



C.J. Chenier is trying to carry on the legacy his father left behind with The Red Hot Louisiana Band.

Like father like . . .

C.J. Chenier carries on legacy of King of Zydeco

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Zydeco doesn't operate like British royalty. The crown isn't handed down — only the accordion.

The undisputed King of Zydeco music was Clifton Chenier. No one realizes that more than his son, C.J. Chenier, who nonetheless is trying to carry on the legacy his father left with The Red Hot Louisiana Band.

C.J. Chenier proudly plays the same accordion with the name "Clifton Chenier" inscribed on it. He has worked with Clifton Chenier, he's played Clifton Chenier. But C.J. Chenier knows he's no Clifton Chenier.

Yet the comparisons between father and son persist.

"It has its ups and downs," said Chenier, who will perform Wednesday at The Blind Pig in Ann Arbor, "but it's nothing I can't deal with."

Zydeco music, a merry brand of dance melodies originating from the underbelly of Louisiana, is dealing with a great deal of notoriety of late. The success Chenier and

Buckwheat Zydeco has helped bring the music out of the bars of the Bayou and into the mainstream. Even a well-known brand of beer uses zydeco to sell its suds.

Clifton Chenier never lived to see it. He died in December 1987, performing until then in spite of a leg amputation and continual kidney dialysis.

C.J. CHENIER took over as leader of the Red Hot Louisiana Band. Chenier didn't really get to know his father too well until he later joined The Red Hot Louisiana Band. He did know of the passion his dad had for the music.

"I wish he would have lived to see what zydeco has become today," Chenier said. "He used to think people took the music for granted."

C.J. Chenier didn't fully appreciate zydeco until he started listening to his father when he was older. Childhood friends in his hometown of Port Author, Tex., used to make fun of zydeco. They would call it "chanky-chank" music.

He took up the saxophone and, at 16, was performing in a top-40 band. Then his father called out of the blue and asked him to join his band in Bridge City.

Green as an 18-hole golf course, C.J. Chenier slowly learned to play the music his father patented. Eventually, he learned how to play the accordion and began fronting the band as Clifton Chenier grew more ill.

"He gave me a lot of pointers — how to do this and how to do that," C.J. Chenier said. "It all helped. It made my transformation to the accordion much easier. I know a lot of what to do on stage from just watching him perform."

On stage, C.J. Chenier and The Red Hot Louisiana Band stay a steady course on the music his father played. The band has two guitarists, Selwyn Cooper and Harry Hypolite, along with bass player Wayne Burns and drummer Joseph Edwards. Arthritis and the grind of traveling led C.J. Chenier's uncle and longtime band member, Cleveland Chenier, to retire as the group's rubboard player.

REVIEWS OF recent performances have indicated the spirit of zydeco is still there. But, as one reviewer pointed out, C.J. Chenier strays away from the French-language songs his father made famous.

The reason for that is C.J. Chenier grew up in Texas and is not fluent in the Creole language spoken in Louisiana.

"That guy also wrote that I didn't play any blues," said Chenier, recalling the review that appeared in a San Diego newspaper. "Before the show, someone told me that they really wanted to hear zydeco tonight. So, the one night I don't play any blues, there's somebody who wants to hear the blues."

"I know I can play the blues. My dad could play the blues. It's in me, too."

C.J. Chenier and The Red Hot Louisiana Band will perform Wednesday at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

IN CONCERT

● THE DIFFERENCE

The Difference will perform on Monday, Jan. 16, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

● BIG BOX OF NINES

Big Box of Nines will perform tonight at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

● WALK THE DOGMA

Walk the Dogma will perform on Tuesday, Jan. 17, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

● FLOCK OF SEAGULLS

A Flock of Seagulls will perform on Wednesday, Jan. 18, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For more information, call 535-8108.

● ROMANCE

Romance will perform on Wednesday through Saturday, Jan. 18-21, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.

● C.J. CHENIER

C.J. Chenier and The Red Hot Louisiana Band will perform on Wednesday, Jan. 18, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

● KINSEY REPORT

Big Daddy Kinsey and the Kinsey Report will perform on Thursday, Jan. 18, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

● IODINE RAINCOATS

The Iodine Raincoats will perform on Thursday, Jan. 19, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

● CIVILIANS

The Civilians will perform on Friday, Jan. 20, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 365-9760.

● WILD WOODY'S

The Wild Woody's will perform on Friday and Saturday, Jan. 20-21, at Griffis Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. For more information, call 334-9292.

● PASSION NOUVEAU

Passion Nouveau will perform on Friday, Jan. 20, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, near Jos. Campau, Hamtramck. For more information, call 875-6555.

● BEFORE OR AFTER

Before or After will perform with special guests, The Happy Deathmen and Plasma Bats, on Friday, Jan. 20, at Paycheck's, 2932 Caniff, off Jos. Campau, Hamtramck. For more information, call 872-8934.

● HEARTBEAT

Heartbeat will perform on Friday and Saturday, Jan. 20-21, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For more information, call 547-6470.

● TRINIDAD TRIPOLI

The Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band will perform on Friday and Saturday, Jan. 20-21, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

● FUNHOUSE

Funhouse will perform on Saturday, Jan. 21, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 365-9760.

● SUN MESSENGERS

Sun Messengers will perform on Friday and Saturday, Jan. 20-21, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

● SEE DICK RUN

See Dick Run will perform on Saturday, Jan. 21, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, near Jos. Campau, Hamtramck. For more information, call 875-6555.

● SOCIAL FABRIC

Social Fabric will perform along with special guests, Killer Tomatoes, on Saturday, Jan. 21, at Paycheck's Lounge, 2932 Caniff, off Jos. Campau, Hamtramck. For more information, call 872-8934.

● HOLY COWS

The Holy Cows will perform on Monday, Jan. 23, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

● MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Mission Impossible will perform on Monday, Jan. 23, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

● WIPERS

The Wipers will perform on Tuesday, Jan. 24, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

● BIG BOX O' NINES

Big Box O' Nines will perform on Tuesday, Jan. 24, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

● ROMANCE

Romance will perform on Wednesday, Jan. 25, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.

● CHISEL BROS.

The Chisel Bros. will perform on Wednesday, Jan. 25, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

● HERRAZZ

Herrazz and Vibratory Sound will perform an all-ages show on Wednesday, Jan. 25, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on WAYN-AM, the campus station at Wayne State University.

1. "Kissability," Sonic Youth.
2. "Cult of Personality," Living Colour.
3. "Freddie's Dead," Fishbone.
4. "Today Is Summer," Junk Monkey.
5. "Dog Meat," Radon Acid.
6. "I'm an Adult Now," Pursuit of Happiness.
7. "High Expectations," Inside Out.
8. "Wrong Again," All.
9. "Punk Rock Girl," Dead Milkmen.
10. "I Hate Love," Karen Monster.

'Showcase' showcases best of Detroit sound

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

"Hello, Mr. Rock'n'roll, meet Mr. Blues. Mr. Blues, let me introduce you to Mr. Jazz. Where you from? Detroit, you don't say. So are we."

Of course, conversations like this don't exist. If they did, they'd all be raving about a new radio show which recently debuted Sunday nights on WDET-FM 102.

"Showcase Detroit," heard at 10 p.m. Sundays, offers an hour of the best in rock'n'roll, blues and jazz. And the best part about it is this: It's stuff stamped, "Made in Detroit."

Paul Ciaravino, 36, is the show's

host. He said the program is designed to highlight the best of what Detroit has to offer, covering most of the musical spectrum.

Although the elements of his show are diverse, Ciaravino believes one common thread ties them together.

"A lot of rock people are into blues and jazz," said Ciaravino, who has worked at radio stations in Mount Clemens and Jackson. "Some of them get their inspirations from blues and jazz people. Rock'n'roll came from rhythm and blues."

SOMEHOW "Showcase Detroit" is able to take a variety of music styles and blend them together rather well.

At least that appeared to be the case on the premiere show.

A blues number, "Detroit Play-boy" by Harmonica Shah, fit right in with a song, "In a Lifetime" by the Stingrays. Also, the host provides background on most of the acts whose music is getting airplay.

That fits right in with the format of the show where the informational is combined with musical. Another feature of "Showcase Detroit" is a segment where Ciaravino interviews people prominent in the Detroit music scene.

Future guests include the Sun Messengers (Jan. 22) and Steve Sanchez of Detroit Blues Factory

Records (Jan. 29).

Ciaravino got the idea for a local music show a few months ago. He's quite familiar with the East Side Detroit rock scene. He thought a radio show can only expand local music.

Soon, he was in touch with Judy Adams, program director at WDET, and things quickly fell into place. He put ads in the Metro Times, soliciting material for the new show. As a result, he's been "bombed" with records, tapes and some CDs from local groups.

Of course, Ciaravino's isn't the only radio show playing local music. "Detroit Music Scene," hosted by Scott Campbell on WDTR-FM, and

"Contamination and Corrosion," hosted by Rick Anderson on WORF-FM, also feature Detroit bands.

"THERE ARE some local rock shows, but this is a local variety show," Ciaravino said. "We cover the whole spectrum."

Like many, Ciaravino is one who believes Detroit music doesn't get the airplay it deserves on commercial radio. WDET-FM is a public radio station, but with a strong signal. Detroit music could be getting its best play to date.

"This isn't going to be a one- or two-month skit," Ciaravino said. "We want this to last. But it really depends on the listeners."

Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on WWWW-FM.

1. "Deeper Than the Holler," Randy Travis.
2. "Change of Heart," The Judds.
3. "That Old Wheel," Johnny Cash/Hank Williams Jr.
4. "Mama Knows," Shenadoah.
5. "I've Been Lookin'," Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.
6. "A Tender Lie," Restless Heart.
7. "All the Reasons Why," Highway 101.
8. "Let's Get Started, If We're Going to Break My Heart," Statler Bros.
9. "Long Shot," Ballie and the Boys.
10. "Hold Me," Steve Wariner.

REVIEWS

LOCAL RIFFS DETROIT'S BEST OF 1988

— various artists

Once upon a time, there was a radio program. On it, musicians from Detroit would have their music played on the air at 11 p.m. every week night.

Then judging by listener response, winners were chosen on a nightly, weekly and monthly basis. The monthly winners would go on a compact disc in hopes of showcasing the finest in what Detroit has to offer musically.

Hard to believe, isn't it?

But thanks to people like Greg St. James, Scott Brown and Pat Still, "Local Riffs" on WRIF-FM actually did happen. "Detroit's Best of 1988" is the final result of the competition that at least provided a drinking fountain in the vast desert that has become commercial radio.

WRIF-FM should be commended for taking on this project. This is a first-rate production. Best of all, proceeds from the sale of the CD/cassette goes to the Child Protection Team at Children's Hospital.

Variety is the essence here. All nine bands "Detroit's Best of 1988" run the spectrum in terms of musical styles. There is something for everyone.



Those who thrive on vivid, heartfelt lyrics, J.D. Lamb's "Suburbia Boy" is a choice cut. People of the melodic rock ilk will no doubt enjoy the offering of The Shake's "Still in My Heart." The hard rock crowd can easily warm to Roulette's "Lost Without Love" as the Euro-sound fiends will dig the massive beat of Tanjet Image on "Faith."

Cuts that stick out here include the guitar odyssey provided by the Orange Roughies' Dave Feeny on "Eyepatch." Also, Second Order Thinking's "Writers and Poets" has a rather endearing melody with Jim Flynn doing some fine vocal work. Same can be said for See Dick Run's "Good Thing."

Overall, this is a good piece of work by everyone involved.

— Larry O'Connor

GREATEST HITS — Fleetwood Mac

It's a look back and a look to the future from this ever-popular pop group with release of its first-ever greatest hits (Warner Bros.).

The hits are obvious — "Rhiannon," "Go Your Own Way," "Hold Me" and the rest. And more than a decade later, they're not exactly rare.

Without exception, all of the Big Mac's chart-toppers are still in heavy radio rotation, whether the format be pop, rock or that new hybrid, classic rock. (There's nothing, however, from the band's early blues days or from any of the non-hit LPs that preceded the 1975 arrival of Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks.)

More interesting, therefore, is the new material — the first issued by the band since last year's departure of lead guitarist/musical adventurer Buckingham.

"As Long as You Follow" and "No Questions Asked," however, were penned by Christine McVie and Stevie Nicks, respectively. So they sound, well . . . like Fleetwood Mac. That means we'll have to wait until next year, at the earliest, to determine the songwriting influence of Billy Burnette and Rick Vito, Buckingham's replacements.



Part of the fun with any Fleetwood Mac album is determining which band members are on the outs with the others at the time of release. Fleetwood Mac has always been a walking National Enquirer among rock bands, what with all its complex personal and personnel relationships. The latest — an on-camera spat between Nicks and drummer Mick Fleetwood during a recent MTV interview.

The gossip-conscious won't find any harsh words toward the departed Buckingham, though. The album sleeve wishes "Love and Happiness to Lindsey from all of us."

But can the band survive without its eccentric life force? Can Buckingham stay afloat without his steady, polished band mates. Stay tuned, pop music's longest running soap opera is about to continue.

— Wayne Peal

LIVE IN DETROIT — The Butler Twins

This is the first album from the brothers Butler, who once wrote a song warning Chicago, that blues mecca, that Detroit was gaining fast. "Live in Detroit" then, may be considered the follow-up volley from the Butlers, Clarence and Curtis, who really are twins. Clarence sings and plays harmonica, and Curtis plays guitar.

The Butlers hail from Muscle Shoals country, northwest Alabama, and migrated to Detroit in the early 1960s, seeking work in the auto factories.

This album is the second released on the Royal Oak-based Blues Factory Records label. Blues Factory's debut was a compilation album that featured the Butlers and other local artists.

The seven-song "Live in Detroit" was actually recorded in Dearborn, at Moby Dick's Lounge, last May, and features the Butlers' five-man band playing mostly original compositions.

The Butlers' style shows the influence of blues masters like Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker — Delta blues electrified.



Two of the tunes on "Live" are credited to harmonica virtuoso Marion "Little Walter" Jacobs. On these, Clarence shows off his own gritty, hard-driving harp playing, which shines throughout the record.

Clarence also writes good, sometimes funny songs dealing with traditional blues themes — good love, bad love and no love at all.

"I'm in love with a married woman/I just can't help myself" goes a line from "Long Distance Love." And on the subject of neighborliness, Clarence declares: "I've got to move/out of my neighborhood/Cause the men is all mad at me/the women think I'm a back door man."

The sound quality of "Live" is remarkably good, and the Butlers play tight.

The Butler boogie is worth catching live or on vinyl.

— Brian Lysaght