True Cajun music comes to Palo Alto

By William Johnson
Times Tribune staff

To many Northern Californians, the word "Cajun" distinguishes cuisine from New Orleans — typically blackened redfish or gumbos made with spicy sausage and seafood.

But to accordionist Marc Savoy, Cajun signifies his heritage and a way of life that goes back more than 200 years.

Savoy's roots go back seven generations in the bayou country of south-central Louisiana. His people had emigrated from France even before the French-speaking Aca-dians (later Cajuns) were forced by the British to relocate from Canada in the 1760s.

Savoy, his guitar-playing wife, Ann, and fiddler Marc Doucet will perform true Cajun music at a dance concert at the Wesley United Methodist Church in Palo Alto Saturday.

Doucet has earned recent acclaim for his score and soundtrack in the 1986 film "Belizaire the Cajun." Marc Savoy, 46, has been featured on several records of Cajun music on the Bay Area's Ar-hoolie Records. The label is one of the most esteemed in the world for ethnic and regional American music.

In Palo Alto Monday, the Savoys laughed when asked if they considered themselves "professional" musicians.

"I don't like to ever be called a professional. We live on a farm outside of Eunice and try to live the old times of long ago," Marc Savoy said. "I run a music store and Ann works on her books."

Ann Savoy, 34, published in 1984 the definitive book on Cajun music, Please see CAJUN, B-10

Record firm specializes in heritage

If your notion of folk music is Peter, Paul & Mary or The King-ston Trio, you will probably not care much about Chris Strach-witz of Berkeley.

But if you care about authen-tic back-country blues, or Texas-Mexican boarder music, Louisi-ana Zydeco, or Blue Ridge Mountain fiddling, you will be writing to Strachwitz sooner or later.

Strachwitz's 27-year-old com-pany, Arhoolie Records of El Cerrito, is one of the world's great resources for American regional and ethnic music.

In the 1987 Arhoolie cata-logue are hundreds of records by little-known musicians who will never make it onto the pop record charts. But Strachwitz has recorded them not for profit, but to preserve an authentic mu-sical heritage. In many cases, were it not for Strachwitz's rec-ords, the musicians would have remained virtually unknown.

But thanks to him, the music of jazz pianist Tiny Hot Parham, singer Big Mama Thornton, Texas blues guitarist Mance Lipscomb and Mississippi Delta bluesman Fred McDowell are appreciated by thousands of lis-teners, rather than just a hand-ful of music scholars. With but one other person to help him, Strachwitz has made many of the records himself. He does ev-erything — from editing the master tapes to pasting on the record mailing labels.

Curiously, Strachwitz's own roots are neither Cajun, Creole, Chicano nor country-western.

He was born in Germany in what has become part of mod-ern-day Poland. He immigrated to the United States in 1947 and taught school for a while in Los Gatos. His interest in authentic

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If you're going ...

Who: The Savoy-Doucet Cajun Band
When: 8 p.m. Saturday
Where: Intoto, at the Wesley United Methodist Church, 463 College Ave., Palo Alto
Tickets: $7 at the door; information: (415) 493-0693

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