

# SAVOY FAMILY CAJUN BAND

*"Musically, they sure ain't no stuffy preservationists;*

*whether a bitter lament or an earthy hard-driving breakdown, with Marc's squeezebox, Ann's guitar, and their highly capable sons Joel and Wilson on fiddle and keyboards, the Savoys cover the Cajun spectrum with a dazzling mixture of spiritual joy and virtuoso voltage." -Jonny Whitesides-Los Angeles Times*

"The Savoys, the first family of Cajun culture" -**San Francisco Chronicle**

The Savoy Family Cajun Band plays honed down, hard-core Cajun music laced with an earthy sensuality. Though the old tunes have been revived and returned to new life intensity in their hands, the Savoy Family Cajun band doesn't play from a studied angle. The musicians in the band, Marc and Ann Savoy and their sons Joel and Wilson, each hold their own as strong individual group members, making up a tight, intense sound.

Marc and Ann, as the **Savoy-Doucet Cajun Band**, have been performing and recording together since 1977, recording five CDs on the **Arhoolie** label. They have traveled all over the world, appearing in all the most prestigious venues, such as the **Newport Folk Festival**, the **Berlin Jazz Festival**, the **Festival of American Folklife** at the **Smithsonian Institution**, the **National Geographic Concert Series**, even the **Queen Elizabeth Hall in London**, England, to name a few. When the Savoy children became old enough to play in a band the **Savoy Family Band** was born, and they began to perform all over, delighting audiences with their familial tightness and raw musical talent. Among their most prestigious gigs are **National Geographic Alive!**, the **Festival of American Folklife** at the **Smithsonian Institution**, the **National Folk Festival**, the **New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival**, and **The Getty Museum** in Los Angeles, which featured the Savoy Family Band in a special concert presentation. In 2007 the Savoy Family were the **honorees** of the acclaimed **Festival Acadien** in Lafayette, Louisiana.

## Honors

Marc Savoy has been rewarded the highest honor in the country from the National Endowment for the Arts, the honorable **National Heritage Fellowship Award**. Ann have been nominated three times for Grammys, first for a CD she produced for Vanguard, **Evangeline Made**, secondly(2007) two nominations for her project with **Linda Ronstadt**. a CD entitled **Adieu False Heart** on the **Vanguard label**, and thirdly, 2010, for her latest **Magnolia Sisters** CD, **Stripped Down** on the **Arhoolie label**. Ann received the **Botkin**

**Book Award** from the **American Folklore Society** for the book she wrote on the history of Cajun music, *Cajun Music, A Reflection of a People*.

## Work In Film and Books

Marc was a featured musician in the film by **Walter Hill** “**Southern Comfort**”(Warner Brothers). The Savoy Family was the subject of an award winning film by documentary filmmaker **Les Blank**, “**Marc and Ann**”. In recent years T Bone Burnett invited Ann to be involved in working with him in film projects. both as a musician and in production. Under his direction Ann and son Joel appeared in the film “**Divine Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood**” and they perform three songs **on the Warner Brothers Soundtrack**. The Savoy Family Band **performed at the premiere of the film in Los Angeles**. Ann became the **associate music producer** of the film “**All The King’s Men**” (Sony Pictures) and her sons Joel and Wilson appear with **Sean Penn** as musicians in the film.

Marc and Ann were prominently featured in the **PBS series “American Roots”**, and Ann wrote the chapter on Cajun music in the book that accompanied the series, which was published by **Rolling Stone Press**. Ann was awarded the **Botkin Book Award** for her definitive book on the history of Cajun and Zydeco music.

## Performances

Although the Savoy Family Cajun Band insists upon maintaining a more acoustic approach to Cajun music the band can hold its own amongst Cajun music lovers everywhere. In fact, the band loves seeing how much power and sound they can get out of just three or four instruments. In a typical show by the Family Band the group demonstrates the way Cajun music has evolved by demonstrating the early double fiddle - triangle sound or the solo accordion - fiddle sound. Early French ballads are added to the program to show other historic elements prevalent in early southwest Louisiana. Between the songs (which are sung in Cajun French) Ann often briefly translates poetry of the songs so that the feeling can be better understood. Their repertoire is chosen carefully, popular dancehall tunes interspersed with soulful ballads, fiddle or vocal duets, or blues. The songs show the spectrum of Cajun life from sorrow and lost love to nonsense and the joy of dance. The Savoy Family Cajun Band brings the raw energy of the dancehalls of southwest Louisiana to the stage, peppered with humorous and informative anecdotes about life on the Louisiana prairies.

Some of the venues the band has performed for include the **Getty Museum**, the **premiere of The Divine Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood**, **three presidential inaugurations**, the **John F. Kennedy Center**, the **Queen Elizabeth Hall in London**, the **New-**

port Folk Festival, the Berlin Jazz Festival, the Jambalaya Jam in Philadelphia, Cajun Bluegrass Festival in California and Rhode Island, Festival of American Music in Oregon, Kaustinen Folk Festival of Finland, Le Carrefour des Accordions in Trois Rivieres, Canada, and many more.

## Biographies

**Marc Savoy** was born and raised in the small Cajun prairie town of Eunice, Louisiana. Drawing inspiration from *'bals de maison'* (house dances) in his father's outdoor kitchen, Savoy obtained his first accordion and began playing it at the age of 12. Playing the instrument led to repairing it and after disassembling enough accordions he began to build them. Playing the accordion has always been a natural part of his life from the dancehall to the home. The musicians with whom he has played Cajun music read like a *who's who* of the finest in Cajun music, from the Balfa Brothers, DL Menard, Doc Guidry to early fiddle masters Dennis McGee and Wade Fruge. Later he played the Texas "Cajun Triangle" dancehalls and recorded some 45 rpms on the legendary producer **Huey Meaux's Crazy Cajun** label.

In 1965 Marc opened the Savoy Music Center in Eunice, which has become a gathering place for local musicians and interested travelers from all over the world. At the store he builds six accordions a month, sending them out to all corners of the globe. Saturday mornings Savoy hosts a jam session at his store.

Marc appeared as a musician in **Walter Hill's** film **Southern Comfort** under the musical direction of **Ry Cooder**. In 1982 he was awarded the prestigious **National Heritage Fellowship** from the **National Endowment for the Arts**. Marc recently appeared in the PBS documentary, **American Roots Series**

A striking feature of Marc's presence is his down-hominess and devotion to preserving Cajun culture. Whether he is playing at his weekly jam session, on a porch, at a dance or festival, it is all the same. He presents his music in its natural state, no glitz, no Cool Whip, no glamour.

Today Savoy travels and plays music either with the **Savoy Family Band** (which features his wife Ann and their two sons, Joel and Wilson) or with the **Savoy Doucet Cajun Band** (featuring famed Cajun fiddler **Michael Doucet** and Ann). He has recorded nine CDs on the **Arhoolie** label and has traveled throughout the US, Europe, and Canada. Savoy loves being in Louisiana where he is known for being an outspoken cultural preservationist, fighting to keep the music pure and unadulterated.

*“..Marc Savoy is..the finest Cajun accordion player of the era. He has impeccable taste, is creative without ever being affected, and plays as hot as anyone yet his playing always sounds very relaxed, as if he's having the time of his life...”*

*-Old Time Herald*

*“Marc, a master of the button accordion, astutely mixed emphatic chords with rippling arpeggios, and Ann, the rhythm guitar player, used her gorgeous voice to add a rare lyricism to what is primarily a social dance music.”*

*-Washington Post*

**Ann Allen Savoy** is a musician, photographer, record producer, and writer. Her destiny was sealed when she began to listen to rare collections of Cajun 78's. She met her future husband, acclaimed accordion builder/musician **Marc Savoy**, and after their marriage she began documenting the Cajun culture, taking photographs, interviewing important musicians, and transcribing the Cajun French songs. Her documentation ultimately became a book, **Cajun Music: A Reflection of a People Volume 1**, which won the prestigious **Botkin book award** from the **American Folklore Society**. An avid photographer since high school, her photos have been exhibited at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and at the Festival of American Music in Eugene, Oregon.

Ann, a musician since the age of ten, began touring extensively with her husband and **Michael Doucet** as the **Savoy Doucet Cajun Band**, appearing in venues such as the **Berlin Jazz Festival, Queen Elizabeth Hall** in London, and throughout Europe, Canada, and the United States. She and her friend Jane Vidrine also formed the **Grammy nominated Magnolia Sisters**, an all women band, to explore the womanly side of Cajun music. Currently she is proud to play in the **Savoy Family Cajun Band**, a band with her husband and two sons, Joel and Wilson. She has recorded fifteen CDs on the **Arhoolie, Rounder, Vanguard, and Memphis International** labels.

Approached by **Vanguard executive Steve Buckingham**, Ann produced two tributes to Cajun and Creole music, the concept of these CDs being pop stars performing with traditional musicians. The first of these, **Evangeline Made**, was **nominated for a Grammy**. Shortly thereafter she was approached by **T Bone Burnett** to appear in the film “**The Divine secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood**” and in the film appears as a musician in the 1940's. Her songs from this film appear on the **Sony** soundtrack of the movie.

Her good friend, **Linda Ronstadt**, asked her to record a record of duets with her, and this CD, “**Adieu False Heart**”, was also nominated for a **Grammy**.

Today Ann lives in Eunice, Louisiana and continues to travel with her bands, recording, writing books, and appearing in films.

*“Savoy has a plaintive, unvarnished delivery that conjures up images of clothing hung to dry in a backwoods backyard...she’s the last of a dying breed of performers”-*

*Entertainment Weekly*

*“Ann Savoy is a keeper of the flame-the kind of girl Duke Ellington had in mind when he wrote “Sophisticated Lady”. She doesn’t imitate the past, she animates it-she makes dead men walk along a crooked line from the paddocks of Virginia to the swamps of Louisiana. She’s a blues singer. In French.”*

*T Bone Burnett*

**Joel Savoy**, son of Cajun music royalty Marc and Ann, is one of the most requested fiddlers in SW Louisiana today. Growing up in Eunice, Louisiana, literally at the feet of Cajun heroes like **Dennis McGee, Dewey Balfa, Michael Doucet, and Wade Frugé** (to name a few) Joel developed a strong sense of what makes Cajun Cajun and as a result, he has developed a fiddle style that is at once authentic and on the cutting edge. In performance he represents his culture with an authority that few people his age can and his playing leaves no doubt that Cajun music is still very much alive. Well versed in music and a quick learner, he can be found playing with just about every band in SWLA a some time or other, though most often he’s seen with his brother Wilson and their parents in the **Savoy Family Band**. In 2006 Joel founded **Valcour Records** which has since developed into what many believe to be the number one music source for what’s happening with the youth of Acadiana today. He’s worked and played with **Linda Ronstadt, T-Bone Burnett, Steve Buckingham, Allison Krauss, Linda Ronstadt, Steve Miller, Tim O’Brien, Darol Angor** and many more. Joel also builds accordions with his father, makes electric guitars and hi-end tube amps and studio gear, and is an excellent recording engineer. He lives on a small farm outside of Eunice with a dog and a rabbit and he loves a good cocktail on most any evening.

*“Joel Savoy is one of the most exciting fiddlers I know. He can switch*

*from sweet, sultry soulfulness to jaw-dropping complexity in a heartbeat. He never fails to leave his audiences moved, dazzled, and, more often than not, completely smitten”-Dirk Powell*

*“Joel Savoy is one of the finest fiddlers of his generation. Whether it's Cajun music, swing, or 'what have you' that he's playing, you can rest assured that his fiddling's gonna sound great.”-Paul Anastasio*

*"Joel Savoy is one of my favorite musicians on just about any instrument, but on guitar and Cajun Fiddle he is truly outstanding."-Linda Ronstadt*

*"Everything Joel Savoy touches turns to music."-T-Bone Burnett*

**Wilson Savoy**, the youngest son of Marc Savoy and Ann Savoy, has made music since before he could walk. As though learning by osmosis in the womb, Wilson could whistle and hum complicated Cajun melodies note for note before he could even speak. He also grew up with Cajun greats like **Dennis McGee, Dewey Balfa, Michael Doucet, and Wade Frugé**. He began playing boogie-woogie and blues piano, inspired by Louisiana-native, **Jerry Lee Lewis**, at the age of 10, and took up the accordion after graduating from high school. His major influences are his father, **Amede Ardoin**, and **Iry Lejeune**. He and his brother, Joel, appear as musicians in a scene with **Sean Penn** in the upcoming **Sony picture, “All The King’s Men”**. Besides being a musician on fiddle, accordion, piano, bass, and guitar, he is an avid filmmaker, and has produced films of many of the finest bands in SW Louisiana. ([www.almenafilms.com](http://www.almenafilms.com)) When he isn't making and producing music videos and short biographies he is traveling with his three times Grammy nominated dynamic young band, the **Pine Leaf Boys**, who have recorded with **Arhoolie Records, Lion's Gate, and Valcour Records**. Check him out on episode eleven of the **HBO show, Treme**.

Wilson Savoy is a powerhouse on the keyboard, whether it's piano or accordion.