

## Dirty Rice

by Todd Mouton

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### *Cajun sounds from The Netherlands; New from McLain and Frank*

Traveling from Amsterdam and worried about U.S. Customs in Houston? Just tell 'em you're in a Cajun band. It worked for the members of **Des Fais Do-Do**, a Cajun/bluegrass band from The Netherlands that made a pilgrimage to Louisiana during the peak of spring festival season.

"It's not planned at all. It's just-how you call it?-immersion," said accordionist **Bert Hek**, describing the musicians' itinerary. The band treads lightly over almost a dozen Cajun tunes on their recently released disc *Mardi blue grass*, and they took in **Festival International de Louisiane**, **The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival** and **The Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival** during their visit.

In addition to stops at landmarks like **Mid-City Lanes' Rock'n'Bowl** and **Master-Trak Studios**, the band got to meet and play with famous Cajun musicians like **Marc Savoy**, **Eddie Lejeune** and **D.L. Menard**.

Based in Enschede in the eastern Netherlands, Des Fais Do-Do includes a teacher, a lawyer, an electrical engineer and an environmental researcher. The group began playing Cajun music nearly five years ago because "it is music for fun," said guitarist/vocalist **Henk Leeuwis**. The players learned from books, recordings and the liner notes to a "Nonc" **Allie Young** record, expanding their repertoire of acoustic folk and bluegrass numbers like "Do Re Mi" and "Tennessee Blues."

The Cajun scene in their home country is booming, the band members said, and they've got two to three gigs a month scheduled through October.

It usually takes their countrymen about a set to figure out how to relate to the Cajun repertoire. "In Holland, when people hear waltzes, they want to start with the wrong foot up," said Leeuwis.

The band hooked up with folks in the bayou country via an Internet newsgroup and e-mail, and they'd love to come back next year and play a few gigs. Recounting their experiences here, Hek summed up the band's motto, "Cajun music opens every door."

Get in touch with the group via e-mail at: [henk.leeuwis@3t.nl](mailto:henk.leeuwis@3t.nl).

**Meanwhile, back in Ville Platte...**A number of discs have recently been issued on **Floyd Soileau's** family of labels in "Flat Town."

*Tommy McLain: The Essential Collection* (Jin) brings together 20 tracks by the soulful honky-tonk crooner. Focusing on echo-drenched ballads, this compilation of **Tommy McLain's** late 1960s recordings for the label is a convenient one-stop package that includes indispensable numbers like "Sweet Dreams," "Before I Grow Too Old" and McLain's "Domino '68 Medley."

It's a good record, but a more expansive, cross-licensed package is truly needed to do justice to this hero of swamp pop. A collection of the rockers and ballads McLain cut over the years for **Huey Meaux** in Houston and **Lee Lavergne** in Church Point combined with some of McLain's brand-new compositions might better merit the label "essential," and help to spread the singer, songwriter and bandleader's fame even further.

McLain is still a compelling vocalist writing great tunes, and, while this recording is nice to have, its scope is limited. McLain's talents have kept dance floors filled and moving for over three decades, and