

these parts frequently change, presenting a variety of melodic and textual material. Other songs in the cycles consist of intricate, overlapping ostinati (repeated melodic and rhythmic patterns) which are particularly characteristic of Sub-Saharan African music. From a Western analytic perspective there appears to be a rich array of Western, Sub-Saharan African, and Arabic elements that certainly deserve in-depth study. However, it would have been important, and interesting, to know how the Fang conceive of their own music; but this kind of information is not provided.

The introductory notes are pertinent and sufficiently detailed for a variety of study purposes. In addition to a description of the Bwiti and Mbiri cults, Fernandez details a ritual cycle of Bwiti and the associated symbolic meanings, giving many Fang terms. Description of musicians and their role and the use and symbolism of musical instruments is included, as well as a short section on musical style.

The organization of selections proceeds logically from the beginning to the end of the ritual cycle. The information on individual bands of the recording include partial and full texts with translations, with explanations of the meaning associated with the music. It is quite helpful that the place, date, and principal performers are included. It should be noted, however, that neither the band titles nor the notes always distinguish which cult the songs belong to. Also, it is not clear whether these recordings were made in the context of an actual Bwiti or Mbiri ritual or not. The sound quality is good throughout, though at times balance between solo and chorus makes close scrutiny of individual parts difficult.

This album is an important contribution to African music, especially as an example of a recently developed type of music exhibiting syncretism. And the notes offer a fine perspective for listening to the music.

Fiddlers of the Tennessee Valley. With Sam McCracken, Lena Hughes, Bob Douglas, Frazier Moss, Richard Blaustein, Bud Meredith, J. T. Perkins, Bill Mitchell, Bill Northcutt, Dick Barrett.  
20 selections, instrumental, stereo, notes.  
DU-33004. Davis Unlimited Records, Route 11, 16 Bond Street, Clarksville, Tennessee 37040, 1973. \$3.00.

Reviewed by Dennis Coelho.

At many of the larger fiddle contests around the United States, it has become customary each year to issue a "souvenir" album made up of selections played by winning contestants, "cuts" from notable jam sessions and perhaps a tune or two from more-or-less local stage talent. Galax, Virginia and Weiser, Idaho provide two well-known examples.

Fiddlers of the Tennessee Valley is a collection of "cuts" (two per fiddler)

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.