



WRITTEN BY
DEVIN COCHRAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
ROMERO & ROMERO

In the age of Spotify, iTunes and numerous other digital streaming platforms, the owners of Lafayette's Lagniappe Records give customers a refreshingly old-school experience when it comes to discovering new – and vintage – music.

LAGNIAPPE RECORDS

Patrick Hodgkins, formerly a bass player in the band As Fast As, met business partner Tess Brunet when she needed a bass player for a show in New Orleans. The two decided they were tired of touring as musicians and wanted to try something new.



SITTING SNUG

between Rukus and the Lafayette Center for Yoga, is an urban-like record store that offers an experience different from the shuffling through unorganized crates of vinyl in the average antique shop.

Tucked away in seafoam boxes, records rest in rows flowing to the back of the 900-square-foot building, divided by genres encompassing rock, pop, jazz and hip-hop. There is an earthy petrichor aroma, while the ears are greeted with the music of the day and the eyes fall upon the store's friendly cockatiel, Agnes.

"There's something here for everyone," boasts owner and curator Tess Brunet. "We have work that needs to be done, but it gets hard when we get swept up in talking to people about a myriad of things."

Before placing them out on display, Brunet and co-owner, Patrick Hodgkins, take on the arduous task of organizing and labeling records by their genre, quality or grade and vinyl type. They assiduously clean used vinyl to make sure it is in its best condition.

"We bust our asses," says Hodgkins. "We use our expertise to sort all of that out before we put it on the floor so you don't have to worry about that. Some people don't care or don't even know the difference, but it's there for the people that do care."

The records are graded and tagged on a scale of very good, very good+, excellent and near-mint.

"Every used record that comes in is unique because it may be a different catalog pressing or it may be a second or third



A

gnes the cockatiel
perches on owner and curator

Tess Brunet's shoulder.



pressing. Then you have to check the condition of each of them," Brunet explains. "We might have a copy of, for example, two records that look identical. One is more than the other, but the one that's more might be in a [better] condition."

Aside from antique stores and corporate entertainment stores like F.Y.E., Hodgkins says their biggest competition is the Internet.

"People can compare prices instantly with their smart phone," Hodgkins says. "We price our used stuff lower than the Internet because we're not selling to the Internet; we're selling to Lafayette."

What makes a trip to Lagniappe Records more personable than buying records online is the real-life interactions with the workers, according to Hodgkins.

"How you discover music online, they kind of base things on an algorithm of, if you like this, you might like this," he says.

"Here, it's like nobody is suggesting anything to you. You can use your sort of free will. We're here for you if you have questions."

"We suggest stuff for people all the time, but you would get a different response," Brunet says.

Lagniappe Records opened its doors last August 7, after the closing of its Baton Rouge location (which had opened in July 2013). Lagniappe Records was originally a website selling online and making appearances at record fairs. Brunet was a vocalist in the New Orleans-based indie-pop band Generational.

"I started Lagniappe Records with \$2,000 of my own publishing money from Generational," she says.

Brunet, who toured to cities such as New York and Los Angeles, was also a drummer for the indie-pop band Dead Boy and the Elephantmen, which appeared at such music festivals as Austin City Limits and Lollapalooza.

BRUNET & HODGKINS ALSO SPONSOR & SUPPORT LOCAL EVENTS SUCH AS FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL & THE MONTHLY ARTWALK.

Hodgkins was in an alternative rock band called As Fast As, in which he played bass guitar. The two met when Brunet needed a bass player for a show in New Orleans, and Hodgkins stepped in – a story Brunet says she loves telling.

Brunet says Lagniappe Records was partly born out of the tiresome life of being a touring musician.

"We were tired of selling things online, too, and trying to juggle being touring musicians, and we decided to stay in one place and have a store to sell records from," Hodgkins says.

When Brunet and Hodgkins were looking for a location to open a store, Brunet says it was a 50-50 chance whether or not the store would be in Lafayette or Baton Rouge. Once their Baton Rouge location's lease was up, the entrepreneurs moved to Lafayette.

"They were raising the rent on us by 30 percent and it was something pretty astronomical," Brunet says. "We weren't finding anything



comfortable, so it made us expand our search. Out of 30-some-odd places, I saw this place and knew instantly it was going to be our new home. It was something I knew right away."

The new venue was previously a vape shop and a newsstand. According to Brunet, it was also a "drunk tank," where police officers took inebriated bar patrons for holding if necessary.

"They had benches apparently in this back cubby hole where our electronic and Louisiana section is," Brunet says, pointing behind her. "There were benches along the wall where they would throw drunk people from the bars late at night and they'd cuff them to the benches."

Besides providing a music service for Lafayette, Brunet and Hodgkins also sponsor and support local events such as Festival International and the monthly Artwalk. They also work to bring shows to Lafayette and support local businesses.

"We do about one show a season," Brunet says. "Usually it's someone we believe in and stand behind or we're usually big fans. We want to bring this to the community because it brings something different."

"[Nearby coffee shop] Réve will have a pot of coffee in here sometimes," Hodgkins adds. "We get our shirts made at Parish Ink and we rock a lot of Genterie fashion."

The clientele of Lagniappe Records sweeps "all across the board," according to Brunet.

"Babies have portable record players in their rooms," she says. "Their parents are buying children's records. From there, we have 80-something-year-olds. It's a lot of in-between. And the younger kids are coming into the store. They're starting off with the classics like Led Zeppelin, but once they grow older, they'll start digging into the not-so-obvious, like J. Cole and Kendrick Lamar." ■



BRUNET WAS A VOCALIST IN THE BAND GENERATIONALS AND A DRUMMER FOR DEAD BOY AND THE ELEPHANTMEN