

recorded at various times from the widely diverse styles represented at the fiddlers' contest and convention held annually at Athens College in northern Alabama. Strictly speaking, the album does not in any way represent the Tennessee Valley as a folk region with a discernable aesthetic or style in fiddle playing.

For geographic diversity the album includes musicians from Texas, New York, Missouri, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee. In terms of experience and competence, the record ranges from Sam McCracken, who "...never played his fiddle more than fifteen miles from his hill country home," (location not identified) to Dick Barrett of Pottsboro, Texas, a professional musician who has worked with Tex Ritter, Bob Wills, Hank Thompson and the Sons of the Pioneers.

While most of the recordings represent the reality of the on-stage concert performance (including errors, in some cases), six of the cuts were, for reasons unknown, recorded in a "warm-up room" away from the audience.

The recording quality varies a good bit, the crowd noise overwhelming the tone of the instrument in some cases. There is high-range distortion in a few other places illustrating the very difficult problems in recording or amplifying string instruments. On the other hand, most of the recording is of acceptable though not studio quality.

Fiddlers of the Tennessee Valley is a comfortable undistinguished collection probably very similar to what most fans of the Athens convention took home on their cassette recorders.

Louisiana Cajun Music -- Vol. 5: The Early Years, 1928-1938. Featuring various artists.

14 selections, vocal and instrumental, mono, liner notes by Chris Strachwitz. Old-Timey 114. Arhoolie Records, Box 9195, Berkeley, California 94709, 1973. \$5.98.

Nathan Abshire and Other Cajun Gems. Featuring Nathan Abshire, other artists. 13 selections, including 7 by Abshire, vocal and instrumental, mono, liner notes by Chris Strachwitz.

Arhoolie 5013. Arhoolie Records, Box 9195, Berkeley, California 94709, 1972. \$5.98.

Reviewed by Richard Sweterlitsch.

For several years I have been fascinated by Cajun music. So has Chris Strachwitz, who seems to have an affinity for releasing albums of Cajun music, both the older and more recent recordings. These two albums represent both groups of releases.

Several years ago, Old-Timey appeared featuring Cajun music originally recorded forty years or so ago. Louisiana Cajun Music, Vol. 5 is a very notable inclusion in the Old-Timey series. Producer Strachwitz has pulled out of the dust and put onto the disc some very good examples of Cajun music. Amadie, Orphy and Cleoma Breaux's ca. 1928 recording of "Ma Blonde Est Partie (Jole Blonde)" is here, along with some very fine dance tunes such as "Vas Y Carrement" and "Valse De Pointe Noire." A 1929 Cajun version of "Easy Rider" is performed by Leo Soileau and Robin. Other notable re-releases on this album include "T'es Petite a Ete T'es Meon," with heavy mountain sounds, and "Mazurka de la Louisiane" performed by the Breaux Freres.

On this same album, Strachwitz has thankfully included two Cajun spoken cuts, "Mayor of Bayou Pom Pom," parts one and two. Recorded back in the '30s, these cuts were initially released in four parts, and two of those are here. Performed by Walter Coquille, both cuts feature the somewhat bragging voice of the "Mayor," defending himself and his legislative acts in front of his constituency, "181, both white and black, and all Democrat." Local color humor abounds, and some traditional jokes and anecdotes are found in his text. His boastful speeches are simply humorous and these two cuts make the whole album worth having. I would like to see Old-Timey release more of this Cajun humor.

Technically this release is quite adequate. Numbers of the original releases are given. The liner notes are adequate, even if they tend to emphasize other Arhoolie based releases featuring these performers. The translation of three songs are provided on the cover.

Nathan Abshire and Other Cajun Gems represents more recent releases, i. e., all post World War II. All were initially produced by George Khoury, who operated a record shop in Lake Charles, La. Khoury was a major producer of commercial sounding recordings of popular Cajun performers, and this reissue of some of those recordings suggests the more commercial vein of the Cajun sound. Performer Nathan Abshire is a very good performer, having started back in the '30s and still active at the time this album was released (1972).

Side one includes seven cuts by Abshire, all very polished and smooth, indicating the professionalism Abshire possesses. Side two is a variety of lesser known performers, and Strachwitz's notes about these later performers are non-existent on this album.

For anyone interested in early Cajun music the Louisiana Cajun Album is strongly recommended. If the more popular sound runs your way, the latter album has some good commercial sounds on it. Personally, I would look for some more recent recordings of Abshire than this one.