ture. Blues clubs have lost their role as the social and cultural centers of the black inner city. The new generation is embracing rap music, which is more aggressive and addresses the problems of racism and class. Nonetheless, blues has spanned three continents and has transected barriers of age, culture, race and, to a lesser extent, language. The simple and natural rhythms, derived from African tribal music, still have a wide appeal and will continue to influence music throughout the world.

6

The Geography of Zydeco Music

Robert Kuhlken and Rocky Sexton

I never thought I'd ever hit Europe, but I know one thing: the way I was playin' that accordion it was goin' to go somewhere . . . I know what I had goin' was goin' to go somewhere.[1]

Zydeco music is a unique blend of Afro-American and Afro-French traditions indigenous to southwest Louisiana. Born out of close interaction between the Cajun (white) and Creole (black) populations of Louisiana, zydeco music developed into a distinctive genre when it received a healthy dose of rhythm and blues influence from the urban areas of east Texas.[2] Its current popularity as dance music is directly tied to the past when house dances were the primary form of entertainment and interaction for rural Creoles. These gatherings featured music that was a precursor to modern zydeco, which contributed to its development.

Methodology

Music can be a cultural trait possessing distinctive spatial attributes. Folk and ethnic music in particular often exhibit a strong regional identity. George Carney has spearheaded efforts by cultural geographers to recognize and chart the distribution and diffusion of the many forms of American music and notes a curious lack of attention to this aspect of the cultural landscape.[3]

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We examine here the concept of a hearth area for zydeco music by utilizing a cultural-historical approach in delineating its origins within the Creole area of southwest Louisiana. Following the example of a simple yet effective model utilized by Carney, birthplace and residence maps of notable zydeco musicians give an indication of the diffusionary movement of the music.[4] Although the core area remains quite definitive, the residential relocations of musicians follow the general trend in Creole population movement and hence may be viewed as factors in its diffusion. Subsequent diffusion can be attributed to the commercial recording and distribution of the music and the national and international concert tours of zydeco musicians. The locations of clubs, dance halls, and church halls where zydeco music is featured reveal another glimpse into its geography.

Origins of Zydeco

Although possibly stemming from African roots, the term zydeco is most often attributed to the folk expression "Les haricots sont pas sales" (The beans are not salted).[5] This saying reflects hard times, with the connotation that people are so poor they cannot even afford to put salt pork in their beans. Zydeco is a musical style that arose out of a mutual acculturation process in Louisiana, when African and Afro-Caribbean music came into contact with European styles and instrumentation. The primary example of this process occurred in the prairie region of southwest Louisiana where Cajuns and Creoles represent the two main ethnic groups.

During the first few decades of this century Cajun and Creole music were very similar. Within this context zydeco music emerged due to a retention of African melodic and rhythmic styles popular with black audiences. John Roberts notes how African-derived Creole elements often transformed white music.[6] By blending in African rhythms, Creole musicians created highly syncopated versions of traditional Cajun songs, leading Daniel Wolff to comment in 1988 that "to this day, Cajun music and zydeco remain distinct—the major difference between the two being racial."[7] In addition it was during this same period (1920–40) that Creole performers began to be influenced by blues music.[8]

An earlier form of zydeco, called la-la, or simply French music, utilized the same instuments as Cajun music. The fiddle, which came into Louisiana from Canada after 1755 by way of the Acadian diaspora, was the standard lead instument.[9] Mary Wilson reports that "the fiddle was used by Afro-American musicians as the primary instrument—and at times the lone

instrument—for entertainment."[10] Although some elderly Creole musicians still favor the fiddle, it is rare in contemporary zydeco.

Zydeco music now features the accordion, which arrived in south Louisiana sometime during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Most scholars feel it was introduced by German or midwestern settlers who came to this area after the Civil War.[11] Geographer Malcolm Comeaux places the accordion in the Louisiana landscape during the 1880s, although an earlier introduction (1830) has been suggested by Florence Borders.[12] The typical model was a diatonic accordion with one row of buttons, which was adopted by both white and black musicians. Availability of the accordion was enhanced by mail-order outlets, and it soon displaced the fiddle as a lead instument.[13] These two instuments, along with the *tit fer*, or triangle, constitute what folklorist Nicholas Spitzer has termed the "original triumvirate of Cajun folk music."[14]

When zydeco emerged from its Cajun-related roots and began to be influenced heavily by rhythm and blues, the simple diatonic accordion was no longer adequate. As Alan Grovenar notes, "With the migration of Creoles to urban areas, such as Lake Charles and Houston, the more versatile piano accordion replaced the one-row model."[15] Blues scholar Paul Oliver attributes the preference for the piano accordion to its capability to tackle "blues in many keys."[16] And because zydeco is first and foremost dance music, the accordion served admirably as lead instument: "Its resonating, high volume was ideal for noisy dance halls."[17]

The washboard has replaced the triangle as a rhythm instrument and has evolved in south Louisiana into the *frottoir* or rubboard, worn on the chest like a breastplate. The frottoir is the signature instrument of zydeco music. Barry Ancelet and Mathe Allain have suggested its antecedents: "Rasps and notched gourds used in Afro-Caribbean music were replaced by washboards, called *frottoirs*, rubbed with thimbles, spoons, or bottle openers."[18] Spitzer relates how the modern version of this instument "became popular in the 1930s when sheetmetal was introduced to the area for roofing and barn siding."[19] Currently frottoirs are manufactured in Lafayette, Louisiana, by the Champagne Sheet Metal Company, which has shipped orders all over the country as well as to Nova Scotia and Japan.[20]

Zydeco within Black Creole Culture

The term Creole, as used here, refers to the Afro-French inhabitants of southwest Louisiana and their relatives in Texas and California. These people are the result of biological and cultural mixing that has been occurring since

the beginning of the eighteenth century. The process within Louisiana started on French- and Spanish-owned plantations of the lower Mississippi Valley, where masters often freed their "colored" offspring. Children of these African/European unions came to be known as the *Gens de Couleur Libre* or Free People of Color. Acculturation was accelerated by the Haitian Revolution, which caused an influx of French, slaves, and *Gens de Couleur Libre* into Louisiana. An example of this immigration was the year 1809 when 1,828 whites, 1,978 *Gens de Couleur Libre*, and 1,991 slaves arrived in New Orleans.[21]

By the dawn of the Civil War, the *Gens de Couleur Libre*, or Creoles as they were called, and other African Americans, had penetrated into the prairie region of Louisiana. There the Creoles came into further contact with Acadians, Spanish, Germans, and Native Americans. By the beginning of the twentieth century, many African Americans had been heavily influenced by the French culture of the region. Most of these people spoke French, attended Catholic churches, and participated in small-scale agriculture, raising crops such as cotton, sugarcane, yams, and rice.

In rural areas prior to the introduction of modern innovations such as electricity, radio, and automobiles, entertainment forms were of a less complex nature. In southwest Louisiana one activity that provided an open forum for communal gatherings was the house dance. This setting facilitated interaction in the form of singing, dancing, eating, and visitation. Most house dances occurred on weekends and were frequented by people living within a few miles of the host location. The bands comprised local musicians who were compensated with a few dollars collected by "passing the hat," charging a small admission, or selling refreshments.[22]

Music at dances was provided by bands that played the precursor to zydeco music. These groups often would consist of only an accordion player accompanied by a rubboard or frottoir. A larger band might include string instruments such as the fiddle and guitar, along with the tit fer. Lyrics were sung in French, the dominant language in the area at the beginning of this century. Dances included polkas, mazurkas, two-steps, and *valses*. In some areas a more African-influenced, upbeat version of the two-step was used. This dance was called a "la-la," and eventually the term came to be applied both to house dances in general and to the music played at these functions. Other French and/or African words used to designate house dances were *un bal, un soire, un gumbo, un diverti*, and *un zydeco*.

Later in the twentieth century traditional Creole culture was affected by urbanization and modernization. Improved roads and availability of automobiles made travel much easier. The introduction of innovations such as radio,

movie theaters, and eventually television resulted in forms of entertainment that served as a lure away from traditional activites like the house dances.

Outmigration Patterns

Outmigration from southwest Louisiana is generally considered a World War II and postwar phenomenon. With the onset of American involvement in the war, an immediate need for labor developed in areas where ships, munitions factories, and military bases were under construction. The shipbuilding industry that developed in the Beaumont–Port Arthur–Houston area of Texas, for example, was a strong lure to the Creoles of adjacent Louisiana. Aircraft and munitions factories in southern California likewise resulted in an outmigration from the prairie region.[23] At the close of the war many Creoles chose to remain in these areas.

A specific example of outmigration was reported from the town of Frilot Cove, St. Landry Parish.[24] Of thirteen adults questioned about the locations of their siblings the following replies were given: thirty-seven siblings were reported living in Frilot Cove, twenty-two lived elsewhere including those in California (five), Houston (three), Michigan (two), Beaumont (one), and Arkansas (one).

Emergence of Modern Zydeco

As Creoles began to leave Louisiana for more urban settings the traditional music they took with them was influenced by urban blues music. This process reached its peak in the post–World War II urban areas and is personified by Clifton Chenier, the late "King of Zydeco." Chenier was born in 1925, the son of a musician and sharecropper, in Opelousas, the center of Louisiana Creole country. In 1947 he moved to Lake Charles, then in 1958 to Houston, where he became heavily influenced by blues music. It is Chenier who popularized the term zydeco and specifically linked it to his music, which ranged from blues sung in French and accompanied by an accordion and frottoir, to more traditional Afro-French songs. Thus it can be seen that zydeco developed out of a rural Afro-French tradition with a blues influence that became more pronounced due to outmigration and urbanization of Creoles.

It is in this context that dance halls and clubs began to emerge as commercial enterprises in contrast to the earlier house dances which had been communal, nonprofit affairs. Despite a more commercial, adult-

El Cid O's Zydeco Club in Lafayette, Louisiana (photo courtesy of Rocky Sexton and Robert Kuhlken).

oriented setting, many clubs and dance halls have retained something of a family, or at least a familiar, atmosphere. As in the past, group interaction occurs against a backdrop of zydeco music, a musical form with roots in the prairies of southwest Louisiana.

Carriers for Diffusion

Several specific indicators of diffusion may be examined in order to document the spread of zydeco music from its hearth area. Following the example of a spatial representation utilized by Carney for bluegrass and country music, we have located the birthplaces and subsequent places of residence for fifteen notable zydeco musicians, all born in the Creole area of southwest Louisiana (Fig. 6-1). Residential relocation has mostly occurred in east Texas and California (Fig. 6-2). Since most zydeco performers were not able to become full-time professional musicians in southwest Louisiana, the wage opportunities offered by the Texas Gulf Coast area and California prompted this migrational pattern. Their music was appreciated by the Creole populations living in these areas; thus, zydeco music was not abandoned. Zydeco has remained functional within the Creole culture, and continues to nurture it in a contemporary setting.

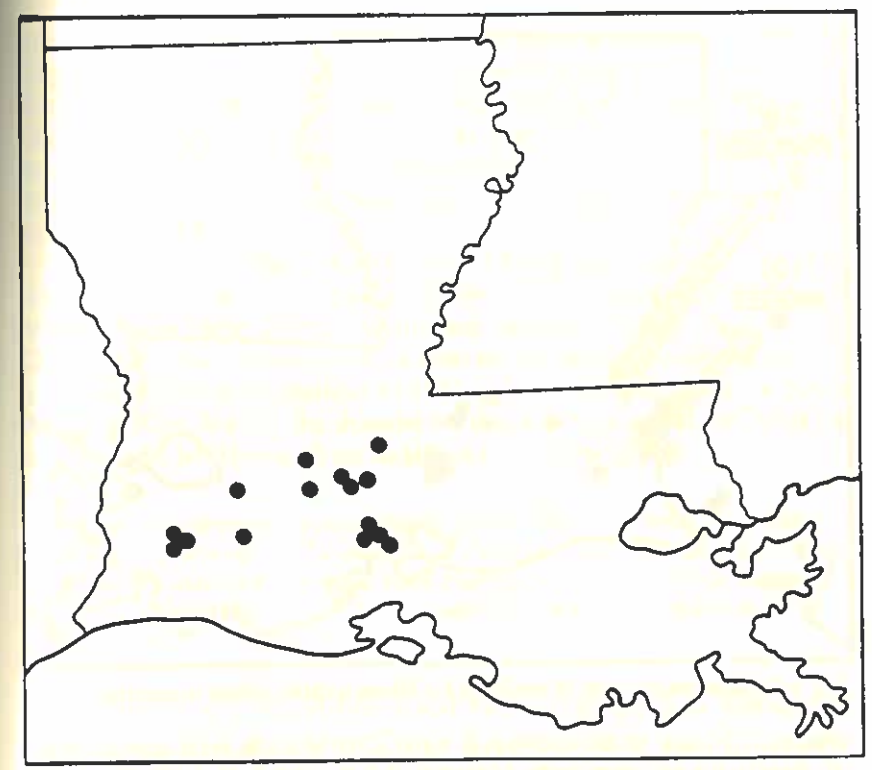

Fig. 6-1. Birthplaces of fifteen notable zydeco musicians.

Obviously, the hearth area remains well defined, judging from the number of musicians who still reside and perform there. Support for the music *in situ* takes the form of patronage at concerts and dance halls, radio air time as well as entire morning radio programs devoted to zydeco, and perhaps most significantly, an annual festival that takes place in the rural community of Plaisance, Louisiana. The Zydeco Festival began in 1982 and consists of a full roster of bands taking the stage one after another in a twelve-hour continuous celebration. Its location in the heart of the hearth exerts considerable centripetal force and reflects the strength of zydeco music as a nonmaterial culture trait.

One of the primary vehicles for diffusion of music is the actual movement of musicians as they perform at a number of locations during a concert tour. The first extraterritorial exposure of a large non-Creole audience to live zydeco took place when Chenier appeared at the Berkeley Blues Festival in 1966. In 1967 he played concerts in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and in

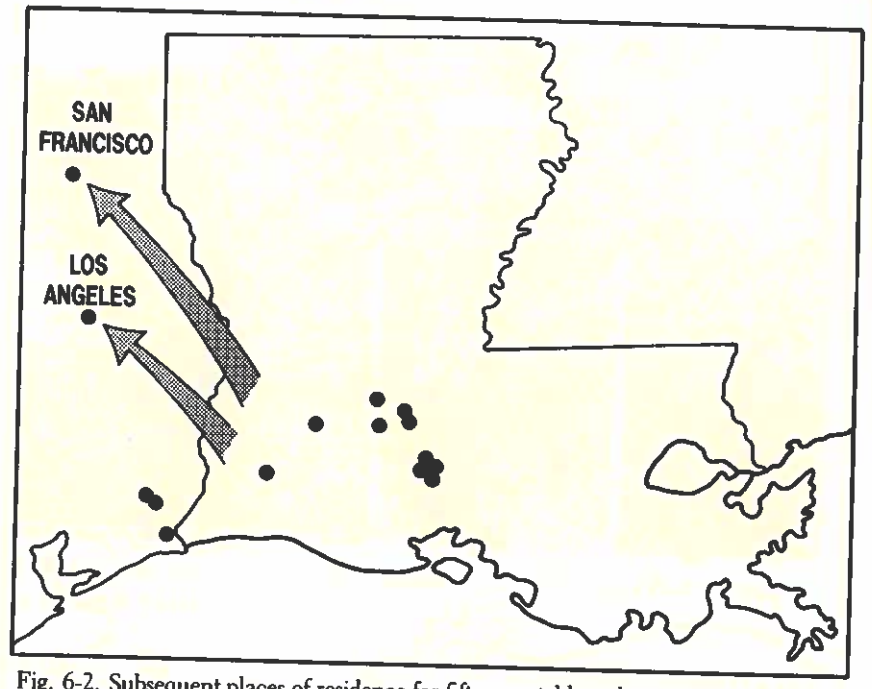

Fig. 6-2. Subsequent places of residence for fifteen notable zydeco musicians.

1969 he appeared at the Ann Arbor, Michigan, Blues Festival and also went on a European tour. In the liner notes to one of Chenier's albums, record producer and folklorist Chris Strachwitz has written:

> In the fall of 1971 Clifton Chenier and his band played a series of concerts, clubs, and dances on the west coast. Two nights they were booked to play for the French-Creole population of the Bay area which has remained a tight-knit group since moving out here from Louisiana. The dances were held in St. Mark's Hall in Richmond, California.[25]

After the 1971 tour Chenier's popularity soared. He began to wear a crown on stage, calling himself the "King of Zydeco." John Broven writes that "During the seventies Clifton Chenier's name became synonymous with zydeco."[26] After many successful concert tours during the 1970s and 1980s, Chenier made one of his last appearances at the 1987 Zydeco Festival in Plaisance.[27] His death soon after deprived the world of a soulful and masterful musician who was justifiably proud of his contributions to and representation of Creole culture.

National and international concert tours have served to spread zydeco around the world, bringing the experience of this infectious dance music to large numbers of people who may never get the opportunity to travel to Louisiana. Artists such as Rockin' Dopsie, Nathan Williams, Willis Prudhomme, Terrance Simien, Queen Ida (based in San Francisco), and Buckwheat Dural have all toured extensively. Zydeco bands are frequently featured in the larger blues festivals around the nation, such as those in San Francisco and Chicago.

Zydeco music has been well received in Europe ever since Chenier first toured there in 1969, with stops in London, Paris, Copenhagen, Oslo, and Vienna. Its popularity overseas has increased dramatically since then. Rockin' Dopsie and Fernest Arceneaux have both toured Europe. Simien completed a successful tour of Switzerland in 1987 and followed with a tour of North Africa in 1989. Indeed, the demand for this music prompted the following liner notes by Jeff Hannusch on an album by BooZoo Chavis:

> One of the surprising musical trends of the 1980s has been the sudden international acceptance of zydeco. Once a style of music whose popularity was confined to southwest Louisiana, today zydeco commands worldwide attention and is considered by many to be the most exciting brand of ethnic music in America.[28]

Recently, a unique and intentional form of international diffusion of zydeco music took place when Delton Broussard and the Lawtell Playboys, from Louisiana's St. Landry parish, traveled to the Seychelles Islands, off the east coast of Africa, to perform several concerts for the native Creole population.[29] In this manner zydeco is beginning to serve not only as a form of entertainment but also as a link between Creoles of Louisiana and other such populations that emerged during the colonial era.

Perhaps the most effective carrier of diffusion of zydeco has been the commercial recording and widespread distribution of the music on records, tapes, and lately, compact digital discs. Early forms of zydeco recordings by Douglas Bellard, Amede Ardoin, and others were strictly for regional distribution. Beaumont musician Clarence Garlow had a few minor hits in the early 1950s, paving the way for two back-to-back releases that began the commercial success of recorded zydeco: "Paper in My Shoe" by BooZoo Chavis in 1954, followed by Chenier's "Ay-Tete-Fee" in 1955.[30] The ultimate success of recorded zydeco has led one reviewer to comment that "we have reached a point where it seems like zydeco artists monopolize the ethnic category in the Grammy awards."[31]

Until recently, as national labels have attempted to capitalize on the growing popularity of this music, the commercial recording and distribution

of most zydeco have been shepherded by two independent labels: Chris Strachwitz's Arhoolie Records in El Cerrito, California, and Floyd Soileau's *Maison de Soul* in Ville Platte, Louisiana. Strachwitz produced some of Chenier's first recordings, as well as those of other east Texas artists during the early 1960s, some of which are now being reissued. He notes a demand for recorded zydeco among the major east and west coast market areas, with San Francisco somewhat stronger than Los Angeles.[32] Soileau has been recording both Cajun and Creole musicians since the late 1950s and feels that the recorded music plays a very important part in keeping the culture intact. While over half of the *Maison de Soul* releases are sold within the major zydeco market area between New Orleans and Houston, larger cities elsewhere also provide a market. St. Louis and especially Atlanta, where an emerging Creole community exists, appear particularly strong.[33]

Further evidence for the successful transplantation and viability of the music is presented in a map of nightclubs, dance halls, and church halls that regularly feature zydeco (Fig. 6-3). Again, the core area remains strong, but east Texas and the San Francisco Bay area are also represented, revealing the popularity of the music among Creole residents in those locations.[34] Houston is particularly visible, not only due to several zydeco clubs, but because the Catholic churches there encourage the music's traditional function within Creole culture as a way to foster solidarity and group cohesion. As Grovenar relates:

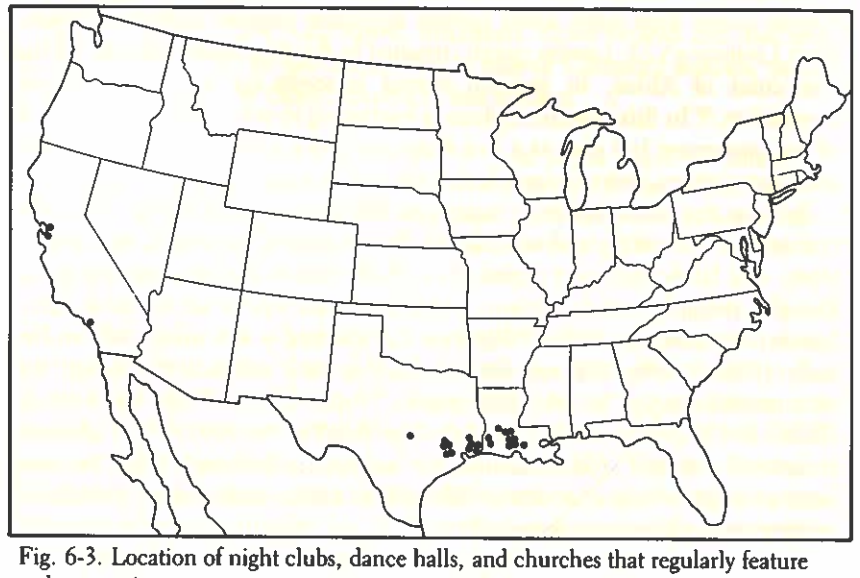

Fig. 6-3. Location of night clubs, dance halls, and churches that regularly feature zydeco music.

> Today most Catholic churches in Houston with large Creole memberships hold zydeco dances. Zydeco is welcomed by the Catholic churches not only because the dances are an important source of revenue, but they allow Creoles to preserve their heritage by meeting family and friends, eating Creole food, and listening and dancing to traditional music.[35]

It is this kind of setting that hearkens back to the house dances of rural southwest Louisiana where zydeco originated and therefore allows the music to reassert its functional role in a new urban context.

Discussion

From its origins amid the prairies of southwest Louisiana, zydeco music has spread to other areas of the country, most notably California and east Texas. It is now recognized as "the major ethnic style in far southeast Texas."[36] Los Angeles holds an annual Cajun and Creole festival featuring zydeco musicians. In the San Francisco Bay area, St. Mark's Hall in Richmond has been the scene of regular zydeco dances for many years.

That this music is the expression of a living dynamic culture may be seen from the continuing attempts at stylistic innovation and assimilation of newer forms. The influence of jazz, for example, is apparent from the many bands that now include a saxophone in their line-up. In 1977, Chenier was having fun with what one reviewer termed "zydisco."[37] Strachwitz remembers that it was always a problem during recording sessions to get Chenier to stick to the older forms of zydeco but praised his sense of innovation: "Clifton is not only a unique artist in the zydeco field, but he is a jazzman, an endless improviser."[38]

Today's leading musicians continue to experiment. Ben Sandmel reports that "some popular zydeco artists, such as Buckwheat Dural and Terrance Simien, have begun to draw heavily on contemporary urban soul sources, to the consternation of purists."[39] A perennial crowd pleaser at the zydeco festival in Plaisance is any of several different versions of a soul-inspired dance tune originally known as the "Harlem Shuffle." Various bands now include this tune in their repertoire and have transformed it with zydeco rhythm and new lyrics into the "zydeco shuffle."

As indicated by the data, zydeco music is a recent phenomenon in terms of widespread popularity outside of Creole communities. Its significance should not be viewed solely in terms of the number of concerts performed or records sold, although commercial acceptance has helped to legitimize the musical form, resulting in an economic incentive for the preservation and spread of zydeco.

Despite exposure outside of the core area, zydeco music is still associated with an Afro-French or Creole cultural tradition. The recent rise in zydeco's popularity is matched with an upsurge of Creole ethnic identity at both the public and personal level. Ann Savoy has expressed this development:

> The black Creole culture is rich and is growing in its appreciation of its modern zydeco music. Creole musicians look with pride and optimism at their culture today, and zydeco is taking the world by surprise.[40]

One elderly Creole during an interview remarked that zydeco "brings back the old system" in reference to revitalization of traditional Creole culture. Just as Cajun music has served to foster cultural solidarity among the white French of southwest Louisiana, zydeco music is playing a powerful role in the development of a modern Creole identity.

Notes

1. Clifton Chenier, interview in Ann Savoy, ed., *Cajun Music: A Reflection of a People* (Eunice, La.: Bluebird Press, 1984), p. 381.

2. The term Creole is problematic because in the past both blacks and whites utilized the designation. Unlike New Orleans where a certain amount of controversy still continues over usage of the term, in present-day southwest Louisiana, Creole is only applied to persons of Afro-French descent.

3. George Carney, ed., *The Sounds of People and Places: Readings in the Geography of American Folk and Popular Music* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1987), and George O. Carney, "Geography of Music: Inventory and Prospect," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 10 (Spring/Summer 1990), pp. 35–48.

4. George Carney, "T for Texas, T for Tennessee: The Origins of Country Music Notables," *Journal of Geography* 78 (November 1979), pp. 218–25, and George Carney, "Bluegrass Grows All Around: The Spatial Dimensions of a Country Music Style," *Journal of Geography* 73 (April 1974), pp. 34–55.

5. Barry Ancelet, "Zydeco/Zarico: Beans, Blues, and Beyond," *Black Music Research Journal* 8 (March 1988), pp. 33–49.

6. John Roberts, *Black Music of Two Worlds* (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 55.

7. Daniel Wolff, "Clifton Chenier," *The Nation* 246 (March 19, 1988), p. 390.

8. Nicholas Spitzer, *Zydeco and Mardi Gras: Creole Identity and Performance Genres in Rural French Louisiana* (unpublished dissertation, University of Texas, Department of Anthropology, 1986), p. 337.

9. Ann Savoy, ed., *Cajun Music: A Reflection of a People* (Eunice, La.: Bluebird Press, 1984), p. 4.

10. Mary Wilson, *Traditional Louisiana French Folk Music: An Argument for Its Preservation and Utilization as a State Cultural Heritage* (unpublished dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Music, 1977), p. 67.

11. Steven Del Sesto, "Cajun Social Institutions and Cultural Configurations," in *The Culture of Acadiana: Tradition and Change in South Louisiana*, ed. by Steven Del Sesto and Jon Gibson (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1975), pp. 1–11; and Nicholas Spitzer, "Zydeco," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, ed. by Charles Wilson and William Ferris (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 1037–38.

12. Malcolm Comeaux, "The Cajun Accordian," *Louisiana Review* 7 (Winter 1978), pp. 117–28, and Florence Borders, "Researching Creole and Cajun Musics in New Orleans," *Black Music Research Journal* 8 (November 1988), pp. 15–31.

13. Nicholas Spitzer, Review of Savoy, *Cajun Music: A Reflection of a People*, in *Journal of Country Music* 11 (June 1987), pp. 47–50.

14. Mary Wilson, quote by Spitzer, p. 91.

15. Alan Grovenar, *Meeting the Blues* (Dallas, Tex.: Taylor Publishing, 1988), p. 141.

16. Paul Oliver, "Clifton Chenier," in the *New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, ed. by H. Hitchcock and S. Sadie (New York: Grove's Dictionaries of Music, 1986), p. 414.

17. Ben Sandmel, "Allons Danser: Cajun and Creole Bands Are Conserving Native Music," *The Atlantic* 260 (July 1987), p. 88.

18. Barry Ancelet and Mathe Allain, *Travailler, C'est Trop dur: The Tools of Cajun Music* (Lafayette, La.: Lafayette Natural History Museum Association, 1984), p. 4.

19. Spitzer, 1989, p. 1038.

20. Interview with Kenneth Champagne, Lafayette, Louisiana, March 13, 1990.

21. Alcee Fortier, *A History of Louisiana* (New York: Manzi, Joyant & Co., 1904).

22. Lauren Post, *Cajun Sketches from the Prairies of Southwest Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962).

23. Increasing urbanization and westward migration of the black population in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century was documented by John Fraser Hart, "The Changing Distribution of the American Negro," *Annals Association of American Geographers* 50 (March 1960), pp. 242–66. Black migration from Louisiana, especially to California and Texas, during the 1950s is graphically presented on a map in George Davis and Fred Donaldson, *Blacks in the United States: A Geographic Perspective* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), p. 46. See also James Allen and Eugene Turner, *We the People: An Atlas of Americas's Ethnic Diversity* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 147–48.

24. Joseph Jones, *The People of Frilot Cove: A Study of a Racial Hybrid Community in Rural South Central Louisiana* (unpublished thesis, Louisiana State University, Department of Sociology, 1950), p. 64.

25. Chris Strachwitz, liner notes on Clifton Chenier, *Live at a French Creole Dance* (Arhoolie 1059).

26. John Broven, *South to Louisiana: The Music of the Cajun Bayous* (Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing, 1987), p. 113.

27. Walter Liniger, "From the Blues Archive: Video Footage of Clifton Chenier's Appearance at the 1987 Zydeco Festival," *Living Blues* 81 (May 1989), p. 55.

28. Jeff Hannusch, liner notes on Boo Zoo Chavis, *Zydeco Homebrew* (Maison de Soul 1028).
29. Suz Redfearn, "From Lawtell to the Garden of Eden," *Wavelength* 11 (November 1988), p. 4.
30. Broven, pp. 108–10.
31. Ron Weinstock, "Book reviews (Ancelet, Broven, Savoy, Hannusch)", *Living Blues* 74 (January 1987), p. 44.
32. Telephone interview with Chris Stachwitz, Oakland, California, March 15, 1990.
33. Interview with Floyd Soileau, Ville Platte, Louisiana, March 13, 1990.
34. Macon Fry, "In Search of the Zydeco Dance Halls," *Wavelength* 13 (April 1990), p. 68.
35. Grovenar, p. 141.
36. Larry Willoughby, *Texas Rhythm, Texas Rhyme: A Pictorial History of Texas Music* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1984), p. 77.
37. Jim DeKoster, "Review of Chenier's *Classic Clifton*, (Arhoolie 1082)," *Living Blues* 48 (March 1980), p. 30.
38. Broven, quote by Chris Strachwitz, p. 113.
39. Sandmel, p. 90.
40. Savoy, p. 306.

7

Spatial Perspectives on the Field Recording of Traditional American Music: A Case Study from Tennessee in 1928

Christopher Lornell

Although the printed documentation of traditional American music began in earnest during the late nineteenth century, less than sixty years have passed since the mounting of the first wide-scale attempts to aurally preserve this music.[1] This preservation was not undertaken by scholars nor erudite enthusiasts but by commercial record companies such as Okeh, which in 1923 issued the first "hillbilly" record by an Atlanta-based musician, Fiddlin' John Carson. The response to Carson's record, "The Little Old Log Cabin In The Lane" and "The Old Hen Cackled And The Rooster's Going To Crow" (Okeh 4890), was so positive that within a matter of months Okeh and other companies were rushing other hillbilly musicians into the studios to try to cash in on their newfound commercial success. A similar phenomenon had occurred in Afro-American music in 1920 when Okeh issued "Crazy Blues" and "It's Right Here For You" (Okeh 4169) by cabaret singer Mamie Smith. This was the first blues record issued by a black singer, although it would be another four years before the more traditional country blues singers had the opportunity to make records.

One of the initial problems faced by these companies was recruiting music talent. While based in large northern cities, most of these companies operated regional offices. The executives in the North were confounded by the puzzle

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Chapter 6

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The Sounds of People and Places

A Geography of American Folk and Popular Music

THIRD EDITION

Edited by
George O. Carney

Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.

Published in the United States of America
by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Maryland 20706

3 Henrietta Street
London WC2E 8LU, England

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British Cataloging in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Sounds of people and places : a geography of American folk and popular music / edited by George O. Carney. — 3rd ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Music—United States—History and criticism. I. Carney, George O.
ML3551.S603 1993 781.64'0973—dc20 93-9930 CIP MN

ISBN 0-8476-7787-7 (cloth: alk. paper)
ISBN 0-8476-7788-5 (paper: alk. paper)

Printed in the United States of America

™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48—1984.

To Mom and Dad Carney—
Who Made It All Possible.