

1. **SAM (Get Down)** (4:10) (Sam Brothers)
2. **LAFAYETTE SPECIAL** (2:00) (Leon Sam)
3. **LA LA WALTZ** (2:30) (Leon Sam)
4. **HEY! MAMA*** (2:40) (Herbert Sam)
5. **ROLL ME BABY** (3:25) (Leon Sam)
6. **GOOD ROCKIN SAM'S BOOGIE*** (4:00)
(Herbert Sam)
7. **GOING DOWN TO BIG MARY** (2:25)
(Leon Sam)
8. **SUGAR CANE PATCH** (2:25) (Leon Sam)
9. **I'M A HOG FOR YOU** (3:25) (Clifton Chenier)
10. **LAFAYETTE ZYDECO** (2:10) (Clifton Chenier)
11. **COUNTRY BOY** (3:45) (Leon Sam)
12. **S.B.5** (2:15) (Leon Sam)

Leon Sam – vocals
and accordion
(or organ on SAM)

Carl Sam – guitar

Rodney Sam – drums

Glen Sam – bass

Calvin Sam – rubboard

* = **Herbert Sam** –
vocal and accordion

Producer: Chris Strachwitz
Assistant Producer: John Lumsdaine
Engineer: Lucy Sherak
Inside group photo by Joe Wilson.
All other photos by Chris Strachwitz

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CA on July 12 & 13, 1979
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SAM BROTHERS 5



SAM
(Get Down!)

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People can hardly believe it! They come around the bandstand and look behind figuring to find a tape machine playing all the music. But no, the young Sam brothers are up there on the bandstand playing that driving music all by themselves – just the five of them! They play that pulsing Louisiana Zydeco – that danceable mixture of old Creole French music blended with a shot of Rhythm & Blues and a good dose of Soul and Funk!

Leon Sam is the lead singer and plays the accordion. Only fifteen years old at the time of these recordings (born August 20, 1964) his voice is already mature and fully in command. His older brother **Carl** (November 11, 1961) plays guitar, **Rodney** (April 7, 1963) is on drums,

Glen (July 15, 1966) on bass, and the youngest **Calvin** (March 12, 1968) scrapes the rubboard. The Sam Brothers Five are the youngest children of Mr. & Mrs. Herbert and Ruby Sam and they live in Scott, Louisiana, just outside Lafayette. Daddy **Herbert Sam**, also known as “Good Rockin’” Sam and heard on two selections (*) on this album, was born in 1924 near Opelousas into a musical family. His father played accordion, so did his mother, and two brothers also played that push and pull music! All of them grew up working in the fields but on weekends they would supply the entertainment at the house parties which were the centers of fun and entertainment in those pre-dance hall days.

Zydeco music developed at the time when Herbert Sam was growing up. The name is probably based on the phonetic spelling of the French word for snap beans: *les haricots*. Since the 1930s, ZYDECO (Les Haricots) SONT PAS SALE (Snap Beans - Not Salty) has also been the name of a popular regional dance tune and was popularized by Clifton Chenier 30 years later. The term Zydeco has also been used to describe not only the music but the good times, dance, food, and socializing that goes with it! The first black Creole accordionist to make records was Amédé Ardoin who began his recording career in the late 1920s (note Arhoolie CD 7007). Since then Zydeco has gained in popularity throughout the Texas – Louisiana Gulf Coast area in the 40s and 50s and is known around the world today largely due

to the popularity of the late undisputed King of Zydeco: Clifton Chenier. Some people call the music Zydeco, others have called it La La, French, or just “push and pull.” Herbert Sam moved to Houston, Texas in the 1950s, worked as a roofer and played Zydeco music at night. He was becoming well known among Houston’s many Louisiana expatriates when in 1961 I heard him while taping a Sunday afternoon Zydeco contest held at a lounge just off Dowling Street. I had very limited equipment and issued only one selection on an Arhoolie LP of early Zydeco music (now on Arhoolie CD 307), but I soon lost track of him. So imagine my surprise when I saw this young group playing Zydeco at the 1979 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, and with them a man who certainly looked familiar - and sure enough, it was

their father whom I had last seen and heard in 1961! Throughout his career Herbert Sam had problems with various band members who weren't dependable, and one night he used his son Carl to play drums. Slowly he replaced the whole band with other sons. At first club owners gave him trouble and said: "what's this?" when they saw the young boys set up the instruments. But by now the Sam Brothers Five have become a popular attraction and every club owner is after them to perform. The first job the boys played was a talent show at school in 1974. They have since appeared on Channel 13 and 39 in Houston and at many dances. In 1977 the family moved back to Louisiana where they have been on Channel 10 in Lafayette, and their reputation has spread. They have played dances as far north as Mississippi and out

in West Texas and the summer of 1979 they decided to take a vacation in California, where they played clubs and dances and appeared at the 7th annual San Francisco Blues Festival produced by Tom Mazzolini.

The five brothers are very close and are delightful youngsters. They like school and enjoy baseball and fishing. The youngest ones are in the Little League where Glen is a good pitcher and the leading home run hitter. They also enjoy horse racing, and three of them want to be jockeys. Here then is the premier album by the Sam Brothers Five – a young group following in the Zydeco tradition but no doubt destined to make their own mark and to evolve their own unique sound.

Chris Strachwitz – 1979 & 2004



ARHOOLE 9044

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Recorded in 1979.

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