

MARC SAVOY - accordion & vocals
ANN SAVOY - guitar & vocals
MICHAEL DOUCET - fiddle & vocals



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THE *BEST OF THE* SAVOY-DOUCET CAJUN BAND



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» ANN SAVOY «

Savoy-Doucet has no band leader – we each hold our unique place in the group – strong, individual, close old friends. I think of the hours we have played together, the great friends, great meals.... Music has been a passport to a world – it has opened doors, hearts, ideas.... I think the Savoy-Doucet Cajun Band has achieved a creative freedom within a tradition.

Marc was hitting the Cajun dance hall scenes in the 1960's and early '70's, an energetic, bright young man in an aging milieu. While he never changed his beloved traditions he was always experimenting – he would put “weird” reed keys in his accordions, like Bb, Eb, E. He would switch keys in the middle of songs, and he wrote new songs that even old Cajun pioneers like Dennis McGee thought were songs by old Cajun artists.

Michael seemed to connect with our band in a stretching-his-traditional-

chops sort of way. With us he could settle into the old songs, tap into his soul and fury. With us he could play the old traditional songs he wouldn't have done with his band, Beausoleil. We have done the four hour dances, the intensity of a hot Louisiana night.

I started as one of the two women who played Cajun music publicly – this was always a point of interest. I had to be accepted by the male dominated scene. I grew with this band, eventually mellowing in to the high keys, laying into the musical groove. I have been a finder of rare songs – I guess that is a special thing about all of us – we are miners of Cajun gems, rescuers of forgotten songs.

Savoy-Doucet won't go away – it is friends playing together, hanging out. As long as there is a new tune to be played, a party to make, you'll find us there, timeless as the music itself.

(Ann Savoy – 2002)

❧ MARC SAVOY ❧

I feel most fortunate to have grown up among some of the most amazing characters this world has ever produced; characters every bit as colorful as anyone found in the works of Dickens. I was much more attracted to these old farmers and field hands than anyone my own age. I loved their stories, their beautiful language, the very special way that they saw the world around themselves and the unique, almost comical way they managed to deal with this world. I wanted to be what they were and do what they did. If their recreation would have been some obscure thing like playing marbles, well, undoubtedly today I would probably be a very passionate marble player. To



describe my feelings toward these old Cajun people as mere infatuation would be the under-statement of the century. It was like they were the standard by which I measured everyone else.

The dictionary describes music as the “art of combining tones into an agreeable sound.” While theoretically correct I don’t think this adequately describes what these folks did with accordions and fiddles. It was an “agreeable” sound

but it was a lot more than that. Theirs was not an art derived from a deep knowledge of music because for the most part these folks were totally illiterate. They were not musicians who played music – they were people

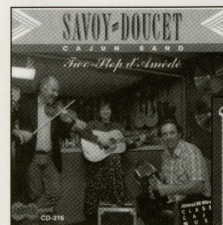
skilled in survival who made everything. They didn’t play music, they made music. Their art was to take a few simple notes, spice them up with a delicious rhythm and serve them up in a very unusual pattern that would get your feet dancing. Their art was their ability to express their passion, hardships, and the joie de vie that was in their heart and soul – something in short supply today.

Today it seems that everything about

music is in excess except heart and soul. Either the bands are too big with too many instruments, too loud, too fused and cross-pollinated or too processed to the point that the music seems sterile. What happened to the simple raw power of my old Cajun mentors? Listen to this CD and I think you will hear what caught hold of my heart when I was a child.

(Marc Savoy – 2002)

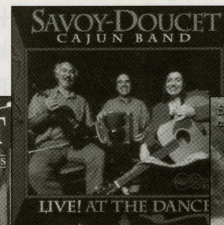
The four CDs Savoy-Doucet has released on Arhoolie Records.



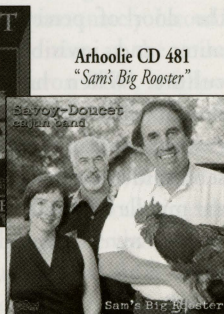
Arhoolie CD 316
“Two-Step d’Amède”



Arhoolie CD 389
“Home Music
With Spirits”



Arhoolie CD 418
“Live! At The Dance”



Arhoolie CD 481
“Sam’s Big Rooster”

» MICHAEL DOUCET «

First thought about the Savoy-Doucet Cajun band would be of empowerment. A direct and intuitive understanding of our Cajun French culture would have to be the nucleus of this group which got its start somewhat auspiciously at an outdoor cookout chez Marc & Ann 1980. Chris Strachwitz just happened to be there with his dangling microphones and we became a recording group.

For my generation, Marc was and continues to be the lineage holder and the door of perception to all inner, outer and invisible aspects of our culture. When he performed with BeauSoleil at the 1976 National Folk Festival in Wolftrap, Virginia, certain sensibilities were aligned. First thing in the middle of a walkway, he ordered me to grab my fiddle and start seconding him. This was my empowerment

moment, direct transmission, or as Marc put it, "let's see how you do taking the test before the lesson."

He also met a young photographer-musician there, Ann Allen of Richmond, Virginia who also received a direct transmission from Marc. She soon became his wife and passionately compiled the ultimate and intimate history of Cajun music.

So, here we are just like we started. When we perform on stage we take our kitchen atmosphere with us. We still have no song list (although Ann tries but we never follow it). However, we play the music from the hearts of the musicians that we learned from and pretty much push the ticket everytime we get together. Our desire is to play the music in the moment; nothing else really matters.

(Michael Doucet – 2002)

» CHRIS STRACHWITZ «

I was the lucky "song catcher" who happened to be present when these delightful people and musical soul mates formed the Savoy-Doucet Cajun Band about 20 years ago. I watched and listened to them evolve and get deeper into their unique but isolated cultural repertoire and develop over the years into what is today the finest traditional Cajun band on our planet! My recording logs say 1980 for the first recording session with this trio which had formed around the remarkable accordionist, instrument maker, and man of many talents, Marc Savoy. This renaissance man who succeeds with just about anything he puts his hands or mind to, first invited me over to a beer joint in north Eunice, La., where I first spoke to him by phone: "You from California?" he asked, "I just ran over two chickens and so we killed two more and I'm just fixing a gumbo here – come on by!" This was in the early 1960s when I had the

good fortune while driving across southwest Louisiana to come across a live program one Saturday morning on my car radio. The wild and joyful sounding event seemed to be emanating from some park in Eunice. It was obviously a program featuring a variety of mostly elderly but well lubricated musicians, with the announcer and the singers expressing themselves in this weird sounding French patois which to my ears sounded a lot more attractive than the usual "through the nose" Parisian French. Unfortunately I could speak neither! The man at the mike turned out to be Revon Reed, a fellow school teacher who from time to time took a big sip from a near-by whiskey bottle and between musical selections announced bargains at various grocery stores or other local merchants. An elegant gentleman dressed in a white plantation suit stood near by – obviously enjoying the proceedings when I

introduced myself as a cajun music fan from California. His name was Paul Tate, and when he discovered that I was especially interested in “authentic” musicians like Aldus Roger and Nathan Abshire (which he distinguished clearly from “traditional” musicians), he suggested I contact this fellow, Marc Savoy and gave me a phone number. That’s how I got to taste my first delicious gumbo Marc and some friends were cooking. Over the years many more incredible meals, soulful music, old records, and unforgettable characters have created this huge magnet which pulls me towards southwest Louisiana on a pretty regular basis. I am never quite sure where my home is – for nourishment I feel especially drawn to the Gulf Coast from New Orleans westward all the way up the Rio Bravo – but for digesting it all I like it here in the perma-chill of the Bay Area!

Today, about 40 years later, I feel most fortunate to have met Marc and

through him a lot of the best music and musicians of the region. I made my first recordings with Marc Savoy, Dewey Balfa and D.L. Menard in 1976. All three were in their prime and I still feel that is one of the best cajun records (Arhoolie CD 312 – Under The Green Oak Tree) ever put out. Marc also helped me in many ways to record fiddlers Cheese Reed and Wade Frugé whom I taped in 1979, two years after Marc married Ann. In 1980 Marc put together a band with his singing cousin Frank Savoy from Church Point on vocals – reminding us of the honky tonk world Marc had been a part of when I first met him. Michael Doucet also took part in that session and in 1981 I made the first recordings with a trimmed-down Beausoleil. Michael apparently was also enjoying my attempts to document some of the unsung fiddle heroes of Cajun music and helped me record several of his mentors like Canray Fontenot, Dennis

McGee, Hector Duhon, Lionel LeLeux, and Varise Connor (the last two will be seen in the “Lost & Found” addition to the classic Les Blank/Chris Strachwitz /Maureen Gosling Brazos Films production of “J’ai Ete Au Bal” or “I Went To The Dance” – The Cajun and Zydeco Music of Louisiana, which is being released on DVD late in 2002). Michael also led me to many other wonderful musicians like Doc Guidry and helped me record Moise Robin and Octa Clark among others.

After Marc married Ann in 1977 it seems the whole scene became much more family oriented but in many ways even more musically focused. The Savoy’s rebuilt the old house where Marc’s grandfather used to live into a wonderful home where the parties got bigger and better! Before Ann joined the scene the musical food parties used to be upstairs from the store – the Savoy Music Center – where to this date jam sessions are still the norm every Saturday

morning – competing for visitors with the unforgettable radio broadcasts from Fred’s Lounge in Mamou. Ann was also a musician who now became inspired to join this vibrant, wonderful culture with all her heart and soul. She played guitar in the solid rhythmic manner epitomized by D.L. Menard and she began to sing in the Cajun patois even though she could speak real Parisian French. Cleoma Falcon became her idol and Ann soon delved into the musical history of her adopted new culture. In 1984 Ann self-published the remarkable masterpiece: “Cajun Music – A Reflection Of A People” via her Blue Bird Press (P.O.Box 941 – Eunice, La.70535) the pictures in which inspired me in turn to produce the above named film with Les Blank. As Michael was attracted to more and more “musicals” at the Savoy’s, the three soon became a real unit. The music became a bit more controlled but I realized that the times they were a changing and the Honky

Tonks were closing down. I realized that spirits from a bottle were not quite as essential as I had previously believed – but that the spirits of your past, your love for the music, your culture and your surroundings could be equally potent and motivating. Just like film maker Les Blank has a strange aversion to film things which do not turn him on at that moment, so does Marc Savoy have a strong sense as to whether he is ready to play or not. I recall the day we had a recording session scheduled in Crowley, La., at Marc Miller's studio with Michael Doucet coming from Lafayette. Shortly

after we walked into the studio – Marc picked up his accordions again and said: "I don't feel like playing today – let's go home!" and so we left. I was a bit baffled but realized that the best vernacular music can't be caught just any time or any day – and I should have realized this from the many times when things just never got off the ground recording the King of Zydeco – Clifton Chenier. But when the spirits are just right everything falls into place. Oh what joy that is and what great music can be caught!

Enjoy!

(Chris Strachwitz – 2002)

Produced by Chris Strachwitz

& the Savoy-Doucet Cajun Band

Cover & page 4 photos by Ann Savoy

Back cover photo by Linda Doucet

Page 1 photo by Philip Gould

Graphic Design by Morgan Dodge

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1. **QUELLE ETOILE** (Which Star) - **vocal:** Ann
2. **LA VALSE DE VACHERS** (The Cowboy Waltz) - **vocal:** Michael
3. **PERRODIN TWO STEP** - instrumental
4. **THE KAPLAN WALTZ** - **vocal:** Ann
5. **CHERE BASSETTE** - **vocal:** Ann (with fiddle & guitar only)
6. **ONE-STEP DE CHAMEAU** - **vocal:** Michael
7. **JOLIES JOUES ROSES** (Pretty Pink Cheeks) - **vocal:** Ann (Austin Pitre)
8. **HAPPY ONE STEP** - instrumental
9. **RENO WALTZ** - **vocal:** Marc & Ann
10. **PORT ARTHUR BLUES** - **vocal:** Michael
11. **ATTENTION, C'EST MON COEUR QUI VA CASSER** (Be Careful, You're Breaking My Heart) - **vocal:** Ann (Aldus Roger)
12. **AMÉDÉ TWO STEP** (Two Step For Amédé Ardoin) - instrumental (Marc Savoy - Tradition Music Co./Bug Music)
13. **LAWTELL WALTZ** - **vocal:** Ann (with guitar & two fiddles)
14. **LA VALSE DU MALCHANCEUX** (The Unlucky Waltz) - **vocal:** Michael (Lawrence Walker)
15. **LAPIN DANS SON NIQUE** (Rabbit In Its Nest) - **vocal:** Ann
16. **SHE MADE ME LOSE MY MIND** - **vocal:** Ann (Marc Savoy - Tradition Music Co./Bug Music)
17. **TITS YEUX NOIRS** (Little Black Eyes) - **vocal:** Marc & Ann
18. **LE GROS GUIME A SAM** (Sam's Big Rooster) - **vocal:** Marc (Marc Savoy - Tradition Music Co./Bug Music)
19. **GOOD-BYE, YEUX BRUNS** (Good-bye, Brown Eyes) - **vocal:** Ann (with guitar & fiddle)

Unless otherwise noted, all songs are traditional with arrangements © by Savoy-Doucet and Tradition Music Co. / BUG Music. © & © 2002 by Arhoolie Productions, Inc.

- **Marc Savoy** - accordion, fiddle (on # 13), vocal (on # 18), and vocal duets with Ann (on # 9 & 17)
- **Ann Savoy** - guitar and vocals (on # 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, & 19)
- **Michael Doucet** - fiddle and vocals (on # 2, 6, 10, & 14)

Tina Pilione - bass: # 1, 6, 7, 8, 13, 15; **Beth Weil** - bass: # 4, 19; **Joel Savoy** - bass: # 11, 16, 18; **Billy Wilson** - bass: # 14; and # 12 recorded live in Minneapolis, MN with **Doug Lohman** - bass & **Paul Laughridge** - drums.

From Arhoolie CD 316 ("Two-Step d'Amédé"): # 4, 7, 15, & 19

From Arhoolie CD 389

("Home Music With Spirits"):

1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, & 17

From Arhoolie CD 418 ("Live! At The Dance"): # 2, 3, & 14

From Arhoolie CD 481 ("Sam's Big Rooster"): # 11, 12, 16, & 18

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**Three amazing musicians recorded over
the course of 22 years, on one CD...**

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