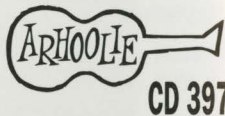


Michael Doucet dit BeauSoleil

"The Mad Reel"



1. ADIEU ROZA (Dennis McGee)
2. SI J'AURAIS DES AILES
3. CAJUN REEL
4. CAJUN MIDNIGHT WALTZ
5. PIERROT GROUILLETTE ET
MAMSELLE JOSETTE
6. CONTREDANSE
7. MADAME SOSTHÈNE
8. L'AFFAIRE DE PERRODIN
9. J'AI ÉTÉ AU BAL
10. LES PETITS YEUX NOIRS
11. AWESOME OSSUN TWO-STEP

With Dennis McGee:

12. THE MAD REEL (Dennis McGee)
13. LA VALSE DE PÈNITENTIARE
(Dennis McGee)
14. LA REEL DE BARZA (Dennis McGee)

Soundtrack "Belizaire The Cajun":

15. OPENING TITLES
16. CONTREDANSE DE DOUCET
17. PETIT JEAN PEUT PAS DANSER
(Johnny Can't Dance)
18. MADAME ETIENNE
19. LE TRAITEUR



20. BELIZAIRE'S ARREST
 21. GRAND MALLET
 22. ROUND-UP
 23. CHANSON DE VERMILION
 24. MATTHEW EST MORT
 25. FUNERAL
 26. LEGER'S CHASE
(The Mardi Gras Song)
 27. LA VISITE AU CONDAMNE
 28. CLOSING THEME: Madame Sothène
- Total Time: 68:44*

Unless otherwise noted, all selections arranged
or composed by Michael Doucet and © by
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Produced by Chris Strachwitz and Michael
Doucet
Cover photo by Phillippe Gould
Cover by Wayne Pope

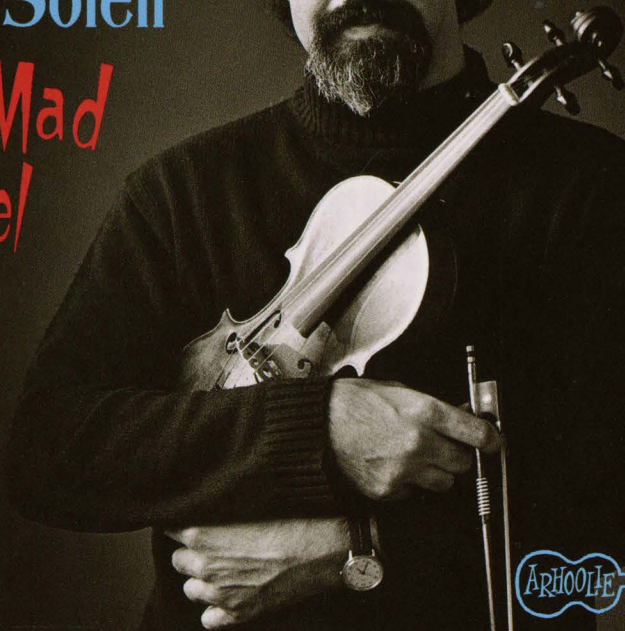
(Personnel details for each selection on page 10)

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Michael Doucet dit BeauSoleil

The Mad Reel

Includes
**DENNIS
McGEE**
And The
Sound
Track Of
**BELIZAIRE
THE CAJUN**



Michael Doucet dit BeauSoleil

"The Mad Reel"

The Mad Reel contains some of Michael Doucet's early work accompanied by members of the early 1980s version of **BeauSoleil** which always included his brother David Doucet on guitar. Also included are three previously unreleased cuts from the **Doucet Brothers' Cajun Duets** which was never completed, with only brother David on guitar (#3, 4, & 9). There are also three wonderful previously unreleased selections by his teacher and mentor, **Dennis McGee**, the Godfather of Cajun music, including the title cut, accompanied by Michael on second fiddle (# 12,13,&14). The CD ends with the sound track recordings by **Michael Doucet and BeauSoleil** from the motion picture: **Belizaire the Cajun** (written and directed by Glen Pitre).

The original album "Dit Beausoleil" (the balance of which can be heard on ARH CD/C 308) came about when I asked Michael in the spring of 1981 to help me record "Cajun Fiddle Styles" (which still has not been released!). Besides some of the best old timers, I wanted to include several selections by Michael himself since he struck me as one of the best young fiddlers with a highly individualistic style. As we started to record at St. Mary's Chapel, where Michael worked at the time, Michael and I were delighted with the pure music produced with just his brother David on guitar, and Robert Vignaud on bass. As a couple of other members of **BeauSoleil** drifted in, we eventually decided to do a full album which also included selections from a studio date to give a more complete picture of Michael's and **BeauSoleil's** music at the time.

(Chris Strachwitz - 1994)

"Before I could go and say that I knew Cajun music, I felt I had to know myself what Cajun music was." Michael Doucet was speaking as we sat in the dark delicious recesses of Pinetta's Restaurant in south Baton Rouge. The place has been a quasi-Bohemian watering hole since his days at nearby LSU in the early Seventies to the present. "I wanted to take the traditional sources and styles of music and do an LP that everybody could relate to...or at least relate to part of it." The album from which parts of this CD were taken, **Dit Beausoleil**, was a milestone on what has become a lifelong quest on Doucet's part for both the roots and branches of Cajun music. Although I was somewhat familiar with his story and its cultural setting, Michael provided an updated oral history, upon which these notes are based, about his own creative, eclectic, highly

literate performances of Cajun traditional music.

Michael Doucet was born in Scott, Louisiana, near Lafayette, on St. Valentine's Day, 1951. His interest in both the past and future possibilities for Cajun music and culture in modern south Louisiana is unique and important. This area is a region of the United States that is filled with contrasts between the way things were and the way things appear to be going. South Louisianans have seen their French-speaking population and cultural traditions dwindle as the vast marsh, swamp and prairie landscape is increasingly utilized—some would say brutalized—for oil and natural gas exploration and petrochemical production in lieu of the subsistence and commercial fishing and trapping and farming of the first half of the century. One is tempted to compare south Loui-

siana with the Brazil in **Tristes Tropiques** as described by Claude Lévi-Strauss, where the jungle and native cultures are confronted by the bulldozer and mass society. Yet, despite the new problems of boomtown economies, water and air pollution, and rapid cultural change, one takes heart in little things: the fact that all 7-11s in south Louisiana seem to sell *boudin* (rice and pork sausage), French ethnicity and language are no longer universally sources of shame or insecurity, and, most relevant here, Cajun music in all forms has made a great comeback and can be widely heard in dance halls and on the radio. It is to the latter *renaissance douce*, of which this CD is a part, that Michael Doucet has devoted his talents.

As a musician he is in a unique position as part of the first generation of Cajuns highly literate in

English, yet also affected through their families by the folk tradition. Well into the twentieth century, literacy in French was available through Catholic schools to the children of planters, substantial farmers and merchants. However, rural Louisiana Cajuns and Creoles were usually not taught to read and write the language. The formalized transition to English, with corollary discouragement of oral French, reached its peak during the advent of widespread public schooling in the Twenties and Thirties and continued until the late Sixties. It is hard to find a person in the forty and over age bracket today who does not have a horror story about being punished for speaking French on the public school grounds. Even where French was taught in schools, there was often a split between local usage and what was considered appro-

priate grammatical usage. Michael, who learned French from his grandmother and great aunt, commented on the problems at school. "Even in high school when we were learning Parisian French, there was always this conflict about how you said something. They were always putting you down. To me it was an oral language and not a written language. Learning to read and write is fine, but being Cajun shouldn't mean putting up walls. I'd learn one thing in school and go speak to someone at Grandmother's house and it wouldn't be the same at all."

Yet Doucet, a songwriter and an ardent fan of the poet William Blake, was brought up between the persistence of a folk culture and the growth of a literate society, and, as such, he is very different from many musicians of previous generations. Rather than being isolated

in one community with access to the oral tradition of one or two master musicians or, at best, the 78s of Cajun music recorded in the Thirties, he has grown up at a time when the music has been marketed extensively on records, radio and TV in south Louisiana. Thus, he has had the opportunity to learn in person from a variety of recognized "old masters" such as Dennis McGee; Will, Rodney, and Dewey Balfa; Canray Fontenot; and Hector Duhon and "younger masters" like Marc Savoy. He has also listened to the 78s of Amédé Ardoin and Leo Soileau, among others. Perhaps most important, he has been able to seek out the relatively unknown violin masters throughout the region, such as Bé Bé and Calvin Carrière, Varise Connor, and Bradford Gordon through his own fieldwork. In addition to his research into the music, Michael

also had the influence of oral folk tradition in his childhood days. For example, he heard Lawrence Walker of nearby Duson and the great Octa Clark of Judice community just south of Scott (both are accordion players).

On his mother's side of the family, he learned the classical and popular traditions of music. On his father's side, he counts Uncle T-Will Knight as a key influence. Uncle Will was a fiddler, but he encouraged Michael to play banjo and then guitar. Michael's sister Paulette was interested in the American folk music revival movement, and this had an effect as well. A particularly important friend and fellow musician for over 25 years has been Bessyl Duhon. Duhon, now an accordionist with the Jimmy C. Newman Band on the Grand Ol' Opry, played traditional Cajun music with his father, Hec-

tor, in Octa Clark's Dixie Ramblers. Bessyl also played Fifties Gulf Coast boogie with a series of bands from the Riff-Raffs to the Swing Kings and was in some ways Lafayette's first musically eclectic Cajun rocker with folk roots. It was later with Bessyl and others that Michael would play in the incredibly creative and regionally popular band, **Coteau**.

In high school, aside from playing the requisite marching band music, Michael continued to form musical ideas in collaboration and competition with Ralph Zachary Richard. Michael and Ralph had played together since age 12 and formed the **Bayou Drifter Band** in the early Seventies. In New York in 1974 the band recorded an LP for Electra that was not released. In the same year they went to France. Michael was particularly interested in the French folk music movement

and was shocked and delighted to find various American expatriates such as Roger Mason and Steve Waring as well as French musicians like Michel Hindenoch and the group Grandmere Funibus Folk, all with an interest in Cajun music. "At this time Louisiana was a virtual desert for young people seeking antiquarian creativeness in Cajun music, so it blew my mind to hear a band in France with six fiddles playing "Jolie Blonde." Ralph and Michael split musically at this point, as Ralph was interested in fronting a French rock band. He later became popular as Zachary Richard in Canada as a French purveyor of rock and roll with some Louisiana trimmings and a lot of Mick Jagger influence. After further inspiration and encouragement from British traditionalists Robin and Barry Dransfield, Michael decided to go

back to Louisiana. "I saw the parallel of the English-speaking peoples' folk music and realized you had to play what you want and feel and not have a complex about not playing typical American Appalachian or Western Swing."

Back in Louisiana Michael joined up with Bessyl Duhon and Kenneth Richard to form **BeauSoleil** and to play his own brand of revival "black and tan" Cajun music. Shortly thereafter another group also emerged, with some members from BeauSoleil, the aforementioned Coteau. BeauSoleil was popular at folk festivals, in small clubs in the United States and on the Canadian and European folk scene (they went to France in 1976 as part of the France-Louisiane Bien Aimee cultural exchange). However, it was Coteau—the first "cosmic Cajun" band to fuse traditional Cajun music with hard-core Gulf

Coast rock—that brought the young south Louisiana crowds back into dance halls like Boo Boo's in Breaux Bridge and Jay's Lounge in Cankton. The band was anchored to tradition by Bessyl Duhon, who played accordion and violin, as well as Michael, who sang and played violin. The other side of the group was more rock and country oriented. Drummers Danny Kimball and, later, Kenny Blevins, added a hot south Louisiana rhythm section, drawing upon New Orleans R&B and second line rhythms. Guitarists Bruce "Weasel" McDonald and Dana Breaux provided high energy twin lead guitars, while bassist Gary Newman sang Cajun country classics. In the words of one observer at the time, "Coteau sounds like a 17th-century band playing 21st-century music." Suddenly tradition seemed avant-garde. Michael Doucet adds today,

"Everybody in the band stood for a certain thing, and when you finally got all the ingredients together it was like a highly seasoned jumbo gumbo. I helped compose and arrange a lot then; there were some real summits musically like the 'Mardi Gras Song,' or the way we played 'Acadian Two-Step.'" Despite great regional acclaim, the disappointment of unconsummated record deals and the group's internal pressures toward musical diversity blew the lid off the pot, and Coteau disbanded in 1977. BeauSoleil, however, the traditional musical alter ego of Coteau, persisted.

Michael had been researching and learning from traditional French fiddlers as well as presenting a folk music-in-the-schools program with Dewey Balfa since 1976. He now had a greater chance to open up to all the music of the

region, joining with his friend Austin Sonnier to hear and play Creole jazz à la Bunk Johnson of New Iberia and the Martelles from Opelousas. The black Creole folk music called **Zydeco** or **Zodico** was also important. Of the black Creole fiddler, Canray Fontenot from Welsh, Michael notes, "He was my greatest black musical influence. Canray is a creative genius."

A first BeauSoleil LP was made for Pate Marconi EMI in France in 1976. The second and best-known LP, called **The Spirit of Cajun Music**, was for Swallow Records in Louisiana. It featured Michael with European chanteuse Francoise Schaubert as well as Hector Duhon and Bessyl Duhon providing a link to local Cajun traditional music. A third LP was recorded in Jennings and released in Canada as **Les Amis Cadjins**, at which point [1981] the current vocalist, Annick Colbert

from Belgium, joined the group and added old French and sacred tradition influences. The band on this CD, in addition to Michael and Annick includes: Errol Verret, from Henderson in the Atchafalaya Basin, a former accordionist with the undersung Cypress Street Band; Billy Ware on percussion; Michael's brother David Doucet on guitar; Tommy Comeaux, who played mandolin with Coteau in its later stages; Tommy Alesi on drums and Robert Vignaud on acoustic bass. This is Michael Doucet and BeauSoleil's best recording because they have adhered more closely to the tradition and have also developed their own style to a greater degree. If this sounds like a contradiction in terms, give a listen as they "Dit Beausoleil."

Nicholas R. Spitzer
Folklorist, December 1981

(Continued from back cover)

Michael Doucet - fiddle and vocals with:
1, 2, 7, 8, 10, & 11: **Beausoleil**: David Doucet - guitar; Robert Vignaud - bass; John "Billy" Ware - triangle & spoons; Errol Verret - accordion; Tommy Alesi - drums; Tommy Comeaux - mandolin; Annick Colbert - vocal & recorder, previously issued on ARH LP/C 5025.

3, 4, & 9: with David Doucet on guitar and previously unissued.

5: Michael Doucet plays all instruments, previously unissued.

6: with members of Beausoleil (5/19/81) and previously unissued.

12, 13, & 14: with Dennis McGee, vocals and lead fiddle, and previously unissued.

15 - 28: Sound track from the Côte Blanche Feature Films Production of **Belizaire the Cajun** and previously issued on ARH LP/C 5038. Produced by Howard Shore with Michael Doucet - vocal, fiddle, & accordion; Errol Verret or Edward Poullard - accordion; David Doucet - guitar; Billy Ware - percussion; Tommy Comeaux - mandolin; and by Annick Colbert vocal on # 25.

7, 8, 10, 11 and 15-28 recorded at Master Trak Studios in Crowley, La. All other selections recorded on portable equipment in Lafayette and Eunice, Louisiana and in El Cerrito, Ca. (# 3, 4, & 9) by Chris Strachwitz.

Also by Michael Doucet & Beausoleil:

CD/C 308 "Allons a Lafayette & More"

CD/C 321 "Beau Solo" (Michael, solo & with David Doucet)

CD/C 322 "Parlez-Nous a Boire & More"

CD/C 5040 "Hot Chili Mama"

Michael Doucet with the Savoy-Doucet Cajun Band:

CD/C 316 "Two-Step D'Amédé"

CD/C 389 "Home Music with Spirits"

CD/C 418 "Live! at the Dance"

Michael also plays and performs in the Brazos Films production of "J'ai Été Au Bal (I Went to the Dance): The Cajun and Zydeco Music of Louisiana," a film by Les Blank, Chris Strachwitz, and Maureen Gosling (\$29.98). The sound track is available on:

CD/C 331 "J'ai Été Au Bal" Vol. I

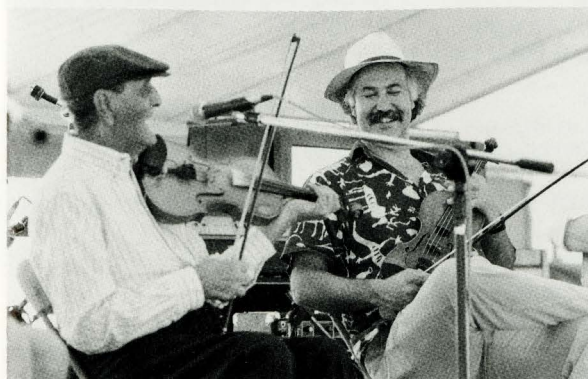
CD/C 332 "J'ai Été Au Bal" Vol. II

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*Above, left to right:
Errol Verret,
Robert Vignaud,
Michael Doucet,
David Doucet, &
Billy Ware*



*Left: Dennis McGee
with Michael
Doucet*

(Photos by Chris Strachwitz)

Michael Doucet dit BeauSoleil

"The Mad Reel"



Over 68 Minutes of Classic CAJUN Music

1. ADIEU ROZA (Dennis McGee) (3:18)
2. SI J'AURAIS DES AILES (2:47)
3. CAJUN REEL (2:01)
4. CAJUN MIDNIGHT WALTZ (3:36)
5. PIERROT GROUILLETTE ET
MAMSELLE JOSETTE (3:09)
6. CONTREDANSE (2:30)
7. MADAME SOSTHÈNE (3:31)
8. L'AFFAIRE DE PERRODIN (1:33)
9. J'AI ÉTÉ AU BAL (3:16)
10. LES PETITS YEUX NOIRS (3:12)
11. AWESOME OSSUN TWO-STEP (2:43)

With Dennis McGee:

12. THE MAD REEL (Dennis McGee) (2:27)
13. LA VALSE DE PÈNITENTIARE
(Dennis McGee) (3:21)
14. LA REEL DE BARZA (Dennis McGee) (3:17)

Soundtrack of "Belizaire The Cajun":

15. OPENING TITLES (1:52)
16. CONTREDANSE DE DOUCET (1:41)
17. PETIT JEAN PEUT PAS DANSER
(Johnny Can't Dance) (1:42)
18. MADAME ETIENNE (2:09)



19. LE TRAITEUR (1:00)
 20. BELIZAIRE'S ARREST (1:33)
 21. GRAND MALLET (1:24)
 22. ROUND-UP (2:21)
 23. CHANSON DE VERMILION (2:01)
 24. MATTHEW EST MORT (1:54)
 25. FUNERAL (1:54)
 26. LEGER'S CHASE
(The Mardi Gras Song) (2:48)
 27. LA VISITE AU CONDAMNÉ (:59)
 28. CLOSING THEME: Madame Sothène (2:43)
- Total Time: 68:44*

Unless otherwise noted, all selections arranged or composed by Michael Doucet and © by Tradition Music Co./Bug Music Co. - BMI

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Cover by Wayne Pope

(Personnel details for each selection on page 10)

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