



Louisiana Bluegrass Musician

Don Wiley's music has undergone several changes during his career. His career began when he was eight years old playing guitar accompaniment to his father's fiddle. He would later take up Cajun music and finally settle into what he calls Louisiana Bluegrass. After his marriage, he left music to dedicate himself to family life, but in 1959, a call came out for help from the community to help raise money for a young person who needed heart surgery. Wiley played at charity events that brought in \$5,000 in about four weeks. That act of charity brought him back to music. Wiley has been an influence on the Central Louisiana scene for over 50 years, beginning with the group he formed at sixteen, The Carolina Playboys. This group was a popular band who played a 45-minute radio show five mornings a week on KVOB in Alexandria. Wiley recalls, "Back in the '40s, we were The Carolina Playboys, but only one of us was from Carolina, the bass player. Well, nobody would book you back then in the clubs hardly if you were from Louisiana. We were all from around Alexandria, but the club owners wanted traveling musicians from out of state, so we called ourselves The Carolina Playboys."

After Wiley's return to music, he formed a new band: Don Wiley and the Catahoula Playboys. Just three years later, Wiley and his partner of 31 years, J. C. Henderson, founded "The Catahoula Country Music Show." This stage show was aired on both KALB-TV of Alexandria and KNOE-TV of Monroe. Over 500 country music entertainers, including many Grand Ole Opry stars and Alexandria's Ruble Wright, appeared on the Catahoula Country Music Show. A thirteen-week television series was produced from this endeavor for a California company, and two record albums were released that helped spread the music of Don Wiley and the Catahoula Playboys across the nation.

In 1978, Wiley switched his musical style to bluegrass and formed another band, Don Wiley and Louisiana Bluegrass. Wiley explained, "I've always been partial to bluegrass. Lester Flatt was always my idol, so I went completely bluegrass in 1978." Though bluegrass is their primary style of music, Louisiana Bluegrass plays its own version of the music, and they play a lot of Cajun in other states, "... the crowd demands it," explains Wiley. Wiley and his band are determined to give their fans what they want—a great blend of bluegrass, Cajun, and country music.

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Pictured in the photograph above are, left to right, Gene King, Bill Landrum, Otis Roberts, Junior Trisler, Lawrence Roberts, and Don Wiley. The photograph includes members of the Catahoula Country Music Show. Other regulars on the show not pictured here were J.C. Henderson, Ruble Wright, and Bobby Dan Masses