

C.J. Chenier enlivens Kingsport with zydec

Hot New Orleans Night will bring back the fast and lively foot-stomping sounds of zydeco music on Friday, July 16.

This year's band is led by a man whose very heritage was the zydeco kingdom.

C.J. Chenier and The Red Hot Louisiana Band will appear in concert during Hot New Orleans Night at 8 p.m., Friday, July 16 on the Hometown IGA Stage in Glen Bruce Park, located in downtown Kingsport.

This free concert is sponsored by the Kingsport Times-News, Timesnews.net, and GoTriCities.com.

"You go to a gig by a jazz band and everybody's sitting down, sipping drinks," Chenier said in his biography. "You play zydeco and you see shoes flying off. You can't come to my show and stay unhappy all night long. You're going to break a smile and stomp your foot before too long. This is happy music, and it makes you dance."

Zydeco is known for getting crowds on their feet, swaying to the rhythm and moving to the beat. In fact, it was Chenier's close relative, a legendary man of Louisiana, that helped form that driving sound.

A man who loved to tell stories through his music, Clifton Chenier is known as the King of Zydeco. He was an inspiration to last year's band, Nathan and the Zydeco Cha Chas, and bands across the bayou.

His son C.J. shared his passion

for music, but his interests lay in jazz and funk. However, when his father called on him to bring his saxophone and join the Red Hots, C.J. decided to check it all out.

"I didn't know any of the songs they played," he said, "but the guys helped me out and brought me along. And then one day the music hit me, and I knew this was what I wanted to do."

As diabetes began to hinder his father's health, C.J. answered his request to follow in his footsteps. He learned to play the accordion through careful observation. After his father's death, C.J. proudly took his inheritance as the lead vocalist and accordion player of the Red Hots.

Since that time, Chenier has released numerous records, the latest of which, "The Desperate Kingdom of Love," included cover tunes from across the genre lines. The album was released after the devastating aftermath of Katrina in Chenier's Texas hometown and reflects some of that pain.

In many of his albums, Chenier strives to keep the sounds fresh with new beats and influences from other genres, including funk, blues and ballads.

That's not to say that he has abandoned the traditional sounds of zydeco, however. He explained his approach on the label of his debut album with Alligator Records, "Too Much Fun."

"I'm trying to keep zydeco in line," Chenier said. "but still ex-

pand it. I want to give people more than one thing to listen to, but still have it be zydeco. I'm liable to take any kind of music and zydeco-ize it."

Living Blues magazine named "Too Much Fun" the Best Zydeco Album of 1995.

Through the years, C.J. Chenier and The Red Hot Louisiana Band have appeared at a number of festivals, including the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, San Diego's Street Scene and Milwaukee's Summerfest. They have also appeared on the "Jon Stewart Show" and CNN.

During a 1996 appearance at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, the Red Hots' performance gained them a segment on VH1 and a follow-up piece in Entertainment Weekly.

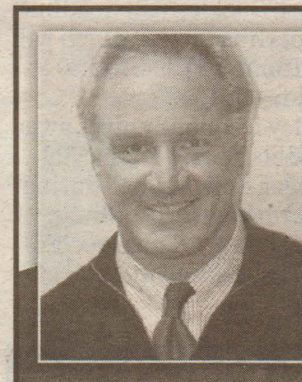
His earlier album, "Step It Up!" brought a number of origi-

nal songs, including "The Right to Walk Away," "The Power of Love" and the autobiographical "Road Dog," along with five others Chenier hand picked, such as his father's "Johnny Can't Dance."

With the release of "The Desperate Kingdom of Love," the Red Hots have continued to gain fans and Chenier to build his rep-

utation as a top zydeco player. The Red Hots are now touring nationally, taking "Desperate Kingdom" on tour. Kingsport will be one stop along their way.

Bring a blanket or lawn chair and get ready for the heat wave as C.J. Chenier and The Red Hot Louisiana Band make their way onstage at Hot New Orleans Night.



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C.J. Chenier will bring his Red Hot Louisiana Band to Hot New Orleans Night Friday, July 16.