

**LIVING BLUES "the best living Zydeco singer and accordionist"**  
**BILLBOARD "the heir to the Zydeco throne"**  
**BOSTON GLOBE "C.J. Chenier attacks the accordion with the tension and drive of James Brown"**  
**WASHINGTON POST "C.J. takes zydeco music into the R&B mainstream"**

## **C.J. Chenier Biography**

Clayton Joseph Chenier was born September 28, 1957 - the son of the great King of Zydeco, Clifton Chenier. C.J.'s father was the first Creole musician to win a Grammy Award. C.J. spent his childhood in the tough tenement housing projects of Port Arthur, Texas. His earliest musical influences were an eclectic mix of funk, soul, jazz and Motown, and his first musical instruments were piano, tenor saxophone and flute. It wasn't until his 21st birthday, after winning a scholarship and studying music at Texas Southern University, that C.J. first performed with his famous father and the legendary Red Hot Louisiana band.

On the road his father showed him how to front a world class touring band - teaching C.J. how to run the family business and how to develop his lifelong passion for music into a career. When Clifton died in 1987 his son adopted the Red Hot Louisiana Band and recorded his debut album for the great American independent label Arhoolie Records. As he told a journalist at the time, he does not try to imitate his father's playing: "I play it the way I play it. All my father really told me was to do the best I could do with my own style." In the following years C.J. would record albums Slash Records and the legendary Chicago label Alligator Records. When Paul Simon recorded his 1990 album Rhythm of the Saints, he handpicked C.J. Chenier to play accordion (alongside Ringo Starr on drums).

In the autumn of 2005, just prior to recording his latest album for Harmonia Mundi's World Village label, the delta region of the United States was pummeled twice by vicious hurricanes that left much of Louisiana and large sections of C.J.'s hometown of Port Arthur, Texas decimated. In the aftermath of these floods - C.J. began writing and recording a collection of songs in a stark contrast to the upbeat nature of some of many his past recordings.

Inspired by Bob Dylan's 1960's collaboration with The Band - C.J. Chenier sought out an existing working band to back him during these sessions. Rounder recording artists The Tarbox Ramblers fit the bill with a combination of tight musical camaraderie, from years of touring, and a deep knowledge of American roots music history. Augmented by session pianist Joe Deleault, the musicians quickly rehearsed and recorded these songs in the cavernous Room A of Boston's Q Division Studios in the autumn of 2005. Inspired by the 1950's Rudy Gelder jazz recordings for Blue Note, and Zydeco albums of Clifton Chenier, the songs were recorded live with everyone playing together in the studio with minimal overdubs.

In essence this is C.J.Chenier's first solo album as a singer-songwriter. Harking back to the deep southern roots of Creole music - C.J. has recorded a collection of some of the most urgent and heartfelt songs of his career. He tapped deep into his father's songbook starting with the smitten sing-along hit Rosemary to the barbed wire blues of Ain't No Need of Cryin' (Everyday is the Same) and haunting Black Snake Blues. The southern gothic images of Hank Williams penned Lost on the River and the devastating P.J. Harvey ballad The Desperate Kingdom of Love complete the somber canvas - a metaphor of the recent carnage in New Orleans.

But a C.J. Chenier recording, like a traditional New Orleans funeral, would not be complete without a tremor of hope for the future and a few great dance tunes. C.J. composed several classic songs for the album including the plaintive I've Been Good To You Baby and the swinging mea culpa Who's Cheatin' Who?. One of the album highlights is the Fender Rhodes driven - Living To Learn. Sans accordion and rubboard, Living To Learn highlights C.J.'s sixties

soul and Motown influences. "As a teenager I played the Fender Rhodes in a top 40 cover band, practicing Soul Ray Charles, and Motown songs for 10 hours a day" recalls C.J.. Next C.J. leads the entire band through a Clifton Chenier tune Bogalusa Boogie as a tribute to the late great Clarence Gatemouth Brown. Gatemouth had died just days after Hurricane Katrina decimated his home in southwest Louisiana. The album ends fittingly with Van Morrison's Comfort You, his great waltz-poem of healing and forgiveness, a fitting end to a stormy night.

A self-described 'road dog' C.J. will be touring extensively in North America and Europe in 2006-2007.

**Select past performances:**

**The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, Chicago Blues Festival, Jon Stewart Show, SxSW, San Diego Street Scene Festival, Milwaukee's Summerfest, Calgary Folk Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, Piazza Blues, Seattle's Bumbershoot Festival, Kilkenny Festival, Meridien Hotel in Paris, Musique Metisse, Edmonton Blues Festival, Salmon Arm Festival, Kansas City Jazz and Blues Festival, Boston Folk Festival, Efes Pilsen Blues Festival in Turkey & Russia, Houston International Festival, Mountain Stage Radio, Lowell Folk Festival, Bern Jazz Festival, BB Kings, Kennedy Center, Madison Square Garden Katrina Benefit, Paul Simon's Rhythm of the Saints album.**

**Discography**

**1988 My Baby Don't Wear No Shoes (Arhoolie)**  
**1990 Hot Rod (Slash)**  
**1992 I Ain't No Playboy (Slash)**  
**1995 Too Much Fun (Alligator)**  
**1996 The Big Squeeze (Alligator)**  
**2001 Step It Up! (Alligator)**  
**2006 The Desperate Kingdom of Love (World Village/Harmonia Mundi)**

**CONTACT**



P.O. Box 600099· Newtonville, MA 02460· USA  
617-969-0810· Fax 617-969-6761  
email: [concerted@concertedefforts.com](mailto:concerted@concertedefforts.com)  
<http://www.concertedefforts.com>