

The Story of “Montreux”

Montreux takes its name from the town of Montreux on the shores of Lake Geneva Switzerland. On December 4, 1971 the band “Deep Purple” had set up camp in Montreux Switzerland to record an album at the entertainment complex that was part of the Montreux Casino, using a mobile recording studio rented from the Rolling Stones. On the eve of the recording session, a concert by Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention was held in the casino’s theatre. In the middle of Don Preston’s synthesizer solo on “King Kong” the place suddenly caught on fire when someone in the audience set off a flare gun into the rattan ceiling. The resulting fire destroyed the entire casino complex along with all of the Mother’s equipment.

Smoke on the Water

Meanwhile, the members of Deep Purple watched the fire from their hotel rooms across the lake. A few days later guitarist Roger Glover awoke from a dream about the fire and came up with the title “Smoke on the Water” referring to the smoke from the fire spreading over Lake Geneva from the burning casino. In the song, the mobile studio is referred to as the “Rolling truck Stones thing” and the “mobile”. The person who started the fire is “some stupid with a flare gun”. “Funky Claude” is Claude Nobs, the director of the Montreux Jazz Festival, who helped some of the audience escape the fire.

“We all came out to Montreux on the Lake Geneva shoreline. To make records with a mobile, We didn’t have much time. Smoke on the water, Fire in the sky.”

The Montreux Casino was rebuilt in 1975.

Montreux is the home of Mountain Studios, the recording studio used by several artist. “Bonzo’s Montreux” by Led Zeppelin is named after the city where the drum session of John Bonham was recorded in 1976. In 1978, the band Queen bought the studio. A statue of Freddy Mercury, lead singer for Queen, acknowledged as one of the greatest singers of all time and occasional performer at the jazz festival, stands in a prominent location on the shore of Lake Geneva. The Montreux Jazz Festival has been held every year in July since 1967. Today’s festival lasts about two weeks, represents every imaginable music style, and attracts an audience of over 200,000.

Before we opened “Montreux Bar and Grill” in Summerville, an unnamed patron at a local bar who looked like ZZ Top suggested the name and told the story about “Smoke on the Water”. We liked the name immediately. In keeping with the Montreux tradition, Thursday through Monday we bring live music “of every imaginable style” to Montreux Bar and Grill here in this grand old building (1862) in beautiful downtown Summerville, SC. We hope you enjoy the show...and the food...and the drinks too for that matter!