

California still has juke joints



Scott Thomas
Anderson

Amador in Action

Drytown isn't very dry, but it is electric.

Laura Doyle, Amy Newton and Russ Lagorio are the new owners of the Drytown Club, a brass tacks watering hole nestled in a blond creek canyon along Highway 49. With the place quickly becoming a hidden treasure for live music, the owners are pushing to give the little bar all the

sonic sugar and laid-back energy of a Mississippi juke joint.

On the outside, the Drytown Club looks like a typical roadside stop in the West. On the inside, it offers a wide-open simplicity adorned with standing amplifiers and a drum kit – good symbols for what the hub is becoming to area music lovers. On most nights, patrons can stroll in and crack open a beer or swirl a glass of Drytown wine, all while getting an earful of sizzling blues. In fact, devotees of this soul-swaying kind of music often travel from all over the valley just to immerse themselves in the Drytown Club's

cozy box of bluesy licks.

On Sundays the dusty parking area is usually overflowing with cars as the weekly Barbecue and Blues event goes down, the band Church Street Center giving the crowd a dose of Appalachian twang before the club's house band, Leather Souls, turns up some rhythmic heat. These afternoons are becoming increasingly well known for the affordable barbecue meals and crying guitar amps, come rain or shine.

"We definitely have people from all over the region coming here on the weekends for blues," Laura told me. "But when we got involved, we really wanted to create a new atmosphere that would cater to locals, especially local musicians and everyone who loves to watch

Thirsty Thursday with Who's J.A.C.?

WHEN: 7 p.m. Thursdays

WHERE: The Drytown Club, 15950 Highway 49, Drytown

MORE INFO: 245-6722

local people jam. That's what's been happening here during the weekdays, and it's drawing incredibly talented musicians."

A huge hit for the bar has been its Wednesday night open music jams, which start at 7 p.m. Some of Amador's best guitar pickers have been obliged to drop by to bang the chords and bend the strings; but specialized musicians have also been

drawn like moths to the flame, including pianists and even a classically trained violinist. Thirsty Thursday has also been a big attraction; beginning at 7 p.m. Thursdays, see \$1 off all drinks, while the band Who's J.A.C.? hits listeners with spicy guitar riffs. On Friday nights – the eve of the weekend – the

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ahead by installing "staging areas" at key points along the way.

A section of completed trail currently runs along the north shore of Camanche Reservoir. Named for one of the more prominent features on the trail, the China Gulch Staging Area is becoming well known among Amador and Calaveras county residents as one of the Mother Lode's best winter hikes. From the China Gulch Staging Area on Camanche's north shore, hikers have a multitude of options: you can take the entire length of the trail to Lancha Plana on an 11-mile round-trip trek, or simply walk out among the grasses and splendid views and stop at any number of historical landmarks or vistas along the way.

If you're up for a bit of a challenge, I strongly recommend taking the full trail to Lancha Plana; with low-canopied trees growing close enough to block the sun and keep the grasses green, this area is a great spot for a relaxing break. Lancha Plana means "flat boat" in Spanish, and was the name of a ford in the Mokelumne River where a ferry was reported to have run at the site of the present-day Lancha Plana Bridge on Buena Vista Road.

To enter Camanche's North Shore and the China Gulch Staging Area, there is a \$7 per-car day-use fee. You might be thinking that \$7 is a bit steep for a day use fee, and considering the entrance fees to most California state parks are less than \$10, I would have to agree. However, if China Gulch wasn't one of the best trails around, it wouldn't be featured in this review. Even on

my salary, I came away from China Gulch's lush green fields and massive stands of blue oaks feeling like I really got what I paid for!

To get to the China Gulch Staging Area from Highway 49 in Jackson, take Highway 88 west for 7 miles and turn left onto Jackson Valley Road. Follow this for 3 miles (following signs to Camanche North Shore) and then turn left onto Camanche Road. Follow Camanche Road all the way to the China Gulch Staging Area. The trail begins at the north end of the lot; to access the trailhead from the parking area, walk north on the gravel road next to a board fence until the kiosk comes into view. Make sure to close the gate across the trail after you pass through.

If you enjoy camping and hiking in the Mother Lode, please remember that California's resources are limited. Many areas are being placed under state-run supervision, and this has a tendency to decrease user freedom and increase entrance fees and restrictions. As with any wilderness destination, proper disposal of waste, camping only at designated sites and proper trail use practices should all be rigorously enforced. Many of the Mother Lode's best recreation areas are under the supervision of area ranger districts. For your safety and future enjoyment, these areas are strictly patrolled. Please be respectful toward these amazing resources and above all, be safe and have fun!

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Sierra Lodestar

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37 Main St.
Hospice Thrift Store
10776 Argonaut Lane & Hwy. 49
In San Andreas:
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FineEye Gallery, 71 Main St.

In Angels Camp:
Hospice Thrift Store,
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