What is going on at Festival? Your guide to food, fun

George Clarke
gorge.clarke@thevermilion.com

As the University of Louisiana at Lafayette celebrates Multicultural Week, Lafayette at large is preparing for the 32nd Festival International de Louisiane, which will take place the final weekend of April, 25-29.

The showcase of Francophone, International and Louisiana music annually transforms downtown Lafayette into a hotbed of cultural encounters that illustrates universal qualities of humanity in a locale that can, at times, be almost stiflingly insular.

With this festival, as with most North American music festivals, it is as much a personal fashion exhibition and exercise in the proper accessorizing of ripped denim and large hats as it is a celebration of music and its border-crossing qualities. The curious way in which “festival attire” is characterized as Indie-chic speaks volumes for the success of Coachella’s branding (or, rather, Urban Outfitters’ capitalization on the equivocation between fringe and freedom). But for me, here in Lafayette, the most fascinating part about Festival International isn’t the Californian-for-a-day costumery, or the eclectic gathering of musicians and artists from across the globe; it’s the kind of quiet agreement between the diverse groups attending the festival — specifically between parents with young children and the drugged-out wanna-be Burning Men — that amounts to a curiously surreal and low-key hilarious understanding of “ignore us and we’ll ignore you.”

Local names at this year’s local Li’l Coachella include Lafayette locals Givers (generously and bafflingly categorized as “experimental pop” on the lineup release), Grammy-winners The Lost Bayou Ramblers, the gnarly and disillusioned Grand Nathaniel & the Ghosts, the funk collective Brass Mimosa and the rootsy Feufollet. However, the focus is, as it should be, on the international acts.

Sidi Touré, an award-winning singer-songwriter out of Mali, brings a unique expression of Songhai music, a West African folk-style. The unification of humanity — specifically in Africa — is an undercurrent throughout Touré’s songs, which draw on Malian history and tradition. Touré will perform the evening of Thursday, April 26, at LUS SCÈNE INTERNATIONALE.

Lisa Leblanc, a firebrand singer from Quebec, who has been said (justifiably or not) to possess to the drollness Courtney Barnett and the great folk-poetry Bob Dylan, and who, having gained considerable acclaim in Canada and Europe for her blazing instrumentation and French-and-English lyricality, will close out the day’s festivities Thursday, April 26, at LUS SCÈNE INTERNATIONALE.

Mydy Rabycad, an absolutely bonkers pop group from the Czech Republic, call to mind a kind of Chromec-trapped-in-a-cabaret, cyberpunk bizarreness that should not be missed. Make sure you’re at SCÈNE LABORDE EARLES LAW FIRM FAIS DO DO Friday, April 27.

Sona Jobarteh faced a unique struggle in coming to her path of artistic expression. She is a product of centuries of tradition that dictated the handing-down of instrumentation from father to son in her family, one of the five “principal Griot families” — musical historians and historians within the West African culture. Jobarteh carries her weighty lineage (her grandfather is a Gambian icon) with grace and aplomb and brings the ancient tradition of kora into the present. Don’t miss her set April 27.