

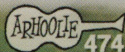
the Best of **CLIFTON CHENIER**

1. **JE ME REVEILLER LE MATIN**
(I Woke Up This Morning) (3:14)
(Clifton Chenier)
2. **I'M COMING HOME** (To See My
Mother) (3:15) (Clifton Chenier)
3. **AY, AI, AI** (2:24) (Clifton Chenier)
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(Who Can Your Good Man Be) (3:40)
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6. **IT'S HARD** (3:20) (Clifton Chenier)
7. **ALL YOUR LOVE** (4:20) (Sam Maghett)
8. **PARTY DOWN** (At The Blue Angel
Club) (4:40) (Clifton Chenier)
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(Snap Beans Without Salt) (3:40)
(Clifton Chenier) (alternate take -
previously unissued)
17. **AIN'T NO NEED OF CRYING**
(4:08) (Every Day Is The Same /
Louisiana Blues) (Clifton Chenier)
18. **INTERVIEW with CLIFTON
CHENIER** over radio station **KPEA -
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA - 1978;**
host: Chris Strachwitz (15:30)

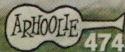
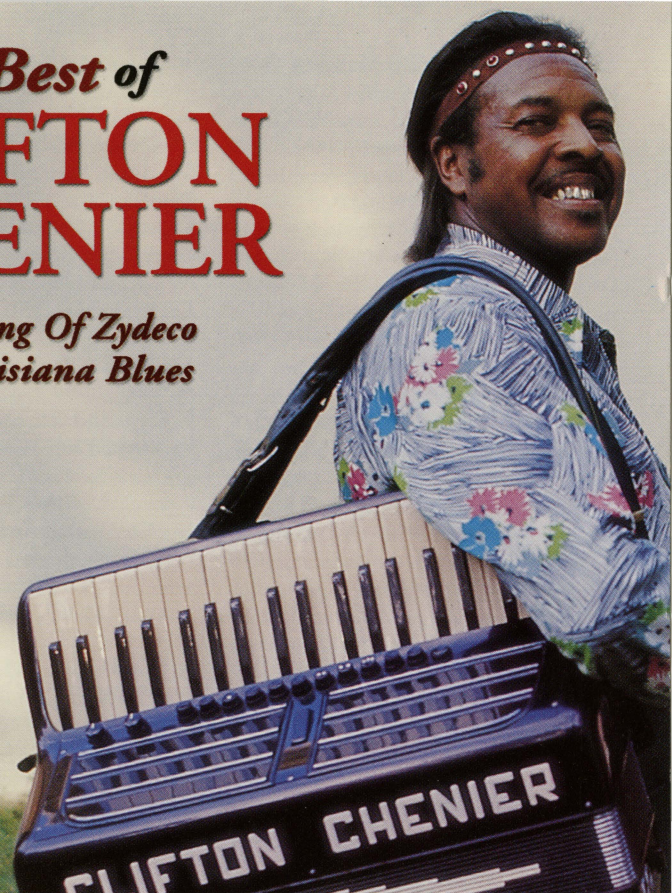
All selections composed by Clifton Chenier are
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by BUG Music Co./ Hollywood, CA.
7 is composed by Sam Maghett

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the Best of **CLIFTON CHENIER**

*The King Of Zydeco
& Louisiana Blues*



1. **Je Me Reveiler Le Matin (I Woke Up This Morning)** Recorded 10/27/1975 at Studio in the Country, Bogalusa, Louisiana. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Cleveland Chenier – rubboard; John Hart – tenor sax; Paul Senegal – guitar; Joe Brouchet (Morris) – bass; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums. Originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1076, currently available on Arhoolie CD 347.

2. **I'm Coming Home (To See My Mother)** Recorded 11/6/1969 in Houston, Texas. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums; Elmore Nixon – piano; Joe Morris (Brouchet) – bass; Raymond Monett – guitar. (**Note:** The noise you may hear in the background towards the end of this track was present in the original recording tape and could not be removed). Originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1052, currently available on Arhoolie CD 339.

3. **Ay, Ai, Ai.** Recorded 2/8/1964 at Bill Quinn's Gold Star Studios in Houston, Texas. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Elmore Nixon – vocal and piano; Bob Murphy – vocal and drums. Originally

issued on Arhoolie #45-506A, currently available on Arhoolie Box Set CD 491.

4. **Brown Skin Woman (Who Can Your Good Man Be)** Recorded 3/5/1970 in Houston, Texas. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Cleveland Chenier – rubboard; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums; Joe Morris (Brouchet) – bass; Antoine Victor – guitar. Originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1052, currently available on Arhoolie CD 339.

5. **Hot Rod** Recorded 5/11/1965 at Gold Star Studio in Houston, Texas. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Elmore Nixon – piano; Cleveland Keyes – guitar; Fulton Antoine – bass; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums. Originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1024, currently available on Arhoolie CD 329.

6. **It's Hard** Recorded 5/11/1965 at Gold Star Studio in Houston, Texas. Clifton Chenier – vocal and harmonica; Elmore Nixon – piano; Cleveland Keyes – guitar; Fulton Antoine – bass; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums. Originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1024, currently available on

Arhoolie CD 329.

7. **All Your Love** Recorded 5/17/1973 at Wally Heider Studios in San Francisco, California. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Cleveland Chenier – rubboard; John Hart – saxophone; Elvin Bishop – guitar; Paul Senegal – guitar; Steve Miller – piano; Joe Brouchet (Morris) – bass; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums. Originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1072, currently available on Arhoolie CD 350.

8. **Party Down (At The Blue Angel Club)** Recorded 1983 at the Long Beach Blues Festival, Long Beach, California. Clifton Chenier – accordion and vocal; Cleveland Chenier – rubboard; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums; C.J. Chenier – alto sax; Warren Cesar – trumpet; Sherman Robertson – guitar; Alonzo Johnson Jr. – bass. Originally issued and currently available on Arhoolie CD 404.

9. **Why Did You Go Last Night** Recorded 2/8/1964 in Houston, Texas. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Elmore Nixon – piano; Bob Murphy – drums. Originally issued on Arhoolie # 45-506B,

currently available on Arhoolie CD 329.

10. **Ma Mama Ma Dit (My Mama Told Me)** Recorded 10/27/1975 at Studio in the Country in Bogalusa, Louisiana. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Cleveland Chenier – rubboard; John Hart – tenor sax; Paul Senegal – guitar; Joe Brouchet (Morris) – bass; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums. Originally issued on LP 1076, currently available on Arhoolie CD 347.

11. **Zydeco Cha Cha** Recorded 11/6/1971 at St. Mark's Hall in Richmond, California. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Cleveland Chenier – rubboard; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums; Joe Brouchet (Morris) – bass; Felix Benit – guitar. Originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1059, currently available on Arhoolie CD 313.

12. **Bon Ton Roulet** Recorded 5/10/1966 in Houston, Texas. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Elmore Nixon – piano; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums; plus bass and guitar. Originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1031, currently available on Arhoolie CD 345.

13. **Black Gal** Recorded 5/10/1966 in Houston, Texas. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Morris Chenier – fiddle; Elmore Nixon – piano; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums; plus bass and guitar. Originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1031, currently available on Arhoolie CD 345.

14. **Johnny Can't Dance** Recorded 4/28/1981 at Grant Street in Lafayette, Louisiana. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Cleveland Chenier – rubboard; C.J. Chenier – alto sax; Robert Peter (St. Judy) – drums; plus unknown bass and drums. Originally issued and currently available on Arhoolie CD 487.

15. **I'm On The Wonder** Recorded 5/17/1973 at Wally Heider Studios in San Francisco, California. Clifton Chenier – vocal and accordion; Cleveland Chenier – rubboard; John Hart – saxophone; Elvin Bishop – guitar; Paul Senegal – guitar; Steve Miller – piano; Joe Brouchet (Morris) – bass; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums. Originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1072, currently available on Arhoolie CD 350.

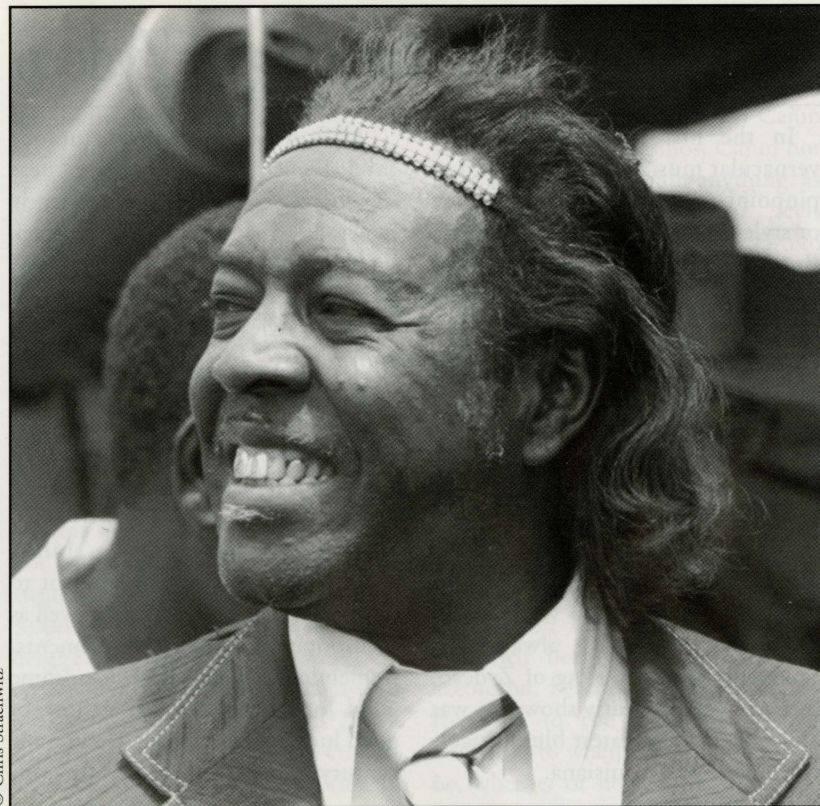
16. **Zydeco Sont Pas Sale (Snap Beans Without Salt)** Recorded 5/11/1965 in Houston, Texas. Clifton Chenier – vocals and accordion; Cleveland Chenier – rubboard; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums. Previously unreleased.

17. **Ain't No Need of Crying** Recorded 5/1/1969 in Houston, Texas. Clifton Chenier – vocals and accordion; Cleveland Chenier – rubboard; Robert Peter (aka St. Julian + St. Judy) – drums. Originally issued on a Prophecy LP, the masters were purchased by Arhoolie from Roy Ames, currently available on Arhoolie CD 351.

18. **Interview with Clifton Chenier** by Chris Strachwitz over KPFA radio in Berkeley, California. Recorded in 1978. Previously unreleased.

Produced and edited by Chris Strachwitz
Graphic design by Morgan Dodge

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Clifton Chenier, *the* King of Zydeco

In the history of popular and vernacular music it is usually hard to pinpoint the genesis of a new genre or style on one particular individual. But in the case of Louisiana's Afro-American *Zydeco* music we actually know who invented it, established it, perfected it, and made it world famous! His name was Clifton Chenier (1925 - 1987), who mixed old rural Creole music with a strong syncopated beat and a heavy dose of contemporary Rhythm & Blues (Clifton called it "rock") of the 1950s - stirred it all up and poured out his musical gumbo we now call Zydeco. He will always be remembered as the King of Zydeco, but, as this CD clearly shows, he was also one of the greatest blues singers to come out of Louisiana.

Clifton was born into a unique rural French Creole heritage near Opelousas, Louisiana. He frequently referred to himself as a "Black Frenchman" and a "Country Boy." He was blessed to have an older brother, Cleveland, who added enormously to the syncopation which drove the Chenier music machine throughout most of its career. Clifton, with his soulful and emotional vocal and instrumental delivery, was also blessed with charisma, leadership ability, remarkable musicianship, a talent to make up songs from scratch as well as incorporating traditional elements, tremendous energy and handsome good looks. Add to that a dose of good luck and the emergence in mid-century of regional music as a potent

element in our national popular music. All this helped Clifton Chenier emerge from Louisiana's humid rice and cane fields to become one of the most important vernacular American musicians of the 20th century.

But Clifton Chenier also had his share of obstacles to overcome. Growing up a "Black Frenchman" in a racist rural environment was often cruel and intimidating. Add to that the stigma of his music, language and culture which was considered backwards, low-class and regional at best. During much of Clifton's lifetime the word Cajun or Creole did not have the positive, joyful, tourist-attracting ring that it has today. His culture and that of many of his white neighbors, the Cajuns, were, as Queen Ida explains so eloquently in the Brazos Film DVD: *J'AI ETE AU BAL* : "kept behind the iron curtain for so long." Today we take pride in

celebrating not only famous Cajun and Creole musicians, but restaurants with their gumbos, crawfish etouffées, cayenne seasoning, along with Cajun auto parts, Cajun Casinos, Cajun hot dogs or just about Cajun anything, as long as the entrepreneur feels attaching this once derogatory term to his product, will today help sell it!

On top of the many social, legal, and cultural hurdles Clifton had to confront, there were the constant problems with cheap or inadequate instruments and amplified sound equipment. I heard the band struggle with constant feed back, distortion, and unbalanced sound levels at many a honky-tonk or dance. I tried to explain some basics about feed-back but Clifton wanted his amp which amplified both his vocals and his accordion, behind him instead of in front or to the side. Worry and anxiety as to where his next job might be, whether or not contracts handed



Left & right photos from "Austin City Limits," Austin, TX. Center photo at San Francisco's Avalon Ballroom. © Chris Strachwitz.

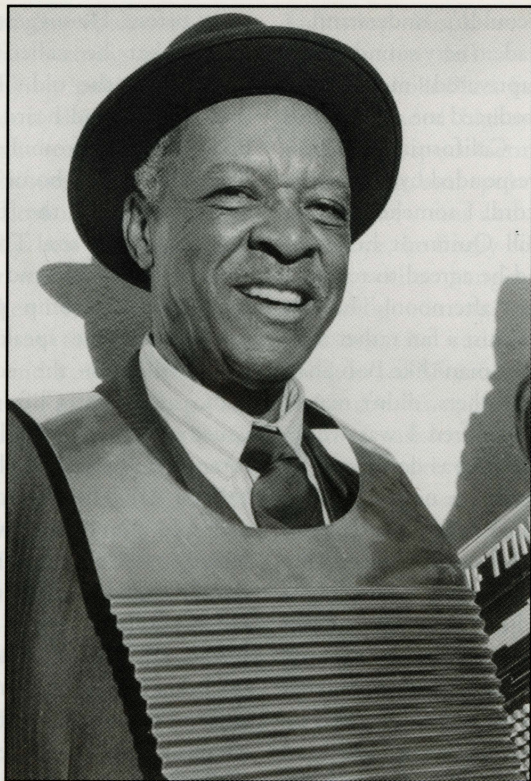
to him by often unscrupulous business people were fair, wanting to keep up with his partying public, and the constant concern about how various audiences might receive him and his music, contributed to Clifton's reliance on alcohol. I could never afford to really help financially and the one offer we got from a major label faded when I demanded enough money up front to buy a decent sound system and a travel bus. By the mid 1970s health problems began to haunt the King of Zydeco and his energy and strength began to be zapped, especially when regular kidney dialysis became necessary.

Meeting Clifton Chenier and then recording him the next day was one of my most unforgettable experiences. In February of 1964 I had come to Houston, Texas, at the invitation of German promoter Horst Lippman. He wanted to meet there with the hope of persuading

Lightning Hopkins to travel to Europe that fall as part of the American Folk Blues Festival. Since I had befriended Lightning for some time, could speak German, promised to go along, and spoke glowingly of meeting new fans and admirers over in Europe, he finally consented. One night while hanging out with Lightning during my stay in Houston, he suddenly suggested going to see his cousin. I inquired as to his cousin's name and he replied: Cliff! I asked: Cliff who? and Lightning said: Cliff Chenier. I was ready to go anywhere Lightning wanted to go and we headed in his car towards "French Town" in the southeast part of Houston. As we entered the little beer joint I could hear the most amazing, low-down blues played on a piano accordion by this lanky black man who sang raw blues in a strange but haunting French patois, accompanied only by a

drummer. I couldn't understand a word but he had an eery sound which absolutely captivated me. When Lightning introduced me as a "record man" from California, Clifton immediately responded by requesting to make a record! I somehow got in touch with Bill Quinn at his Gold Star studio and he agreed to record a session the next afternoon! The fact that I really was just a fan rather than the usual "record man" like Bob Shad or the Bihari brothers, didn't matter to Clifton. He figured I was white, must know what I was doing and he desperately needed a new single for the radio and juke boxes. I had hoped to see him at the studio with just the drummer I had heard the night before - but I didn't know Clifton yet! He showed up with a full band: piano, guitar, bass, drums, and of course himself on accordion. Also he didn't really want to record the kind of "French" blues I had heard the

night before. He suggested we record more what he called "rock" and hinted that the old "French" cane field music I had heard was only for homesick folks from Louisiana who liked that "down home" music. Fate almost reduced the band to the previous night's size! The guitar amp literally caught fire and could not be used, the bass amp produced no sound since the speaker cone was separated from the core, but the piano man kept Clifton happy. We issued a 45 rpm single which got some air and juke box play in the area (AY, AI AI). Then I wrote to Clifton and told him that I would like to record a full album with him - but that I wanted some of that "French" blues! He finally agreed to make half the album "French" if he could make the other half "rock & roll." I agreed and the next session with the help of engineer, Doyle E. Jones, resulted in Clifton's first LP album, Arhoolie LP



Cleveland Chenier

1024 (all now on CD 329). By that time Cleveland Chenier had quit backing Lightning Hopkins and was re-united with his brother Clifton who was ready to record a two part program. The first six or so selections were Rhythm and Blues type items, including "Hot Rod" and "It's Hard" heard on this CD. Then he let the band sit it out, except for the drummer, and he got Cleveland to back him on rub-board and as a trio they tore into these incredible Zydeco, Blues, and Waltzes. Instead of bringing you here the two cuts which made a hit on a single (you can hear them both on CD 301), I have dug up an alternate take of "Zydeco Sont Pas Sale" which has never been issued before. Instead of the hit, "Louisiana Blues" which he sang in French, we bring you here the same song but sung in English and recorded some years later as "Ain't No Need Of Crying" or better known for

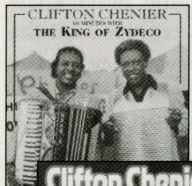
its line about every day isn't the same OR every day is the same (with your old lady)! I have also included on this CD an interview I did with Clifton in 1978 over radio station KPFA in Berkeley, CA, where I used to do regular programs of vernacular American music for over 25 years.

Clifton was a joy to record in the studio even though you never knew what was coming next. Not even the guys in the band knew - they usually picked it up once Clifton started. By 1975 for the session in Bogalusa, La. (CD 347) Clifton had hired the talented sax player and arranger, John Hart to join the Red Hot Louisiana Band. By 1977 when I recorded Clifton with the help of John Lumsdaine in New Orleans, the band had grown even larger with the addition of Stanley "Buckwheat" Dural on organ and piano who was also a good arranger.

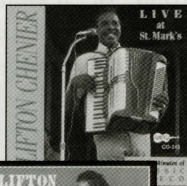
— Chris Strachwitz, 2003

You should check out the Arhoolie Video (soon to be a DVD) *Clifton Chenier and his Red Hot Louisiana Band* featuring interviews and performances of Clifton with 13 songs. Also the DVD/Video *Jai Été Au Bal, The Cajun & Zydeco Music Of Louisiana* (see below).

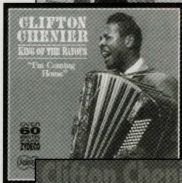
You can read more about Clifton Chenier and Zydeco music in two very fine books: 1) *The Kingdom Of Zydeco* by Michael Tisserand and 2) *Cajun Music - A Reflection of A People* - by Ann Allen Savoy and in the booklets which accompany Clifton's ARHOOLIE CDs:



ARHOOLIE CD 301
"60 Minutes With the King Of Zydeco"



ARHOOLIE CD 313
"Live At St. Mark's"



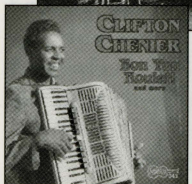
ARHOOLIE CD 329
"Louisiana Blues And Zydeco"



ARHOOLIE CD 339
"King Of The Bayous"

ARHOOLIE CD 345
"Bon Ton Roulet" and More!

ARHOOLIE CD 347
"Bogalusa Boogie"



ARHOOLIE CD 350
"Out West"



ARHOOLIE CD 351
"Clifton Sings The Blues"

ARHOOLIE CD 355
"The King Of Zydeco Live At Montreux"



ARHOOLIE CD 404
"Live At the Long Beach & San Francisco Blues Festivals"

ARHOOLIE CD 487
"Live! At Grant Street - Lafayette, LA"



ARHOOLIE CD 9001
"Zydeco Sont Pas Sale"

ARHOOLIE VIDEO 401
"The King Of Zydeco"
(Coming soon to DVD)

BRAZOS FILMS DVD or VIDEO 103
"Jai Été Au Bal" (I went to the dance)
(Roots of Cajun & Zydeco Music)



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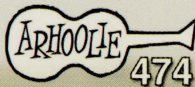
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file under: **Blues**

