

L'AGNIAPPE


SOMETHING EXTRA FOR SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

January 20, 2011 • Volume 28 Number 2

"BOOM TOWN"

It Could Happen ... And
Sooner Than You May Think





LAGNIAPPE

SOMETHING EXTRA FOR SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA


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Publishers Bob Hartnett
Greg Pavlovich
Editor Brad Goins
Associate Editor Karla Wall
Layout & Design Mike Manis
Advertising Sales Tanya Alsbrook
Patty Hebert
Chester Rogers
Classified Nydia Neveu
Distribution Manager Edward Frazer
Contributing Writers Jeremy Alford
Dr. Dale Archer Duane Bergeron
Todd Elliott Rocke Fournet
E.J. Gaspard Norman German
Arthur Hebert John Maginnis
Nola Mae Ross Rick Sarro
Chuck Shepherd Vic Wukovits

Office Phone (337) 433-8502
Office Fax (337) 433-8964
Mailing Address PO Box 3292
Lake Charles, LA 70602
Shipping Address 2906 Deaton Street
Lake Charles, LA 70601

Editorial e-mail edit@thelanyap.com
Advertising e-mail ads@thelanyap.com
Classified e-mail class@thelanyap.com

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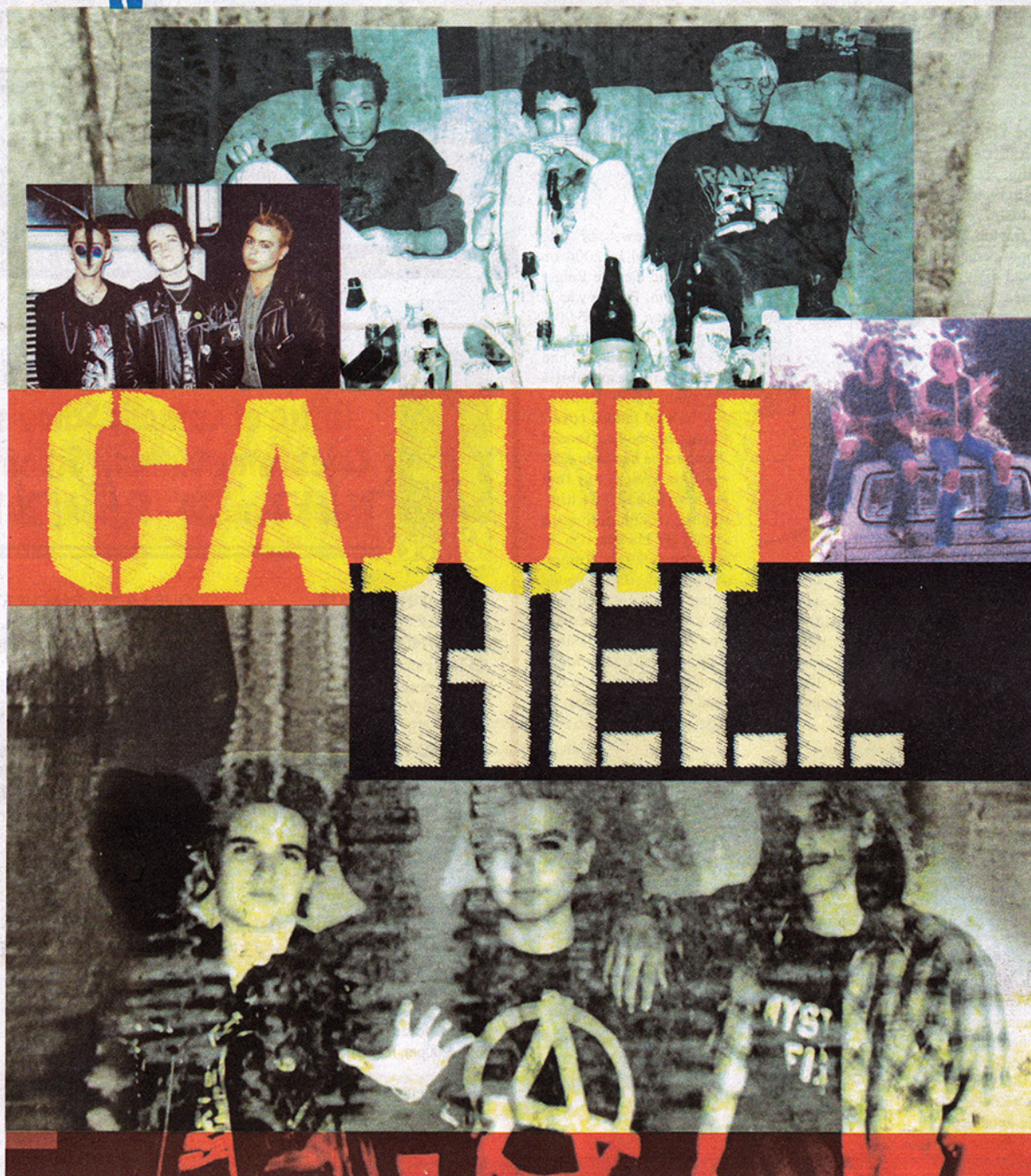
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Local Production Company Portrays The Life Of South Louisiana Punk Icon Criss Drunk In A New Documentary

BY BRAD GOINS

Cajun Hell is a forthcoming documentary that will chronicle the precocious rise and early death of south Louisiana punk musician Criss Drunk, best known for his key role in the band Mystic Fix.

Even today, when one thinks of south Louisiana, one isn't likely to think of it as a place that's receptive to punk music. Drunk became relatively popular by playing that foreign style of music nearly 20 years ago. And he established that popularity by

performing in the extremely unlikely locale of Ville Platte — a small conservative town steeped in Cajun traditions.

A small Southwest Louisiana business, Miscellaneous Productions, has created the film, and is presently promoting it. The filming, much of which occurred in Louisiana, took place in 2009-10. These days, the film's creators are doing pick-up shots, "a lot of editing" and screening sessions with test audiences of various types. "We're just working on it every day," says director Eric Dunn, who directed the film

under the name Eric Dumb.

Dunn works in both San Francisco and Mexico City. He once lived in Sulphur, where he supervised an organization designed to bring innovative music to the Lake Area.

Punk was not a common commodity in Southwest Louisiana in the 1970s through 1990s. Eric had to drive to Lafayette to purchase tapes of records by the Ramones. "I don't think there was anything like what [Drunk and Mystic Fix] were doing. Even in Lafayette, there were [only] a couple of punk bands."

When Dunn learned that Drunk had enjoyed a successful run as a punk musician in Ville Platte in the 1990s, he was intrigued. "I was interested to find there were punks here. There were no places to play. It wasn't a normal thing to do. They had all these obstacles coming from the Cajun culture."

DRUNK ROCK

Criss Drunk played drums, guitar and bass; sang; and wrote songs for more than 10 bands during his brief career. Although he was best known for his punk music, he also played in musical styles ranging from metal and hard rock to reggae, country, southern rock and acoustic.



Director Eric Dunn at the camera.
Photo By Daniel Castro

He started off by playing drums in such hard rock and metal bands as Oblivion and Kings Legion in Ville Platte in the late 1980s. In 1993, he undertook his highest profile musical project — the formation of the punk band Mystic Fix. The band played continually, making a name for itself not just in Louisiana, but also in Texas, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida.

Mystic Fix concerts were met by strong opposition in Ville Platte by those who considered the music evil or deca-

dent or just plain noisy. But the concerts also received a tremendous amount of support from area youth who felt that what Drunk was offering was just what they needed. In the latest trailer for *Cajun Hell*, an area musician notes that in one year, Mystic Fix was voted both the most popular and the most unpopular band in the area.

Drunk's music was sometimes called "drunk rock." He performed in bars, house parties, dance halls and clubs.

Mystic Fix broke up in 2001. Drunk next formed Southern Discomfort, a band with a southern rock sound. He

then recorded a solo acoustic album, *Taurus Attraction*. In 2002, he formed LA Phantoms, which had a classic rock vibe. Again, the band "gigged extensively," says Dunn, playing at such venues as the Hard Rock Cafe in New Orleans and the SXSW Festival in Austin, Texas.

The LA Phantoms broke up in 2005. Drunk continued to play in Ville Platte, this time in Label 13 — a band that featured the original 1993 line-up of Mystic Fix. In this incarnation, the band played hard rock and metal. Drunk also began playing with the metal band Manaford. In 2006, he decided to once again devote his efforts to Mystic Fix.

Drunk died in his sleep on June 11, 2007, at the age of 33. At the time of his death, Mystic Fix had been preparing to cut a new record and undertake an extensive tour.

It's unknown what caused Drunk's early death. Dunn says that what one hears about the subject is "rumors and speculation." Regardless of the rumors, the subject of Drunk's death is largely taboo, due to his larger than life profile.

Dunn says musicians are still playing punk in Ville Platte — "carrying on the legacy."

continued

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CAJUN HELL

He thinks Drunk recorded somewhere between 150 and 200 songs. "He kept recording no matter what." More than 50 of the songs will be featured in *Cajun Hell*.

WHY DID HE STAY?

Dunn expresses Drunk's firm stand on art and music in words he imagines the musician uttering: "I'm just going to create the music and art I want to and not let anyone tell me I can't."

Why did the talented Drunk opt out of a move to Houston, New Orleans, Atlanta or some other urban center where he might have had a reasonable shot at success, or at least a subsistence income playing music? Why did he choose to stay in Ville Platte, which would have offered very limited career options even if his music had been extremely popular? "I'm not really sure," says Dunn. "That's something I'm trying to investigate in the film."

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Dunn first got the idea for his film when he learned of Drunk's death. A

2009 trip to the Ville Platte area gave Dunn reason to believe "there was a real interest in a documentary about Mystic Fix. We began developing the idea, making contacts and seeing what material was available."

The film's pre-production began in Louisiana in June, 2009, and continued from July to October, 2009, in San Francisco.

Production began in November, 2009, with two months of shooting in Louisiana and Texas that resulted in more than 100 hours of footage. Thousands of photos, flyers and pieces of artwork were archived. Of particular interest was the do-it-yourself art of the posters Drunk and Mystic Fix used to promote shows.

Miscellaneous Productions conducted more than 40 interviews, including interviews with 12 ex-members of Mystic Fix, Drunk's many close friends and the members of his family. Also interviewed were members of such bands as Acid Bath, the Hates, Frigg a Go Go, Santeria, LA Phantoms, Stabb Sassy and the Pick-ups. (The best known of these bands is probably Acid Bath, a doom metal band from the Houma area that had a strong following during the 1990s. Singer Dax Riggs said the band's sound was a combination of stoner metal and doom metal, while guitarist Sammy Duet



Director Eric Dunn on an airboat during filming. Photo By Daniel Castro

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said the sound was one of "gothic hardcore." Journalist Bert Woodall once called The Hates "Houston's first and last punk band.")

The production company traveled between New Orleans, Louisiana and Dallas, "tracking down all kinds of people along the way."

Additional shooting, as well as post-production, took place in 2010. By October, the company had a rough cut of the film.

"We are in the final stages of post-production, and are getting ready to submit to film festivals for 2011," says Dunn. It's the need to make that 2011 film circuit that accounts for the fact that the film won't be released to the general public until 2012. In the meantime, test screenings will be going on in Louisiana, Texas, California and Mexico.



Criss Drunk, Jimmi Jazz, James Val

'WE'VE BEEN LEARNING A LOT'

This is the first feature length film for director Dunn. "We've all been learning a lot through the process," he says. "It's almost a job training opportunity." Those who've worked on the film have done everything from learning how to run the equipment to lining up interviews.

Viewers of the film will be able to get "a taste of the Cajun culture" by watching the film, says Dunn. (To take one example, the film will show the Lacassine Playboys performing.) The effort to depict the culture has been part of the learning process, and has meant

some new experiences for the film's creators. Although production manager Dana Cormier has lived in Southwest Louisiana much of her life, she took her first ride on an airboat during the course of filming. "It's really been a great experience making a film in Louisiana," says Dunn.

The 2012 official release date gives the production crew a comfortable window to work in. "We're not going to rush it," says Dunn. "We want to make it something everyone can enjoy."

For more information on the project, visit CajunHell.com or see the Cajun Helldocumentary page on Facebook.



Dunn interviews Peter Schmeltzer of the band Yellow Dye #5 in Henderson, LA. Photo By Daniel Castro

FILM ACTORS SOUGHT

With the tax benefits allotted to filmmakers who decide to write, shoot, and advertise in Louisiana, it comes as no surprise the local area has been seeing the glare of camera lenses lately. Local producers at 2184 Productions, whom you may have seen dodging around the downtown area with sub-machine guns and tactical gear as they were being film for the upcoming movie *Pathogen X*, are currently in the post-production phases of the project.

Writer/directors Calvin Tyler and Jordan Waldmeier say that things are looking good — not only for the debut of their feature film, but also for their hometown. Tyler was recently contacted by Katrina Bennett, who had become affiliated with a Los Angeles-based film group that had a project ready for launch — and would need some local assistance. The project is titled *East Stackton*, and is set to start principal photography in mid-April. With pre-production rolling full steam ahead, the producers are looking for local talent to bring their big screen vision to life.

Auditions will be held Sunday, January 22, from 3-6 pm at the Lake Charles Little Theater. For more information, call Tyler at 337-884-5925. Anyone wanting to make a production donation may do so by visiting the following link: <http://www.facebook.com/lc5a00WUGpoxXvTEXJ0khZ4Xu4yQ>; www.indiegog.com/east-stackton



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