Left-Hand Practice
by Arthur Metzler

I have noticed through the many years of my career as an accordionist, that most accordion players seem to favor the right-hand keyboard and many of them just play a simple left hand accompaniment when playing a solo or even when playing with a combo. I find that one can use the left hand bass to a much greater advantage if one would learn to voice the single bass notes on the left-hand side of the accordion. One should practice bass exercises and etudes for the left hand as well as the right hand melody.

Unfortunately, most accordion instruction books do not seem to have enough left-hand exercises and etude studies for the student to practice. To give you an example: instead of playing a samba, like "Tico Tico" in the left hand like a fast polka, I would play my left-hand bass like the following example.

I find that playing the bass this way is much more effective and a lot better for the ballroom dancers to dance. Otherwise, if you play it fast like a polka, you will have the dancers running around on the ballroom floor. One can really feel the rhythm when the bass is played in this manner.

A Little Cajun Delight
by Nick Ariondo

Here is a brief sample of a two-beat Cajun rhythm style, playing a bass-chord accompaniment in the left-hand with a rhythmic combination of 8th notes and 16th notes in the right hand. After listening to several different kinds of rhythms on various Cajun recordings, I thought this particular rhythm could be easily adapted to the accordion.

As you get used to it and you start feeling the rhythm within yourself as you play, things will begin to fall into place. Try not to place heavy accents on the downbeats (one and two), because it will tend to sound heavy and cumbersome. Feeling the upbeats as you play will make the music more flowing. Once you have the rhythmic feel under control, have someone play a solo along with your driving rhythmic background. Also, try a solo yourself (with the left-hand, bass-chord accompaniment) by applying the right-hand scale pattern for solos as written below.

Try not to add chromatic runs or go outside the scale pattern when soloing. Cajun music is based on specific scale patterns and rhythms, characteristic of the music. These scale patterns best fit the diatonic type of cajun accordions and by staying within this structure, the music will remain more authentic in style. Stay away from alternate chords and notes other than a passing tone when needed. Have fun with it!