

The Lost Bayou Ramblers

Cajun

Lafayette, Louisiana

At a time when some of Cajun and zydeco music's biggest bands spice their gumbo with a generous helping of modern sounds, the Lost Bayou Ramblers has taken a different path, becoming emissaries for older styles of Cajun music that sound just as fresh now as they did in earlier times. With dynamic stage shows including near acrobatic feats, the Lost Bayou Ramblers possess an energy and spirit that is unparalleled among Cajun bands today. "Rustic, ribald and rugged tunes free of contemporary styling, it's not rock-influenced, amplified modern Cajun music -- but it rocks," writes Nick Pittman in the *Times of Acadiana*.

Led by brothers Louis and Andre Michot, two of the finest young Cajun musicians around, and backed by the rock solid rhythm section of upright bassist Alan LaFleur rhythm guitarist Cavan Carruth and drummer Chris "Oscar" Courville, the group's passionate interpretation of Cajun repertoire has earned them a devoted following among music fans young and old. "What is today considered 'traditional' Cajun music," says fiddler Louis Michot, "was originally created by a blending of many cultures and musical styles, so for us it's not a matter of 'purism'.... We play it like we learned it."

As Cajun culture emerged in southwest Louisiana, so did one of America's most distinctive regional musics. The Lost Bayou Ramblers takes its inspiration from the late 19th and early 20th century Cajun traditions of acoustic *bal de maison* ("house party") music, and the early, amplified dance hall bands that featured fiddle and accordion. It has also developed a vibrant repertoire of Cajun swing tunes from the 1930s and 1940s in which the accordion is replaced by the lap steel guitar.

Louis and Andre grew up in Pilette, Louisiana immersed in traditional Cajun music. Their father and uncles toured the world as Les Freres Michot, a respected Cajun ensemble. After a decade of "initiation" playing backup on triangle, guitar, and bass, Andre and Louis took up the lead instruments, accordion and violin. In 1999 they formed their own band with Louis on fiddle and vocals, and Andre on accordion and the lap-steel. Louis plays the fiddle that was passed down to him by his maternal grandfather, who had received it from *his* mother. In addition to learning accordion from his family, Andre was also taught by the great Ray Abshire. Since their founding, the group has led in a resurgence of interest in Cajun music among younger generations. In 2009, they released their fourth, and finest recording to date, *Vermillionaire*; for the first time capturing the energy of their live show in the studio. As bassist Alan LaFleur says: "If it doesn't feel like you're at our house, having a good time, it's not working."