



### **Wilson Anthony 'Boozoo' Chavis .....**

Louisiana Zydeco is an infectious dance-hall music that blends Cajun tunes, African American blues and Caribbean rhythms, most often featuring the accordion as the lead instrument. Boozoo Chavis was one of the fathers of this musical form. In 1954 he had a regional hit with *Papier dans ma soulier* (Paper in My Shoe), He predates Clifton Chenier, the recognised 'King of Zydeco' ... Boozoo's album of the same name will be an interesting discovery if you only know those of the Clifton.

He gave up performing in public for nearly 30 years because he felt he'd been cheated out of his due royalties. During his time away from the limelight, Boozoo led a traditional Creole lifestyle in rural Pied des Chiens (Dog Hill), Louisiana, raising a family, training and racing horses, and making horsehair ropes. He once joked: *I got a ranch on an acre of land, I wish I had me 20 or 30 acres, but I made a ranch out of one acre. I got race horses on it there, I got chickens, ducks, I got dogs, I got a guinea, I got turkey, goose, and I had some pigeons...and I've got a garden... I got a ranch on one acre of land!*

In 1983 he stormed back onto the music scene through an appearance at the first Southwest Louisiana Zydeco Festival. His performances inspired a whole new generation of young Zydeco players who have now spread this musical form around the country, indeed around the world. Playing with family members in his band, Boozoo combined driving rhythmic tunes with witty lyrics to entertain and energise audiences who often travelled miles to listen and dance to his music. A recent hip-hop Zydeco artist gave him the ultimate compliment when he recorded a tribute song entitled: *I got it from Boo.*

Wilson Chavis died on May 5, 2001 in Austin, Texas while on a concert tour with his band. Ordinarily, Heritage Fellowships are only given to living artists but an exception was made this year for Chavis, since he died after he'd already been selected by the panel.