



michael doucet
from now on



Smithsonian Folkways

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SFW CD 40177

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- 1. EVERYTHING I DO GONNA BE FUNKY 5:52**
(Allen Toussaint / Screen Gems EMI Music Inc., BMI)
- 2. LE TWO-STEP DE BASILE 2:40**
(arr. Michael Doucet / Dosay Music, BMI, admin. by Bug)
- 3. BEE DE LA MANCHE 3:50**
(Canray Fontenet / Tradition Music Co., BMI, admin. by Bug)
- 4. MADAME BOUDREAUX 4:42**
(Michael Doucet / Happy Valley Music, BMI)
- 5. CHEZ DENOUSE 3:03**
(Dennis McGee – Michael Doucet / Orange Skies Music – Dosay Music, BMI, admin. by Bug)
- 6. A CLOSER WALK WITH THEE / I KNOW 4:22**
(Barbara George / EMI Unart Catalog Inc., BMI)
- 7. REELS DE MAMOU 5:36**
(arr. Michael Doucet / Dosay Music, BMI, admin. by Bug)
- 8. L'AMOUR OU LA FOLIE 2:30**
(Michael Doucet / Dosay Music – Orange Skies Music, BMI, admin. by Bug)
- 9. FONKY BAYOU 4:35**
(Michael Doucet / Dosay Music, BMI, admin. by Bug)
- 10. AMÉDÉE'S ACCORDION 2:17**
(Amédée Ardoin – arr. Michael Doucet / Dosay Music, BMI, admin. by Bug)
- 11. CONTREDANSE DE MAMOU 2:17**
(Shelby Vidrine – Freeman Fontenet / Flat Town Music Co., BMI)
- 12. BRASSE LE GOMBO VITE (STIR THE GOMBO FAST) 2:08**
(Michael Doucet / Dosay Music, BMI, admin. by Bug)
- 13. NEW ORLEANS 3:04**
(Hoagy Carmichael / Songs of Peer Ltd., ASCAP)
- 14. WADE'S TWO-STEP 2:53**
(Wade Frugé / Tradition Music Co., BMI, admin. by Bug)
- 15. CHÈRE EVANGELINE 2:52**
(arr. Emma Reid – Michael Doucet / Dosay Music, BMI, admin. by Bug)
- 16. HAPPY ONE-STEP 3:49**
(Dennis McGee – Michael Doucet / Orange Skies Music – Dosay Music, BMI, admin. by Bug – Flat Town Music Co., BMI)
- 17. MADAME YOUNG 2:26**
(Dennis McGee / Flat Town Music Co., BMI)
- 18. SAINT LOUIS BLUES 5:39**
(W.C. Handy)
- 19. YOU GOTTA MOVE 3:16**
(Fred McDowell – Rev. Gary Davis / Tradition Music Co., BMI, admin. by Bug – Chandos Music, ASCAP)



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Michael Doucet

by Andy Wallace

In September 2005, two weeks after Hurricane Katrina devastated his native Louisiana, Michael Doucet came to Washington, D.C., to receive a National Heritage Fellowship award from the National Endowment for the Arts for his contributions to American culture. Master fiddler, composer, and leader of the acclaimed Cajun ensemble BeauSoleil, Doucet is at once a link with the great traditional players of past generations and a trailblazing innovator. His importance to the preservation of Cajun music, and its growth and development over the past three decades, is enormous.

Michael Doucet grew up in the unique and complex culture of South Louisiana, in the heart of Cajun Country, which stretches from the west bank of the Mississippi River to the Texas border. His formative years were a time of great change for the region, as gas and oil exploration and petrochemical production supplanted farming, ranching, fishing, hunting, and trapping as the basis for the economy. French language and culture appeared to be dwindling under assault from outside influences and pressure to become a part of mainstream America. Yet the distinct Acadian culture of the region has been adapting to and assimilating outside influences from the earliest days of settlement in the 1760s. Cajuns are Doucets and Menards, but they're also Hoffpauers, Reeds, Johnsons, Conners, McGees, Ortegas, and Manuels, as well as Creoles such as Fontenot and Vidrine. The word Cajun itself, an Anglo corruption of the term Acadian, derives from the

Micmac Indian phrase La Cadie, “Land of Plenty,” which the original settlers in Nova Scotia adopted.

Cajun music has also proved to be marvelously adaptable, without ever sacrificing its essence. It picked up the accordion from the Germans early in the 20th century, and since the advent of recorded sound has borrowed from popular forms in virtually every decade. Anglo old-time string band music, Hawaiian sounds, western swing, and Nashville country music have all influenced Cajun musicians, and music, but they have enhanced rather than obliterated it. Michael Doucet is simply doing what great Cajun musicians have always done—make the music his own.

Michael Doucet was born on St. Valentine’s Day, 1951, and grew up on his father’s farm in Scott, about five miles west of Lafayette, Louisiana. Michael was raised with English as his first language, but he learned French at an early age from his grandmother and great-aunt. During the 1950s and 1960s Cajun French was largely an oral language in Acadiana. For several decades it had been actively discouraged in public schools, and the French that was taught, most often in the parochial system, was formal Parisian French that bore little resemblance to the language spoken at home. When studying French in high school, Doucet experienced the dichotomy between what he was being taught as the “correct” way to speak the language and the Cajun French he had grown up with.

Musically, Michael also grew up in a mixed cultural environment. His father’s side of the family had deep roots in traditional Cajun music. Several of his aunts sang old French ballads, and his Uncle Tee Will Knight was a fiddler. As a child, he remembers hearing the legendary accordion players Lawrence Walker of nearby

Duson, and Octa Clark of Judice. It was his Uncle Tee Will who gave him his first instrument, a four-string banjo, and encouraged him to take up the guitar.

From his mother's side of the family Michael was exposed to classical music, as well as jazz and popular American music. His older sister, Paulette, became interested in the music of the American folk revival of the 1960s, and this music, too, had an influence on Doucet, as did the popular rock and roll that he heard on recordings and the radio. Playing trumpet in the high school marching band was also part of his musical education.

When he was twelve years old, Michael teamed up with his cousin Ralph Zachary Richard, with whom he played for nearly a dozen years, off and on, eventually forming the folk-rock ensemble the Bayou Drifter Band. Around the same time Michael began a lifelong friendship with Bessyl Duhon, a great accordion and fiddle player whose father, Hector Duhon, played with Octa Clark's Dixie Ramblers. Bessyl, several years older than Michael, was an eclectic and versatile musician, comfortable playing both traditional Cajun music and 1950s swamp rock. He had a significant influence on Doucet's musical development, and the two would later create the seminal bands BeauSoleil and Coteau.

Michael went on to college at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, where he majored in English. While at LSU he began to develop a serious interest in Cajun music and culture. He delved into the archives at college for material pertaining to the Acadians' expulsion by the British from Nova Scotia, early Acadian and Creole settlement in Louisiana, and collections of French Acadian songs and folklore. While he found some material, he wondered why there were no courses

being taught about his culture. These would come a few years later, and at a different institution, the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette, where Doucet would have a hand in shaping the curriculum.

There was, however, a wealth of Cajun and Creole music available on recordings, and a genuine renaissance of Cajun culture was beginning around this time. Folklorists such as Harry Oster, Lauren C. Post, and Ralph Rinzler had come to Louisiana to record singers and musicians, and in addition to local labels such as Swallow and Goldband, national specialty labels, notably Arhoolie, were issuing Cajun recordings of contemporary musicians as well as reissues of 78s from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. During the 1960s Cajun music began to attract national attention, as the Balfa Freres, Austin Pitre, and others began to play at the Newport Folk Festival and Smithsonian Folklife Festival and were invited to play concerts around the country. These musicians, especially the late Dewey Balfa, returned home energized by the reception that their music had received outside of Louisiana. Although French Cajun music was to be found throughout Southwest Louisiana, it had been marginalized by the mass culture. It could be heard in dance halls, but not on the radio or TV. Balfa was proud of his music and his culture, and determined to make his fellow Cajuns aware of the treasure they possessed. Dewey became one of Michael's important mentors, and within a few years, Doucet would work with Balfa in carrying out this mission.

By the time he graduated from college in 1973, Michael had taken up the fiddle and begun to focus on playing more traditional Cajun music. He continued to play with the Bayou Drifter Band, and in 1974, the group was approached by a

French promoter who invited them to travel to France for a couple of weeks to play at a folk festival. It was a defining moment in Doucet's musical odyssey. As he later described it in an interview with *Sing Out!* magazine, "Wow! They know about this music. I remember being woken up with about ten hurdy-gurdies and a bunch of fiddle players playing 'Jolie Blonde' under our windows. Where were we? Died and gone to heaven, you know. It was amazing. It was like speaking to people of our great-grandfather's era who were our age. It was the turning point of my life."

The two-week trip stretched into a six-month sojourn in France. Doucet discovered that while there were few people his age at home who wanted to play Cajun music, there were French and expatriate Americans who had a serious interest in it. Two movements that were going on at this point in time contributed, I think, to Michael's perception. First, the renewal of interest in traditional music and culture, known as the folk revival in the United States, extended to many other countries, and a worldwide network of grassroots musicians was developing. Doucet and his band BeauSoleil, as part of this movement, were soon to become important international ambassadors for Cajun music and culture. Second, after two centuries of relative isolation, the French-speaking people of North America, in both Canada and the United States, were reestablishing ties with each other and with their mother country. Cultural exchanges were becoming commonplace between Louisiana, Quebec, and the Maritime Provinces of Canada, as well as with France itself. Doucet delved deeply into the French and Acadian roots of Cajun culture and incorporated them into the music that he created over the next thirty years.

While in France Doucet split with his partner Richard, as they were moving in

different musical directions. Richard, more oriented towards rock and roll, moved to Quebec and as Zachary Richard has been quite successful in purveying his high-powered, Louisiana-flavored French rock and roll.

Before leaving Europe, Doucet befriended two other musicians, from England, who were to have a significant influence on his musical development. Brothers Robin and Barry Dransfield were two young Brits mining that country's wealth of traditional song. Their unique and elegant interpretations of traditional material, played on fiddle and guitar with passion and precision and sung in close harmony, made a lasting impression on the Cajun musician. There are, I think, parallels between the Dransfields' music and some of the work that Michael has done with his brother David.

Once back in Louisiana Michael's life took a new direction. He set aside plans to attend graduate school in New Mexico, where he had intended to study English Romantic poetry, particularly the work of William Blake. He later told Cajun folklorist Barry Jean Ancelet, "*J'ai barguiné Blake pour Balfa et je suis rentré plutôt chez nous*" ("I traded Blake for Balfa, and returned home instead"). Ever the eclectist, Doucet did eventually find the time to set Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* to music and record the results for Red House Records.

In 1975 Michael obtained a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program, to seek out and study with older violin masters, Cajun and Creole, throughout the region. He sought out players such as Bé Bé and Calvin Carrière, Varise Connor, Lionel LeLieux, Dewey and Will Balfa, Hector Duhon, Bradford Gordon, and above all, Dennis McGee and Canray Fontenot, to

master the intricacies of traditional Cajun and Creole music, particularly as they related to his chosen instrument, the fiddle. He also immersed himself in the wealth of recordings now available to him.

McGee and Fontenot deserve special attention here, because they had an enormous influence on Doucet's playing. Dennis McGee, often referred to as the Godfather of Cajun Music, was in his early eighties when Doucet met him. A brilliant fiddle player and singer, he had made some of the earliest recordings of Cajun music back in the late 1920s and 1930s, with legendary musicians such as Ernest Frugé, Angelus LeJeune, Amédée Ardoin, and his longtime partner, Sady Courville. Dennis was raised and still lived outside of Eunice, an hour or so west of Lafayette. He was still playing and, in recent years, had been traveling to festivals and concerts around the country with Courville. His playing style was intense, intricate, and archaic, based on old musical forms and rhythms that had existed before the diatonic accordion entered Cajun music and changed it forever. Cajun music has long featured two fiddles, a lead playing the melody and a second playing mostly on the bottom two strings below it. McGee was a lead fiddler, with Frugé and Courville playing below him, though in quite different styles. Michael spent countless hours with Dennis over a period of many years, mastering both McGee's way of playing lead and the art of Cajun second fiddle. McGee was also a singer of astonishing power and emotion, and his influence can be heard in Doucet's vocals. Michael and Dennis remained close friends until Dennis' passing in 1989 at the age of 96, and they often played and recorded together. Michael Doucet is the only living player who can truly capture the old style of Dennis McGee.

Canray Fontenot was Michael's greatest black musical influence. A Creole fiddler from the Durald area, Fontenot had a unique way of playing that combined loose, Caribbean-style bowing with blues tonalities, jazz improvisation, and Cajun modal scales to produce a style all his own. His repertoire was largely traditional Creole tunes and songs, but his playing was revolutionary. He began playing with his father Adam and played second fiddle behind Amédée Ardoin early in his career, but he is best known for his work with the great Creole accordionist Bois Sec Ardoin. As with McGee, Doucet spent much time learning and playing with Canray over the years, and recorded an album with him. His influence is evident in Michael's free-wheeling style.

While he was delving into the roots of Cajun music, Doucet also joined up with his old friend Bessyl Duhon to found two bands that were to have an enormous impact on the direction Cajun music was to take over the next three decades. With Duhon and Kenneth and Sterling Richard he created BeauSoleil, whose early music was strictly acoustic and influenced by his sojourn in France. BeauSoleil continues to this day and is arguably the most innovative and successful Cajun band in the genre's history. We'll return to them shortly. The other group, Coteau, though of relatively short duration, had a more immediate impact. Coteau was the first band to mix hard-core traditional Cajun music with Gulf Coast rock. They produced a sound that had great appeal to young people from the region, and brought that generation back to the clubs and dance halls, such as Jay's Lounge in Cankton, and Boo Boo's and Mulate's in Breaux Bridge. They appeared at the acclaimed New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, where they

received a tumultuous reception, and went on that same year, 1976, to play at the National Folk Festival at Wolf Trap Farm Park, outside of Washington, D.C., where they enjoyed a similar response. The group featured Bessyl Duhon on accordion and fiddle and Michael, singing and playing fiddle, providing the Cajun base. Drummer Kenny Blevins added a hot Louisiana rock and roll rhythm section with a New Orleans second line beat, while guitarists Bruce “Weasel” McDonald and Dana Breaux added soaring, high-powered lead guitar. Bassist Gary Newman, Nashville star Jimmy C. Newman’s son, sang a mix of Cajun and country classics. The sound was unique, exhilarating, and has never been quite duplicated since. As Michael Doucet once described it, “Everybody in the band stood for a certain thing, and when you finally got all the ingredients together it was like a highly seasoned jumbo gumbo. I helped compose and arrange a lot then; there were some real summits musically like the ‘Mardi Gras Song,’ or the way we played ‘Acadian Two-step.’” Coteau was quite successful for a few years and toured throughout the region as well as traveling to folk festivals far afield. Failure to consummate a record deal and internal tensions were wearing on the group, however, and it disbanded in 1977 when Bessyl went off to Nashville to play with Jimmy C. Newman.

BeauSoleil has been the primary means of Doucet’s musical expression over the past three decades, though by no means his only outlet. The group takes its name from a legendary figure in the Acadian resistance in Canada, Joseph Broussard dit Beau Soleil. Broussard led a successful guerilla war against the British for several years before surrendering after the fall of Quebec in 1759. He was interned in Halifax, Nova Scotia, until after the Treaty of Paris in 1763. He was

eventually able to charter ships to bring a group of exiled Acadians to Louisiana, via Saint-Domingue (Haiti), finally arriving in Louisiana in 1767. He and his group of 197 emigrants settled in the area near where Doucet lives today. There are Broussards on Michael's mother's side of the family.

BeauSoleil's career has been a reflection of Doucet's growth as a musician, bandleader, and composer and can be traced through the more than two dozen albums that the group has recorded. In the early years, the accent was on a more traditional Cajun sound, with French overtones. Their first album was recorded in France, and their second featured European chanteuse Françoise Schauber on vocals. The next group of recordings featured Belgian vocalist Annick Colbert, who added old French and medieval sacred music to the sound. As the years and albums went on, new influences emerged—Creole, zydeco, swamp pop, New Orleans jazz, Caribbean rhythms, Tex-Mex, to name a few—all seamlessly integrated into the group's sound by Doucet's arranging.

There have been numerous personnel changes in the group over their long history, but there is also an essential continuity. Since the early 1980s, Michael's younger brother David has played guitar, and his singing and distinctive flat-picking style are part of the band's signature sound. David is the first to have developed a lead flat-picking style for Cajun music. Growing up he admired the country-style playing of Rodney Balfa but also listened to the great Appalachian guitarist Doc Watson, and Mississippi Delta bluesman Mississippi John Hurt. Billy Ware and Tommy Alisi have been longtime band members, as was Tommy Comeaux until his death a few years ago. There have been several accordion players over

the years, but Jimmy Breaux is now a fifteen-year veteran. Others have provided a particular flavor during their stints with the band. Bassist Al Tharpe, who played with the Plank Road String Band, sometimes added five-string banjo to the mix, and the current bass player, Mitchell Reed, sometimes seconds Michael on fiddle. Mitchell is a nephew of the late Wallace “Cheese” Reed, a legendary old-style fiddler.

For the first dozen years or so, BeauSoleil was a part-time band, working at clubs in the region and traveling to festivals on the weekends. They toured France and Canada several times, but most of the musicians came home to day jobs. Michael continued his fieldwork with older musicians, developed a program of music in the schools with Dewey Balfa, and for a time worked in the Communications Department of the Diocese of Lafayette, producing radio and TV programs. In 1986 BeauSoleil made a leap and became the first full-time performing and touring Cajun band. Several things precipitated this. They signed a contract with Rounder Records, from Somerville, Massachusetts, giving their recordings national distribution, and produced a recording with noted Louisiana guitarist Sonny Landreth. Doucet wrote and the group recorded the soundtrack for the motion picture *Belizaire the Cajun*, directed by Glenn Pitre. The next year Michael Doucet and BeauSoleil recorded the signature song for the movie *The Big Easy*. Around this time they also began to appear regularly on Garrison Keillor’s *Prairie Home Companion*, as they have continued to do ever since.

Over the past twenty years BeauSoleil avec Michael Doucet, as the group is now called, has toured nationally and internationally, moved onto Rhino Records,

and received seven Grammy nominations and won a Grammy award in 1998 in the category of best traditional folk album for *L'Amour ou Folie*. In 2008 they are the best known and most respected Cajun ensemble in the world, having introduced the sounds of South Louisiana to millions of people around the globe.

While BeauSoleil forms an important part of Doucet's music career, he has also been busy on other fronts. As a bookmark to BeauSoleil's progressive sound, Michael has had a long collaboration with Marc and Ann Savoy as the Savoy-Doucet Band. They have been playing together since 1979 and have recorded several albums over the years for Arhoolie, as well as performing at concerts and festivals throughout the country. Theirs is a deeply traditional sound. Accordion maker, player, and fiddler Marc Savoy, though a bit older than Michael, is the other musician of their generation who has learned widely from the old masters and brought the music to younger generations. For over forty years the Savoy Music Center in Eunice has been a gathering place for Cajun musicians from all over the region, as well as a required stop for outsiders looking to find authentic Cajun music. Marc's wife Ann, originally from Richmond, Virginia, is a fluent French speaker, and has immersed herself in Cajun culture. A splendid singer and guitarist, she has compiled and edited the definitive book of Cajun songs entitled *Cajun Music: A Reflection of a People*.

Michael has recorded with many other traditional artists, including Dennis McGee, Canray Fontenot, Octa Clark, Hector Duhon, and Chuck Guillory. With his wife Sharon, he recorded and produced a recording of Cajun children's songs. During the late 1980s and 1990s he toured nationally several times with

the “Masters of the Folk Violin” tour, produced by the National Council for the Traditional Arts, which also included Allison Krauss, Kenny Baker, and Claude Williams, among others. In recent years Doucet has also been a part of the Fiddlers Four, which includes Darol Anger, a veteran of the David Grisman Quartet and a founder of the Turtle Island String Quartet; Bruce Molsky, a brilliant interpreter of Appalachian fiddling; and Rushad Eggleston, a master of improvisation on the cello. The group has appeared at major venues all over the United States.

Michael and Sharon Doucet live in Lafayette in an old Cajun-style house that they bought and restored in 1974. Their three children, Melissa, Ezra, and Matthew, are all musicians. Matthew has recently embarked on a career as a violin maker and set up a shop in the area.

The music on this CD was recorded in a couple of unrehearsed sessions with two musicians with whom Michael enjoys playing music. Several pieces were recorded at La Lou Studio in Lafayette, where Aldus Roger and other Cajun greats have recorded in the past. His good friend Mitchell Reed is playing second fiddle on several of these cuts. The other tunes were recorded in Baton Rouge, and feature the beautiful and intricate guitar work of Todd Duke, who regularly plays with the great New Orleans Creole singer John Boutte. On the recording Doucet plays violin, octave violin, diatonic accordion, and guitar. The range of material is impressive, ranging from old Cajun tunes learned from Dennis McGee and Canray Fontenot, to blues and New Orleans funk. Several of the songs and tunes were written by Michael, though in the case of a couple of the fiddle pieces, they sound as if they've been around forever. ☹



track notes *by Michael Doucet*

1. EVERYTHING I DO GONNA BE FUNKY

*Michael Doucet, octave violin, vocals;
Todd Duke, guitar*

This is one of my all-time favorite Allen Toussaint tunes. I met guitarist Todd Duke at a workshop stage during the 2006 Calgary Folk Festival and was struck by his New Orleans piano guitar style. This is the first tune we ever played together, and it was captured for this recording. Sometimes music tells you something that goes beyond what words can really describe.

2. LE TWO-STEP DE BASILE

Michael Doucet, fiddle

The Cajun waltz version was recorded back in 1928 by Leo Soileau (fiddle) and Mayeuse Lafleur (accordion-vocals). This great duo was well known for their originality and superb musicianship. Unfortunately their career together was cut short after Mayeuse's untimely death just before their 78 recording was released. Leo went on to lead several influential Cajun string bands in southwest Louisiana, but still spoke of that incident like it was yesterday when I met him in 1975. My two-step version is inspired by and dedicated to these creative pioneers.

3. BEE DE LA MANCHE

Michael Doucet, octave violin

I was fortunate to have recorded this Canray Fontenot tune as a duo with him at his home back in 1981. Canray was an incredibly creative and inspirational human being who has blessed the Louisiana French Creole community with his insight and talent.

4. MADAME BOUDREAU

Michael Doucet, fiddle, vocals; Todd Duke, guitar

Originally an early 20th-century Cuban tune, “Mama Inez” was translated into New Orleans second line, then picked up by Cajun accordionist Nathan Abshire and sung as “Mama Rosin” by Little Yvon LeBlanc. I take it a bit further to delve into M’dame Boudreaux’s cooking ability.



5. CHEZ DENOUSE

Michael Doucet, fiddle, vocals; Mitchell Reed, fiddle

A traditional tune of Dennis McGee's with lyrics about his Eunice, Louisiana, home and lovely wife Gladys, who would always welcome me in for a soirée of hot coffee, French conversation, and hotter fiddle music. Mitchell Reed, a great young disciple of Dennis', and I play twin fiddles à la McGee & Courville.

6. A CLOSER WALK WITH THEE / I KNOW

*Michael Doucet, octave violin, vocals;
Todd Duke, guitar*

When I heard George Lewis play this tune, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. Of course, Barbara George knows how to fonkatize a good ole gospel tune her bad self, "I Know."

7. REELS DE MAMOU

Michael Doucet, fiddle

This is my assembly of reels recorded by Harry Oster in Mamou, Louisiana, in the late 1950s. They include reels from Aubrey DeVille, Wallace "Cheese" Reed, and Austin Pitre, all amazing Cajun fiddlers.

8. L'AMOUR OU LA FOLIE

Michael Doucet, fiddle; Mitchell Reed, fiddle

I'm proud to say this is the title song on BeauSoleil's 1998 Grammy-winning CD. Mitchell thought it would be great as a twin fiddle tune.

9. FONKY BAYOU

Michael Doucet, fiddle; Todd Duke, guitar

I had written this bluesy piece in Paris after I emerged from a month-long Shambhala-Buddhist retreat in France. It must have put some good space in my mind for this first-take duet jam with Todd.

10. AMÉDÉE'S ACCORDION

Michael Doucet, accordion

I am not an accordion player, but I love all of Amédée Ardoin's accordion tunes, and that's what seems to come out of my fingers whenever I pick up that little stomach spinet. This is merely a hint of the kind of music Amédée made in 1920s and 1930s.

11. CONTREDANSE DE MAMOU

Michael Doucet, octave violin

This is one of the first Cajun fiddle tunes I heard that resembled more of the rare old-world French quadrille sounds found in Louisiana. Shelby Vidrine, fiddle, and Freeman Fontenot, accordion, are my sources for this tune.

12. BRASSE LE GOMBO VITE (STIR THE GOMBO FAST)

Michael Doucet, fiddle; Mitchell Reed, fiddle

“Brasse le gombo vite” is a minor-key fiddle excursion into realms of Louisiana food preparations such as stirring the roux. The key to this tune is not letting the roux burn as it darkens into the color of chocolate.

13. NEW ORLEANS

Michael Doucet, fiddle; Todd Duke, guitar

This is Hoagy Carmichael's 1932 tune about the city that has given us so much great music. It was Todd Duke's idea to include that little cadenza in the middle which will mess with the dancers. “If you've never seen that town, boy, what a pity, there's nothing like New Orleans....” (HC)



14. WADE'S TWO-STEP

Michael Doucet, fiddle

I learned this piece, originally a fiddle waltz, from the late Wade Frugé, with whom I had the opportunity to play second fiddle on many memorable occasions in Eunice, Louisiana. After I once played this two-step version for him, he looked at me in disbelief and said jokingly, “You can’t record that until I’m dead.” To which I replied, “Well, you must’ve liked it because it didn’t kill you yet!” For me, this tune brings back all the fun and musical times we shared.

15. CHÈRE EVANGELINE

Michael Doucet, fiddle; Mitchell Reed, fiddle

My Cajunized version of a Swedish folk song I learned from the English countryside fiddler, Emma Reid, who is known for her snake-bow soul.

16. HAPPY ONE-STEP

Michael Doucet, fiddle; Mitchell Reed, fiddle

Dennis McGee recorded this tune with Sady Courville in 1929. A more modern Cajun swing style evolved out McGee’s tune in the 1950s and became known as “Petit Mamou,” so I simply reversed the musical process.

17. MADAME YOUNG

Michael Doucet, octave violin

Another McGee tune from that same 1929 session. Cajun fiddler Orin “Doc” Guidry changed the tune a little in the 1950s, added “*pour faire fâcher les vieilles femmes*” to the lyrics, and named it “Allons danser, Colinda” after a Trinidadian stick dance.

18. SAINT LOUIS BLUES

Michael Doucet, fiddle; Todd Duke, guitar

One of the tunes I learned from my uncle, Tee Will Knight, who first showed me how to play his fiddle—which, by the way, is now on display at the Louisiana State Museum. For

many years after learning this song, I often wondered why a saint like Louis would get the blues! I arrived at my slippery fiddle style from the bayou’s mud and the meandering Crescent City Creole soul.

19. YOU GOTTA MOVE

Michael Doucet, guitar and vocal

Originally a Southern gospel tune transferred to slide guitar by Mississippi Fred McDowell. I really liked Mississippi Butch Cage’s fiddle version, but I thought I should say “*bonsoir*” simply with just my guitar.

about this recording *by Michael Doucet*

This project was recorded live in three sessions with no rehearsals, overdubs, or song lists. In the first session, I simply walked in, took out my fiddle, and played tunes as I would play them at home.

At the second session, I was joined by Mitchell Reed, a great fiddler and storyteller in his own right. We simply sat down, visited for a while, then began playing in the twin fiddle styles that we had both learned firsthand from Dennis McGee and Sady Courville.

At the third session, I asked Todd Duke, an outstanding New Orleans jazz and funk electric guitarist, to bring along his acoustic guitar. Since this was our initial meeting as a duo, we went about exploring our common musical ground together by experimenting and conjuring up some tunes that brought us both some funky mellow joy.

These sessions were a musician's delight due to the expertise, patience, and great ears of the guys pushing the recording buttons: Ben Williams, David Rachou, and Pete Reiniger.

credits

Produced by Michael Doucet

Tracks 5, 8, 12, 15, and 16
recorded and mixed by David Rachau at
LaLouisiane Studio, Lafayette, LA

Tracks 2, 3, 7, 11, 14, and 17
recorded and mixed by Ben Williams and
LPB Studio One, Baton Rouge, LA

Tracks 1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 13, 18, and 19
recorded by Ben Williams, mixed by Pete
Reiniger

Mastered by Pete Reiniger

Annotated by Andy Wallace and Michael
Doucet

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Betty Derbyshire, financial operations
manager; Laura Dion, sales; Toby Dodds,
technology manager; Spencer Ford, customer
service; Henri Goodson, financial assistant;
Mark Gustafson, marketing; Helen Lindsay,
customer service; Julian Lynch, customer
service; Keisha Martin, manufacturing
coordinator; Margot Nassau, licensing and
royalties; Jeff Place, archivist; Amy Schriefer,
program assistant; Ronnie Simpkins, audio
specialist; John Smith, sales and marketing;
Stephanie Smith, archivist, Norman Van Der
Sluys, audio specialist; Kathy Wasik, sales.

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about smithsonian folkways

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings is the nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum of the United States. Our mission is the legacy of Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. The Smithsonian acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has continued the Folkways tradition by supporting the work of traditional artists and expressing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding.

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