
Forcier, André. *Gumb-Oh! Là! Là!* (thirteen-part series).

Lafayette, LA: Louisiane à la carte and Tele•Vision, 2002. Thirteen DVDs: average length is twenty-six minutes. \$20.00 for each DVD. For orders, contact Charles Larroque, Producer, P.O. Box 52192, Lafayette, LA 70505-2192. Tel: (337) 233-5616. Fax: (337) 233-5616. E-mail: charles@louisianealacarte.org. Website: www.louisianealacarte.com.

Gumb-Oh! Là! Là! is a thirteen-part documentary series on French Louisiana, an outstanding series for making French relevant to American students today. Each engaging episode focuses on a prominent person in the preservation of French language and culture in Louisiana: Richard Guidry, Geno Delafosse, Merline Courteaux, Greg Guirard, Amanda Lafleur, D. L. Menard, Ronald Gaspard, Gérard Dupuy, Herbert Wiltz, Horace Trahan, Mark Krasnoff, Jolène Adam, and André Courville.

No documentary on French Louisiana would be complete without the presence of Richard Guidry. Guidry fulfills the role of “institution” for a people who was heretofore denied any institution for the preservation of their language and culture. As a defender of the Cajun language and culture, Richard deconstructs the myths that abound about what it means to be Cajun. As a Cajun linguist, Guidry labors to restore an eroding language; this he does with no small amount of typical Cajun hard-headed determination and tough love for those seeking to bring this language and culture into the twenty-first century.

Geno Delafosse is a zydeco musician who stays true to his Creole roots and sings the French songs born of the old “Là Là” tradition. Geno comes from a long line of musicians nurtured by the cross-pollination of the different influences found in south Louisiana. His French is Cajun prairie French yet he identifies himself as a Creole (Black French). His music is both Cajun and Creole, as he mixes it up on his diatonic accordion whenever he performs. Most importantly, Geno Delafosse connects with the youth of south Louisiana, and his attitudes of tolerance, inclusiveness, and *laissez les bons temps rouler* are well received throughout the world.

Merline Courteaux makes a profound statement when she declares that one cannot claim to be Indian in Louisiana if one does not speak French. This Houma Indian symbolizes the special bond between the French colonizers and the Native Americans that exists to this day.

Greg Guirard is a modern-day Cajun “Johnny Appleseed,” as he plants seeds of understanding and redemption for a people still numbed from the trauma of the past. The photographer/writer/crawfisherman has a Zen-like approach to life in the Atchafalaya Basin, and his message is a universal one for Cajuns caught up in the not too long ago unfamiliar world of Americanization.

Amanda Lafleur, an academician at LSU, has successfully produced a Cajun dictionary. Of particular interest is how she does her fieldwork with the quirks of her many language “informants.”

D. L. Menard’s famous song “La Porte d’en Arrière” has become an anthem of sorts for many Cajuns used to having to come in through “the back door” to be able to partake in the American dream.

Ronald Gaspard appears in the series to emphasize the fact that not all Cajuns and Creoles are musicians, fishermen, etc., but perform many different jobs, just like everyone else in the rest of the U.S. Ron is a private detective, but he purges his camera, which earlier spied on cheating husbands and wives, by later using it to interview the elderly in old folks’ homes in his own personal effort to help preserve a disappearing way of life — one, incidentally, that never needed private detectives!

Gérard Dupuy is a product of the early French explorers, Napoleon’s soldiers, the Tunica-Biloxi Indians, and maybe a few Cajuns thrown in. Although he does play the fiddle, Gérard bucks a few conventions about “Cajuns” and teaches GED at Angola State Prison. (He is now retired.) If every culture needs its own primal scream, Gérard Dupuy is the guy who can connect.

Herbert Wiltz embodies the Louisiana Black Creole French experience. The word “Creole” in Louisiana is rife with misconceptions and misguided judgments. Herbert tries to set the record straight with his interpretation, which is different from the New Orleans version. This is of particular importance in the series since many outsiders mistakenly associate contemporary French Louisiana with New Orleans. There is very little if any French remaining in New Orleans; however, in the sugar cane fields of St. Martin Parish, the children of the Haitian Revolution mixed in with the French colonists, local Indians, and Spanish, and Cajuns continue to define and redefine themselves by more than one word could ever say.

Horace Trahan is no ordinary Cajun musician. In fact, he’s not really a “Cajun musician,” as this white boy does zydeco and does it well. Horace was once deemed “the anointed one” destined to carry the old Cajun music tradition into the next generation. He sounded just like the old Cajun masters. Then one day, he went zydeco on them and took his share of flack for preferring the black French style to the “white” Cajun style. But Horace was all about Bob Marley, and in the series he tells Cajuns and Creoles alike that they need to “Get up! Stand up!”

Mark Krasnoff is perhaps the most charismatic and profound subject of the whole series. Half Cajun, half Jewish, Mark gives a unique view of the spiritual side of a people steeped in the mysticism of the survivor. “Kraz” was brought up in the cotton fields and bayous of Ville Platte and made his way to the theater circuit of New Orleans via New York. (Mark adored all things Orleanian. Unfortunately for us, he could not bear living in a dying city after Katrina, and he tragically took his own life just last year.) In the program, Mark brings his own brand of *françité* to New Orleans, and New Orleans just loved him to death.

Jolène Adam’s story is that of a young girl discovering her roots and vowing to honor her Acadian ancestors by totally embracing the French language. It’s a sim-

ple story, but one that is inspirational to many young Louisianians who want to know their roots and how to transplant them in a modern American setting.

André Courville's story is similar to that of Jolène Adam. His love of genealogy and music, coupled with his schooling in French immersion, creates a unique space where the Liberal Arts meet *Les Humanités*. It's a story of hope for the next generation. Today, André sings opera in New York and in Italy.

Undeniably rich in the history and culture of French Louisiana, *Gumb-Ob! Là! Là!* is a true gem, as it brings to life the efforts of those committed to preserving French in Louisiana. *Gumb-Ob! Là! Là!* has genuine appeal for students of all ages and backgrounds, not just for the French language classroom but also for history and social science classes.

Eileen M. Angelini, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Foreign Languages
Canisius College
Buffalo, NY

Publisher's Response

The Acadians call it a *tintamarre* — the defiant actions of those who sought refuge in the woods after being driven out of their homes by the British in 1755. With pots and pans and anything that would make a racket, the Acadians in turmoil noisily reminded the British that they were still there. *Gumb-Ob! Là! Là!* was created as a *tintamarre* letting the world know that French Louisiana is still out there and that there is much left to be said on that subject.

Our hope is to see this series (and its successor, *Coeurs batailleurs*) used in the classroom with accompanying instructor's guides. There should be only positive outcomes in meeting pedagogical objectives given the unique cultural setting presented here. In the meantime, we at Louisiane à la carte continue to further our social mission by seeking ways to provide a new generation with a voice in a language once a mother tongue and now a "grandmother" tongue. Along the way, there are myths to deconstruct, sociolinguistic identity crises to be dealt with, and a language and culture to validate.

The viewing of these Louisiana French documentaries by Louisiana students produces an impact on a population whose collective memory gets jogged by a familiar reality, albeit a reality clouded over by the forces of assimilation. It is our hope that locally, these films serve as an agent of change where dots are connected, where memories are no longer repressed. On a broader scale, it is hoped that the exploration of these questions of language and cultural identity will strike a chord with a greater North American Francophone audience who increasingly find themselves in survival mode. These survivors have a voice and they speak to us louder and louder, and with pride for they are still standing — standing tall — thanks to the shoulders of their ancestors. Others wait to stand too. And so the *tintamarre* continues ...

Charles Larroque
Writer/Producer
Lafayette, LA