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ACTS TO CATCH
THIS
SPRING

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by Michael Patrick Welch & Amanda Wicks
photographs by Romero & Romero

THE STORY OF HOW 25-YEAR- old Kyle Huval came to learn the accordion at age 10 over another more traditional instrument is somewhat prosaic. It was the one instrument his family owned.

"I had always wanted to play guitar, but we didn't have a guitar and my parents couldn't afford a guitar," he says, a jovial demeanor coming through his Cajun-tinged accent. "That's what I learned on."

Living in Eunice, Huval is now a high school history teacher, but his nights tell a different story. He and his band the Dixie Club Ramblers play traditional Cajun music that sets dancers twirling. "We take the older things and we add a lot of energy, a lot of rhythm, a lot of youth," Huval explains.

Where younger musicians might explore modern sounds and weave those into tradition to create something more progressive, Huval and the

Dixie Club Ramblers have no intention of straying far from form. If anything, they draw on legends like Austin Pitre, Aldous Roger and the Balfa Brothers to lead their way. "We stick whole stone to what we do," he says. "We love what we do and people know us for that now. We don't want to let those people down."

- A.W.

GENRE: Traditional Cajun



KYLE HUVAL AND THE DIXIE CLUB RAMBLERS

RUSTY METOYER



AT 23 YEARS OLD, LAKE Charles Zydeco accordion player Rusty Metoyer seems pretty young to be the torchbearer of age-old musical traditions. "My music is different because I do keep the traditional sound pretty close," says Metoyer. "But, I also infuse newer sounds: funk, R&B, country music. So, I really kind of have my own style that's not being duplicated by any other band."

Both of Metoyer's grandfathers were Creole musicians: "Fiddle, accordion, guitar, drums and bass," he recalls. "Holidays we'd always have jam sessions at the house, playing the blues and stuff. My second grandfather died when I was

15, and that's when I started getting fierce about learning - if only to keep playing songs for the family on holidays. But it's turned into something much bigger than I imagined!"

Metoyer and Zydeco Krush, the band he started his senior year of high school in 2010, have played across Louisiana and Texas, up and down the East and West coasts, over in France and the Netherlands. These days they regularly play Capri Casino in Lake Charles, Jack Daniel's Bar and Grill in L'Auberge casino, and Café des Amis in Breaux Bridge.

Metoyer's new album In Due Time, was released this spring. "I think it's different, a little more in depth; the music is a little more complex. And there's a little more storytelling," says Metoyer, who explains, "The name In Due

Time, is from a song on the album that talks about how I might not be a big name right now, or you might have heard me but don't know who I am - but in due time you will know who I am."

- M.P.W.

GENRE: Zydeco fusion

CONCERT DATES: 4/14, McNeese, Lake Charles; 4/15 & 5/20, Jack Daniel's Bar/L'Auberge, Lake Charles; 4/22, O'Darby's, Carencro; 4/23, Semien Stables, Sulphur; 4/29, Contraband Days, Lake Charles; 5/14, Cafe Des Amis, Breaux Bridge; 5/21, Ride or Die Riders, Lacassine

ARMED RHYMERY



"YOU CAN TELL WE HAVE ROOTS in the older hip-hop," says rapper Mo Blak of her duo Armed Rhymer. "We gravitate toward a funky sound that's more versatile."

In terms of subject matter, she says, "The music is always real; it's what we feel, and what we're going through. I normally rap about my hunger and my passion for music. But if I am feeling sad that's what I talk about. It's frustrating trying to be an artist in a city where hip-hop isn't the main genre, so I take out a lot of my frustration about that through the music. But mostly it's about perseverance, keep on pushing. Music is like my

punching bag," says Black. "It's fun, but competitive."

Blak, from Lafayette, and her partner Edward X from New Orleans, both in their early 20s, have over the last three years rocked Lafayette Prime Downtown and the city's Mardi Gras Festival, plus clubs like Legacy, Blue Moon Saloon, JPs, Jefe's. The reception has shows that Acadiana is ready for real, organic hip-hop. "A lot of rappers perform over their own songs with the vocal and everything," says Blak. "We don't do that - our vocals are all live. We have a more natural performance. We even do live band shows every once in a while. But most of all we have a different level of onstage crowd

participation. We make sure everyone on the floor is engaged the whole time, and that they have a part in what we're doing."

Armed Rhymer's debut album *Two Black Sheep* is available for free on Soundcloud, and a new release is scheduled for May.

- M.P.W.

GENRE: Hip-Hop/Funk
LATEST ALBUM: Attitude (coming in May)

CONCERT DATES: 4/20, Legacy, Lafayette; 4/23, Spanish Moon, Baton Rouge, other dates TBD

GENRE: Roots Rock/Cajun

CONCERT DATE: April 20, Chickie Wah Wah, New Orleans,

MARK MEAUX STARTED THE popular Bluerunners in 1987, and after letting the band lay dormant for many years, has finally brought it back again this year, to the delight of Louisiana music fans. "When you start again, it's just the funnest thing to do," says Meaux, who is joined once again by Adrian Huval on accordion, drummer Frank Kincel, bassist

Cal Stevenson, and Jason Harrington on harp, fiddle and mandolin.

Meaux is unable to describe Bluerunners in just one or two words. "We jump all around, different genres, that's kind of what our thing is," he says. "We just try and get to the gutbucket of whatever genre we're doing, whether it's kinda like a country song, or kinda like a soul song, or kinda like a punk song."

The Bluerunners are also known for jumping around physically, on stage. "The music is really energetic," says Meaux. "But the show is also really down home too, cause we were never rock stars. We were just guys who ... got signed from a gig at Maple Leaf [in New Orleans]. We were sort of super naive and had our hearts on our sleeves the whole time. We were told we got signed because we were 'earnest, and not full of shit.'"

Now with no label backing the band, Meaux and company are restarting slowly. "We won't do any concerts besides regional stuff," he claims, for now. "But we do have a couple new songs. Hopefully we can get back in the studio and make something before the summer. For now we're just having fun getting our legs back under us!"

- M.P.W.



BLUE RUNNERS

TWELVE YEARS AGO, THE Creole String Beans began covering the most obscure Louisiana swamp-pop tunes its members could dig up. "We're all record collector geeks, so we're constantly looking for those deep nuggets," says guitarist, New Orleans resident and St. Landry Parish landowner Rick Olivier, who first started The Creole String Beans with

bassist Rob Savoy. "At first we weren't going to do any originals because we always prided ourselves on finding the obscurities. And in that canon, you have a never-ending supply to pick from the best songwriters in the world, from Allen Toussaint to Doug Sahm."

With a twin saxophone attack and good old New Orleans triplets on the piano, the Creole String Beans keep it swampy. "We do Lloyd Price's

'Just Because.' People just jump on the dance floor when we play that," Olivier attests. "K-Doe's 'Here Come the Girls' was fairly obscure when we started covering it. And we do what I consider to be the National Anthem of South Louisiana, 'Mathilda' by Cookie and the Cupcakes. When Rob and I were growing up, we'd go to weddings and...if the band didn't play 'Matilda' at the wedding, it was like the marriage didn't count."

But of course over the dozen years the String Beans have

also penned some hot originals, such as "Sally Put a Spell on Me," and "Funky Spillway." "The latter one I am kind of proud of," says Olivier. "It gives shout-outs to all these tiny Louisiana town like Chackbay that never get mentioned, and Pierre Part.

To follow up to the band's album Shrimp Boots and Vintage Suits, the Beans will release their new record, titled Golden Crown this month.

- M.P.W.

GENRE: Swamp Pop

CONCERT DATES:
4/10, French Quarter
Festival (New Orleans);
4/29, New Orleans
Jazz & Heritage
Festival



THE MID-CITY ACES



THE MID-CITY ACES band recreates the sound of Lafayette, while living in their favorite New Orleans neighborhood. "What makes Mid-City so unique is it's a really fresh neighborhood, and very artsy, but at the same time there's a lot of old unique New Orleans traditions that are still alive in Mid-City," says Aces accordion player Cameron Dupuy. "It's more like where your average local person would be. Uptown people usually have more money, then the Quarter is more tourists, and Mid-City is right in the middle and it's just a thriving local area, really down to earth, like how our music is unique, and down to Earth."

Dupuy shares the stage in his three-piece Cajun band with fiddle player Gina Forsyth (well-known from working with Bruce Daigrepoint) as well as Cameron's guitarist father, Michael Dupuy. "We'd get together every year at our cousin's house for Christmas and do a big family jam session," remembers Cameron of the band's origins. "That's the times when dad and I would always get to play with Gina on older Cajun songs that we just didn't get to play as often - songs people just don't play much anymore." Then in 2015, Forsyth asked the father and son dup to help her record an album of herself playing fiddle to old Cajun songs. "It was her solo project, really, with us helping," remembers Dupuy. "But we liked it so much we decided to start booking gigs as a band."

Turns out that what's often par for the course in Acadiana, really stands out just up the road in New Orleans. "The fact that we're keeping it as traditional as possible, while also being from New Orleans, that separates us from everyone else," says Dupuy, while promising, "we keep it pretty close to the Lafayette style."

- M.P.W.

GENRE: Cajun

LATEST ALBUM:
Live At Jazz Fest
(2011)