

Q&A



MARC BROUSSARD

This son of Louisiana's Cajun country prefers humanity to perfection

A SIGNED PICTURE OF LOCAL NATIVE Marc Broussard hangs on the wall at Don's Country Mart grocery store in Carencro, La., but the acclaimed singer and guitarist doesn't get treated like a celebrity around here. "They don't really know what I do," he says with a laugh. "And that's fine with me. Here in Cajun country, that's just how you supplement your income, playing in bands." In keeping with that attitude, his new self-titled effort keeps things old-school. "There's no reinventing the wheel," says Broussard, 29. "The stuff that sounded great back in the day sounds great today."

How did your childhood shape you?

My dad [guitarist Ted Broussard] was a professional musician and a serious jazzbo. So the music I heard around the house was complex and cerebral, as opposed to the good-time Cajun music that's more associated with southern Louisiana. Even the New Orleans music, like the Neville Brothers and Allen Toussaint, didn't quite make its way into my home.

What's new about this record?

In the past, I tried to outgrow my britches and

throw my ideas about production where they didn't belong. I knew going into this project that [producer, co-writer and keyboardist] Jamie Kenney would get the sounds and arrangements together, and I trusted him to do that more than any other producer I've worked with. It was the most relaxing recording experience I've ever had. Working with Jamie opened me up to better focus on my main job, which is to sing.

How did you meet Jamie?

We met two years ago at a cold writing session and hit it off in a big way. Jamie's from the South, loves football and talking politics. Then he sat at the piano and played a few bars, and it was all I needed to hear. I love working with piano players, because as a guitarist, it gives me a different perspective on my music. And he's supremely talented. Writing together felt very natural. It was just a matter of saying, "Hey, what do you want to talk about in this song?" And that usually was dictated by what the arrangement was lending itself to. Jamie would work out the arrangement, then together we'd hammer out the lyrics. Once we got rolling, we finished a song a day.

How do you get a great groove?

Hire the best drummer you can, like [longtime Broussard sideman] Chad Gilmore. Once you get it on tape, don't screw with it too much. Often in pop production there's an effort to perfect the drummer, and you can suck the humanity right out of the track. It's very easy to get wrapped up with locking to a grid and making everything perfect. It translates as lifeless. I've seen my own tracks go down in flames for this reason. Hire great musicians, then get out of the way and let them play.

Do you have a goal on stage?

My goal is to take an audience through an entire array of emotions throughout an evening. I want to make them cry, laugh, dance and walk away emotionally spent and talking about it. I'm giving everything I've got, so I want it to translate to the audience. I feel like as long as my band and I are having a good time, then the audience is having a good time. It's a dancehall mentality. My favorite thing to see is not an audience staring at me. It's to see an audience full of guys and girls facing each other and dancing.

—Bill DeMain

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