

# The Cajun Strangers

## TRADITIONAL CAJUN MUSIC FROM MADISON, WISCONSIN



The Cajun Strangers play the dance music of the Cajun culture of SW Louisiana at festivals, dances, parties, concerts, and weddings. The music is a mix of two-steps, blues, waltzes and zydeco, played on the button accordion and fiddle, with a rhythm section of guitar, electric bass, drums, rubboard, and T-fer. Many songs are sung in Cajun French with some songs sung in English.

We have two CD's released on Swallow Records, the Cajun label out of Ville Platte Louisiana. The first, "Valse a Deux Temps", was released in 2006 and won the Prix Dehors de Nous award from the Cajun French Music Assn in 2007 for the best Cajun CD by a band outside of Louisiana. The second CD, "Cajun County Ramble" was released in May 2009 and builds upon our initial effort with more song variety and maturing musicianship.

We teach the traditional Cajun dancing styles but most types of ballroom and swing dance can be danced as well to our music. We have shared the stage with national touring groups such as the Red Stick Ramblers, the Mamou Playboys, Geno Delefosse, Feufollet, Chubby Carrier's Bayou Swamp Band, Thomas Big Hat Fields, Dennis Stroughmatt, and the Lafayette Rhythm Devils.

The band has played at the Wheatland Traditional Arts Weekend in Remus MI in May of 2005 thru 2007, at Bastille Days in Milwaukee Wis. in July 2006 thru 2009, and at the Potawatomi Casino in Milwaukee during Mardi Gras season in 2006 thru 2009. We have also played Folk Ball at Memorial Union in Madison Wis. in 2003 thru 2009, Mardi Gras evening at Essen Haus in Madison, 2004 thru 2009, and the Overture Center for the Arts International Festival in Feb 2005 thru 2009 in Madison Wis.

# About the Cajun Strangers

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## **John Romano, accordion**

John has been performing traditional music for decades. John plays the button accordion and sings Cajun vocals. He has traveled extensively in SW Louisiana and has sat in on accordion and sang with Cajun bands in Louisiana at both Mulates and La Poussierre in Breaux Bridge, DI's in Basile, Charley's Lounge in Mermentau, and performed in Cameron Parish, Louisiana for a benefit concert after Hurricane Rita,.

## **Brian O'Donnell, fiddle**

Brian caught the Cajun fiddle bug at the Ashoken camp in New York, became enamored with Dewey Balfa and Dennis McGee, and promptly headed down to Lafayette, LA for six weeks of Cajun jams and bayou exploration. He managed to get a Lafayette library card, listened to every Cajun record they had, and got some lessons from Courtney Granger and Kevin Wimmer. Brian is a much sought after fiddler in Cajun music circles and he also plays bluegrass and old time music.

## **John Fabke, guitar**

One of Southern Wisconsin's finest traditional musicians, John Fabke has been involved with a wide variety of roots music styles for the past 17 years. Fabke played Cajun guitar with the Madison-based Grand Chien Cajun band and has also performed with Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys. Along with Cajun music, Fabke also plays banjo, guitar and mandolin in blues, bluegrass and old-time country settings.

## **Jim Schwall, bass**

Although he writes songs and plays several kinds of music on several instruments, Cajun Strangers' bass player Jim Schwall is best known for playing blues guitar in the Siegel-Schwall Band. After hearing Cajun bands in pre-Katrina New Orleans, Jim traveled west to

Cajun country to soak up more Cajun music and culture around Breaux Bridge and Eunice.

## **Karen Holden, t-fer, dance instructor**

Karen started playing Cajun music when in about 2001 she stopped dancing to listen to the music. She plays t-fer ("little iron") in the band and provides dance instruction.

## **Colin Bazsali, drums**

Originally a jazz drummer, Colin set aside percussion for the folk guitar, harmonica, and banjo and began exploring traditional American musical forms, especially old-time banjo. This led circuitously to Cajun and back to the drums, which he has been playing with the Cajun Strangers since early 2005.

## **Other Events and Recurring Venues**

Tunes on Monona Terrace - Madison Wis,  
Folklore Village Dances - Dodgeville, Wis  
True blood Performing Arts Ctr – Wash Island Wis  
Louisiana Hot Sauce Festival – Oshkosh Wis  
St Feriole Island Cajun Fest – Prairie du Chien Wis  
Sun Prairie Blues Festival – Sun Prairie Wis  
Overture Center After Work Series – Madison Wis  
Harmony Bar monthly dances - Madison WI  
Boone County Arts Council – Belvidere Ill  
Irish American Center dances – Chicago Ill  
O'Briens Restaurant in Old Town - Chicago Ill  
CFMA dances – Chicago Ill  
Cajun on Chicago - Freeport Ill  
On the Waterfront Festival – Rockford Ill  
Fox Valley Folk Music Festival – Geneva Ill  
Big Island Rendezvous - Albert Lea, MN  
Crossings at Carnegie - Zumbrota, MN  
Swamp n' Grass – Elkhart Wis  
Golden Harvest Days - Green Lake Wis  
Tyrana Brewery - Lake Mills Wis  
Sugar Maple Trad Music Fest – Madison Wis  
Harry Place Concert Series – Beloit Wis  
Portage Center for the Arts, Portage Wis  
Higher Ground Public Radio - Madison Wis  
WORT Block Party – Madison Wis