Cajun Social Music
Featuring Nathan Abshire, Mark Savoy, Hector Duhon and Others

1. 'Trape mon chapeau 2:23
2. Jolie blonde 2:28
3. Tout ça c'est dur à croire 3:38
4. Chère tout-tou 3:01
5. Bosco Stomp 3:02
6. J'étais au bal hier au soir 2:31
7. Midnight Special 2:58
8. La valse de Lawtell 1:22
9. Courtaleau 1:44
10. Un homme marié 3:03
11. Mamou Two-Step 2:23
12. La valse d'amour 3:21
13. Osson Two-Step 2:59

Originally issued in 1977 as Folkways FA 2621.

Recorded and annotated by Gérard Dole
Digitally remastered by Randy Kling at Disc Mastering, Nashville, Tennessee.
Cover photograph (La Poussiere, Breaux Bridge, Louisiana) by Philip Gould.
Design by Nancy Jean Anderson.
Art direction by Scott Billington.

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Hadley Fontenot accordion
Sadie Courville fiddle
Preston Manuel guitar and vocal
Recorded September 6, 1975 in Mamou

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Milton Mélancçon fiddle
Marc Savoy fiddle
Lurlin Lejeune guitar
Recorded September 1, 1975 in Mire

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Milton Mélancçon fiddle
Lurlin Lejeune guitar
Adausas Thibodeaux vocal
Recorded September 1, 1975 in Mire

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Nathan Abshire accordion and vocal
Allie Young accordion
Armand Babin teens triangle
Recorded August 27, 1975 in Basile

5. Bosco Stomp 3:02
Allie Young accordion
Bessyl Duhon fiddle
Rodney Balla guitar and vocal
Recorded August 30, 1975 in Basile

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955 L’Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600, Smithsonian
Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560, U.S.A.
CAJUN SOCIAL MUSIC

Featuring
Nathan Abshire,
Hector Duhon,
Marc Savoy
and Others

Of the Louisiana French, the Acadians form the most homogenous group in the southwestern part of the state. Approximately four thousand settled in the Attakapas country, along the Bayou Téche, and Lafourche and Vermilion bayous, coming in small groups over a thirty year period after the English dispersion of their Canadian settlement in 1755.

Their descendants, who call themselves Cajuns, remain to a large extent an agricultural people who hold tenaciously to their ways. They quickly absorb, it seems, nearly every alien who comes in contact with them. Like the land, they are prolific.

The ball has been assuredly the epitome of leisure activity for generations. A traveller witnessed one in the 1870s:

The neighborhood ball is orderly and well conducted, with whole families attending. A section knows as 'le parc aux petits' is provided for the babies so that the mothers can keep a careful watch on their older daughters, while the fathers enjoy a quiet game of cards in an adjoining room. The old women also come to play cards, each carrying a bag of coins with her. Some of the mothers are quite young to be relegated to places against the walls; they follow the dance with sparkling eyes. During the evening, a supper of chicken gumbo with rice and hot black coffee is served. When the musicians at length grow weary, they go outside and cry 'le bal est fini.' Otherwise, the dance-loving Acadians would never go home.

Dennis McGee, a fiddler born in 1893, gave me more details about the house-dances he played in his youth:

Suppose I had a house, well, they came and asked me to lend it for a ball: all right, I gave my consent.

They rode around to invite young girls and at night, they got together. Women sat down on benches they had made with blocks of wood and planks; they watched their daughters, you know, in these days, a girl couldn't go out alone, no. The boy who had borrowed the house, he was the boss until the ball was through. He decided which couple to put together; he stood at the door and when a guy asked him to dance, he placed him. Sometimes he let him dance, sometimes not. If he didn't like him, he left him back wards, so that he couldn't dance. This one he liked, he placed him each two, three or four sets.

Nowadays, dance-halls have replaced the old house-dances, but music is still played traditionally at such social gatherings as gumboos, fricasees, fish-parties, etc. Anyone who can play will bring his instrument and there is at least one capable accordion player and singer per family. One or two more guests will often join on the guitar and the fiddle, forming a one-night band for the pleasure of the dancers and listeners. There will always be a triangle to come in. Although the Cajuns have reshaped their fiddle-based dance tunes to the more limited scale of the diatonic accordion brought in in the late 1800s, there are survivals of older fiddle tunes. (For more details about instruments, dances, and songs, see the notes for Cajun Home Music, Folkways 2620.)

The guitar was introduced in the twenties. The first one to use it regularly with the accordion, seemingly, was Cléoma Breaux, Joe Falcon's wife, who recorded extensively from 1928 to World War II. She had many followers and the guitar quickly became part of the rhythm accompaniment which had been supplied so far by the triangle alone.

The now classical combination to play Cajun music traditionally is an accordion, one or two fiddles, a guitar, and a triangle.

The age of the players presented in this album ranges from mid-thirties, like Marc Savoy or Lurlin Lejeune, to mid-sixties, like Allie Young or Nathan Abshire. I recorded them at gumboos and fish parties during the summer of 1975.

Acknowledgments:

I wish to thank all the dear folks who welcomed me so nicely to Louisiana, and Michèle Brisse, my companion during this field trip. You can write me for further details: Gérard Delé, 10 rue de Buci, Paris 75006, France.

*Trape mon chapeau

Hadley Fontenot accordion
Sadie Courville fiddle
Preston Manuel guitar and vocal
Recorded September 6, 1975 in Mamou

Oh, 'trape mon chapeau, c'est l'heure j'm'en vas y dir, cher!
Ah yé yé, malheureuse,
Gardez donc quoi t'as fait
T'as quitté ton vieux nègre*
Moi j'connais j'mérite pas ça, ha ha!

m'ont dit z'y m'aimaient pas
Moi j'connais sont fachés
'Près gueule sur la galerie, hi hi!

Oh, catch my hat, it's time for me to go he says, dear!

Ah, yé yé, misery maker
Look at what you did
You left your old nègre*
I know I don't deserve this, ha ha!

Your daddy and your mama
They told me that they didn't like me
I know they are angry
Shouting on the porch, hee!

*Nègre is a term of endearment in both black and white Louisiana French communities.

Jolie blonde
Milton Mélano accordion
Marc Savoy fiddle
Lurlin Lejeune guitar
Recorded September 1, 1975 in Mire

Tout ça c'est dur à croire
Marc Savoy accordion
Milton Mélano accordion
Lurlin Lejeune guitar
Adausas Thibodeaux vocal
Recorded September 1, 1975 in Mire

Oh yé yé, ça c'est dur à croire
Ton pap'et ta mam' m'avaient dit
J'étais pas bon
Oh yé yé, comment moi j'va faire
'Tit coeur aujourd'hui l'après m'quitter
Mais moi tout seul

Oh yé yé, it's hard to believe
Your dad and your mom told me
I was no good
Oh yé yé, what will I do
L'il heart, today you are leaving me
All alone

Chère tout-tou
Nathan Abshire accordion and vocal
Allie Young accordion
Armand Babineaux triangle
Recorded August 27, 1975 in Basile

Hè, chère tout-tou,
Viens m'chercher chère tout-tou
Z'a la maison
Hè, chère tout-tou
Tu m'as quitté pour t'en aller
Z'avec un autre

Hè, chère tout-tou,
Mois j'm'ennue oui de toi
Chère tout-tou
(Pas d'ma faute, nègre!)
Hè, chère tout-tou
T'as quitté ta chère maison
Pour t'en aller
(Ha hey!)

Hè, chère tout-tou,
Ty connais j'mérite pas ça
T'après faire
Hè, chère tout-tou
D'écouter tous les conseils
De tous les autres, bêbê!

Hey, dear tout-tou,
Come and find me, dear tout-tou
At home
Hey, dear tout-tou
You left me to go away
With another one

Hey dear tout-tou
I miss you
Dear tout-tou
(It's not my fault, nègre!)
Hey, dear tout-tou
You left your dear home
To go away
(Ha hey!)  
Hey, dear tout-tou  
You know that I don’t deserve  
What you are doing  
Hey, dear tout-tou  
You listened to all the advice  
Of all the others, babe!

"Tout-tou" is a term of endearment  
that is literally translated as "all in all"—as in "you are my all in all."

**Bosco Stomp**  
Allie Young accordian  
Bessyl Duhon fiddle  
Rodney Ball guitar and vocal  
Recorded August 30, 1975 in Basile

Y en a des titres brunes  
Oui y en a des titres blondes  
Oui y en qu’as ses noir  
Que l’able veut pas las voir  
Ca va t’aire des misères  
Ca va t’aire des accroces  
Ca va t’aire les aimers  
Puis là ça tourne le dos  
Ca qui m’a fait du mal à moi

Y en a des titres brunes  
Oui y en a des titres blondes  
Oui y en qu’as ses grosses  
Que l’able veut pas las voir  
Ca va t’aire des misères  
Ca va t’aire des accroces  
Ca va t’aire les aimers  
Puis là ça casse le coeur  
Ca qui m’a fait du mal lité fille

There are some little brunettes  
There are some little blondes  
There are some who are dark enough  
That the devil doesn’t want to see them  
They will make you miserable  
They will make you believe them  
They will make you love them  
Then, they turn their back on you  
That’s what hurts me

There are some little brunettes  
There are some little blondes  
There are some who are fat enough  
That the devil offers want to see them  
They will trouble you  
They will make you believe them  
They will make you love them  
Then, they break your heart  
That’s what hurts me, lil’ girl

**Midnight Special**  
Allie Young accordian and vocal  
Hector Duhon fiddle  
Bessyl Duhon guitar  
Recorded September 24, 1975 in Basile

Hé yà, tout partout où moi j’(ai) été  
Héier au soir mais pour te voir  
Titile t’étais pas là  
Oh, jolie, ça qu’a toi, mais aujourd’hui  
Quand même tu veux mais t’en r’venir  
Titile moi j’èveus pas t’voir

Hé jolie, aujourd’hui moi j’après t’voir  
Quel c’est ça, m’assez heureuse  
Tous les misères que tu m’as fait  
Oh, pretà, ça qu’a toi, mais aujourd’hui  
Quand même tu veux mais t’en r’venir  
Titile moi j’èveus pas t’voir

Hé yà, everywhere I went  
Yesterday night to see you  
L’il girl, you were not there  
Oh, pretty one, what’s up with you today  
Even if you want to come back  
L’il girl, I don’t want to see you

Hey, pretty one, today I can see  
That you are so happy  
Despite all troubles you gave me  
Oh, pretty one, get ready, because today  
Even if you want to come back  
L’il girl, I don’t want to see you

**La valse de Lawtell**  
Milton Mélançon fiddle  
Marc Savoy fiddle  
Lurlin Lejeune guitar  
Recorded September 1, 1975 in Mire

Courtableau  
Nathan Abshire accordian and vocal  
Armand Babineaux triangle  
Recorded September 1, 1975 in Basile

S’en aller sur l’Courtableau tit monde*,  
Pour ramasser des écossés, yé yà  
Pour faire du feu, bébé,  
Pour faire bouillir les tourloulous  
S’en aller sur l’Courtableau tit monde  
Pour ramasser des écossés, yé yà  
Pour faire du feu bébé  
Pour faire bouillir des ouaouaron

S’en aller sur l’Courtableau tit monde  
Pour ramasser des écossés tit monde  
Pour faire du feu bébé  
Pour faire bouillir les écuvisses  
S’en aller sur l’Courtableau tit monde  
Pour ramasser des écossés yé yà  
Pour faire a la flante bébé  
Pour faire bouillir des cocolières

Let’s go to Bayou Courtbaleau, l’il one  
To collect dry wood, yé yà  
To light a fire, babe  
To boil crabs  
Let’s go to Bayou Courtbaleau l’il one  
To collect dry wood, yé yà  
To light a fire, babe  
To boil frogs

Let’s go to Bayou Courtbaleau, l’il folk  
To collect dry wood, l’il folk  
To light a fire, babe  
To boil crabs  
Let’s go to Bayou Courtbaleau, l’il folk  
To collect dry wood, yé yà  
To light a blazing fire, babe  
To boil alligators.

Un homme marié  
Allie Young accordian and vocal  
Hector Duhon fiddle  
Bessyl Duhon guitar  
Recorded September 24, 1975 in Basile

J’ai rencontré dans les bals  
Elle était après danser  
J’ai d mandé à mes amis  
Qui c’était cette chère tite fille  
A me r’semblait si mignonne  
A passé dans la clairière  
Un homme marié avec une famille  
Après essayer de courtiser

Elle a couché sa chère tite tête  
Sur mon épaule mais en dansant  
J’ay cassé son cher tit coeur  
Elle savait pas j’étais marié  
C’est pas la peine mais la blâmer  
Pour tout ça qu’a après arriver  
Un homme marié avec une famille  
Après essayer de courtiser

I met her in the dance halls  
She was dancing  
I asked my friends  
Who was this dear little girl  
She looked so cute to me  
As she moved through the lights  
A married man with a family  
Trying to court

She leaned her dear little head  
On my shoulder while dancing  
I broke her dear little heart  
She didn’t know I was married  
It’s no use to blame her  
For all that’s happening  
A married man with a family  
Trying to court.

**Mamou Two-Step**  
Milton Mélançon fiddle  
Marc Savoy fiddle  
Lurlin Lejeune guitar  
Recorded September 1, 1975 in Mire

**La valse d’amour**  
Allie Young accordian and vocal  
Hector Duhon fiddle  
Bessyl Duhon guitar  
Recorded September 24, 1975 in Basile

Moï j’endorss mais ton tit coeur  
Et chère tite fille  
Et j’vas l’emmenner avec moi  
M’a la maison  
Tu m’as tout l’temps si bien soigné  
Mais jolie fille  
Mais tout t’de d’mande  
C’est l’en rev’rir m’a avec ton nègre

Tu coup’rais mais tes tis ch’veux  
Que j’aime autant  
Une tite caresse qui m’t’ravaille aussi dur  
Tu m’as tout l’temps si bien soigné  
Mais jolie fille  
Mais tout t’de d’mande  
C’est t’en rev’rir m’a la maison

I fall asleep on your little heart  
Dear lil’ girl  
I’ll take it  
Back home with me  
You always cared for me so much  
Pretty girl  
All I ask you  
Is to come back with your nègre

You’d cut a curl of your lil’ hair  
I love so dear  
A caress which troubles me so hard  
You always cared for me so much  
Pretty girl  
All I ask you  
Is to come back home.

**Osson Two-Step**  
Marc Savoy accordian  
Milton Mélançon fiddle  
Lurlin Lejeune guitar  
Adausas Thibodeaux triangle  
Recorded September 1, 1975 in Mire

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