

# Enjoying A Stellar Career:



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL BOUDREAUX

## Paul Boudreaux reflects on his music & art

*By Anita Oubre*

For some artists music comes naturally. These artists are people who have not had any formal training, but have a passion for music and/or another talent that cannot be taught. Paul Boudreaux is one of those people, a self-taught bass player, singer, songwriter, producer, bandleader and visual artist.

As a child growing up in uptown New Orleans, Paul was exposed to music at an early age. His family lived a few doors down from the legendary Dew Drop Inn which is acknowledged to be one of the most important and influential clubs in the evolution of Rhythm & Blues in New Orleans. It was during those times that the children would sneak a chance to run into the bar and put their ear up to the jukebox. It was a comforting sound that came out of that impressive machine, Paul would reminisce many years later during this interview.

A young Paul spent his time before and after school watching in awe as the musicians from different bands went into the lounge to rehearse. He was mesmerized each night as he fell asleep listening to the musical grooves coming in through his window.

"I couldn't wait to grow up so I could be a part of that bar," recalled Paul. "It was a different time; people were friendly and uptown was a unique place to be." Paul remembers LaSalle Street as bustling with fancy cars pulling up in front of the Dew Drop and musical icons like Count Basie and Ray Charles coming and going.

As a teen Paul dabbled with the guitar casually with friends. He attended Booker T. Washington High School and, after completing his studies, he went into the U.S. Army. It was on a memorable day in 1965 on an Army base in Germany that he purchased a bass guitar from a fellow serviceman who was leaving town. "He tried to sell me the bass for a hundred dollars. I told him all I had was fifty and the rest is history," said Paul.

The bass consumed Paul's free time with studying the instrument and practicing. He learned a few scales and how chord changes were structured. From there he purchased some records and taught himself how to play. Within a short period of time not only was Paul hooked on the instrument, he was "in love with it."

By that time he felt confident enough to form a band with some fellow servicemen. They called themselves the Bourbons. They were such a hit that they were invited to entertain the troops at service clubs throughout Germany. Upon his release Paul had transformed into a professional gig-playing musician. "I went into the service a regular guy and came out a musician," he said.

After his discharge from the army, he continued to pursue music. His aunt ran The Shadowland nightclub on Washington Avenue and he was asked to sit in a few times when other musicians didn't show up. This led to a full-time job on the music scene and Paul was introduced to many people in the business.

It was the late 1960s and the sound of an era was in full swing. Irma Thomas played a weekly gig at the club and Lee Dorsey, Johnny Adams, James Rivers, George Porter and Leo Nocentelli were all regulars. "It was a place where you could be around some really good musicians and get booked for gigs," said Paul.

Also around this time Paul started playing as part of a trio with his friends, drummer Bobby Williams and guitarist Louis Clark. They recorded "Boogaloo Mardi Gras" which was produced by the legendary Eddie Bo for Capitol Records. From 1968 to 1970 the trio performed as Bo's rhythm section on some of his early recordings. He also recorded with Johnny Adams, Luther Ingram, Johnny Taylor, James Rivers and Isaac Hayes.

"That was truly a great experience," said Paul. "Then I was lucky to meet and eventually go on the road with R&B singer Joe Simon. I traveled all over to places like Chicago, Atlanta and Detroit. I was able to see the world as a young musician," Paul added. He was recording at places like the Otis Redding studio and playing the Apollo theatre.

"I kept thinking, wow, this is the same stage James Brown performed on," said Paul. Within

a few months he proved himself and became leader. It was his job to keep the band together and make sure everyone showed up.

However, while Paul learning the ins and outs of a doing shows on the road he also learned how competitive it was. The nightly repetition and the boredom between shows took a toll on him, he admitted, noting that it was not in his long-term plans. "I wanted a wife, a dog and a house," said Paul. So he settled down in his hometown after he met the love of his life, his wife Phyllis, in 1972. They have been together ever since and she has gone on to become a widely known community leader as a publicist, minister, author and consultant.

Over his long musical career, Paul has performed with Irma Thomas for many years, had a regular weekly gig at The Chandelier with The Music Factory Band. He also played in a band called Renegade with The Neville Brothers and was part of a house band called Sweet Poison with Aaron Neville, Johnny Adams and Willie West.

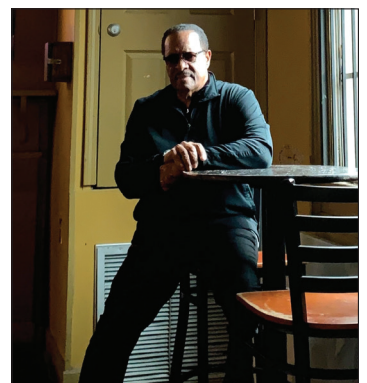
"I was honored to sit in with the Meters from time to time," he said. "I learned so much from all those great artists - Bo, Art, Leo, George, Aaron and others."

Paul has also written and produced music for The Las Vegas Connection band, Willie West and his current band the Blues Krewe. He has performed with them on Bourbon Street and they had regular gigs at the La Strada club and Rhythms. He continues find inspiration each day and enjoys writing daily.

"Playing to a different crowd every night in a professionally run club with a huge stage and great lighting was everything a musician could ask for," said Paul. "We were paid right, we made good tips. It was the best gig any band could ask for because the world came to us each night. Not only did we play music but we performed routines and put on a show," said Paul.

Bourbon Street continues to be a special place for Paul to perform. He can be found three nights a week at the Funky 544 club.

An equally talented fine artist, Paul enjoys painting beautifully realistic portraits for friends and family. He has painted pictures of other musicians he knows, including Irma Thomas,



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Aaron Neville and many more, plus dogs and outdoor scenes in City Park and elsewhere around New Orleans. Samples of his work can be viewed on his Facebook page. "It's my way of sharing what's around us and paying tribute to those who help make our city what it is," he stated.

But music is and will continue to be his first love, "Music has always been joyous and fulfilling to me," Paul declared. "The joy of music is in my soul and that feeling has never left me since I was a child resting my head on the side of the jukebox."

