



DOUG KERSHAW
by Tamela Meredith Partridge
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According to famed fiddler, Doug Kershaw, when war forced his French ancestors to relocate from Acadia, Canada, to Louisiana in the 1750's, they took their rich Acadian (Cajun) heritage, spicy cuisine and joyful music with them.

"The French version of Cajun music is an old art form," says Kershaw, who was born in the heart of Cajun country on a houseboat in Tiel Ridge, Louisiana. "Inside Cajun music you will find the blues, rock and roll, country and other rhythms. It's an intense, energetic and fun music."

Kershaw, nicknamed the Ragin' Cajun, will perform on Saturday at Nashville North in Taylorville.

"I guess they call me the Ragin' Cajun because I have such a good time on stage," says Kershaw, who taught himself to play more than twenty instruments over the course of his illustrious career.

Kershaw has been known to wear out two or three bows per song as he plays, dances and sings his vivacious and foot-stomping Cajun music.

"The fiddle and the classical violin are the exact same instrument," Kershaw says. "The only difference is how it's played. Particularly if it's played by a studied musician who has learned to read and write music, compared to a musician, such as myself, who has learned the instrument by ear and is just fiddlin' around on it."

Kershaw plays the fiddle so incredibly fast that clouds of rosin will rise from his bow, giving the audience the impression that it's actually smoking.

"Heat is what breaks the hair on the bow," Kershaw says. "The rosin keeps it from getting so hot."

Coming from a musical family, Kershaw was already fiddling by age eight and formed a family band, the Continental Playboys, four years later with brothers Nelson ("Pee Wee") and Russell ("Rusty").

Kershaw and brother Rusty became a duo from 1955 to 1965 and eventually sold over 18 million national label records.

"I take pride that Rusty and I were in the beginning days of country boogie, rockabilly and rock and roll," Kershaw says. "It's very exciting to know we were a part of all that, along with such greats as Elvis Presley, The Everly Brothers and others."

Hit singles for the Rusty and Doug duo include, "So Lovely, Baby," "Love Me To Pieces," "Hey Sheriff," "Diggy, Diggy, Lo" and "Louisiana Man."

"I wrote Louisiana Man when I got out of the Army in 1960," Kershaw says. "It's an autobiographical song about my father. I was only 7 years old when he died, so I combined my memories of him with the knowledge I had growing up with those memories."

As a solo artist, Kershaw has preserved the Cajun musical culture through his stage shows, albums and such singles as, "Mama's Got The Know How," "Hello Woman," "Cajun Baby (duet with Hank Williams, Jr.)" and "Boogie Queen."

"To this day," Kershaw says, "I could be walking on the street and Cajun people of all ages will come up to me and say, 'thanks so much for making us proud to be Cajun.' That's what it's all about. For me, it just doesn't get any better than that."

Current endeavors for Kershaw includes an album of all new material, "Easy," and recording an album of original music with country/bluegrass artist, Marty Stuart.

With over forty years in the music industry, Kershaw continues to receive an enthusiastic response from pop, country and Cajun fans alike.

"It's wonderful to be able to survive and make a living doing something that you enjoy and feel totally free with," Kershaw says. "But I never forget that it's the people that make it all possible."