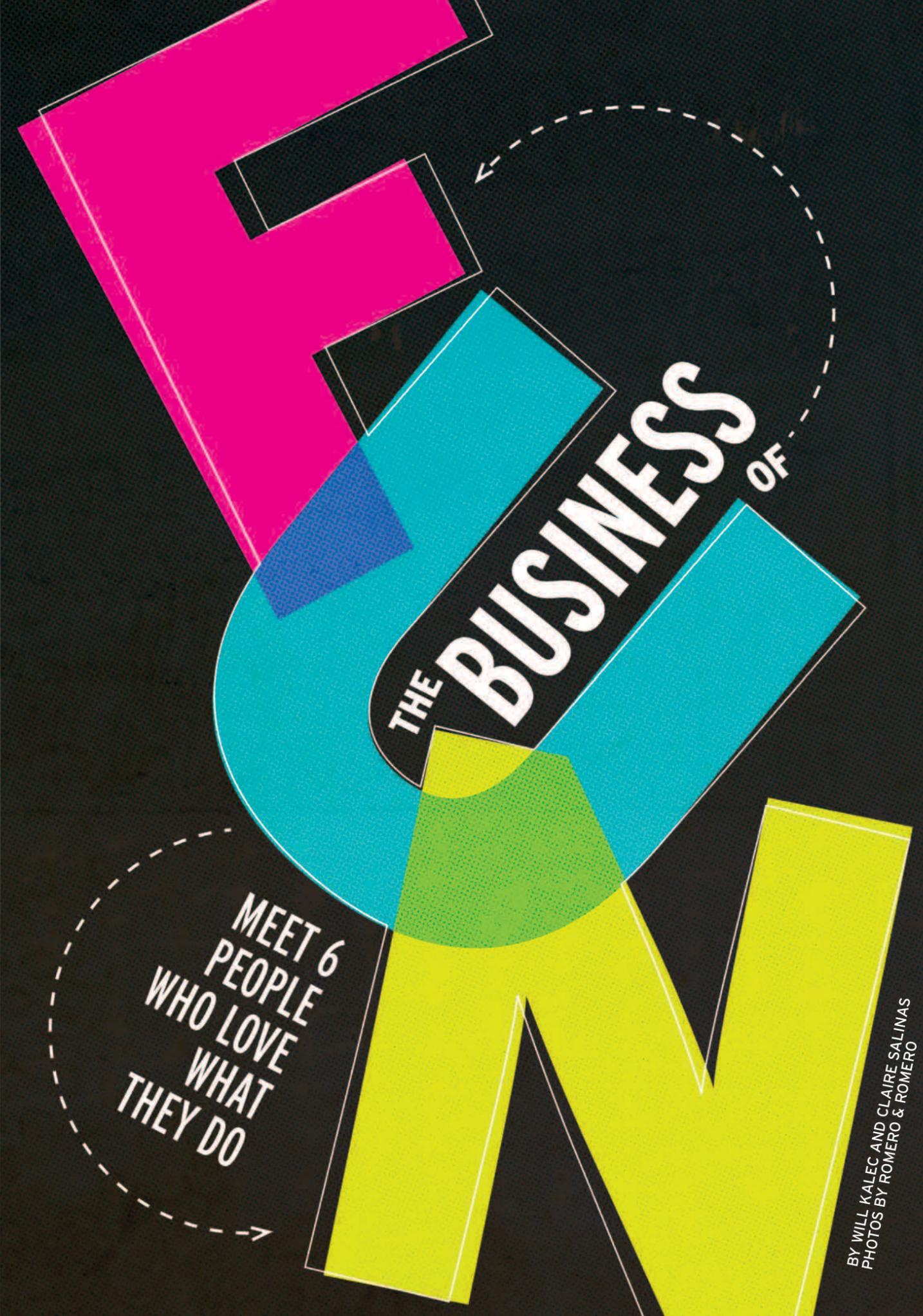
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BY WILL KALEC AND CLAIRE SALINAS
PHOTOS BY ROMERO & ROMERO



Melodie
McMath

EMERGE JUICERY

evolvelafayette.com

Melodie's life changed for the better when she started to drink organic juice. Here, she hams it up with a Matcha green smoothie (with extra chlorophyll) and a raw chocolate chip cookie.



Ross
Fontenot

GENTERIE
SUPPLY CO.

genterie.com

Tastemaker Ross sports a Life After Denim shirt, Brixton fedora hat, Forage bowtie and a Daniel Wellington Watch. He uses a safety razor made by Baxter.

Business partners
and good friends
Robbie and Nick
created their
dream business of
making desserts
that incorporate
puns and music.



**Robbie
Austin**

POPS AND ROCKETS

popsandrockets.com



**Nick
Villaume**

POPS AND ROCKETS

popsandrockets.com



Derek Curry
SNEAKER POLITICS

sneakerpolitics.com

A self-described sneaker nerd, Derek's business thrives due to his knowledge about shoes coupled with boundless enthusiasm.



Jeanne Lousao
FEED N SEED

feednseedlafayette.com

Jeanne Lousao is the director of events and operations at a repurposed warehouse that showcases a range of interesting, artistic performances.

NAME CHANGE, JUICE SAME

Owner **Melodie McMath** rebrands her business from Evolve to **Emerge Juicery**, but sticks to the healthy principles that changed her life.

GIVE LAFAYETTE'S MELODIE MCMATH A FEW MINUTES AND SHE'LL thoroughly explain all the ways juicing can improve the way you look, feel, think and see the world.

"This has been like, a 10-year evolutionary process," McMath says. "And the first transformation happened within myself."

A loyal juice disciple after she witnessing firsthand the ways in which a cleanse healed some ailments and improved her overall health, McMath has served as an enthusiastic shepherd for the juice lifestyle, easing it into a market known for its rich, flavorful and fattening cuisine.

Since 2013, McMath's Evolve Juicery has carved its niche in Lafayette, serving pressed raw fruit and vegetables concoctions out of Bibi's Patisserie on Pinhook Road and at the Lafayette Farmers Market at the Horse Farm on weekends. After a successful Kickstarter campaign that raised more than \$25,000, McMath plans to open her own storefront later this year. Once it's up and running, she intends to provide more menu options, including raw foods. With a laidback, no-pressure approach, McMath built up her once-skeptical customer base, and now she has a loyal following of juicers. That mission – to change longstanding bad eating habits – continues, even though McMath is renaming the business to "Emerge Juicery" this fall.

"I wanted people to evolve in mind, body and spirit when we started this, so that name fit," McMath says. "There's a lot of magic to truly experience out in the world,

but we're so foggy and full of toxins that it clouds much of our view and outlook of the stars and the sky and the moon.

But when you get clear in your body, you're able to detect the world around you. When you reach that point, you emerge, which is the next step."

All of the juice pressed at Evolve is organic and free of pesticide. Bottles are made of recycled glass materials and can be returned in Evolve's buyback program. Unused portions of fruits and vegetables are turned into compost for local farmers.

McMath proudly says, "sustainability is a mindset." Because people are particular about what they eat

and drink, many curious potential customers enter Evolve with hints of trepidation. McMath suggests newbies dangle their toes in the water rather than cannonball in the pool, starting with a gradual implementation of juice into their diet.

"It's all about figuring out where you are on your evolutionary journey," McMath says. "If someone comes to me, and they're (eating) Sonic and McDonald's every day, I will actually suggest not to cut out the burger and fries, but instead of the normal drink, take a juice with you. That's where we start. So it's not overwhelming. It's not a mountain to climb all at once. And once you embrace that, you're on your way."

"Living a healthy lifestyle is just a way of showing love – showing love for yourself," McMath continues. "It's a way to open up and work to our full potential, and from there, you reach your full potential spiritually."

BY WILLIAM KALEC



"Racer" shave cream, "Whiskey" aftershave, "Victory" moisturizer, and "wood" hand cream from Portland General Store in a dopp kit from Izola

floor resembles your grandfather's study, accessorized with deer heads, dark leathers and rich, stained woods. The products for sale almost blend seamlessly into the motif of the building.

From clothing to grooming products to accessories like sunglasses and backpacks, pretty much everything in Genterie Supply Co., is impossible to find anywhere else in Acadiana. Genterie leans heavily on buying from independent manufacturers, ensuring a unique product line and shopping experience for its customers.

"There are stores similar to ours in other cities, but there's nothing like it here," Fontenot says. "Lafayette is probably one of the smaller towns to have this type of store, but my customer has shown me that they're here. I generally buy pretty limited amounts, so my customers pretty much knows that when they come here, they're going to leave with something they probably aren't going to see over and over again when they go to dinner or go to drinks. You can go to other boutiques, but I don't think anyone has the feel or mix that we do."

THREADS COUNT

Since it opened five years ago, **Genterie Supply Co.** has been outfitting today's modern Louisiana man (and the occasional woman now, too).

THAT SHIRT ISN'T JUST A SHIRT. It's a lifestyle, according to Genterie Supply Co. owner Ross Fontenot. And that lifestyle comes with a philosophy attached.

Fontenot subscribes to the belief that every great man is a great storyteller, and that our own stories are transmitted through who and what we surround ourselves. The clothes and products at Genterie, therefore, intend to be part of that story – necessary elements in penning life's chapters for the man who carries himself with a little more pride, a little more care and a little more confidence than the rest of us.

"Our store is everything man," Fontenot says. "And when we looked around the market, there wasn't a place for this, but there was a need for a place like this. There are brands and products here that you won't find in most stores. It's a store designed for someone with particular taste."

Ever since Fontenot opened shop in 2011, Genterie Supply Co., has catered to the needs and wants of complex, layered individuals – men who are equal parts rugged and refined. The interior décor reflects that. The retail

BY WILLIAM KALEC



"Just Can't Mint Enough" (cantaloupe and mint)

"I Cran (So Far Away)" (cranberry, lime, vanilla and ginger)

Chicory and Ivory (chicory coffee and cream)

"Pulling Peanuts (From A Shell)" (Thai peanut)

NOSTALGIA ON A STICK

What happens when '80s pop and glam rock serve as the inspiration behind a line of frozen desserts? **Pops and Rockets** in Lake Charles.

ONE GLANCE AT THE ever-evolving menu friends and business partners Robbie Austin

and Nick Villume thought up, and a couple things become crystal-clear, quickly.

These guys sure love making pops. And these guys sure love puns.

Subscribing to the notion that even the best-tasting desserts need a hook to stand out in a competitive, oversaturated market place, Austin and Villume – a pair of Lake Charles natives, and the co-owners of Pops and Rockets – attach a blast from music past to every frozen flavor they whip up inside their non-scientific "Pop Lab."

Each dessert is named after an 1980s band or an old song.

For instance, if you're looking for something savory, stick a Choc Blobster pop in your mouth (an ode to the quirky B-52's song "Rock Lobster." Rather something fruitier and tart? Try the sweet tea/mango/cherry hybrid pop known as "Every Little Tea She Does Is Mango." And both David Lee Roth and Sammy Hagar would agree that "Cran Halen" (cranberry and satsuma) is the perfect relief to the summer heat.

"We're not re-inventing anything, but I think we are treading new ground for Acadiana," Austin says. "But this isn't the first frozen pop business, and it won't be the last, so paying homage to the music

and the times we grew up in and remain fond of is kind of our thing.

"Even though our product is top-of-the-line and we use great ingredients, in the end, you're selling a feeling," Austin continues. "And so that's what we're selling – that memory of eating treats off a stick as a kid, and reminding you of the music that might have been playing in the background when you did."

Pops and Rockets celebrated its anniversary in July, and seems to be trending toward more exponential growth in the coming year. By the end of the summer, Austin and Villume should be selling pops wholesale to specialty stores in and around Lake Charles and Lafayette – offering another commercial piston to the treats they sell at the Cash and Carry Farmers Market

and out of the Pop Lab on Pujoe Street.

"People get the concept, which was really refreshing for us," Villume says. "There is a place for gourmet frozen desserts in Acadiana, and that's rung loud and true thanks to the engagement of our fans. It doesn't matter if you're 15 years old or 50 years old, everybody always has flavor ideas and names, and we love that. It creates a buzz factor."

As far as nuts and bolts are considered, Pops and Rockets produces 400 to 500 desserts a week, though production capacity will certainly be ramped up in the coming months to meet the demand of wholesale orders. An ample portion of the week is spent tinkering with new flavor combinations – a necessity considering how fluid the Pops and Rockets flavor list is month to month. But beyond that, Austin and Villume

spend time researching and digging into the media and music of the 1980s. In a way, Austin explains, the duo acts as amateur archivists.

"We didn't want to let Urban Outfitters dictate what '80s culture is," Villume says. "When we started, I said, 'I don't care if we sell a single pop. What we created here is so cool and so awesome that I'm proud just to have done this.' Then, we went to the market. And in two hours we sold \$700 worth of popsicles."

"Now, what I said earlier was still valid, but holy heck, it was nice to get that kind of response."

BY WILLIAM KALEC

HAPPY SOLES

Sneaker Politics' Derek Curry turns a footwear "obsession" into a thriving business.

DEREK CURRY HAS HAD NFL PLAYERS, rappers and people from around the world sport the shoes he sells and helps design at his company, Sneaker Politics.

The easygoing yet enthusiastic personality of the 32-year-old native New Iberian makes being nationally recognized and highly sought after seem like a breeze.

Curry explains his drive to open his first location back in 2006 in Lafayette, as being fueled by him being a "huge shoe nerd."

After returning to Lafayette from a three-year stint in the military and getting serious about his finance degree, Curry started working at Sidelines while attending school.

During his time there, the shoe aficionado mourned when customers' inquiries about shoe features were met with blank expressions.

In his mind the shoe shopping experience should be a more personalized one.

Curry explains, "No one knew the product, but I used to talk to people and have a story for everything. I wanted more of that fun vibe. People come to our store and hang out for an hour sometimes, and they'll stay in there just talking to us."

After graduation, Curry was offered the opportunity to attend Rice University for his MBA, but turned it down to open his first store.

He says, "I did the numbers and figured out if I could sell two pairs of shoes per day I could break even, and I was like, 'Man I could do that for sure.' I thought it was worth the risk. The first three years were tough, but everything after that started to click."

All the colors of the rainbow: Melodie McMath uses only the highest-quality, organic ingredients with an emphasis on sustainability.



Sneaker Politics counts rappers and NFL players among its clientele.

Although the store has had their brand sported by NFL players at press conferences and Lil Boosie frequents the Lafayette store, recognition for the brand didn't come right away.

"The first thing that put us on the national map was when Lil Wayne had an artist that left his label and went out on his own. We started doing T-shirts for him. His name is Curren\$y and he still raps today. He had a huge following, and some of those shirts did real well. That was like our first big break."

Curry doesn't hesitate to acknowledge the stellar team behind him that has helped make the brand a success. "Sam was my first employee who came to work with me because he would come sit for four hours on the couch just talking to me and I was like, 'You might as well start working here.' We're known around the nation for our photography, and Dustin does everything in-house. Also, we designed a shoe and Lee actually came up with the idea and then we worked together to come up with exactly how it worked."

The shoe designed by Lee Trahan was the first one released by Sneaker Politics in collaboration with a major brand.

The shoe was based on the Rougarou, a Cajun folklore of a werewolf, and the 500 pairs of \$180 limited edition shoes sold out within minutes of being posted online.

For Curry, much of the joy that comes from designing and selling shoes, stems from being able to tell the story behind them.

"In my opinion the most successful shoe designer that Nike had is this guy Tinker Hatfield; he was an architect beforehand. He's the one who made Air Max and he got all those ideas from buildings. If you know the thought process that goes behind the shoes sitting on the shelves it's kind of cool to me. Some people grab our shoe and say they would never wear it, but they just thought the story was cool. It's more of a collector's thing than them putting it on their feet. They're premium material and they're a little different from the shoes that sit on the shelves at Foot Locker."

Later this year the brand will be releasing a New Balance inspired by True Detective, which was filmed in Louisiana, and two Sauconies based on the Battle of New Orleans, to commemorate this year's bicentennial. There are also plans in the works to open up another location in New Orleans later this year.

Curry says, "It's more of a family and its fun now. It's not just looking out for myself, anymore, it's making sure they're fine, too. So we're all growing together."

BY CLAIRE SALINAS

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

Feed N Seed, the people's venue

What used to be a feed store in the early 1900s has been converted to an arts venue that hosts everything from local and international bands to dance lessons and variety shows.

Feed N Seed was birthed out of owner Richard Young's desire to have a space for all ages to perform their art.

Young explains, "I am an extremely open individual when it comes to ideas. We pretty much entertain the bulk of what comes our way as long as it doesn't get us in trouble. We're always looking for people who want a stage to perform on."

Young's vision came from his extensive exposure to the arts and his desire to bring that to the Lafayette area.

"I've always considered myself a dynamic person for my interest in the arts. One night my girlfriend and I could be in Houston seeing a rock concert and the next minute we could be in New Orleans watching a burlesque show. I like for our clients to come to the venue and not know what to expect. I want them to think, 'What crazy thing is going on at The Feed N Seed tonight?' In Manhattan you can go from one block to the next and get any form of entertainment you can dream of. I want Feed N Seed to be a venue for everybody and a venue for the people."

The acquisition of a liquor license bumped the venue's entrance age to 18, but all ages can still perform at the venue.

Jeanne Lousao, director of events and operations for the Feed N Seed, explained that although The Feed N Seed serves alcohol, the focus is more on the performances.

"I don't want to run a place where I'm encouraging people to come drink their hearts out. I really want to run a place where people can come enjoy something unique as well as give people an opportunity to perform."

The Feed N Seed has been open on and off since around 2010, and gone through some ownership changes, but in October

of 2014 it began to operate on a consistent Thursday to Sunday schedule.

Lousao explains how far the venue has come in that short amount of time.

"I'm pretty proud of what we've been able to accomplish in pretty much less than a year. Everything we've done has been through social media and word of mouth. It's kind of been like a little hidden gem in Lafayette that not many people know about yet."

For Lousao working at the repurposed warehouse is part of her passion for preserving the Acadian culture.

"I've always had this strong connection to the French culture. It's part of my heritage, I'm French. I'm not Acadian, but we definitely adopted that culture whenever our family moved here back in the early 1800s, so it's always been a big passion of mine. My No. 1 role model is probably my grandfather, he's passed away now, but he was a doctor of agriculture at LSU and he was very passionate about Louisiana and preserving the state and our culture."

When it comes to role models, Young feels he pretty much had to figure it out on his own.

"I didn't have a lot of role models for some reason. I didn't really have wealthy parents, and I kind of had to do it on my own. My key to success is something my brother used to always tell me, 'Perspiration over inspiration.' I've always been real scrappy. From a young age I learned to work as hard as I could until I got it. I have competitors who are smarter and wealthier than me, but I beat them time and time again because I outwork them."

The inspiring messages on the chalkboard bathroom walls, the red plush couches and the decorative shutters gathered from throughout Acadiana all make The Feed N Seed feel like a sweet escape from reality, where things are simple, but mostly sweet.

Those interested in performing at The Feed N Seed can direct messages their Facebook page (search for Feed N Seed Lafayette) to pitch ideas.

BY CLAIRE SALINAS

Feed N Seed serves alcohol, but the real focus is on its artistic performances.



Celebrating 30 years

Back row: Mitch Landry, Jean-Paul Coussan, Jonathan Davis, Steven T. Ramos
Front row: Elisa Davis, Phil Boudreaux, Sara Tannehill Zuschlag

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