

C.J. Chenier

Can't Sit Down
 (World Village)

CJ Chenier's last album, *The Desperate Kingdom of Love*, went about as far outside the zydeco mainstream as you can get—ominous title, PJ Harvey title track, generally downbeat feel. But that was also a fairly explicit post-Katrina album, and it's likely to be a one-off in his catalog. He's back to party-band mode this time, with a live-in-studio disc recorded in one day ("in one kick-butt session," the notes specify) that includes what you'd expect from a good live set: a couple time-honored dance floor fillers (Boozoo Chavis' "Paper in My Shoe" and his dad Clifton Chenier's signature song "Hot Tamale Baby"), one slow-blues change-up, and a whole lot of lively grooves. He even prints all the lyrics in the booklet, but when the entire lyrics of two songs are "Can't sit down / I feel good" and "Zydeco / zydeco boogie / Jump the boogie jump," it ranks as the shortest lyric sheet since the Ramones' debut.

Chenier hasn't dropped the progressive elements altogether,

dipping back into the unlikely-covers well for Tom Waits' "Clap Hands," which manages to include some offbeat Waits-style instrumental touches (lead kalimba, plus a rare flute solo from Chenier) without sacrificing danceability. The other offbeat cover, Curtis Mayfield's "We Gotta Have Peace" is more aggressively reworked, and the best example of his band's flair for arrangements. Timothy Betts' wah-wah guitar honors the song's blaxploitation-era roots, and there's a long instrumental coda—not a random riff but a composed piece—that takes it to a more joyful peak.

The title track may be a one-riff song from Clifton's catalog, but

it's a heck of a riff—one that's as close to frat house rock 'n' roll as traditional zydeco. One of only three C.J. originals here, "Ridin' with Uncle Cleveland" is a nice slice-of-life song about a night

partying with the Chenier clan. Otherwise, the set is heavier than usual on familiar material so it doesn't provide many surprises. What it does do is kick butt.

—Brett Milano

