

# “The hardest working Gypsy Jazz Band in San Francisco” – San Francisco Chronicle

The Music / The Band

## Gaucha

### Biography



### Booking:

**Dave Ricketts**

**415 515 5873**

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Gaucha is a masterful Bay Area band that combines the influence of gypsy jazz of 1930's Europe with the rhythmic drive and collective improvisation of New Orleans swing music, gutbucket blues and elements of ragtime. Their sound, a uniquely American concoction, blends instrumental acuity and lighthearted humor that keep their audience coming back for more. As founder, guitarist, and main composer Dave Ricketts says, the band is "in love with the music of Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller and Jimmie Rodgers, as well as the stories, the life styles and the footsteps of hundreds of other great jazz, blues, country and rock musicians that created the sound of American Music from roughly 1900-1950's"

Gaucha has recorded seven albums, tours regularly, and has an increasing repertoire of over forty original tunes. Seven of their tunes are featured in the 2012 film "Trattoria"; one was chosen by the Metropolitan Museum of Art for their website; and another is featured in the outtakes section of the Pixar DVD CARS 2. In 2018 Gaucha got a song in the Hollywood Movie (right before the sex scene!), "Destination Wedding" starring Keanu Reeves and Winona Ryder. And two of Dave's own compositions will be placed in a New York City based indie film, "Stationed at Home," in 2020.

Led by eminent guitarist, Dave Ricketts, the group has been a San Francisco mainstay for over fifteen years, and one of the busiest bands in the bay area playing 5 to 10 gigs a week. Together with virtuosos Rob Reich—accordion and Craig Venetresco—guitar, superlative bassist Ari Munkres and versatile percussionist Steve Apple, these guys keep crowds moving with their beats and complex rhythms.

# GaUCHO

## Albums



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## The Albums

GaUCHO Live at Joe's Pub

Released: 2016



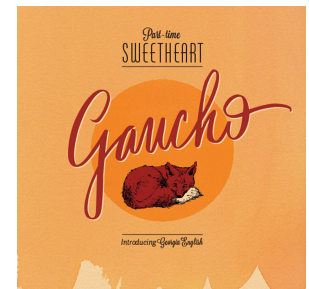
Thinking of You

Released: 2014



Part-Time Sweetheart

Released: 2012



Pearl

Released: 2010



Deep Night

Released: 2008



Deluxe

Released: 2006



# Gaucha

## Gigs



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## Where to hear Gaucha play

Amnesia The Bar – Wednesday nights for the past 15 years

Comstock Saloon – Monday and Friday nights

Club Deluxe – Tuesday nights

Brenda's French Soul Food – Sunday afternoons

## Past Gigs

SF Jazz

Joe's Pub NYC

Doc's Lab

Camp Swing

Cigar Bar

Mechanics Library

Friday Nights at the DeYoung

SF Moma

Throckmorton Theatre

KQED

Café Borrone

## Achievements

Movie: Destination Wedding

Pixar Movie: Cars 2

Movie: Trattoria

Metropolitan Museum Website

# Voted “Best SF Jazz Band 2016” – SF Weekly

## GaUCHO

**BUZZ**



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### The Buzz

“GaUCHO's universe is expansive enough that Django Reinhardt is not the only star illuminating its nocturnal wanderings.” – **SF Weekly**

“GaUCHO transports listeners back in time. Blending instrumental acuity and lighthearted humor, they take the French gypsy tradition straight back to the gutbucket, creating a uniquely American concoction.” – **SF Jazz**

“S.F. Jazz Festival – 10 shows you need to see”

– **San Jose Mercury News**

“This is jazz that wears its heart on its sleeve with plenty of Saturday savoir-faire and swagger and straight from (and to) the heart of musicianship. In the a.m. or Deep Night, this'll chase the blues away posthaste.”

– **Porto Franco Records**

“GaUCHO scores high marks for integrating the rhythms of world cultures in their music while also retaining a slice of Americana in their songs with elements of ragtime and the old-time country-swing of riverboat bands. They offer more than a typical gypsy-jazz ensemble and their love of this music is inspiring.” – **Jazz Reviews**

“Their tight-knit 1930s Eastern European standards, Reinhardt covers, swing hits and New Orleans jams enabled the outfit to make a name for itself around S.F., scoring high-profile fans like Joy Luck Club author Amy Tan.” – **The Monterey Weekly**

# GaUCHO

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## The Press

### **SF Chronicle**

*GaUCHO - S.F.'s hardest-working Gypsy jazz band*

*By Aidin Vaziri*

With long-running residencies at Amnesia and Tartine Bakery (along with a half-dozen odd shows in between), GaUCHO just might be the hardest-working Gypsy jazz band in San Francisco. Next month the group, founded by guitarist Dave Ricketts, will play five shows in five days. We asked Ricketts to promote each one separately while giving us the entire history of the collective, which is currently rounded out by guitarist Michael Groh, bassist Ari Munkres, accordionist Rob Reich, reed player Ralph Carney, drummer Pete Devine and special guest vocalist Tamar Korn. No big deal, right?

Amnesia Bar, Aug. 10

"I started the band there a little over nine years ago - the band started as a trio now it's a sextet. Every week we go back and try new things. We also play first and third Thursdays at Tartine Bakery. Both venues are kind of the yin and yang for the band. Amnesia is a big rowdy party every night - we have to use amps and have sound guys. We get to play acoustically at Tartine. We get to try out things quietly that we didn't the night before. It's like the morning after."

Cafe Borrone, Aug. 11

"This year I'm going to take the band on tour more. In November, we're going to do our first tour of the West Coast and Pacific Northwest. We play in New York a lot. I've been bringing the band out there for about three years. The scene there is so intense I don't think a band like GaUCHO could have been created there. It can constrict people artistically. We're more free to be ourselves here. But it is where I met Tamar. I took her out to lunch and asked her if she would consider doing a CD with GaUCHO. She said, 'I've always wanted to write lyrics for songs.' So it became this East Coast/West Coast project. We just love her singing so much. It felt very validating that we were on a path that this great singer recognized and wanted to work with us." (Cont.)

# Gaucha

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## The Press

Healdsburg Guitar Festival, Aug. 12

"That's just me solo. I'm teaching a workshop on Gypsy jazz. In a lot of ways, instrumentation-wise, the band started as a Gypsy jazz band. It has its roots with Django Reinhardt, who played guitar and banjo - he created the genre in the 1930s. When we picked it up, I started Gaucha as a way of exploring it more. As we did it, we met more and more people, like Clint Baker and Leon Oakley. They love Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke. So there's a lot of traditional jazz history in what we do, as well."

Caffe Pascucci, Aug. 12

"Two years ago, we didn't have many original songs. Now we can play a three-hour gig of nothing but original material. It feels like the band is growing. We're becoming more graceful players. 'Pearl' is the first CD with mainly new original tunes. There's 10 originals and two standards. Tamar sings on five of the songs and wrote lyrics for three. A lot of the songs are personal experience I've shaped into a song. I love George Gershwin and Hoagy Carmichael - so they're in that style of writing. Pixar just bought a song from me. It's in a small place in the outtakes of the 'Cars 2' DVD, but it's validation. That feels good."

Porto Franco Art Parlor, Aug. 14

"Porto Franco is run by Peter Varshavsky and his father, Sergei. We were the first band signed to their label back in 2009. They have a really great vision. Both our albums were recorded at Amnesia during the day. We just lock the bar down and invite an audience in. We want their energy there because we love performing for the audience but we just tell them they can't applaud or talk during the recording. Tartine Bakery and La Mediterranee donate food to the recording sessions. We'll run each song three times. It's an all day event. That was a fun way to record them, but I'm looking forward to doing the next one in a studio."

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The Press

## **Monterey County Weekly**

*The Gaucho Gypsy Jazz Band Trio makes a good thing better, stops by Museum of Monterey for a special show.*

*By Adam Joseph*

Dave Ricketts remembers a time, not long ago, when the clerks at his local music store referred to gypsy jazz as “fag music.”

Now he says those same guys hit him up for advice about which guitar strings bring out the best gypsy jazz sound.

Ricketts formed the Gaucho Gypsy Jazz Band about 10 years ago following a three-year stint in Hot Club of San Francisco. Gaucho promptly began unleashing wildly entertaining live instrumental shows fueled by the group's intermingling playfulness and musicianship – and led by Ricketts' unblemished and intricate fluidity on guitar.

Their tight-knit 1930s Eastern European standards, Reinhardt covers, swing hits and New Orleans jams enabled the outfit to make a name for itself around S.F., scoring high-profile fans like Joy Luck Club author Amy Tan.

Though already polished and established, Gaucho reinvented itself a few years back. Ricketts was going through a painful divorce and felt inspired to start writing his own material. (Previously the band hadn't performed originals.)

“Music is such a personal experience,” Ricketts says. “It comes from having rough experiences, like a divorce. It was a great way to stay focused instead of getting caught up in the bad stuff.” (cont.)

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## The Press

Ricketts' fiery flurry of songwriting resulted in Pearl. The album features 10 original tracks and New York City-based vocalist Tamar Korn, who will join the GaUCHO Gypsy Jazz Band Trio on Friday night at the Museum of Monterey – which has undergone a reinvention itself – along with Rob Reich on accordion and Ari Munkres on standup bass.

Korn gives life to Ricketts' beautifully bleak break-up lyrics on Pearl's title track. She delivers each line as if she lived through the heartbreak herself. Her vintage vibrato oozes with the same kind of savory antique lure that soaks the accompanying instrumental parts.

"There's no one out there like [Korn]," Ricketts says. "She's a world-class vocalist and charming performer."

Ricketts never imagined that the vocal role on GaUCHO's most recent release, Part-Time Sweetheart, would go to one of his former music pupils, but sure enough there's 20-year-old Georgia English, who took guitar lessons from him for six years beginning at 8 and now studies songwriting and voice at Berklee School of Music in Boston.

"You're hoping just to encourage [students] to like music and then go back to skateboarding," he says. "I've been teaching for 15 years and it's rare that you get to see something like this."

On Sweetheart, the title track opens with Ricketts' one-minute, romantic guitar serenade constructed from semitones, appoggiaturas and mordents. Then he creeps into gypsy jazz strums and gives way to English's invigorating blend of modern and retro, an amalgamation that fits nicely with GaUCHO's dedication to old-world sound and Ricketts' openness to trying new things.



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The Press

**SF Weekly**

*Gypsy Americana*

*By, John Graham*

The term "gaucho" commonly refers to nomadic South American cowboys, which is pretty indicative of how the San Francisco band Gaucha plays its version of Gypsy jazz: in Gaucha's hands, le jazz manouche is left playfully unchained to the genre's European historical foundations, allowing the music to ramble and roam beyond the typically defined borders of Djangoslavia. Of course, Gaucha nails down the genre's staple sounds — e.g., the rhythmic, pumping, almost percussive guitar chordings — but Gaucha's universe is expansive enough that Django Reinhardt is not the only star illuminating its nocturnal wanderings. For example, on the 2009 album *Deep Night*, Gaucha opens the Hot Club's walls to encompass Tin Pan Alley, New Orleans riverboat swing, and loose blues influences, while its regular Wednesday gig at Amnesia is anything but a staid lesson in Gypsy jazz history. These Mission District regulars (bandleader/guitarist Dave Ricketts, accordionist Rob Reich, reedsman Ralph Carney, et al) always keep the proceedings free and easy. It's easy to imagine Django's own vagabond ghost smiling down in approval.

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The Press

***East Bay Express***

*CD Review: Deep Night*

*By, Mark Kershaw*

Everything old is new again (well, nearly everything) thanks to these savvy, intrepid local hepcats. Gaucha — no, not a Steely Dan cover combo — is a sextet consisting of acoustic guitarists David Ricketts and Michael Groh, accordionist Rob Reich, Ralph Carney on various wind instruments, bassist Ari Munkres, and drummer Pete Devine.

Deep Night is sixteen standards/chestnuts (mostly from the first half of the 20th century) played in the mode of Belgian Gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt's Hot Club de France and their disciples the Hot Club of Cowtown and Hot Club of San Francisco. You'll likely notice a common thread: Hot, here denoting driving tempos, vigorously rhythmic, invigorating swing, and sultry melodies. Along with an assortment of expressive clarinets, Carney blows scorching sax in the boldly big-hearted manner of pre-bebop players Coleman Hawkins and Johnny Hodges, and growling trumpet à la Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington's brass section. Think the accordion is for squares? Reich's squeezebox is the thick, tangy mayonnaise that offsets the caliente generated by the rest. The guitarists — heck, the whole lot — play fabulously with not a single excess note.

This is jazz that wears its heart on its sleeve with plenty of Saturday savoir-faire and swagger and straight from (and to) the heart of musicianship. In the a.m. or Deep Night, this'll chase the blues away posthaste. (Porto Franco Records)

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## **Jazz Reviews**

### *Gypsy Jazz – CD Reviews: Deep Night*

*By, Susan Frances*

The gypsy-jazz sextet, Gaucha bring back the jangly country-swing grooves of riverboat bands and the emotive nature of Russian-based folk dances on their latest album, *Deep Night*. Their repertoire has shavings of Django Reinhardt's country textured jazz with slabs of gypsy-folk dance rhythms. The band's rhythm section has raspy washboard strokes of Ari Munkres on standup bass and the splashing strikes of drummer Pete Devine creating a pliable floorboard for the supple accordion swags of Rob Reich and the swiveling riffs of guitarists Dave Ricketts and Michael Groh as Ralph Carney's horns slip and slide excitedly across the melodic seams. The band's arrangements are so well balanced that everyone's parts have definition as they each share the spotlight, including special guest guitarist Craig Ventresco whose ragtime textured sequences add glitz and flying sparks to the numbers.

From beginning to end, the album feels like an episode of the Lawrence Welk Show, particularly in the band's rendition of "Tea For Two" which was a staple of the show. Moving from the country meshed clip-clopping beats of "St. Louis Blues" to the sensual Spanish flare of the guitar riffs in "Bossa Dorado" and "Tico Tico," to the exotic zig-zagging patterns of the clarinet in "The Sheik Of Araby" and the Italian bistro ambience of "Two Deuces" and "Memories Of You," Gaucha integrates influences from various world cultures into their music. But no matter where the band takes their music, the tunes are all dance floor oriented from the tender glides of "Bei Dir War Es Immer So Schoen" to the jumping beats and nimbly swiveling motions of "Some Of These Days." The suavely rolling slopes of the horns in the title track have a waltzing strut that emotes deep seeded desires with overtones of a Greek tragedy, while the peppy sprigs of horns and accordion keys swerving across "Dark Eyes" are laced in a Russian-folk dance rhythm.

Gaucha scores high marks for integrating the rhythms of world cultures in their music while also retaining a slice of Americana in their songs with elements of ragtime and the old-time country-swing of riverboat bands. They offer more than a typical gypsy-jazz ensemble and their love of this music is inspiring.

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## Players



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## The Players

### **Dave Ricketts – Guitar**

Dave has committed his life to music. He plays guitar, sings, composes, songwriter and even plays a bit of cornet! His formal study and training was with Michael Chapdelaine (a student of Andres Segovia, among other accomplishments) at the University of New Mexico, where he has a bachelors in music.

Dave is founder and bandleader for the nationally and internationally known GaUCHO, which he has led now since 2002. GaUCHO is based in San Francisco and in 2009, won SFWeekly's Reader's Poll, "Best Jazz and Blues Band" and in 2016 GaUCHO was very honored to have won the title of "Best Band" for the same paper. GaUCHO has also played many music festivals, Djangofest SF and Djangofest Northwest, Djangofest Midwest in Madison, Wisconsin, as well as selling out two concerts for SFJAZZ Festival in 2016. In 2018 GaUCHO got a song in the Hollywood Movie (right before the sex scene!), "Destination Wedding" starring Keanu Reeves and Winona Ryder. And two of Dave's own compositions will be placed in a New York City based indie film, "Stationed at Home," in 2020.

While GaUCHO is technically a Gypsy Jazz Band, Dave has always been in love with The American jazz and blues guitarists and singers who predate Django and Oscar. Jazz guitarists such as Nick Lucas, Eddie Lang, Lonnie Johnson, Teddy Bunn.

### **Ari Munkres - Stand Up Bass**

Ari Munkres has been playing with GaUCHO since the band's beginning. A true music scholar and Northern California Native, he graduated with a BA in music from CSU Humboldt. Ari has had the opportunity to collaborate with a multitude of musicians in cities across America and beyond. Playing (the) bass professionally for over 30 years, his obvious and sheer delight in his craft and artistry draws applause from audiences and critics alike. He loves playing with GaUCHO, a group of musicians who share his abiding passion for the gypsy tradition.

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## The Players

### Rob Reich – Accordion

Rob Reich is quintessentially what makes the San Francisco music scene a vibrant and vital mecca for independent music; he's become one of its stalwart underground artists. Reich starting studying piano at age three. After graduating with a degree in Music Composition from Oberlin Conservatory of Music, he moved to the Bay Area, where he discovered the accordion, now his primary instrument. He is best known for his work with Tin Hat, GaUCHO, and Circus Bella. "Whatever context he's in, Reich transforms it into a creative hothouse where thousands of musical flowers bloom." -Andy Gilbert, East Bay Express

### Craig Ventresco – Guitar

Craig Ventresco moved to San Francisco thirty years ago and quickly established himself as a guitarist specializing in older styles of American popular music. A transplant from Maine, he also lived in NYC for a time. He used to play on the street every day to earn a living but is thankful he has not had to do so for the past ten years. The reason he never got a "day job" is that he really loves playing guitar and wanted to improve. He has a real love for popular music that was written during the ragtime era (circa 1890-1915) and also for blues. He is self-taught and spends as much time as humanly possible working on his playing. Craig says of himself, "I don't save recordings of my own playing because I hear myself enough, but I suppose that I have recorded over 30 of them, both solo and with other musicians." He is probably best known for his integral contributions to the soundtracks of Terry Zwigoff films, Crumb and Ghost World.

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## The Players

### Steve Apple – Percussion

Steve Apple started playing drums at the age of five on a "Tony the Tiger" drum set supplied by his very tolerant mother. At age 14 he started playing Traditional Jazz with the Churchill Street Jazz Band at Palo Alto High School and fell in love with the music. His early drumming influences were Davey Tough, Ray Bauduc and Gene Krupa, as well as later drummers Wayne Jones, Hal Smith and Eddie Torres. He's played with many Bay Area "Trad" and Swing bands including The Royal Society Jazz Orchestra, the Magnolia Jazz Band, Professor Plum's Jazz, Clint Baker's Jazz Band and others. Since 2011, he's been the drum instructor at the annual San Diego Adult Traditional Jazz Camp. Steve spent two years filling in for Beth Goodfellow with GaUCHO starting in 2011 and enthusiastically became the regular drummer in 2013. He enjoys playing a supportive role for his band-mates and he LOVES playing for dancers.

### Leon Oakley – Cornet

In 1968 Leon relocated from Binghamton, NY to join the Turk Murphy Jazz Band in San Francisco. After leaving Turk's band in 1979, he became a member of The South Frisco Jazz Band until the band retired in 1998. During this period, Leon also worked a day job as a senior electrical engineer with BART, retiring in 2000. Shortly thereafter, Leon became a member of John Gill's Yerba Buena Stompers, that continues to perform at jazz festivals around the country.

Around the San Francisco Bay Area, Leon is a regular in Dave Rickett's band, GaUCHO, as well as with Clint Baker's All-Stars and with North Beach Rhythm.

He is often a guest musician with Scott Anthony's Golden Gate Rhythm. He brings his own band, Friends of Jazz, to the local Jazz Clubs.

In more recent years he has recorded with GaUCHO on their "Pearl" and "Part-Time Sweetheart" CDs. Leon has appeared on over 30 recordings produced on various labels including Atlantic, Delmark, Stomp Off Records, and Jazzology as a member of the Turk Murphy, South Frisco, Yerba Buena Stompers, and other jazz bands.

## Photos

# GaUCHO

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