

A few words on mudbug business

Is a Japanese allowed to play the alphorn? Of course he is. But he runs the risk of coming over as a comedy turn because, even if he coaxes music out of the instrument, he certainly won't manage to express anything of the culture behind it. The world it comes from is just not his world.

Now why am I telling you this? Because there's a bunch of guys from little old Switzerland who have, as is their good right, dedicated themselves to the folk music of far-away Louisiana. The best you can expect from that is some agreeable copy-cat playing – you might think. But you'd be wrong, because Marc & the Boiled Crawfish are thoroughly immersed in the ways of living and thinking that form the foundation of Cajun and Zydeco music. Again and again they travel around "Cajun Country", soaking up its culture, cuisine and history, and giving something of themselves in return. Marc not only plays the accordion like a local, he can also rattle on in the antiquated French still spoken in the region. He and his band – master musicians to a man – know that the Cajuns affectionately call their crawfish "mudbugs". They've learned that the audiences in the Atchafalaya Basin are a part of the music, because there can be no dance music without dancers. And one Mardi Gras dawn, the band joined the other young fellers to chase the chickens destined for the day's traditional gumbo stew.

Marc and the Boiled Crawfish have done a lot more than take Cajun music and Zydeco on board. Anyone who has seen them live knows that they've absorbed the *esprit* of the music into their very bones. And for those who are lucky enough to be treated to it, Marc's consummate creole cooking dispels any doubts about his really living the Cajun culture. Marc is well aware, though, that even in its proudest moments Cajun has a melancholy side: every waltz, every two-step is a wordless account of the expulsion of the Acadians from Nova Scotia and their ensuing wanderings over 250 years ago.

Maybe these plucky settlers who finally ended up in southwest Louisiana have something in common with the people of rural Switzerland; maybe the Cajun accordion is a distant cousin of our own *schwyzerörgeli*. At all events, Marc and his band have found a homeland in this music. They interpret it freely, bringing in black and white elements as well as scatterings of rock – just the way the young musicians in Louisiana do.

If Mamou, Louisiana, is the "Cajun Music Capital of the World", as is proclaimed by a sign at the junction of Main Street and Highway 13, then Rüschtikon, Switzerland, is the "Cajun Music Capital of the rest of the World".

So no worries; just let the bon-temps rouler!

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