



From the 7th Ward to Center Stage:

Jordan James Bates, the Fresh Prince of the French Quarter

By Kimmie Tubre

In a city where nearly every street corner hums with music and memory, there's a new talent rising from the heart of New Orleans. This talent carries both the promise of youth and the weight of legacy. His name is Jordan James Bates, and if you haven't heard it yet, just wait. You will!

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Anthony Bean and Jordan James Bates

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANTHONY BEAN

Jordan's story is as much a part of New Orleans as the oak trees lining Esplanade Avenue in his childhood neighborhood. "I was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, in the historic 7th Ward," Jordan shares with pride. "This city raised me."

Jordan grew up as the middle child of three boys. His older brother Damond is now 20, and his younger brother Cedrick is 9. Like many kids, he was captivated by the world of movies, but for him, the magic of Toy Story was everything. So much so that every Halloween, until the age of nine, he proudly dressed up as Woody, the cowboy who sparked his imagination.

Now, Jordan uses that vivid imagination to help when he is in character on a stage. The very busy 17 year old straddles two worlds. He's a senior at George Washington Carver High School where he gains book knowledge, and a theater student at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA) where he is able to delve into his creative side. "Balancing both schools has taught me discipline and time management," said Jordan who admits that, though his schedule is jam-packed, his focus on his career and goals is unshakable.

"I stay on top of my academic responsibilities and make sure that those assignments never pile up and I still maintain a 4.0 GPA," he added. "It's not



Jordan James Bates and Anthony Bean

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANTHONY BEAN

always easy, but it's all part of the grind and I love it."

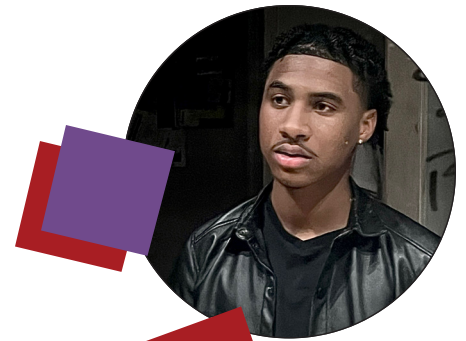
Jordan's path to the stage wasn't always so clear. In fact, it took a middle school teacher, Ms. Butler, to help him find it.

"She told me, 'You're going to be an actor,'" he recalls. "Then she paid for me to attend the Anthony Bean Community Theater's summer camp. I truly believe God used her as a vessel to reveal my purpose."

That summer changed everything. After a monologue audition earned him a personal audience with the legendary Anthony Bean, Jordan took the stage in front of the entire camp.

"When I finished, the room went completely still," he remembers. "Then Mr. Bean said, 'That was excellent. You're already off to a good start, and I see potential.' I later found out he rarely gives compliments like that."

From then on, it was theater, theater, theater. Mr. Bean became more than a mentor for Jordan: he became what he lovingly calls a "bonus father." And now, Jordan hopes to someday walk in his footsteps as a director, producer and entrepreneur.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF
JORDAN JAMES BATES



He's well on his way. He's already appeared in television productions like "Secrets of Sulphur Springs," "Heart of a Lion," and ABC's "Teen Talk." But, for Jordan, the heart of his work still lives on the stage.

"Acting for stage and acting for film are two very different worlds," he explains with a grin. "On stage, every movement has to be intentional and projected outward to reach the back row. Film, on the other hand, is intimate. You have to bring it all in, because the camera catches everything."

Among the roles he's taken on, there is one that deeply resonated with his personal experiences and that was the role of Malcolm X in "El Hajj Malik El Shabazz" by the late Norbert R. Davidson. For Jordan, stepping into the shoes of such a towering



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historical figure was transformative.

“That role taught me about strength, resilience, and the power of Black history and identity,” he reflects. “It changed the way I saw myself and my place in the world.”

On August 30, 2025 Jordan played the role of Aikeem in “504,” a youth hip-hop musical at the historic Orpheum Theater. This role is deeply personal for him. The show, written and directed by Anthony Bean, tells the story of young New Orleanians rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina. It’s a return to the very production that marked Jordan’s theatrical debut back in 2019.

“Back then, in 2019, I played Li’l Man, a boy determined to help rebuild the city,” he says. “Now, in ‘504,’ I’m playing Aikeem, a leader organizing a concert to give a voice to our youth. It’s full circle for me. Aikeem is a lot like myself. He is ambitious, driven, and passionate about New Orleans.”

Indeed, Jordan’s connection to this city is more than just a setting. Though he now lives in the French Quarter with his aunt and uncle, he jokes, “Some people call me the Fresh Prince of the French Quarter and I can’t say they’re wrong! #RealLifeFreshPrince.”

Like any good prince, Jordan understands

the weight of responsibility, especially as a young Black actor in a city with such a rich cultural and theatrical heritage.

“For me, acting is about telling stories that matter and stories that reflect the world I live in and the people I come from,” he says. “Being a young Black actor carries a special responsibility. I bring truth, depth, and dignity to every role I take on.”

His guiding light? These words of the late, great Black playwright August Wilson:

“Confront the dark parts of yourself, and work to banish them with illumination and forgiveness. Your willingness to wrestle with your demons will cause your angels to sing.”

“I try to bring my whole self to every character and always honor the voices of those who came before me,” Jordan explained.

Looking ahead, Jordan is dreaming big and working even bigger. He hopes to attend a top arts conservatory that will allow him to grow, not just as a performer, but as a creator and leader in the arts.

“I want to explore every facet of theater and entertainment, from performance to production,” he says. “My long-term goal is to run my own theater and film production company.”

When asked the question, “Where do you see yourself in five to ten years?” Jordan responded by saying, “I see myself thriving as a successful actor and entrepreneur,” he continued. “I want to create art that makes an impact. I want to build a legacy.”

As New Orleans continues to inspire and shape Jordan’s journey, there’s little doubt the city will one day look back and proudly say, “We knew him when.”

Jordan Bates is the future of the New Orleans theatrical scene. He is a dynamic actor, skilled storyteller, and a positive light for the city that raised him. And he’s just getting started.

“Eat, sleep, theater, repeat,” Jordan says with a smile. And there’s no doubt that he’ll be saying it for years to come.



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