

Texas Zydeco



BY ROGER WOOD PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES FRAHER

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To most people, zydeco appears as quintessentially Louisiana as gumbo. Certainly, the music originated among black Creoles of southwest Louisiana. But the swamps of southwest Louisiana spill across the Sabine River into southeast Texas, and the music originally known as 'la-la' quickly trickled west, too. There it fused with blues to create

a new sound that came to be known, spelled, and recorded as 'zydeco'. Black Creoles from Louisiana began moving into southeast Texas in search of better jobs during the first half of the twentieth century.As they resettled, so did their music. "Texas Zydeco" describes how many of the most formative players and moments in modern zydeco history developed in Texas, especially Houston. As the new players traveled back and forth between Houston and Lafayette, Louisiana, they spread the new sound along a 'zydeco corridor' that is the musical axis around which zydeco revolves to this day. Roger Wood and James Fraher spent years traveling this corridor, interviewing and photographing hundreds of authentic musicians, dancers, club owners, and fans. As their words and images make clear, zydeco, both historically and today, belongs not to a state but to all the people of the upper Gulf Coast.

作者介绍:

目录:

[Texas Zydeco_ 下载链接1](#)

标签

评论

[Texas Zydeco_ 下载链接1](#)

书评

[Texas Zydeco_ 下载链接1](#)