



Sidney Brown

Sidney Brown was a fine accordion player and songwriter, the leader of the classic “Traveler Playboys” band, and a pioneer Cajun accordion maker.

Brown was born in Church Point, Louisiana, in 1906, and began playing accordion as a child. Largely self-taught, by the age of 13 he was playing house dances and *fais-dodos*. Brown formed his band, “The Traveler Playboys,” after moving from Church Point to Lake Charles, Louisiana. He became well known in Lake Charles for his rhythmic, old-timey accordion playing. Brown and “The Traveler Playboys” began recording for the Goldband label in the mid 1950s. Their recordings enjoyed great success. Brown's “*Pistauche a Tante Nana*” became the third best selling record in the history of Cajun music. His two-step, “Traveler Playboy Special” is still performed by many Cajun bands.

Before World War II, Cajun accordionists favored German accordions, especially those made by the Monarch and Sterling companies. With the advent of the war, German instruments were no longer available in the United States. Both the Monarch and Sterling factories were destroyed in the conflict. After the war many of Germany's remaining accordion makers were isolated behind the Iron Curtain in East Germany. The only new accordions available to Cajun musicians in the post-war period were generally inferior instruments, not particularly well-made and not loud enough to be heard over the electric guitar, steel guitar and drums of a full band. With good new accordions in short supply, Brown began experimenting with accordion making, eventually producing high-quality, hand-made instruments. He not only was able to help meet the post-war demand for new Cajun accordions, but also established a reputation as an accomplished repairman throughout southwest Louisiana, keeping many old pre-war Monarchs and Sterlings alive and playing in the hands of their owners.

In 1963 Brown was forced to abandon performing due to a heart condition. He spent the remaining years of his life building and repairing accordions. He produced about 50 instruments in all, many of which are still in use. He died on August 6, 1981.