

CAJUN ROOSTERS 3

Chris Hall: accordion, fiddle, vocals
Hartmut Hegewald: fiddle, scrubboard, vocals
Michael Bentele: guitar



The Cajun Roosters 3 started life as an offspring of the 5 piece Cajun Roosters for a multimedia performance called 'Cajuntales', where the history of Louisiana and its people is told by combining film, cartoons, photos and live Cajun music. This show was featured several times at festivals and locations throughout Germany with repeated showings in Munich at the famous Amerikahaus.

They have played several major venues and festivals already including a 23 date tour of Germany. The tour took the trio by surprise. Most venues were sold out in advance and the great interest from the media and the public was evidence of a growing interest in this music with its origins in a culture thousands of miles away across the Atlantic Ocean. The music was at the same time unfamiliar yet strangely connected to the audience. Played on 3 simple instruments the sound of the fiddle, guitar and perhaps most of all the accordion struck a chord with the public.

They released a CD "From the swamps and bayous of Louisiana" at the start of 2008 which won 1st runner up in the 2008 European Cajun and Zydeco Awards (order [here](#)).

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Specialize in down home traditional Cajun music with a side order of acoustic Zydeco and Creole music. They play two steps, waltzes, Cajun blues and back porch Zydeco from SW Louisiana. It's a raw uncluttered sound that evokes the mysteries of the bayous and swamps of Louisiana. Classic timeless music that takes you on a journey from the 1920's when this music was first recorded to the present day. Along the way they tell stories about the musicians who created this music and reveal some of the fascinating history of the Cajun people and their culture. Equally at home playing seated concerts or to dancing crowds the Cajun Roosters 3 leave audiences shouting for more everywhere they have played. Their passion for the music is infectious and clear from the first note to the last. Three musicians united in their love and understanding of one of the greatest undiscovered musics of the 21st century.

Cajun Roosters 3 play songs by Iry Le Jeune, Nathan Abshire, Canray Fontenot, The Balfa Brothers, The Lawtell Playboys, Lawrence Walker, Aldus Roger, Austin Pitre, Leroy Broussard, Bois sec Ardoin, and many more.



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Chris Hall: UK (cajun accordion, fiddle, vocals, triangle, homemade drums)

Since the 70s Louisiana accordion boss man Chris Hall, based in Derby/UK, is known through his work with R.Cajun & the Zydeco Brothers, The Bearcats, Zydecomotion and Breaux. His reputation is such that he was called on by Bill Wyman to play on his album and was also part of the band put together by Sir Paul McCartney to record his "Run Devil Run" album. He was also called in by Kate Bush to contribute to her last album. Through his company Swampmusic he has been responsible for many festivals, tours and concerts of Louisiana artists in Europe taking to the road many times with artists like Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys, John and Geno Delafosse, and Randy Vidrine and Mitch Reed. He has studied the music first hand over many years with the masters in Louisiana, has a huge knowledge of C/Z and has been playing the music for over 25 years. He is widely acknowledged as one of the finest exponents of this music outside of Louisiana and has won many awards for his playing. He plays Acadian Cajun accordions handmade in Louisiana and a Hohner Supreme handmade in Germany.

Hartmut Hegewald: Germany (fiddle, vocals, scrubboard) is a fine musician, with a rare and uncanny ability to really get to grips with the subtlety of the style and capture the Cajun feel on the fiddle. He has carefully studied the masters with great passion, attending workshops and learning from them at first hand and in a short period of time has emerged as one of the few players outside the USA who really understand how to get the elusive Cajun sound. He is a versatile player with an ability to understand the finer details of the old masters like Dewey Balfa, Dennis McGee, and Canray Fontenot as well as younger players like Mitch Reed, Kevin Wimmer, and Travis Matte. He is also a fine Cajun singer and plays an authentic scrubboard which he learnt from the great Joe Chavis. He plays an old French fiddle which he renovated in his own workshop where he also builds handmade guitars.

Michael Bentele: Germany (guitar, percussion) has also known the Louisiana Cajun scene for a long time. During the 1980's he went to Louisiana for the first time to do an interview with Dewey Balfa and other Cajun musicians for a documentary film about the music. From that moment on he has been in love with the music and has spent his time studying and playing the music of his heroes. As a documentary film maker and TV director of many music shows he has been around many kinds of music all his life, yet one thing has remained constant, his love of Cajun and Zydeco music. He is a versatile player encompassing not only a fine Cajun Rhythm but also Creole and Zydeco on the acoustic guitar. His rock solid intense rhythms form the basis of the groove that is so important in Cajun music.

The Cajun accordion is a simple looking wooden box. With only 10 buttons for melody and 2 for bass rhythm it seems like it should be easy to play. It's an instrument that is based on an old German design. They were shipped into the USA and sold by mail order companies under brand names like Sterling and Monarch or into the UK branded as Internationals. These were the instrument of choice for players at the start of the 20th Century and even today can be found occasionally in playable condition. Although popular at the time they almost disappeared from Cajun music in the 1930's and 40's but came back with a bang in the late 40's when a new found pride in Cajun culture emerged. Small accordion workshops grew up in Louisiana and modifications were made which made the instrument even better. Today no self respecting Cajun band can be seen without one.

The fiddle is the glue that holds together the rhythm and melody in Cajun music. As legendary Cajun musician Dewey Balfa once said ... if you ain't got the fiddle you ain't got Cajun music. It is played in many different ways, some Cajun players give it a country feel, others make it more bluesy but it's always distinctive and recognisable. It is characterised by a rhythmic groove using octaves, unisons and chords to give a full sound and often uses syncopated rhythms and bluesy shuffles. Once heard it's never forgotten. It's an elusive style that is quite unlike any other way of playing. A well played Cajun fiddle can create the dance groove all on its own, combine it with an acoustic guitar and a chunky chunk Cajun accordion and you have a match made in heaven!

The guitar has been used in Cajun music ever since the turn of the 20th century. Early recordings by people like Cleoma Breaux and Joe Falcon featured just accordion and acoustic guitar with the accordion providing melody and the guitar giving a driving rhythm. It's been around ever since then and is generally played with a simple groove. Simple it maybe but easy it ain't! Many seasoned guitar players in Europe have tried and failed to capture the elusive Cajun Rhythm or found that the groove they figured would be easy to nail down has given them a new challenge. Also although the chords in Cajun music are simple (many songs use only 3 and sometimes only two chords) the chord changes often occur at unexpected times to western ears raised on blues rock and pop music. In a Cajun trio the guitar player is guitarist, bass player and drummer all rolled into one and is a slave to the rhythm, providing the solid canvas on which the fiddle and accordion can paint their pictures. If the guitar player can't lay down a rock solid groove the melody instruments can never rise to new heights and the accordion and fiddle waste their creative energy.

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A selection of recently played venues

Amerikahaus Munich
Gloucester Cajun Festival UK
Hainichen Cajun Festival
Trossingen (Hohner Museum) Germany
Memmingen Germany
Tollwood Festival Munich
Oklahoma Saloon Munich
Hide Out Blues Club Munich
Fröndenberg Kulturhaus Kettenmuseum
Düsseldorf Jazzschmiede
Gütersloh Apostelkirche
Detmold Alte Aula Schule am Wall
Remscheid Teo Otto Theater
Hagen Offene Lutherkirche
Gronau Cafe Oreade
Kempen Kuba
Bonn Brotfabrik
Hamm Lutherkirche
Köln Domforum
Wuppertal Unterbarmer Hauptkirche
Dortmund Keuninghaus
Unna Ernst-Barlach-Gymnasium
Kleve Kleine Ev. Kulturkirche an der Böllensteige
Soest Alter Schlachthof
Herford Stadtheater
Köln Louisiana
Siegen Krönchen Center
Euskirchen Comedia

Cajun Roosters 5 have also played

Cajun & Zydecofestival, Saulieu (F)	Festival du Culture (LUX)
Cajun & Zydecofestival, Opwijk (B)	Hildesheim Jazzfestival (D)
Cajun & Zydecofestival, Soest & Baasem (D)	Cajun & Zydecofestival, Raamsdonksveer (NL)
Bietigheim Jazzfestival (D)	Donauinselfest, Wien (A)
Tollwood Festival, München (D)	Burghausen Jazzfestival (D)
Gronau Jazzfestival (D)	Broadstairs Folkfestival (GB)
Skagen Folkfestival (DK)	Gloucester Cajun & Zydeco Festival (GB)
Lichtensteig Jazzfestival (CH)	Breda Jazzfestival (NL)
Füssen Jazzfestival (D)	Piacenza Folkfestival (I)

What is Cajun and what is Zydeco?

The word Cajun is a term applied to the people of a particular area of S.W. Louisiana. Their ancestors left France in the 17th century to settle in an area of Canada then known as Acadie, which became Nova Scotia and New Brunswick when the British took over in 1710. The Acadians were deported from their homeland in 1755 by the British Crown when they refused to swear allegiance, and renounce their Catholic faith. Many families were separated and more than a quarter of the 12,000 exiles perished in this sad episode in British colonial history. After 1765 many Acadians arrived in Louisiana where they struggled to recreate their society in the inhospitable swamps and bayous of their new home. For the next 200 years they lived in relative isolation in this harsh landscape and their distinctive culture developed away from the mainstream of American influence until well into the 20th century.

Cajun and Zydeco are regional music styles which flourish in Louisiana despite the efforts of the USA to homogenise all its cultures into one seamless whole. It's a blend of German, Spanish, Scottish, Irish, Anglo American, Afro Caribbean and American Indian influences with a base of French folk tradition. It's a music born of hardship and oppression and is joyous and uplifting despite the sadness of its lyrics. Whilst Cajun music is played by the white French people of Louisiana, Zydeco is the music of the black French speaking population. Though similar in some respects, Zydeco has a heavier helping of Afro Caribbean rhythm and more of a taste of the blues. Zydeco tends to be more rocking, syncopated and funkier than Cajun and is more likely to have English lyrics.

Both types of music are originally for dancing and having a good time. In Louisiana and here in Europe there are dances that go with the music and some people like to learn the moves and try out the dances. The music of The Cajun Roosters 3 is equally suited to concerts and the band can tailor their show for many different situations.

Michael Bentele Lütticher Str. 64-66 50674 Köln Germany
Tel: +49-171-33 71 690 Fax: +49-221-510 34 30
www.cajunweb.de
cajun@netcologne.de

Chris Hall (UK) Tel: + 44 1332 332336
PO Box 94 Derby DE22 1XA England
www.swampmusic.co.uk
chrishall@swampmusic.co.uk