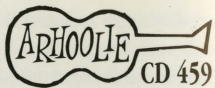


JOE FALCON

"Cajun Music Pioneer - Live at the Triangle Club in Scott, La. - 1963"



1. JOE'S BREAKDOWN (5:06)
2. 99 YEAR WALTZ (4:46) (vocal: Theresa)
3. CORRINE, CORRINA (5:01)
4. JOLE BLONDE (4:24) (vocal: Allen)
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(The Tracks of My Buggy) (5:03) (vocal: Theresa)
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(Keep A' Knocking) (4:40)
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15. LES FLAMBES D'ENFER
(The Flames of Hell) (4:50)

Total time: 74:00

Joe Falcon - accordion and vocals
(except where noted)

Lionel Leleux - fiddle

Theresa Falcon - drums (& vocals)

Allen Richard - guitar (& vocal)

1, 2, 3, 4, & 6: previously unreleased
5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, & 15 previously
available as Arhoolie Cassette 5005 and as Arhoolie
LP 5005 (without #8 & 11). Recorded by Valerie Post
at the Triangle Club in Scott, La., on June 29, 1963.

Cover photo © by Chris Strachwitz (same person-
nel, except Howard Mire for Allen Richard) taken at
a dance in Crowley, La., in summer of 1962.

Produced and issued by agreement with Mrs. Theresa
Falcon.

Cover by Wayne Pope

*Louisiana Acadian Singer and Accordion Player
Extraordinaire. Born in Rayne, September 28, 1900—
Died in Crowley, November 29, 1965.*

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JOE FALCON

✂ Cajun Music Pioneer ✂



Recorded live at the Triangle Club in Scott, LA 1963

JOE FALCON

Cajun Music Pioneer

Live at the Triangle Club in Scott, La. - 1963

Joe Falcon opened a new era in Cajun music when he and his wife, Cleoma, accompanied a local jeweler to New Orleans to record the song, "Allons a Lafayette." That was on April 27, 1928, and it was the first Cajun recording ever made. That record caused a mild furor and was a popular topic of conversation at the time. In fact, many Cajuns, as poor as they were, often bought more than one disk at the time "just in case one got broken."

Joe Falcon was born three and a half miles north of Rayne, near German Cove. A few miles to the west of where the other Falcons lived: John, Abel, Frank, and Sosthene, all uncles who each had their own syrup mill. When he was seven years old, Joe begged his father to get him an accordion for which they had to go to Lafayette. After several years of practicing and playing little house dances, Joe went with his sister to a dance one night. He took the horse and buggy and luckily, his accordion, because

when he got to the dance, it so happened that the band Mr. Guidry had hired, had not shown up and Joe was quickly hired to play his first professional dance. He was paid \$4 to play the dance and that was a lot of money in those days! From that day on Joe Falcon was always paid for his music.

In 1928 a local jeweler by the name of George Burr took Joe and Cleoma and a singer named Leon Meche from Bosco to New Orleans, to try out for making a recording. He had apparently heard or read about the talent search. When they got to the hotel where the recording company had set up their improvised studio, the men in charge of the recording at first did not want to give the Falcons a chance to try out because they said an accordion and a guitar are not enough music since they were used to recording mostly orchestras. Finally they said, "OK, let's try one" but by that time Leon Meche got so nervous he couldn't

sing and told Joe to go ahead and sing it himself. Well, they listened to the first take and liked the sound of it and so the second take became the first Cajun record!

Some of the songs in this album were old folk songs 40 years ago, they are still played today although changes have come to the music and songs of the Cajun Country. Many new songs have been added; French words have been put to American songs; most instruments now have electric amplification; and all music at dance halls comes over public address systems.

The uniqueness of this album is that it was recorded live at a real *fais-do-do* without thought of publication at the time. The real atmosphere of the music and dancing crowd was captured, however, at the expense of some of the words—which never seemed to be too important to those engaged in dancing at the time. For the real Cajun swing of the music, it is essential that the setting be a live one.

Cajun dance bands are what one might call fluid; personnel changes with time. The only constant in this case was Joe. He had played hundreds of dances and made many dozens of recordings with his first wife, the late Cleoma

Breaux Falcon, and her brothers who likewise had their own bands at different times.

This band included Joe's second wife, Theresa Meaux Falcon, who also sang and played drums. Cleoma, who died very young in 1941, had been a singer and a guitar player. Filling out the quartet, "The Silver Bell String Band of Crowley, La.," were Allen Richard who played guitar and sang, and Lionel Leleux, on fiddle. As with practically all Cajun bands, the leader is the main vocalist although others alternate and share the vocals they always do so without harmonizing. For some reason, Cajuns sing only as soloists.

Unbeknownst to most Cajuns, some of their liveliest and most popular songs are of African American origin. "Hip et Taiout" and "Allons Danser Colinda," supposedly, fall in this category, but as Joe said, "We gave them a little extra twist." Joe Falcon's playing, like most Cajun musicians, was very much influenced by African American musicians, especially Amédé Ardoin, who went with the Falcons to New York for his last recording session. Almost equally influential on Joe was local Rayne accordionist Sidney Babineaux, who was also black.

Joe's career and the world of Cajun music were all the same; indeed, Joe was "Mr. Cajun Musician" himself. It was a great talent that Joseph C. Falcon carried to his grave.

A few closing comments about some of the songs: **LES FLAMBES D'ENFER** is a two-step sung by Joe Falcon. Some sing this song facetiously, "Les Femmes d'Enfer" (The Women of Hell) "My dear children, come join me, I'm condemned, my dearest children, pray for me, I am condemned to the flames of hell for the rest of my life." **LA VALSE A NONC GUSTAVE** is played to the tune of "Keep a Knocking, But You Can't Come In." "They told me that there is a new dance. It is called the Twist! Come meet me, baby—we'll go do the twist! All night long at Uncle Gustave's." **ALLONS A LAFAYETTE** (Let's go to Lafayette) another two-step and the first Cajun song ever put on

disk and the song which marks the beginning and the end of Joe's long recording history. **OSSON T TWO-STEP** is another song seeking pity. "The country can grow but it can never be better. . . we are at the height of our happiness." **HIP ET TAIAUT** is a two-step about two dogs, Hip and Hound. The two dogs stole the man's sled, and when they saw he was hot, they returned the sled. The girls from Bosco steal his vest and when they saw he was hot, they return it. Next they steal and return his cravat. **ALLONS DANSER COLINDA** (Let's dance, Colinda), a two-step, supposedly of African American origin. "Let's dance, Colinda, dance close, Colinda, to make the old ladies mad. It's not every one who knows how to dance the old time dances. . . when your mama is not there, let's dance to make the old ladies mad."

(Notes by Lauren C. Post – 1967. Edited by Chris Strachwitz–1997)



Joe Falcon, 1962

Photo © by Chris Strachwitz

Producer's Note:

When I met and talked with Joe Falcon in the summer of 1962, he was still playing dances almost every weekend for a largely older crowd. When I asked if he would consider making records again, he flatly said no. He had not made any records since the mid-1930s when Cajun music was rapidly turning towards Country or Western music and leaving the accordionists behind. His main complaint however was that the local labels making the recordings in the post World War II era were not paying any money to the musicians to make the records! He also felt that most of the bands sounded alike!

As the first musician to make a record of Cajun music (1928), Joe was something very special and he quickly became a regional celebrity. Talking to some of the people who came to his dances, it became clear to me that they were attracted by Joe's pleasant personality as well as his smooth, danceable style of playing the accordion in contrast to the older, jaggedy sound and rhythm of Dennis McGee, for example, who's music harked back to an earlier era. Not only was Joe Falcon the first to make a Cajun record, but he was one of the first to play this music on an accordion, which had arrived on the scene relatively recently. Back

in 1928 Joe Falcon was the man with the latest and most modern, up-to-date sound! Thirty-five years later, although he tried to keep up with the latest dances and songs, Joe was no longer the young local hero but he still enjoyed playing dances for his older fans and neighbors.

Joe Falcon was also among the first when it came to putting names to traditional old Cajun songs and tunes! When the recording director asked Joe to give him the titles for the selections he had recorded, Joe hesitated because, except for a few like "Allons a Lafayette," most tunes had no one definite title. But since a name had to be fixed on the disk's label, Joe, with suggestions from the "record man," added the names of various small towns like Osson, Lacasine, Duson, etc., to old, well-known waltzes and two-steps.

Lauren C. Post was a professor of geography at San Diego State College when I met him to arrange the release of this material. A native of Acadia Parish, Louisiana, although not of Cajun stock, Mr. Post was "cajunized" early in life and became very interested in the music and other folkways of the region. In 1936 he was the chairman of the Louisiana section of the National Folk Festival which was held in Dallas, Tx., that year. The Cajun band which played at the Festival included the now leg-

endary singer and accordionist, Lawrence Walker, who according to Alan Lomax was the best example of folk talent at the whole festival. Mr. Post was also the author of "Cajun Sketches" (Louisiana State University Press, 1962) which not only included chapters on Cajun traditions and music but gave us budding Cajun music fans the first wonderful photo of Joe Falcon, Cleoma Breaux, and their daughter. Lauren's wife, Valerie Post, was a trained singer but also deeply interested in this charming rural music. She brought her tape recorder which she used in her voice training classes, to make these recordings during their vacation trip to Louisiana in the summer of 1963. Joe Falcon's health was declining and he played his last dance a few months after these tapes were made. Although reluctant to record for the local recording firms, Mr. Falcon was glad to help Mrs. Post make a final document not only of his music but of a typical *fais-do-do* of the time.

The longer playing time of the CD makes it possible now to bring you a better balanced document of what was heard at this dance played by Joe Falcon and his band. On the 1968 LP release of this historical material, which could only hold eight of these lengthy dance numbers, I had favored the two-steps and faster numbers. On this CD I was able to interject more waltzes and slower tunes, which in general always alternate with two steps at a dance. The sound quality is not the best but considering it was made with one microphone standing on a table near the bandstand, it's quite remarkable what a natural sound actually resulted. As Lauren Post mentions in his comments above, all the instruments except the drums, were amplified and the vocals came over the house PA system. I believe this is the only recording which gives you a true picture of a typical Cajun dance from the period — yet by a legendary musician who was the first to make a Cajun recording in 1928.

(Chris Strachwitz - 1997)

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File Under: CAJUN

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