

## “How to begin making tunes really Cajun in seven steps”.



The late, great Isom J. Fontenot, ace Cajun harper.

Choose an easily remembered Cajun tune like “**The Convict’s Waltz**” (10 hole harp) and play it with single notes.

(1) 5**5**6 – **5**5**4** – **5**6**6** – 6**5**5 / 5**5**6 – **5**5**4** – **5**6**6** – 5**4**4

(2) Keep time well, it’s a waltz so it’s 3;4.

(3) Perform a chorded version. Use the “Duffel Bag Method”.

(4) Make a generalised tongue block and play the tune again chordally.

(5) Add “pushes” to these tongue blocks only where underlined. So, play actual note and then tongue block.

(6) Add “bounces” (akin to a “Hammer On”) with your tongue and breath. We’ll discuss how as we do them.

(7) Accentuate the underlying rhythm. This is “old time, traditional dance hall music” – always keep it in mind.

Now Practice it in. Within a short time you’ll have a good Cajun feel. Some people would add “learn to sing in Cajun French” and relocate to south-western Louisiana but that’s for later... ha ha :-)) You have the beginnings of a Cajun-style waltz pretty good. When you have done the practice you can add your own bits to it. Okay, let’s try a Cajun-style “Two-step”. Add the “sauce” as described above and you’ll soon be “*Rocking da Swamp...ayeeeeee! Yaille yaille chere!*”

“**Diggy Liggy Lo**” by Doug Kershaw.

4 4 **44** 5 5© **55** **55** 5 4 4 **44** 5 © **5** 5 **4**  
 Diggy Liggy Li - and ah Diggy Liggy Lo, fe-ll i-n love at the *fais do do*.

**22** **2** **3** **4** © 4 © **4** **22** **22** **33** **4** **5** 55 **44** 4  
 Th - e Pop was cold & the coffee *chaud* for ah Diggy Liggy Li & Diggy Liggy Lo.

Now these lyrics go with the same tune;

***Diggy Liggy Li ‘vec, Diggy Liggy Lo, pour réallumer tous les flambeaux,  
 Du Bayou au Grand Chico c’est la fête chez Diggy Liggy Lo. (Ayeee!)***

Lastly – nice little trick. Tongue block and on 1<sup>st</sup> line only play one hole higher... that’s your “turn around”. Then play second line “straight”. When you get good at it then mess with it. Enjoy!

“J’ai Passé Devant ta Porte” waltz by Cleoma Falcon-Breaux.

66 **5** 65 ® 33 4 ® **4** 5 ® **55** 54 **223** 4 **4** ®

J’ai pass-é d-e-vant ta porte. Ja-i cri-e “B-ye Bye la Belle”.

66 **5** 5 4 55 **5566** ® 66 **5** 5 **5** 5 **4** **3** 4

P-ersonne qu’a pas re-pon-due. O-h yaille yaille! Mon coeur fait mal.

“Turn around” with tongue-blocked chords, bounces and pushes, very rhythmic.

6 **5** 5 6 4444 - 6 **5** 5 6 4444 -

**555** – **3 4 222** - **555** – **3 4 222** - “Blues it up” a little here.

66 **55** 5 © - 456 **6** ® – 66 **5** 5 **5** 5 **4** **3** 4

We’re gonna mess with this now and see what we can do with it. Okay, what’s next?

“Saute Crapaud” Wade Frugé. Check out Isom J. Fontenot playing this on his harp on YouTube.

677**66** -7**888** – **88766**-7**887** (x2)

8997 - 89**988**-**8997** – **89887**(x2)

Saut crapaud ta queue va bruler. prends courage, a’va repousser.

C’est Jacques Petrin pas rien sur la tete, en revenant du Lac Charles en mangeant des bananes.

“Little Liza Jane” (New Orleans Creole, traditional).

5 6 6 **6** 5 5 56**6** 6 5 6 6 **6** 6 6 5 5**4** 4

What’s your name, pre’ li’ thing? Li’ Liza Jane. Where d’you live? Down the Lane. Little Liza Jane.

What’s your number? Stone cucumber! Li’ Liza Jane. Where’s ‘yo’ poppa now? Ain’t gonna stop us now. Little Liza Jane.

7 6 **6** 6 5 6**6** 6 7 6 **6** 5 5**4** 4

Poor Li’l Liza! Li’l Liza Jane! Poor Li’l Liza! Li’l Liza Jane!

**“The Belle of Point Claire”**, Artelus Mistic / Cajun Harmonica. Traditional tune.

Artelus Mistic was born on January 15, 1912. As he only ever laid down two tracks over two days, he wasn't known as a recording artist. He was well-known where he lived of course. As a musician he was known as a good Cajun harmonica-player who played “Bal de Maisons” and similar social events across south-western Louisiana. Both Isom J. Fontenot and Jerry Devillier knew him. We have heard from Mr Fontenot himself that both musicians had played together. According to the “American Database of Historical Recordings”, at the age of 27 Artelus Mistic took part in a recording session in New Orleans across November 6<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> 1929. This was for the Victor Recording Company. He recorded one 10” 78 rpm single, namely “The Belle of Point Claire (A side BVE-56506 ) / You Belong To Me (B side BVE-56507)”. As far as we know he never recorded again. Artelus Mistic died in September 1973. On “The Belle of Point Claire” he plays a G harmonica in 3;4 time but swiftly. Cajun waltzes are usually played with a decent pace and a solid beat, sometimes as is heard here they're even quicker again. Far different then “regular waltzes” heard elsewhere. He is playing in 2<sup>nd</sup> position. There is heavy emphasis on the beat as this sort of music is for dancing to. This is a feature of Cajun music that will become very apparent to you as you begin playing. He also uses “phasing” with his hand which Isom J. Fontenot also uses. Artelus also sings in-between playing, his vocal parts being delivered in the local French Cajun dialect. In Cajun (A) and (B) parts are called “First part” and “Turns” as often (but not always) the 2<sup>nd</sup> parts are not strictly “B parts”... stick with me, we're okay in this case :¬)

**Basic tune;**

(A)

56 **677<sub>7</sub> 8 – 888<sub>88</sub> 7-77 - 7<sub>78</sub> – 8888 -**  
**6677<sub>7</sub> – 888<sub>88</sub> - 7-77 – 76** 656 – 6656 –  
**677<sub>7</sub> 8 – 88<sub>88</sub> 7-77 - 7<sub>78</sub> – 8868 -**  
**6677<sub>7</sub> – 888<sub>88</sub> - 7-77 – 76** 656 – 66 – 8

(B)

**677777 - 6<sub>6666</sub>8-677777 -6<sub>6666</sub>8-**  
**677777 – 666666**<sub>5</sub> – 6666656 – 6 (back to A)

These are the standard traditional lyrics for this piece. Mr. Mistic is improvising around them. Roughly translated the person in this song is going away because his lover has somehow slighted him.

*T'es petite, t'es mignonne, t'es pour moi malheureuse  
Ça t'as fait, chère, 'tite monde faut pas faire ça... whoo!*

*Ton vieux nègre, chère catin, après rouler tout les chemins  
C'est pour toi, malheureuse, je vas m'en aller... whoo!*

**"Madeline";** (traditional).

**6** 6 6 5 **4** 4 5 **5** 6 **6** 6 6 **4 4** 5 **4** 4

Hey Madeline, toi t'as couché dehors? Hey Madeline, dans le grand brouillard.

**6** 6 6 5 **4** 4 5 **5** 6 **6** 6 6 5 **4** 4 5 **4** 4 4 5

Hey Madeline, toi, tu va'me -faire mourir? Hey Madeline, et t'arrête pas d'roulailler.

**"Jambalaya (On the Bayou)"** by Hank Williams.

5 6 **6** 5 6 **6** 6 5 6 **4** 6 6 **7 7** 6 6 6 **6** 6 6 5

Good-bye Joe; me gotta go - me oh, my oh. Me gotta go pole my pirogue down the Bayou.

7 7 7 **6** 6 7 **6** 6 6 **4** 6 6 **7 6** 6 **6** 6 5 **4** 4

My Yvonne, sweetest one, me oh, my oh. "Son of a Gun", gonna have big fun on the Bayou.

5 6 **6** 5 6 **6** 6 5 6 **4** 6 6 **7 7** **6 6 6** 6 6 5

Thibodeaux, Fontenot; place is buzzing. Kin-folk come see Yvonne by the dozen.

7 7 7 **6** 6 7 **6** 6 6 **4** 6 6 **7 6** 6 **4** 5 **4** 4

Dress in style, go "Hog Wild", me oh, my oh. "Son of a Gun", gonna have big fun on the Bayou.

7 7 7 **6** 6 7 **6** 6 6 **4** 6 6 **7 7** 6 6 6 **6** 6 6 5

Jambalay', Crawfish Pie - Filé Gumbo. For tonight I'm gonna see "mes cheres amis" oh,

7 7 7 **6** 6 7 **6** 6 6 **4** 6 6 **7** 6 6 **6** 6 5 **4** 4

Pick guitar, fill fruit jar and be gay-oh! Son of a gun, gonna have big fun, on the Bayou.

Keep practicing, stay in touch. Laissez le bon temps rouler.  
I'm neither on Facebook nor LinkedIn. Martin run's the band  
website and looks after our Facebook page. To reach me directly  
please send me an email [aidanharpsheehan@gmail.com](mailto:aidanharpsheehan@gmail.com)  
Aidan Sheehan [www.whiskeyriver.uk](http://www.whiskeyriver.uk) (Rocking Cajun Blues)