Kershaw, Doug (1936-) Encyclopedia Article

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Contents

Kershaw, Doug (1936-) Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Kershaw, Doug (1936—).....3

Kershaw, Doug (1936—)

Doug Kershaw, from Tiel Ridge, on the Gulf Coast of Louisiana, was one of the first to popularize southwest Louisiana's Cajun sound, an infectious dance music characterized by fiddles and accordions as lead instruments. French is the language of most Cajun music—Hank Williams' "Jambalaya" is essentially an English lyric to the Cajun standard "Grand Texas," and Little Richard's "Keep a-Knockin" is an Anglicized rock 'n' roll version of "Tu Peut Coupez." Kershaw, however, sang in English from the beginning, and that gave him a quick in-road to a larger musical world. With his brother Rusty, he went to Nashville in the mid-1950s. They made several records together as "Rusty and Doug," culminating in Kershaw's breakout hit, "Louisiana Man," which reached number four on the country charts in 1961. "Louisiana Man" never reached the top 100 on the pop charts, but an appearance on Johnny Cash's hit television show made Kershaw a pop phenomenon, and his flamboyant fiddle style and stage presence (he favored velvet Edwardian suits) put him in demand as a solo act. He has recorded duets with Hank Williams, Jr., and Fats Domino, and in 1960, "Louisiana Man" became the first song broadcast back to earth from the moon during the Apollo 12 Mission.