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Lafayette's 'Daily Crawfish' serves up spicy satire with a Cajun twist

Spicy satire with a Cajun twist

by Kailey Broussard Special to The Advocate

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Advocate staff photo by LESLIE WESTBROOK -- Richy Parkin, co-creator of satirical news web site TheDailyCrawfish.com, is pictured Friday, March 4, 2016, in Lafayette, La.

What started as a handful of humorous, fictional articles by a native of England and friends in Lafayette where he now resides has snowballed into a satirical news site that has caught the attention of local news

outlets and public figures — and even a '70s rock band.

By day, Richard “Richy” Parkin designs chalk displays and creates digital illustrations for Whole Foods Market in Lafayette. But after nightfall, he mutates into the website auteur behind The Daily Crawfish, an online journal that’s proving to be a hit on social media.

So what is The Daily Crawfish? Think The Onion, only with a Cajun accent, a website peppered with satirical articles like these, where the headlines tell the tale:

Five Treated For Trauma In Tony Chachere’s Under-Seasoning Accident

Edwards: “Screw It, I’m Just Going To Throw Northern Louisiana On Craigslist And Be Done With It”

OFFICIAL: Speed Cameras Now Outnumber People 2-to-1 In River Ranch Area Man Declines \$80,000 Per Year Job After Realizing That He'd Need To Take a Left Turn on to Johnston Street at 8 a.m.

“I can’t imagine it’s as easy as The Onion, where they have the whole U.S. to play with, because you gotta keep it local, but it’s still so easy,” Parkin says of his popular website. “Don’t get me wrong; I love this area and I love Louisiana — it writes itself!”

His fingers tap on his sticker-covered MacBook Pro as he muses over personal experiences and current events that serve as the inspirations for his humorous stories — a process that takes an average of 30 minutes.

His corps of comedic collaborators said an outsider like the British-born Parkin has a knack for finding humor in day-to-day life in south Louisiana that can be spun into articles for The Daily Crawfish.

“It’s a little easier for Richy because he’s got an outsider’s perspective, whereas we’ve lived here most of our lives,” observed Josh LeBlanc, who specializes in features and operates as the publication’s public relations man. LeBlanc, who fields complaints about some of the articles, said Parkin has “no filter.”

It seems to be working, though.

Originally from Lincolnshire, England, Parkin earned his bachelor's degree in graphic design from Teesside University in England. Since his childhood and on into adulthood, Parkin often vacationed in the United States.

"I've been all over the U.S.," Parkin said. "I've been to New York, Las Vegas, Grand Canyon. I think Louisiana is one of the nicest places I've been to. It has its problems, as I'm sure anywhere does."

During a trip to New Orleans in December 2011, Parkin met Ashlee Trahan, a full-time burlesque performer and costumer. They married two years later. Through Trahan, Parkin met a group of guys in Lafayette who helped him get the website going.

Parkin said moving 3,000 miles from his home in England to be with Trahan required some adjustments. He confessed that he changed the way he speaks, acts and dresses to assimilate into U.S. culture.

A lot of people have trouble just moving from here to New Orleans,” said LeBlanc of Parkin’s move to Cajun country.

Although Parkin’s specialty lies in design, he said he’s always enjoyed writing although he’s never considered himself to be very good at it.

The idea for a satirical website sprang to him while he was reading comments on the KATC Facebook page. He was amused by the fraudulent sources commenters often used as they argued their points, and he set off on a quest to explore further how easily people could be fooled.

“That’s what kind of makes it fun because it’s not just written for the sake of being written,” Parkin said. “It’s written because you have personal attachment to it in a way and you’re like, ‘These people are stupid. I want them to see how stupid they’re being.’ ”

The Daily Crawfish was the vehicle chosen to pursue it.

“My thought was, ‘Wouldn’t it be hilarious if we tried to write our articles and try to get them to spread?’ It didn’t start as, ‘Let’s make a satire site.’ It started as almost a sadistic sort of thing,” Parkin said.

The site began in December under a different name as a small, free domain. Parkin started by “throwing ideas out there” and publishing several articles to jump-start the site’s feed. Within two weeks, the traffic crashed the website, prompting Parkin and his team to invest more time and money in the fledgling faux news site.

“It was almost like a social experiment, in a way,” Parkin said.

Eventually, he said, an article that “confirmed” ’70s rock band Foghat wrote “Slow Ride” about Verot School Road traffic caught the attention of KTDY radio DJ Steve Riley.

Foghat’s manager later contacted The Daily Crawfish team via Facebook.

“Someone from this area obviously asked, ‘Is this true?’ A week later, we got a message from the band’s management ... and she loved it,” said Parkin, who was bemused the article drew such attention.

Although the site has gained traction in Acadiana, the group behind it remained relatively out of the public eye. The only people who knew the authors' identities were "close friends" and co-workers, Parkin said, although maintaining anonymity is not a priority.

"If people know it's me, then it's fine," Parkin said. "If someone comes knocking on my door threatening to kill me, I'll be like, 'First Amendment!'"

Parkin's uncertain as to what the future holds for The Daily Crawfish.

"This is by no means a strategic, well-put-together experiment; it's just a flying-by-the-seat-of-your-pants type thing," he said. "It's working, I guess; people seem to respond to it and seem to like it."

He said he would sell if a site like The Onion made an offer for The Daily Crawfish. But he said he'd be just as content making mere pocket change from the production.

“It would be nice to make a little beer money,” he said with a laugh.