



Anita Oubre:

A Cultural Ambassador for New Orleans

Breakthru Media Staff Report

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MANNY URBAN

New Orleans is known worldwide as a city whose people and visitors love to party and have fun. Dozens of festivals, parades and other festive events that happen frequently here are proof of that, and this is where Anita Matamoros Oubre is in her element.

COVER STORY

A hospitality industry employee by profession, Anita is an entertainer by choice, consistent with her bubbly, outgoing, perpetually cheerful personality. As a member of three women's dance clubs, she loves to parade in colorful costumes and twirl decorated umbrellas – most of which she designs and decorates herself – especially during Mardi Gras and other festive annual events.

“I’m a New Orleans gal through and through and this is what I love doing,” Anita proudly proclaimed. “When we’re out on the parade route you can see the

joy. You can feel it. People are cheering for us on both sides of the streets. They’re having a good time and yelling ‘Go girl!’ and they’re trying to mimic our moves. They’re dancing to the music and everybody’s in a real happy, euphoric place.”

Anita is excited to get in the swing of the Carnival Season. To kick off 2024, she performed with The Lady & Men Rollers Social Aid and Pleasure Club. Their annual second line was held on New Year’s Eve.

Hosted by JoAnne Burak the club’s parade has started on St. Charles Avenue for the last few years and it follows what



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they call a traditional uptown route through the neighborhoods. “Coming out of that beautiful home is amazing. The people on the street joke that women are coming out of the mansion’s windows and doors and we literally do,” laughed Anita.

The theme was “Rolling into New Year’s Eve Carnival Style.” The women were adorned in purple, green and gold sequined suits and they carried intricately decorated fans in the shape of a Mardi Gras mask. “It was so much fun to hold this giant mask in front of my face as I came dancing out that door,” Anita said. “The crowds just went wild as they figured out who each of us was behind our masks. It was a most joyous day as we came together after a year of planning and finally took it to the street.

“It’s such a fabulous, exuberant release for me and my sister club members as we dance on our parade day,” Anita continued. “Our band, ‘Da’ Truth’ is amazing. We feel invincible and our president, Miss Linda ‘The Yakamein Lady’ Green is so proud of her legacy and her club.”

Coming off a festive weekend bringing in Kings’ Day, Anita was part of the planning committee for the annual Baby Doll Sisterhood Mardi Gras Ball that was held at Miracles Hall on the night of the Epiphany (January 6). Her group is known as the Mahogany Blue Baby Dolls.

“It was beautiful to see all the Baby Dolls in their gowns ready to bring in the season,” Anita said. “Next we will celebrate



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our annual Blessing of the Street where we welcome new Dolls into the community and come together in fellowship and prayer for a safe season.”

Anita has been busy getting ready for the rest of the parades in which she will participate. At last count she’s slated to dance in eight parades for the 2024 Carnival Season. “Carnival is my favorite time of year,” she said. “I love not only the revelry but the preparation. It is a marathon getting costumes together, planning the logistics and all the while working a fulltime job on the side,” she added.

Reflecting on what she termed “a whirlwind year” in 2023, Anita was crowned Queen of two Mardi Gras clubs. She rode in the *krewe*delusion parade in a handmade, wooden-carved Baby Doll carriage as the Baby Doll Queen and she also reigned as one of the “Five Queens of New Orleans”



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for the Krewe of Stars.

“Being recognized by my sister Baby Dolls was everything to me,” Anita proudly stated. “There is no feeling to match riding through the night on this ridiculous carriage with a magnificent crown on my head. The love from the crowd was intoxicating. People were shouting my name over and over again and just showering me with small gifts and affection.”

On January 27, at the next *krewe*delusion parade, Anita will crown her successor, reflecting on her one-year reign as “an honor I will cherish for a lifetime.”

Also commenting on her honor from the Krewe of Stars, she said, “The group is a delightful bunch of fun-loving people who celebrate the ‘Star’ in every one of their members. Captains Carl Mack and Marshall Harris are two amazing gentlemen whose company I adore, and to reign with four other legendary New Orleans icons was over-the-top fun.”

In addition to Mardi Gras parades, Anita and the groups she belongs to also perform for festivals, conventions, Carnival balls, private parties and for seniors at facilities for the elderly. They also do charitable work, sponsoring or participating in drives to collect supplies for local schools. In addition, they help out with donations and food to families of members who have lost loved ones.

“All of these clubs that I’m involved in are not only dance-based, they’re also sisterhoods,” Anita explained. “The community service is what’s really at the heart of each one of them.”

With an avid love for dance Anita decided to try something new recently.

She started attending belly dance workshops with local instructor Karla Marie Cochran. Although she initially felt out of her comfort zone, she discovered that this form of dance was not only intriguing but educational.

“My instructor, Karlita, is the total package,” Anita explained. “I’m learning all about the history of where the dance comes from, and about the people and the music. The women in our class all celebrate one another. We come in every size and shape. One of our early lessons was body positivity; learning to love our bellies and hips and the proper rhythm in which to move them. Being able to embrace our feminine curves has been so empowering.”

Anita ended up being hooked on the classes and began performing with the Shimmy Shakti troupe.

“Dance is such a beautiful art form,” Anita said, emphasizing that she is a season subscriber to the New Orleans Ballet Association. “And when I’m dancing myself it gives me life; it gives me joy. It makes me feel really happy and I love sharing that joy with others.”

Anita is also a contributing feature writer for Breakthru Media magazine, and she has enjoyed her four-year tenure with the publication. “Making connections with people in the community is so rewarding,” she noted.

“As a journalist, I love learning about all the wonderful people I have the pleasure of writing about. New Orleans is full of so many talented, creative people and I get to talk on an intimate level with some amazing personalities,” Anita said. “Getting next to people on that level is pretty sensational.”