

# LAWRENCE "BLACK" ARDOIT

and his  
FRENCH  
BAND



with EDWARD POULARD on fiddle



Dallas DeVille, Edward Poulard, Donald Ray Ceasar, Lawrence "Black" Ardoin and Clarence Le Day

## LAWRENCE "BLACK" ARDOIN And His French Zydeco Band

When I first visited Houston, Texas in 1960 Mack McCormick introduced me to a unique and delightful regional dance music which was known as Zydeco, French, La La, or just Push & Pull! Many nights I drank beer at Irene's listening to the little accordion band in the corner on the left as you entered. Willie Green one night had a guy second him on a little concertina and a guy beating out rhythm on a washboard was sitting behind them. On Sundays they had Zydeco contests just off Dowling Street. The music there was hard rocking and had a strong blues flavor and the singers sang with fierce passion and energy seldom heard outside the hard core blues joints. This is where I first heard and recorded Herbert Sam (Arhoolie LP 1009—Zydeco) who raised his sons into the Zydeco tradition and they have been making a good name for themselves in recent years as the Sam Brothers 5. What I heard at these Zydeco dances were emotional and powerful amplified cries from people who had grown up working in the hot, humid fields of Southwest Louisiana. They moved to the big cities during the war years of the 1940s looking for better work in defense related industries.

One night Lightning Hopkins took me to hear "my cousin" at a beer joint in "French Town" near the ship channels on the Southeast side of Houston. There was this tall black man with a huge piano accordion on his chest, plugged into an amp, hollering out some of the toughest blues I ever heard, accompanied by only a bashing drummer. It was Clifton Chenier, the man who has since become the undisputed King of Zydeco. Most of the time he sang in some strange patois I could not understand but the feeling was obvious, he was putting his whole heart and soul into his music. Over the years I was fortunate enough to be able to record Clifton Chenier on many occasions and issue some of his best records

until his recent illness which has drained him of some of his energy but not of his musicianship. During the years of recording and listening to Clifton Chenier on many, many occasions I heard of course other French or Zydeco groups but seldom did they seem to come up to the high standard set for this music by Clifton. Some, like John Delafosse and Boisec Ardoin were quite different from Chenier's brand of French music and I enjoy their more traditional style—and how can I forget Canray Fontenot's highly individualistic singing and fiddle playing?

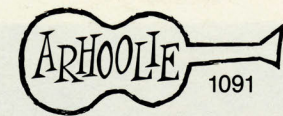
Over the years since I first met Boisec Ardoin in 1971 when he and his family made a record for me with Canray Fontenot (Arhoolie LP 1070) I have kept in touch and often heard his sons play at dances and at the annual New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. It wasn't until this past spring however that I was suddenly confronted by Lawrence Ardoin and the band you hear on this record, playing with such unity and spirit at the Festival, that I went up to them and asked if they might want to record for me. Not only was Lawrence singing and playing accordion better than ever but he had with him a fine fiddler whom I had the pleasure of hearing a few years ago with the Nolton Simien band from Church Point: Edward Poulard! Edward it also turned out, is the brother of a fine accordionist living in the San Francisco area: Danny Poulard who in recent years has been the leader of the Louisiana Playboys, the band which supplies the music at most of the Louisiana Creole functions in Northern California.

Lawrence Ardoin, born November 17, 1946 in Durald, La. is one of the younger sons of master Creole musician Alphonse "Boisec" Ardoin. He used to play drums in the Ardoin Family band and only switched to the accordion in 1975 after his older brother Gustav was

killed in an accident and at the suggestion of brother Morris. Gustav had been a fine accordionist (note Arhoolie LP 1070) and his untimely death left the family without the traditional lead instrument. Boisec, cousin to the late Amade Ardoin, the first black French accordionist to make records (note Old Timey LP 123), retired from playing dances about 1975 and these weekend traditions fell on Lawrence's shoulders. Lawrence is married with three children. The oldest son Sean (heard on a couple of cuts on this album) plays sax and accordion, daughter Erica is also picking up on the accordion and even the baby I hear is trying to learn! For the past 15 years Lawrence has worked for Gulf State Utility and has confined his musical talents to the weekend dances. The present group has been together for about two years and in my opinion is simply one of the best and tightest French Zydeco bands anywhere and will most likely play for many dances and parties along the Gulf Coast.

The songs on this album range from old numbers which Amade Ardoin sang back in the 1920s and 30s such as COFAIR and MIDLAND TWO STEP to new compositions by Lawrence like I'VE BEEN THERE and some which he has arranged like THE LONELY WALTZ and MY BABY DON'T WEAR NO CLOTHES. In between are hits by Clifton Chenier: EVERY NOW AND THEN (Tu Le Ton Son Ton), Bayou area standards, the big south Louisiana hit MATILDA sung here in French, the J.B. Lenore blues TALK TO YOUR DAUGHTER sung by Edward Poulard, the 1950s hit by Bob Geddins: HAUNTED HOUSE also in French, and a few items of unknown origin, all done in pure French Zydeco style by the best new band in the business: Lawrence Ardoin & his French Zydeco band! Let the Good Times Roll!

(Chris Strachwitz-1984)



BAYOU TWO STEP  
YOU USED TO CALL ME  
HAUNTED HOUSE  
COFAIR  
MATILDA  
I'VE BEEN THERE

EVERY NOW AND THEN  
WALKING DOWN THE INTERSTATE  
THE LONELY WALTZ  
MIDLAND TWO STEP  
MY BABY DON'T WEAR NO CLOTHES  
TALK TO YOUR DAUGHTER

Lawrence "Black" Ardoin—*vocals & accordion*  
Edward Poulard—*fiddle (and vocal on B6)*  
Donald Ray Ceasar—*drums*  
Joseph Landry—*bass*  
Dallas DeVille—*lead guitar*  
Clarence Le Day—*guitar*  
Alfred Pete—*rubboard*  
Sean Ardoin—*sax*

Cover photo taken by Chris Strachwitz at a benefit dance in Basil, Louisiana

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Produced by Chris Strachwitz

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