

“A propulsive, rollicking, swamp-boogie joy ride.” –*People*

“Stanley ‘Buckwheat’ Dural, Jr. is the leader of the world’s hottest zydeco band. Buckwheat is a brilliantly dexterous musician belting it out with a terrific set of pipes while exuding consummate showmanship. From beginning to end, Buck throws it down and slams it sideways.” –*OffBeat*

American musical legend Stanley “Buckwheat” Dural Jr.—along with his band, Buckwheat Zydeco—is the preeminent ambassador of Louisiana zydeco music. 2009 marks Buckwheat Zydeco’s 30th anniversary, and Buckwheat is celebrating with the release of his new CD (and Alligator Records debut), ***Lay Your Burden Down***. *The New York Times* says, “Stanley ‘Buckwheat’ Dural leads one of the best bands in America. A down-home and high-powered celebration, meaty and muscular with a fine-tuned sense of dynamics...propulsive rhythms, incendiary performances.” The Louisiana vocalist, accordion and organ master recorded his new CD at Dockside Studios in Maurice, Louisiana with Steve Berlin (Los Lobos) producing, as well as leading the horn section.

Lay Your Burden Down is the most ambitious, deepest and varied recording of Buckwheat Zydeco’s career. It is a remarkably conceived, rocking album featuring five new Buckwheat originals and complete reinventions of songs by Memphis Minnie (*When The Levee Breaks*, made famous by Led Zeppelin), Bruce Springsteen (*Back In Your Arms*), Gov’t Mule (*Lay Your Burden Down*), Captain Beefheart (*Too Much Time*), Jimmy Cliff (*Let Your Yeah Be Yeah*) and JJ Grey & Mofro (*The Wrong Side*). Guests on the album include Sonny Landreth, Warren Haynes, Steve Berlin, JJ Grey and Trombone Shorty. As New Orleans author Ben Sandmel writes in the liner notes, “***Lay Your Burden Down*** pulses with music that tells a story. Since it’s zydeco, this album will naturally get feet to moving. But ***Lay Your Burden Down*** speaks with equal eloquence to the head, and the heart.” In this, Buckwheat’s first post-Katrina album, Louisiana’s life-affirming jazz funeral philosophy of renewal—partying in the face of adversity—is on full display, with joyful, rhythmic dance music and deeper, more intense songs sharing the same celebratory bayou spirit. With ***Lay Your Burden Down***, Buckwheat Zydeco’s large and loyal fan base will have to make room for a massive influx of new converts.

Over the course of 30 years, Buckwheat Zydeco has gigged with everyone from Eric Clapton (with whom Buckwheat also recorded) and U2 to The Boston Pops. The band performed at the closing ceremonies of the 1996 Summer Olympics to a worldwide audience of three billion people. Buckwheat even performed for President Clinton twice, celebrating both of his inaugurations. The band has appeared on *The Late Show With David Letterman*, *CNN*, *The Today Show*, *MTV*, *NBC News*, *CBS Morning News* and many others.

According to Alligator Records president Bruce Iglauer, the addition of Buckwheat Zydeco to the label is huge. “Buckwheat is *the* iconic figure of Louisiana zydeco music

worldwide. It's a thrill to bring an artist of this stature to Alligator. More important, he tears it up at every show. His energy level and accordion chops are just amazing, and he's a terrific, soulful singer. Plus, he's a thrilling Hammond organ player. I'm also excited to reunite Buckwheat with Steve Berlin of Los Lobos as producer. Berlin produced *Five Card Stud*, one of Buckwheat's finest albums, and we believe Buckwheat's Alligator debut is even better. Also, Buckwheat has been booked for years by Concerted Efforts, a great agency for American roots music."

Stanley "Buckwheat" Dural, Jr. was born in Lafayette, Louisiana in 1947. He acquired his nickname because, with his braided hair, he looked like Buckwheat from The Little Rascals. His father was an accomplished, non-professional traditional Creole accordion player, but young Buckwheat preferred listening to and playing R&B. He became proficient at the organ, and by the late 1950s was backing Joe Tex, Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown and many others. In 1971 he formed Buckwheat and The Hitchhikers, a 15-piece funk and soul band. They were a local sensation and found success with the single, "It's Hard To Get," recorded for a local Louisiana-based label. Never a traditional zydeco fan when growing up, Buckwheat nonetheless accepted an invitation in 1976 to join Clifton Chenier's Red Hot Louisiana Band as organist. He quickly discovered the joy and power of zydeco music, and marveled at the effect the music had on the audience. "Everywhere, people young and old just loved zydeco music," Buckwheat says. "I had so much fun playing that first night with Clifton. We played for four hours and I wasn't ready to quit."

Buckwheat's relationship with the legendary Chenier led him to take up the accordion in 1978. After woodshedding for a year, he felt ready to start his own band under the name Buckwheat Zydeco, and began his recording career with the small Blues Unlimited label. By the mid-1980s there were more offers to perform than he could possibly accept. Recordings for Black Top and Rounder followed before Buckwheat befriended New York-based journalist Ted Fox, who championed Buckwheat to Chris Blackwell at Island Records in 1986. Buckwheat Zydeco signed a five-record deal and Fox became and still remains his manager. The success of these records kept Buckwheat Zydeco on the road and in constant demand.

In 1988, Eric Clapton invited the band to open his North American tour as well as his 12-night stand at London's Royal Albert Hall. As even more doors opened, Buckwheat found himself sharing stages and/or recording with Keith Richards, Robert Plant, Willie Nelson, Mavis Staples, David Hidalgo, Dwight Yoakam, Paul Simon, Ry Cooder and many others, including indie music stalwarts Yo La Tengo on the soundtrack to the Bob Dylan bio-pic, *I'm Not There*. His music has been featured in films ranging from *The Waterboy*, *The Big Easy*, *Fletch Lives* and *Hard Target* to name a few. BET's #1-rated show, *Comic View*, used his live version of *What You Gonna Do?* as theme music for the program's 10th anniversary "Pardi Gras" season. He even wrote and performed the theme music for the PBS television series *Pierre Franey's Cooking In America*. Buckwheat won an Emmy for his music in the CBS TV movie, *Pistol Pete: The Life And Times Of Pete Maravich*. Buckwheat Zydeco has played just about every major music festival in the world, including the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival (numerous times), Newport Folk Festival, Summerfest, San Diego Street Scene, Bumbershoot, Montreaux Jazz Festival and

countless others.

During the 1990s and 2000s Buckwheat recorded for his own Tomorrow Recordings label and maintained an extensive touring schedule. Along with his remarkably talented band, he brings his music to fans all over the world. Now, with his new relationship with Alligator and *Lay Your Burden Down*, his massive instrumental and vocal talents and boundless energy, Buckwheat, already the most popular zydeco artist in the world, will find the largest and most enthusiastic audience of his long and storied career.