



Going for a Grammy

Rotterdam percussionist David Macejka played on C.J. Chenier's zydeco album

By **TOM KEYSER**

Staff writer

C.J. Chenier sent him an email. That's a neat thing right there, receiving a personal email from the zydeco superstar.

What made last week's email even better was that it informed David Macejka that he and the rest of Chenier's Red Hot Louisiana Band had been nominated for a Grammy Award for the album "Can't Sit Down," released in September. Macejka, who played percussion and kalimba on the record, was home in Rotterdam, drinking his morning coffee and checking emails and Facebook, when the news arrived.

"It's great," Macejka says. "It's like an actor getting nominated for an Oscar, or at least an actor being part of a project that gets nominated. Some of the best musicians in the world are on that nominations list. It's an honor being in their company."

"Can't Sit Down" was nominated as best regional-roots album. In reducing categories this year from 109 to 78, The Recording Academy eliminated the zydeco category. So Chenier's album is competing with brass, polka, zydeco and Hawaiian music.

Chenier, who sings on the album and plays accordion, piano, flute and organ, is the son of Clifton Chenier, the "king of zydeco" and designer of the rub-board. The senior Chenier, who died in 1987, won a Grammy Award in 1983 for the album "I'm Here."

Macejka's story of how he came to play with C.J. Chenier is one those dream-come-true tales. In June 2003, the local band in which he was playing, Jocamo, opened for Chenier at Alive At Alive.

After Jocamo finished, Chenier approached Macejka, told him how much he liked his playing and asked him to keep his equipment (conga and timbale) on stage and play with him. Despite not knowing Chenier's music, Macejka did, and that began a relationship that continues to this day.

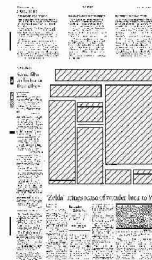
He kept playing with Chenier's band and, about a year or year and a half ago, became a full-time member. He tours regularly with the band; in October he flew to Poland for one 45-minute set with Chenier at the Rawa Blues Festival, which bills itself as the largest indoor blues festival in the world. Macejka says they played for 5,000 to 6,000 people. Macejka also plays and tours with the Celtic band Cu Dubh, based in Boston.

But you don't have to go to Boston or Poland to see Macejka at work. He will conduct a drum workshop Sunday at the Yoga Spa in Ballston Spa. (See box.)

His participation on Chenier's "Can't Sit Down" was his first on a Chenier album. According to Chenier's website, the album was recorded for the World Village label in "one kick-butt" session at Rock Romano's Red Shack recording studio in Houston, Texas. Many of the songs, Macejka says, were recorded in one take.

"He wanted to focus on how the band sounded live," he says, "the energy of the band when it plays live."

This was Chenier's first album in five years, and band members thought it might receive a Grammy nomination, Macejka says. So the news wasn't a complete surprise. Now, Macejka must make plans to attend the awards ceremony Feb. 12 at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.



“No way I’m going to miss that,” he says. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

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At a glance

DAVID MACEJKA

DRUM WORKSHOP

- **When:** 2-4 p.m. Sunday
- **Where:** Yoga Spa, 53 Front St., Ballston Spa
- **Cost:** \$20
- **Info:** 760-807-2412; <http://the-yoga-spa.com>; <http://www.davidmacejka.com>



DAVID MACEJKA

JASON DULIN