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Love Songs, and: Music From the Zydeco Kingdom, and: Let's  
Go!, and: Sam's Big Rooster (review)

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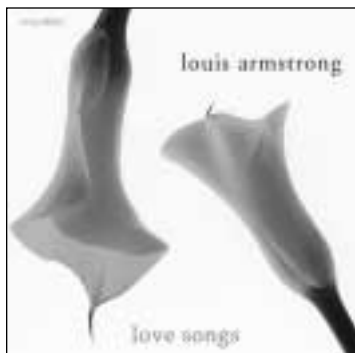


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# music recordings

*Reviews by Gavin James Campbell, Music Editor*



## **Louis Armstrong Love Songs**

Columbia Legacy, 2000

CD 62219, \$12.00

To honor the one hundredth anniversary of Louis Armstrong's birth, Columbia's Legacy division is launching a number of projects. The first of these is a delightful collection of Armstrong's love songs. Six of the fifteen tracks cover the period from 1929 and 1930 when he worked with his Sebastian New Cotton Club Orchestra. The remaining nine cuts are from between 1955 and 1961. (Sony and its subsidiaries do not own the music Armstrong recorded between 1930 and 1955, hence the twenty-five year gap.) As a bonus, the CD contains a previously unreleased live version of "Ko Ko Mo, I Love You So" recorded at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, as well as a duet with Carmen McRae backed by the Dave Brubeck Trio. The selections, while certainly not encompassing the full range of Armstrong's talent, nevertheless provide a delightful complement to any romantic evening or weekend morning.

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## **Music From the Zydeco Kingdom**

Rounder, 2000

CD 11579, \$15.00

## **Nathan and the Zydeco Cha Chas Let's Go!**

Rounder, 2000

CD 11661-2159-2, \$15.00

## **Savoy-Doucet Cajun Band Sam's Big Rooster**

Arhoolie, 2000

CD 481, \$16.00

Cajun and zydeco fans have plenty to pick from these days as excellent CDs continue to come out. Here we're highlighting three particularly good releases, but they're only the tip of the iceberg.

It takes guts to squeeze the history of zydeco onto nineteen cuts; such a compilation is bound to frustrate hardcore fans, who will debate the inclusion and exclusion of various artists and songs. Nevertheless Michael Tisserand, whose 1998 book *The Zydeco Kingdom* forms an ideal complement to *Music From the Zydeco Kingdom*, has chosen the selections with real flair. Right from the top he begins with the granddaddy of them all, Amédé Ardoin in a 1929 recording of "Two Step de Eunice," and then moves through other giants like Zydeco Force, Queen Ida, Boozoo Chavis, Buckwheat Zydeco and, of course, Clifton Chenier. Yet this isn't just a compilation of zydeco superstars and their greatest hits. Tisserand also includes lesser-known acts, some field recordings, and some releases that have never achieved wide circulation. The liner notes are very good, setting both the larger context for zydeco's development and future, and providing interesting information about each act and song featured. This is both an excellent introduction to the variety of zydeco and a great party album.



Those seeking a more intimate acquaintance with an artist who appears on Tisserand's compilation can delve into Nathan and the Zydeco Cha Chas' latest release. Nathan Williams is widely recognized as one of zydeco's most creative current practitioners and best songwriters. Playing piano accordion like his idol Clifton Chenier, Williams incorporates songs from the traditional repertoire and contributes a number of his own compositions, all liberally sprinkled with R&B inflected rhythms.



In its previous releases and in its public appearances the Savoy-Doucet Cajun Band has been at the forefront of preserving no-frills traditional Cajun music. With accordionist Marc Savoy, guitarist and vocalist Ann Savoy, and fiddler Michael Doucet, the band keeps alive not only many of the old tunes, but the spirit of simplicity and grace that is a hallmark of old-time Cajun music. Ann has a beautiful voice that is wonderfully suited to melancholy-tinged tunes like "Attention, C'est Mon Coeur Qui Va Casser," and her husband, Marc, handles the accordion with a combination of elegance and spirit. Doucet, already well known for his innovative work in the group Beausoleil, contributes a dazzling proficiency but never overwhelms the parts. The selections are not simply covers of old Cajun standards, but also include songs written by Marc with words by Ann. Recorded for the most part in the kitchen out back of the Savoy home in Eunice, the album breathes the spirit of old time Cajun music.