



The Kingdom of Zydeco

Michael Tisserand

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“An important book for anyone with an interest in life, American music, Southern culture, dancing, accordions, the recording industry, folklore, old dance clubs in the weeds, fortune tellers, hoodoos or shotguns.” —Annie Proulx

There's a musical kingdom in the American South that's not marked on any map. Stretching from the prairies of Louisiana to the oil towns of East Texas, it is ruled over accordion-squeezing, washboard-wielding musicians such as Buckwheat Zydeco, Nathan Williams, Keith Frank, Terrance Simien, Rosie Ledet, and C. J. Chenier. Theirs is the kingdom of zydeco. With its African-Caribbean rhythms, Creole-French-English lyrics, and lively dance styles, zydeco has spread from its origins in Louisiana across the nation, from Back Bay to the Bay Area. It has influenced the music of Eric Clapton and Paul Simon and been played at Carnegie Hall.

In this remarkable and engrossing book, Michael Tisserand reveals why zydeco's identifiable and unforgettable blend of blues and Cajun influences has made the dance music of Louisiana black Creoles so popular and widespread. Zydeco's appeal runs deeper than the feel-good, get-up-and-dance reaction it invariably elicits and is intertwined in the music's roots and rhythms, handed down from generation to generation. Here is the story of zydeco music. Tisserand goes on the zydeco trail to meet the major artists; he reconstructs the legends behind the music's beginnings, offering complete biographies of pioneers such as Amédé Ardoin and Clifton Chenier; and he takes you into the dance halls and onto the front porches where zydeco was born and continues to thrive. More than a book on a musical style, *The Kingdom of Zydeco* is an exploration and a celebration of a distinctive American culture.

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