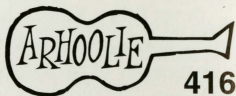


Cajun Fais Do-Do *with:*

Nathan Abshire & the Balfa Bros., Cyp & Adam Landreneau,
Isom J. Fontenot, Jerry Devillier, & the Breaux Brothers



Nathan Abshire and The Balfa Brothers:

1. CAJUN TWO-STEP
2. MA NEGRESSE (Nathan-vocal)
3. CALCASIEU WALTZ (Nathan-vocal)
4. BAYOU PON PON (Dewey-vocal)
5. OLD FOLKS POLKA
6. HAYES' WALTZ (Nathan - vocal) (*)
7. HICKS WAGON WHEEL SPECIAL (*)
8. LA VALSE A RAY (Nathan - vocal) (*)
9. GRANDE NUIT SPECIAL (Dewey-vocal)
10. GABRIELLE WALTZ (Nathan - vocal)
11. PAPER IN MY SHOES (Dewey - vocal) (*)
12. BASILE BREAKDOWN (Dewey - vocal) (*)
13. LE TEMPS EST APRES FINIR (Nathan-vocal)
14. FRENCH BLUES (Nathan - vocal) (*)

Cyp and Adam Landreneau:

15. LA TALLE D'ERONCES (*)
16. TREVILLE EST PAS PECHEUR (*)
17. PRAIRIE RONDE (*)

Isom J. Fontenot & Jerry Devillier:

18. N'ONC 'DAM ET TANTE BASSETTE (a contredanse) (*)

Cyp and Adam Landreneau:

19. LA VALSE DE DENUS McGEE (*)
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Cyp and Adam Landreneau:

26. LA CHEROKEE
27. GRAND MAMOU
28. LAKE CHARLES TWO-STEP (*)

The Breaux Brothers:

29. HEY MOM
 30. BREAUX'S BLUES (Blues for Amede) (*)
 31. CROWLEY TWO-STEP
 32. LA BRANCHE DE MURIER
- (*) = previously unissued

Nathan Abshire—accordion & vocals; Dewey Balfa—fiddle & vocals;
Rodney Balfa—guitar; & Basile Marcentel—triangle. Recorded at
the Frontier bar in Basil, La.

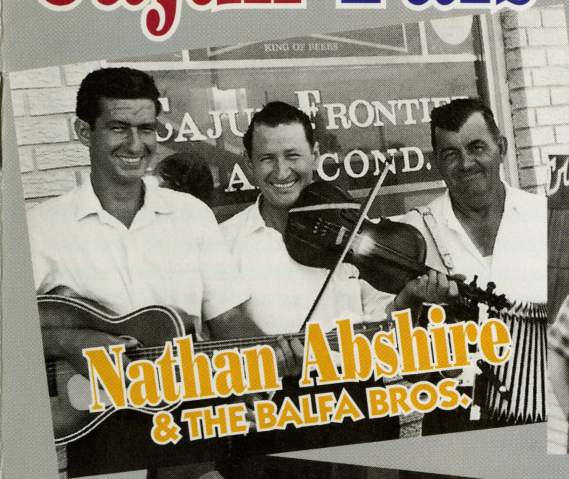
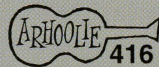
Cyprien Landreneau—accordion & vocals; Adam Landreneau—fiddle
& vocals; with Revon J. Reed—triangle; Jerry Devillier—har-
monica & triangle; & Isom J. Fontenot—harmonica. Recorded at
Adam Landreneau's home in Mamou, La.

The Breaux Brothers: Amade Breaux—accordion & vocals, Ophy
Breaux—guitar & vocals. Recorded at Jay D. Miller's home in
Crowley, La.

All recordings made by Chris Strachwitz in May of 1966
Recorded, edited & produced by Chris Strachwitz
Photos © by Chris Strachwitz.
Cover by Wayne Pope
Selections without (*) were previously available on Arhoolie LP 5004.

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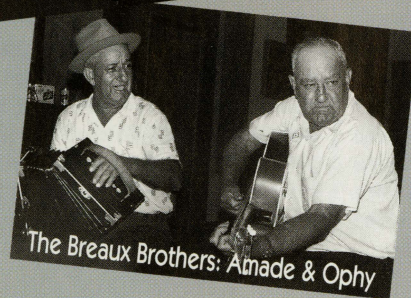
Cajun Fais Do-Do



**Nathan Abshire
& THE BALFA BROS.**



Back: L to R
Revon Reed & Adam Landreneau
Front: L to R
Cyp Landreneau, Jerry Devillier
& Isom J. Fontenot



The Breaux Brothers: Amade & Ophy

CAJUN FAIS Do-Do

These recordings mark the end of an era. They represent the magnificent artistry of the last of the wonderful and largely amateur, unrestrained, pure, emotional, authentic Cajun musicians. Most Cajun musicians recorded since the 1960s although often just as good, have been more polished and professional. This CD is dedicated to the memory of the late Revon J. Reed, first ambassador of Cajun Music and the late Paul Tate as well as all the great folk musicians from that era who have gone to the great dance up yonder! Sooner or later we will all join them!

Revon J. Reed was a Mamou, La. school teacher who via his weekly Saturday morning radio broadcasts, brought authentic Cajun music not only to the local population but also to those of us visiting or just driving through. When I first visited Louisiana's Cajun Country, the broadcasts originated from a tent at the Lakeview Park in Eunice. Then for a time the proceedings took place at the French Casino just west of Mamou, and finally Revon found a permanent home at Fred's Lounge right on the main drag in beautiful downtown Mamou. The programs aired over radio station KEUN in Eunice, La. and the proceedings started at 8 am with whiskey bottles at the ready and plenty of beer to crank up the

spirits of the musicians and audiences alike. In the early days you never knew who would be stopping by to play but Revon had always attracted someone special. Attending the broadcasts or just listening to them over the radio was, especially for a visiting outsider like myself, a truly extraordinary experience. Unfortunately very few, if any, of the broadcasts were taped and the few times I tried it myself, I quickly determined that the air sound was so poor (due to an ancient remote transmitter Revon used) that one could hardly consider using the results for release on a record.

Revon Reed became a good friend to many of us who took periodic pilgrimages to Acadiana, including film maker Les Blank. In those years, I was searching for music to issue on Arhoolie records which I had started in the fall of 1960. Unfortunately I had very little operating capital! Revon offered to help me document several of the Cajun musicians in the area, even though some, like Nathan Abshire (whom I especially liked) seldom if ever appeared on his broadcasts. Nathan was considered a professional musician who played his regular dances, unlike the amateurs who were perhaps more willing to make those Saturday morning appearances.

Although Revon was not entirely happy with all the tapes I had made, he helped me put together an LP in 1966 and subsequently wrote to me saying I should listen to the many tapes he had of all kinds of local musicians! Unfortunately I never got around to checking out those tapes of home music and amateurs, but perhaps one day they will surface. By the mid 1960s with the booming "folk music" scene, Revon Reed acted as a "roadie" for many of the musicians and took them on tour to the Chicago Folk Festival, the Newport Folk Festival and in the Fall of 1966, even to Europe. I shall never forget that day in May 1966 when in Jay Miller's house we heatedly discussed who from southwest Louisiana should go on that tour to Europe. The tour included authentic southern country music with the Stanley Brothers, Cousin Emmy, the New Lost City Ramblers, etc. It was organized by Horst Lippman and Fritz Rau, who had already become pioneers in presenting authentic American Blues in Europe. Upon hearing the Breaux Brothers for the first time when they came to audition for us that day (and from whence these recordings come) I immediately put them on the top of my list. These two men were totally raw and unrestrained — just the kind of music I personally enjoyed enormously. I was however outvoted in favor of Cyp and Adam Landreneau who were considered to be more reliable and presentable! After all it was Revon Reed who had to travel with them and deal with them every day! Thanks,

Revon Reed, for taking this music all over the world, for your hospitality, for your deep involvement in the music you loved so much, and for making it accessible to those of us outsiders who otherwise would have had a heck of a time finding wonderful singers like Nathan Abshire, the Balfa Brothers, the Landreneaus, and all the others whom we were soon to meet and hear with your help.

Paul Tate was a gentleman, attorney, and patron of Cajun Music from Mamou, who put me in touch with several remarkable individuals from Acadiana, including Marc Savoy. Paul also helped Nathan Abshire and other Cajun musicians obtain fair compensation for their work. He gave advice freely and told me about Floyd Soileau (Swallow Records) whom Paul considered the only absolutely honest man in the local record business. Floyd has been a friend and valued distributor ever since. Paul also hosted Les Blank for the premiere of his ground-breaking film, "Spend It All" and the gumbo which was served rather late that night, was one of the most unforgettable culinary experiences of my life. Paul also gave me Marc Savoy's phone number and told me that he was an interesting character whom I would enjoy meeting. That meeting, at a bar on the north side of Eunice where Marc was fixing a gumbo with a chicken he had just accidentally run over, has also resulted in a continuous friendship and a whole lot more unforgettable culinary and musical delights.

(Chris Strachwitz — 1995)



*Remote
Saturday
morning
broadcast
from
Lakeshore Park,
Eunice, La.,
1966.*

*Left to right:
Revon Reed
at the controls,
Paul Tate,
Ambrose
Thibodeaux
triangle,
Adam
Landreneau
fiddle,
Jerry Devillier
accordion.*

Saturday morning has become a tradition in Grand Mamou, Louisiana, and come eight o'clock, it's Fais Do-Do time—live and recorded — from the French Casino, through the remote facilities of station KEUN, Eunice. Revon Reed, self-styled jockey, emcees the two hour musicale, sprinkled here and there with choice “frenghish” adjectives eulogizing the local merchants’ products, who make the program financially possible.

Of the many performers present every Saturday, four stand out for their variety of traditional music. Cyprien and Adam Landreneau, Isom J. Fontenot, and Jerry Devillier are the four uninhibited Cajuns who play and sing with such vim and vitality — so full of good humor, bourbon and fun!

Cyprien Landreneau (as well as the other three merry-makers) is a native of the Mamou Prairie, a rural farming district of some 4500 good-natured souls. “Cyp” is barely 63, father of 11 children and grandfather of 29. He started playing the French accordion at age seven in an old barn adjoining his home, for his parents couldn’t stand the “noise”; but at the tender age of eight, “Cyp” was accepted in human circles and he’s been entertaining ever since.

Other members of this group include Adam Landreneau, 58, one of the finest traditional Cajun

fiddlers in South Louisiana, who along with “Cyp” has a string of tours and festivals to his credit; including a European tour in 1966 and the Newport Folk Festival. Isom J. Fontenot is one of the best harmonica players heard anywhere, a carpenter in his 70s who has also appeared at the Newport Folk Festival and recorded for Dr. Harry Oster in 1958 (Arhoolie CD/C 359). Last but not least, Jerry Devillier is an accomplished triangle and harmonica player who is just full of good spirits and fun!

The first part of this collection is devoted to the music of one of the all-time greats in the Cajun music field: Nathan Abshire, who began his recording career back in the 1930s and who reached widespread popularity in the 1950s when he was heard every day over KPLC in Lake Charles after he put out the “Pinegrove Blues.” (Note ARH CD 373 “French Blues”). Born June 27th, 1913, Nathan started on the accordion very early in life and since almost everyone in his family played Cajun music, he soon picked up many old songs and tunes. Nathan is one of the most interesting of all the Cajun accordion players due to his vast and varied repertoire, ranging from old Cajun two-steps and waltzes to church songs and blues. Nathan Abshire played with Amédé Ardoin, the first black Cajun artist to make records (heard on Arh/Folklyric CD 7007) and is thoroughly familiar with the blues.

Dewey Balfa is Nathan’s favorite fiddle player and along with his brother Rodney on guitar, have been members of the Pinegrove Boys for some time playing all of Nathan’s dances. Dewey and Rodney, along with some other brothers, had a very popular group in Basil around 1946 to ‘48 called the “Musical Brothers.” Most of Nathan’s recent recordings have been in the contemporary style with amplified instruments, bass, and drums, but on this record he has put together a more traditional group and Basile Marcentel played the triangle. Born in 1898, he was the oldest member of the group but just as full of vim and vigor as the rest of them! At the end of the session, which was held in the back room of a bar in Basil and recorded on portable equipment, Nathan Abshire said that this was the best music he has ever put on record.

Along with Joe Falcon, the very first Cajun recording artist, Cajun music fans around the world may know the Breaux Brothers from their early 78

rpm records from the early 1930s. Amade Breaux, born September 25, 1900, plays the accordion and gives out with the spirited vocals while his younger brother Ophy Breaux backs him on guitar. Their sister Cleoma Breaux became Joe Falcon’s first wife and was present on many of the early legendary recordings.

Together with Revon Reed, these sturdy sons of Old Acadie hope ya’ll enjoy the joyous and lonesome notes of this hitherto little-known Cajun music of Southwest Louisiana. This music heard at the Fais Do-Dos, which means a party out in the country with dancing, eating, drinking and fun for everyone, goes back to the middle of the 18th century when the Cajun ancestors from Nova Scotia were evicted from their homeland and finally found asylum along the bayous of southern Louisiana. We know you’ll like this Cajun music as well as the Cajuns themselves—so “dansez le Fais Do-Do” and “be ye merrie” thereby!

(Revon J. Reed & Chris Strachwitz—1966)

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Total time : 75:48 () = previously unissued*

Nathan Abshire—accordion & vocals; **Dewey Balfa**—fiddle & vocals; **Rodney Balfa**—guitar; & **Basile Marcentel**—triangle. Recorded at the Frontier bar in Basil, La.

Cyprien Landreneau—accordion & vocals; **Adam Landreneau**—fiddle & vocals; with **Revon J. Reed**—triangle; **Jerry Devillier**—harmonica & triangle; & **Isom J. Fontenot**—harmonica. Recorded at Adam Landreneau's home in Mamou, La.

The Breaux Brothers: **Amade Breaux**—accordion & vocals, **Ophy Breaux**—guitar & vocals. Recorded at Jay D. Miller's home in Crowley, La.

All recordings made by Chris Strachwitz in May of 1966.

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