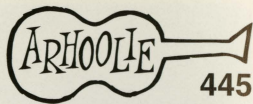


ALPHONSE "BOIS SEC" ARDOIN

with CANRAY FONTENOT
»La Musique Creole«



Part I: 1966

1. LES BLUES DU VOYAGEUR (3:00)
vocal: Bois Sec
2. JOLIE BASSETTE (2:17) vocal: Canray
3. QUO' FAIRE (2:17) vocal: Bois Sec
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11. LA VALSE D' OBERLIN (2:36) vocal: Bois Sec
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13. FAIS PAS CA! (3:27) vocal: Bois Sec
14. DURALDE RAMBLE (2:04) vocal: Bois Sec
15. 'TIT GALOP (2:35) vocal: Bois Sec
16. ALLEZ-VOUS-EN (3:42) vocal: Bois Sec

Part II: 1971 & 1973

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vocal: Bois Sec
18. CHERE ICI, CHERE LA BAS (2:30)
vocal: Bois Sec
19. OPELOUSAS WALTZ (2:35) vocal: Bois Sec
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vocal: Bois Sec
21. LE BOSS (Rice Farmer) (5:20) vocal: Morris
22. JUPE COURTE (3:35) vocal: Morris

23. JOLIE CATIN (2:15) vocal: Gustav

24. ARDOIN TWO-STEP (2:31) (*)

25. HOME SWEET HOME (3:15) vocal: Bois Sec

Total time: 68:09 (*) = previously unissued

Alphonse "Bois Sec" Ardoin — vocals and accordion
Canray Fontenot—vocals and fiddle, with:

1 – 16: Isom Fontenot – triangle (except # 15, where Revon Reed played triangle); recorded July 24, 1966 in Falls Church, Va. by Dick Spottswood and originally issued as Melodeon LP 7330 "Les Blues Du Bayou." Arhoolie purchased the masters in 1995 from Biograph Records.

17 – 25: Gustav Ardoin – bass (accordion and vocal on # 23); Morris Ardoin – guitar & vocals (# 21 & 22); Lawrence Ardoin – drums. Recorded at the Ardoin family home west of Mamou, La. by Chris Strachwitz in 1971 (# 21, 22, & 23) and 1973. Except for # 24, these selections were originally issued on Arhoolie LP/C 1070: "La Musique Creole." Selections sung by Canray from that LP are now available on ARHOOLE CD 381: CANRAY FONTENOT: "Louisiana Hot Sauce – Creole Style."

All selections arranged or composed by A. Ardoin & C. Fontenot and © by Tradition Music Co. (BMI)
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Cover photo by Michael P. Smith

Cover design by Wayne Pope

Produced by Chris Strachwitz

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ALPHONSE "BOIS SEC" ARDOIN

WITH CANRAY FONTENOT
La Musique Creole



ALPHONSE “BOIS SEC” ARDOIN *with* CANRAY FONTENOT *“La Musique Creole”*

This “double” CD includes the first album ever recorded by an African American Cajun band. What you hear here however, is not yet Zydeco, but the traditional “French” or “Creole” music of the rural, mostly French speaking African American population of south-west Louisiana.

In the 19th century, a “dance band” in this region was often just a lone fiddler. By the early part of the present century the accordion had become very popular and today the all-mighty “squeezebox” has just about retired most fiddlers, except in white Cajun bands.

In the 1960s and 70s however, when these recordings were made, the fiddle and accordion still had a marvelous interplay and were just about of equal importance in Creole music. This is the foundation for the remarkable musical gumbo today known as Zydeco or La La, of which Clifton Chenier was the undisputed founder, king, and cham-

pion. Before Clifton there lived a man of small physical stature, who was however a musical giant. His name was Amédé Ardoïn (note ARH/FL CD 7007) and he was the first Creole accordionist to document this evolving tradition by making commercial phonograph records in the late 1920s and early 30s.

Alphonse “Bois Sec” Ardoïn, a cousin of Amédé’s, is today carrying on this remarkable family tradition, even though he lost his long time partner and fiddler, Canray Fontenot, to cancer in 1995. From the 1960s into the 90s, “Bois Sec” and fiddler extraordinaire, Canray Fontenot, became the best known exponents of authentic Creole music. They made appearances at national folk festivals from Newport to the Smithsonian and they traveled to Europe. They also became a regular feature at the delightful annual New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival and the tourist industry took advantage of Canray’s exuberant and winning smile by using his photos in magazines, ads, and brochures to promote the

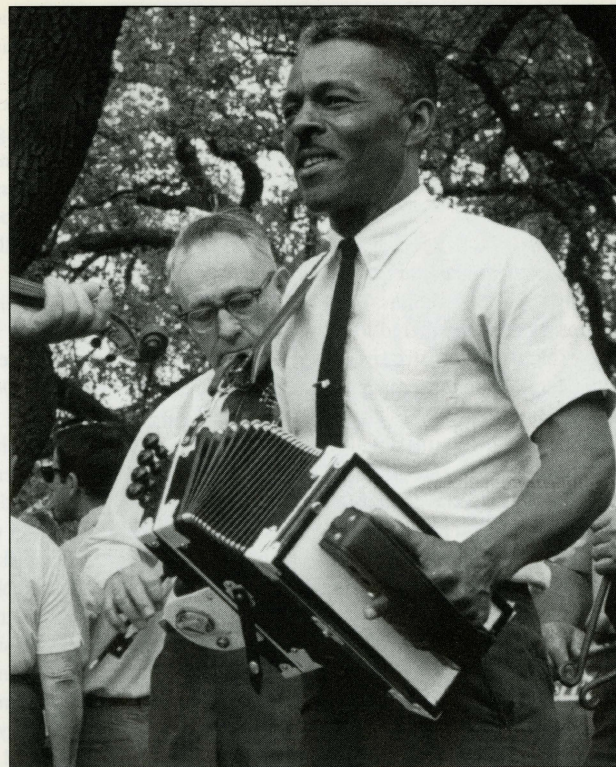


Photo © by Chris Strachwitz

Alfonse “Bois Sec” Ardoïn at the 1970 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.
Sady Courville (fiddle) behind him..

regional culture.

The music, however, was probably at its functional and spirited best when “Bois Sec” and Canray played at home near Mamou, Louisiana, where weekly dances and house parties had become regular events for the enjoyment of friends and neighbors for almost half a century.

Since the late 1960s, “Bois Sec” has had the support of his sons who have helped to carry on the family’s musical traditions. With their own groups they have gathered loyal local followings. The entire extensive Ardoin clan along with Canray Fontenot became the subject of a fascinating film by Les Blank entitled “Dry Wood” which is the English translation for “Bois Sec.” They are also well represented in the all time classic film on Cajun and Zydeco music: “J’ai Ete Au Bal” (I Went To The Dance), also a film by Les Blank, produced by Chris Strachwitz, and edited by Maureen Gosling.

The first part of this CD presents the entire, historic, first album made by “Bois Sec” and Canray, which was first released in 1967 on the Melodeon (and later Biograph) label. Here you hear “Bois Sec” and Canray by themselves, the way they played for many,

many years — much in the tradition of Bois Sec’s cousin, the late Amédé Ardoin. Legendary Mamou, La., school teacher and radio personality, Revon Reed had taken the duo along with harmonica and triangle player, Isom Fontenot (no relation to Canray) to the Newport Folk Festival in 1966. On their way back to Louisiana, Dick Spottswood invited them to stop by a studio in Falls Church, Virginia, to make the album .

Let Revon Reed tell you a little about these musicians whom he had known as neighbors for years: **Canray Fontenot:** “This Cajun-Creole fiddler was born October 16, 1922 [died July 29, 1995], and began his career at 11 on a makeshift cigar box instrument. Eager to imitate his father, he kept listening to the haunting melodies of the Afro-American Creole strains of the bayou land. A year later an uncle picked up an abandoned old fiddle from a neighbor’s trash pile, fixed it, gave it to nephew Canray — and he’s been playing this fiddle ever since: value — about 75 cents. Canray learned music from his father Adam and also from a man named Douglas Bellard who Canray says was the best black fiddler he ever heard. At 12 he played his first *bal de maison* (house dance).

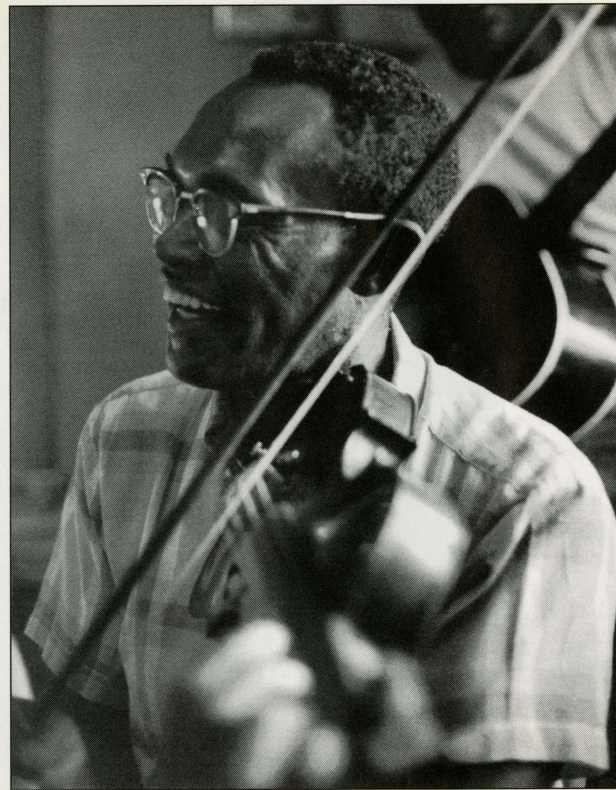


Photo © Les Blank

Canray Fontenot 1971



Photo © Chris Strachwitz

The Ardoin Family May 1981, front center "Bois Sec and Marceline Ardoin, and several of their fourteen children at a family reunion party.

A few years later he met “Bois Sec” Ardoin and the two teamed up and have played hundreds of dances for white and black groups since.

“A farm hand on the Lloyd Dilleaudeaux estate near Welsh, Louisiana, Canray sired and reared six children on his small income. Today (1966), he prides himself on being the father of six well bread offspring, all well-educated and ready to take their place in society. He’s sorry he didn’t have the opportunity of today’s children. ‘I went to school 10 years to get to the fifth grade,’ he recalls. ‘We had only one session of three or four months a year,’ he adds.

“In 1948 “Bois Sec” and Canray organized their first band, The Duralde Ramblers comprising the traditional French (?) Hohner accordion, the fiddle, a rhythm guitar, drums, and the triangle. The group has played dances in night clubs and private homes from Mamou to Eunice, Basile, Jennings, and Lake Charles. They recently played at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park, New York City, at the Newport Folk Festival, and to a select group at the Providence State House in Providence, Rhode Island. They’ve been on TV and radio — always tremendously well-received and

appreciated for their authentic Afro-Creole sounds, enthusiastic Cajun yells, and ad-libs; and greatly admired by Alan Lomax, Ralph Rinzler, George Wein, Richard Spottswood, and several other musicologists.”

Alphonse “Bois Sec” Ardoin: “A humble but personable sharecropper in Evangeline country, Alphonse Ardoin, better known as “Bois Sec” or “Drywood” is a first cousin of one of the great performers on the French accordion, Amédé Ardoin. Bois Sec, who came from very poor but hard-working folk of the soil, was born November 16, 1916, and learned to play the accordion from his older brother, although without the brother’s knowledge. It seems Bois Sec, seven at the time, managed to borrow his brother’s accordion every time Big Brother left the premises. By the end of the first year of secret rehearsals, Big Brother found out that Little Brother played better than he did and promptly rescinded the beat-up instrument to young Bois Sec, who’s been squeezing it with vim, vitality and joy ever since.

“Today, Bois Sec Ardoin is highly respected as an entertaining Creole musician, capable of sending you from low bluesy moods to a carefree let-live atmosphere. There’s nothing

weak or slouchy about his voice or his high whining Creole whoops either. Alphonse “Bois Sec” Ardoin reared 14 children on his little cotton corn-tater patch, sent them all to public school some twelve miles away, and attended night classes himself. Alphonse’s boys today are rightly proud of themselves. All have good jobs. All are well adjusted. All are proud of Papa “Dry Wood.”

“Bois Sec’s” repertoire moves from the real melancholy sounds of blues to the old French dances and on to ancient bluesy hymns and lyrics of a different breed from the common Cajun tunes of today. It is no wonder that Ralph Rinzler of the Newport Foundation selected him to participate in the annual Newport Folk Festival, held in July this year [1966]. Accompanying him was Canray Fontenot of the Welsh community, an accomplished traditional fiddler who “bows” as well as his cohort Ardoin “squeezes,” along with Isom Fontenot on the French harmonica and Revon Reed on the triangle or *basstrange*.”

(Revon Reed & Chris Strachwitz - 1966 & 1995)

The second part of this CD presents “Bois Sec” and Canray recorded in their home near Mamou by Chris Strachwitz on portable equipment, alone and with the addition of several of the Ardoin Brothers in a slightly more modern setting. Morris Ardoin sang a few songs which were made up on the spot! “Le Boss” was especially poignant since Morris had just that day asked his boss for a raise! In response his boss only raised hell with Morris and threatened to fire him! This gave Morris the blues and these emotions came out that evening when we did the recording. Many of Canray’s vocal selections from that “Bois Sec” Arhoolie album (LP/C - 1070), are now available on Canray’s own CD: “Louisiana Hot Sauce — Creole Style” (Arhoolie CD 381). This then is an introduction to a remarkable family — a family who are carrying on a tradition which reaches back to the roots of Acadian music.

For more details about these and many other Cajun and Creole musicians, please note Ann Allen Savoy’s classic book: **Cajun Music - A Reflection of a People, Vol.1.**





Photo © by Chris Strachwitz

*"Bois Sec" Ardoin, right, with sons Morris, left, and Gustav, center,
at the 1973 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.*



*"Bois Sec" Ardoin center; with sons Morris (fiddle); and Russell (box);
from the film "J'ai Été Au Bal (I Went to the Dance)"
The Cajun and Zydeco Music of Louisiana"*

Photo by Chris Strachwitz

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