

Written by Mike Schulz
Thursday, 27 June 2013 05:57

- [99.95\\$ Microsoft Windows 8 \(64 bit\) cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Cakewalk Sonar 7 Producer Edition \(en\)](#)
- [Buy Cheap Autodesk Maya Entertainment Creation Suite Premium 2012 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [9.95\\$ Incredible Bee Archiver 2 MAC cheap oem](#)
- [Discount - Autodesk AutoCAD Electrical 2014 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [29.95\\$ Nuance PDF Converter Professional 6 cheap oem](#)
- [49.95\\$ ACDSee Pro 3 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Microsoft Office 2004 Student and Teacher Edition MAC \(en\)](#)
- [Buy OEM Sony Sound Forge 10](#)
- [Discount - Adobe Flash Builder CC Premium MAC \(Full LifeTime License\)](#)
- [Download Microsoft Office 2010 Home and Student Family Pack with SP1 \(32-bit & 64-bit\)](#)
- [Buy Adobe InDesign CS5 on Demand \(en\)](#)
- [Buy Microsoft Streets & Trips 2011 \(en\)](#)



As he's the son of the late Clifton Chenier – the Grammy Award-winning accordion legend commonly known as “The King of Zydeco” – it makes sense that C.J. Chenier would have a parent to thank for his initial entry into the world of professional music. And he does: his mom.

“I was, like, 20 years old,” says the native of Port Arthur, Texas, “and I was playing piano in this funk band I put up in my hometown, and one day we were playing a bazaar at a Catholic Church. And my mother sent one of my friends to tell me I needed to come home, because my daddy called and said he wanted me to go on the road with him. And I was hesitant, because I

Written by Mike Schulz
Thursday, 27 June 2013 05:57

had never been to too many places, and I knew that everybody in my daddy's band was way older than I was.

“But I got home and my mother told me, ‘I tell you what: You're not working. You don't have nothin' to do. You'd *better* pack your bags and get on out of here!’” Laughing, Chenier adds, “And I just said, ‘Yes, *ma'am!*’ I mean, I was hesitant, but I was happy.”

Mom's directive, as it turns out, has made a *lot* of people happy, because 25 years after taking over his late father's Red Hot Louisiana Band, C.J. Chenier performances continue to thrill zydeco and blues fans worldwide. Called “the heir to the zydeco throne” by

Billboard

magazine and “the crown prince of zydeco” by the

Boston Globe

, the singer/songwriter/accordionist is an undeniable master of his genre – though the man readily admits that, in the early stages of his career, he didn't fully understand what that genre *was*

“It's weird,” says the 55-year-old Chenier during our recent phone interview, “because where I came from, zydeco wasn't a popular music. They called it ‘la la music’ back then, and la la music just wasn't popular. I mean, it was with the people who *knew* about it, and I knew my daddy was ‘the king of zydeco,’ but I only had one of his albums, so I didn't know what it was really about.” He laughs. “But I found out quickly when I started traveling with him!”

Raised by his mother, and apart from his father, in rural Texas, Chenier says that as far as music was concerned, “I guess I always had the bug in me. I'd been playing around with music and instruments since, like, the second grade – took piano lessons in the second grade, was in the school choir in third grade – and so I guess I've been trying to be a musician all my life, pretty much.”

In fourth grade, says Chenier, “I actually wanted to play the trombone. But my mother told me, ‘No, your daddy's got a saxophone in his band, You need to play saxophone.’ But I didn't even know what a saxophone was. And then I saw one being played on television, and I was like, ‘Man, that sure has a lot of keys on it!’ You know what I'm saying? The trombone looked simple because it just had a slide, but *this* thing ... !

Written by Mike Schulz

Thursday, 27 June 2013 05:57

“So I got on the saxophone,” says Chenier with a laugh, “and I adapted to it pretty good, man. That was my main instrument all through high school and everything. I think I was meant to play that thing.”

Chenier says he enjoyed playing both the sax and the piano in his youth, and was particularly pleased to discover that he could, on occasion, even get paid for it. “At my first gig, the guy gave me seven bucks. I was 17, and I took that seven bucks, and I was the happiest person on earth. And the next time we played, he gave 30, and I was like, ‘*Whoa!* Thirty bucks? All *right!*’ You know, 30 bucks in 1975 was a lot of money, man!”

But until receiving his 1978 invitation to tour with his father’s Red Hot Louisiana Band, Chenier says that pursuing a career in music “was only a dream. I come from Port Arthur, Texas, and that place just *wasn’t* musical. For everybody who lived there, they just wanted to graduate and get a job at the refinery, because that was the best-paying job. And I really didn’t want to do that.

“So I was fortunate to have a father in the business,” he continues, “because he rescued me from that. Because I worked at the refineries. I worked as a longshoreman. I did fish meal – tossing around 100-pound sacks of fish meal. I worked on a railroad. I did hydroblasting. I did a *lot* of stuff in my year and a half out of high school. And I hated *all* of it.”

He loved, however, playing the sax alongside his father and bandmates. “Traveling is tiresome,” says Chenier, “but once you get up there and get on that stage, all the travel seems to just disappear, man. It’s just great to get on stage and perform and see if you can make people happy.”

Chenier also loved learning to master the accordion when Clifton – who would succumb to diabetes-related kidney disease in 1987 – became seriously ill in the mid-1980s. “I was around 27 or 28 when I started on the accordion,” says the man who has been called “the best living zydeco singer and accordionist” by *Living Blues* magazine. “I just started playing around with it trying to figure it out. And I guess I did, you know what I mean?”

Written by Mike Schulz

Thursday, 27 June 2013 05:57

After his father's passing, says Chenier, "It never even dawned on me to do anything else but continue with the guys I was already playing with," so he took over as frontman for Clifton's ensemble. And it was through his performances with the Red Hot Louisiana Band that Chenier's newfound accordion skills caught the attention of Paul Simon, who was looking for instrumentalists for the album that would become 1990's Grammy-winning *Rhythm of the Saints*.

As he name-checked Clifton in his song "That Was Your Mother" from 1986's *Graceland*, Chenier says, "Paul Simon was, I think, a big fan of my dad's, and that's why he called me. And that was something, man. Just all of a sudden this guy calls and says, 'Hey, Paul Simon wants you to come to New York' And I was like, 'Well, yeah
! All
right
!'"

But even though Chenier did end up playing backup on *Rhythm of the Saints*, "I didn't get to go on tour with him," he says. "And that broke my heart, man. I had a tour with my own band happening at the exact same time, and even though it would've been great for me, I just couldn't leave my guys stuck out like that."

His inability to tour with Simon, though, hardly impeded Chenier's career trajectory. In 1992, he played accordion on a track for the Gin Blossoms' *New Miserable Experience*, and also found himself and his bandmates showcased on PBS's lauded music series

Austin City Limits

. His studio-debut release

Too Much Fun

was named 1995's best zydeco album in

Living Blues

magazine. And in 1996, following performances on CNN and

The Jon Stewart Show

, the C.J. Chenier & the Red Hot Louisiana Band set during the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival was featured in its own segment on VH1.

"I keep waiting for that time to come around again, man!" says Chenier, with a laugh, of his mid-'90s career surge. "Because I've got new tricks for them! You know, just give me the

Written by Mike Schulz

Thursday, 27 June 2013 05:57

opportunity to show people what's happening *now!*"

Recently, Chenier's and his band's happenings have included the release of 2011's *Can't Sit Down* CD, concert and festival engagements throughout the United States, and several international tours. "We just did the Netherlands," says the artist, "and we did France and Belgium just a couple weeks ago. We pretty much go to Europe every year, and we've got some stuff ready for France for next March already."

And what's *always* happening for Chenier is the opportunity to keep introducing more, and younger, audiences to his output.

"Our younger generation don't never get exposed to roots music in radio and the media and stuff like that," he says. "They get exposed to rap, they get exposed to hip-hop, and they idolize that stuff – things that don't even take a real person who learned how to play music. I mean, a person that's never played music before can go and download instruments and create a whole song by picking this bass pattern, and picking this drum line, and throwing in a few cowbell sounds, and the media takes it, and it becomes a million-dollar seller, you know what I mean?"

"But this was here *first*," says Chenier. "Roots and the blues – that's America's music. And that's why we need youngsters to come out to events like this [the Mississippi Valley Blues Festival]. Even though it might not be familiar to them, at least they get exposed to it. And then, they might want to come back again. And bring some of their friends next time."