

(upbeat music)

[Karina] Welcome to Houston, the land of zydeco.

Laissez les bons temps rouler.

[French for "Let the good times rool"]. Come on.

Zydeco is a feel-good music that you can't help but to dance to.

[Cedric] If you can two-step, if you can move your feet, you can zydeco.

(upbeat bass and drum music)

(accordion music)

[Karina] The people, no matter if it's an older crowd or a younger crowd, everybody's dancing, everybody's into it.

For a while, I stopped coming.

Now I'm like, I need that.

I need that moment of feeling free, letting my hair down.

You know, being around friends and family.

(zydeco music)

Something about when you hear that accordion and that washboard, that you know you've tuned into some Cajun, Creole zydeco music.

(zydeco music)

[Cedric] If you can move two to the left, two to the right, oh yeah, you can zydeco.

My zydeco nickname is One Step.

I didn't know how to do a two-step.

Zydeco is two steps and I was always doing one step.

But, as you can see, I don't do that anymore.

(zydeco music)

I love the music.

My grandmother has always told me, "Boy, that music is embedded in you. That's your blood."

Zydeco was born in southwest Louisiana and was brought here, to Houston.

It's bigger in Houston than it is in Louisiana.

(zydeco music)

[Alexis] Houston is on top of the zydeco world.

I grew up listening to my grandpa and my uncle playing in their own zydeco band.

My mom and dad met at a zydeco event.

(zydeco music)

When I'm dancing, I feel good, a relief.

So here we are at The Big Easy.

This building is important to my family because here is where my grandfather, Wilford Chevis, began his zydeco career.

(zydeco music)

Zydeco is basically Creole-French culture but we have our own way to it.

Like a southern Louisiana roux.

(zydeco music)

[Joseph] I was born outside of Opelousas, Louisiana.

Creole is a mixture of African-American and French-Caucasian and Native Indian.

I started dancing when I was 10 or 11 years old.

I love it.

In the beginning, we called it French la-la.

We're going to the la-la.

(zydeco music)

My grandfather would move everything in the house out and bring a band in.

(zydeco music)

My mom and dad left there when I was seven years old.

And we moved to Houston.

(zydeco music)

[Alexis] Right now we are in the area called Frenchtown.

This area is important to the zydeco culture because in the 1920s there was a big flood in Louisiana, so everyone moved here, to Houston, and they lived right here, in Frenchtown.

(zydeco music)

[Joseph] Fifth Ward, Frenchtown area of Houston, it was just like Louisiana had moved to Houston.

(zydeco music)

Clifton Chenier came along.

[Clifton] We gonna play y'all the music what's happenin' down home right now.

They call it zydeco.

[Joseph] And he came up with this song called "Zydeco Pas Sale".

[Clifton] This is a little song they call "Zydeco Sont Pas Sale" that says "no salt in your snap bean."

[Joseph] Clifton recorded that in Houston.

That's when people started switching from la-la to zydeco.

(zydeco music)

Some of the Creole people that started trail rides, they brought their music with them.

Just the Creole culture.

[Cedric] Trail riding clubs, and social clubs host events year round, with live zydeco music.

[Alexis] Trail ride is what helps spread the culture.

Trail riding is riding the horses during the day.

And the zydeco-ing at night.

♪ Turn it up. ♪

(zydeco music)

Nowadays you'll see more of the younger crowd.

The way the music's changing, the crowd changes.

I mean we all still dance together, anyway.

(zydeco music)

[Karina] With so much going on, we need something that can bring people together and, honestly to me, that's zydeco.

Dancing, feeling free, like hey, do your thing.

(zydeco music)

Hey, I hope you loved learning about zydeco here in Houston.

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