

Ricky B: Making Bounce Music and Serving the New Orleans Community

By Anita Oubre

Generations
of New
Orleanians
were raised

in the government-subsidized housing developments scattered throughout the city, most of which no longer stand. It was in these housing developments that the sounds of a distinctly New Orleans flavor of hip-hop music, known as “bounce,” are said to have emerged in the late 1980s.

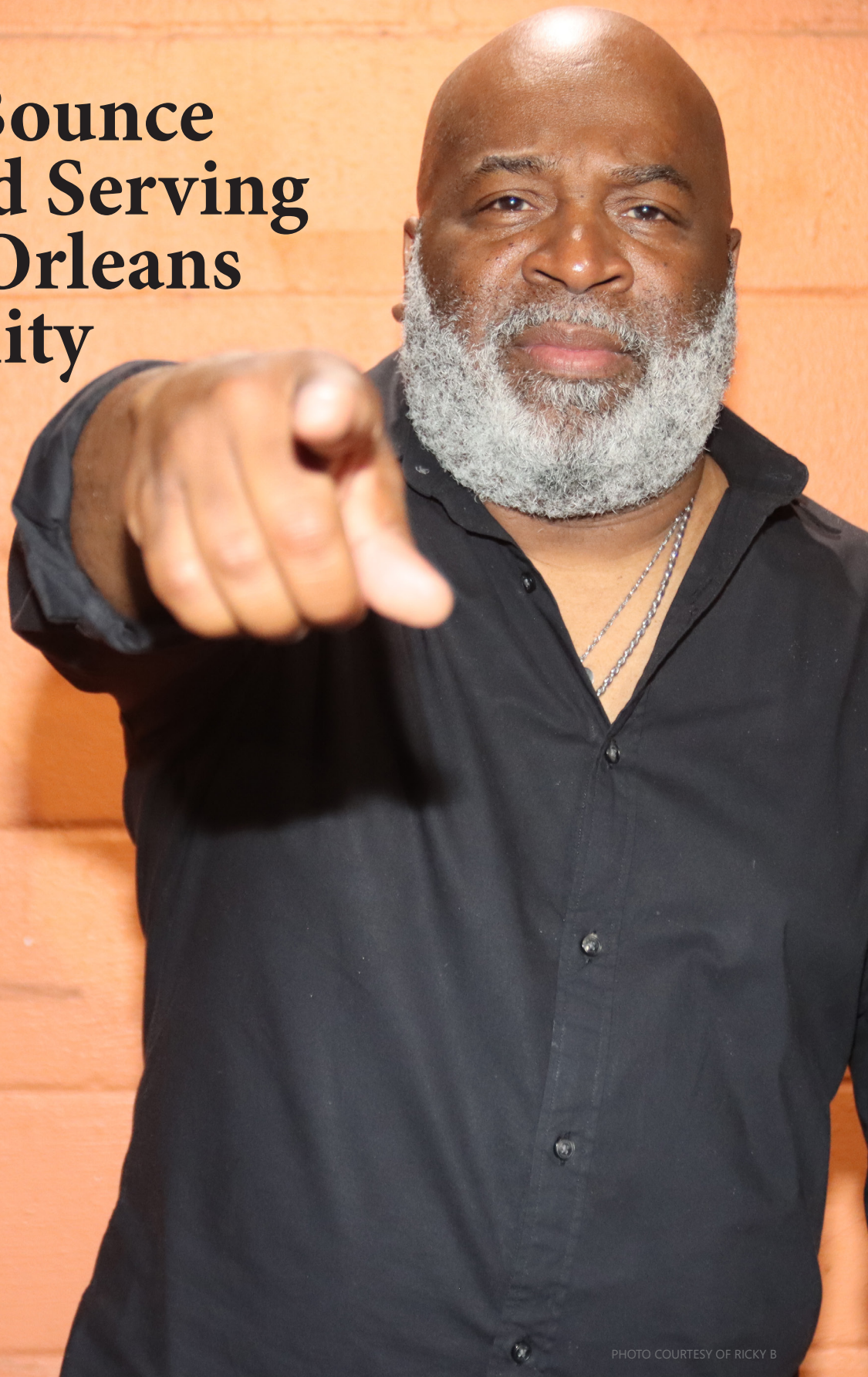


PHOTO COURTESY OF RICKY B

One of the pioneers of the bounce style was Ricky “Ricky B” Bickham, who was raised in the St. Bernard housing development. His 1994 hit record, “Shake for ya Hood,” is a New Orleans bounce classic that remains popular to this day and is widely recognized as an anthem of that era.

The song, Ricky emphasized, “spoke to the realities of what was taking place on the streets of New Orleans” at a time when the city was experiencing a record number of violent crimes. Ricky’s music has proven timeless, as it was 32 years ago, and it is still highly requested at all types of gatherings.

Since that time, Ricky has released many other singles and CDs, keeping his name and music in the public eye. He is equally as passionate about his foundation, RickyB for LYFE (Lifting Youth & Family Empowerment), where he gives back to the community by supporting loved ones of those incarcerated. The foundation assists families in making visitation possible to keep those relationships intact.

Ricky is the middle child of three sons. His mother, Barbara Bickham, was a strong, independent, and resilient woman who did her best to raise her children. “She was a single mother who worked two jobs and even attended school when we were younger, but we did not want for anything,” Ricky recalls. She was devoted to her sons



and is truly the inspiration behind their mission of giving back.

Ricky attended Edward H. Phillips for both elementary and junior high and then moved on to John McDonogh High School, where the artist known as “Ricky B” was born.

“The fellas used to freestyle in the men’s restroom, and I was a bystander, and one day Bigalow, who later became my business partner, asked me to say a little something, so I jumped in the circle and started spitting, then everybody was like, ‘you got it’ After that I started putting my penmanship to work and I’ve been writing ever since.”

In school, Ricky realized that students from all over the city attended John McDonogh, but they shared some of the same experiences. They enjoyed the marching bands, the pep rallies, and hanging out, having a good time together. They also shared the grim reality of witnessing violence on a frequent basis in their neighborhoods, which is often expressed in the lyrics of songs in the bounce genre.

As defined by Wikipedia, “Bounce is characterized by call-and-response-style party and Mardi Gras Indian chants and dance call-outs that are frequently hypersexual and controversial.” The rapid-fire lyrics are backed up by synthesized instrumentation and drumbeats and often feature backup vocalists.

“In the beginning, it wasn’t really my style of rapping,” Ricky explained. “But we had that beat, a sample of the Staple Singers’ song ‘I’ll Take You There’ with a hook, and the people loved it. It spoke to the realities of what was taking place on the streets of New Orleans,” he emphasized.

Like jazz, bounce was born in New Orleans, and Ricky is passionate about taking it to the stage. He’s performed across the Gulf Coast region, as well as in Chicago and Richmond, Virginia. “My highlight to date is performing at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival,” Ricky stated.

“I thrive in those moments,” he said. “My drive is to be an attraction to showcase the music and culture of New Orleans. Other



areas of the country need to see that our music consists of all elements – jazz, hip hop, brass, bounce, Black masking Indians, as well as classical.

Today, Ricky B is recognized by a generation of fans and is always humbled by the love he receives. Contributing to the culture and setting standards for what he believes about music is what he strives for. Selecting the right words is just as important as selecting the beat because the message can have an impact.

“I don’t think anyone who never performed would understand the courage it takes and the sacrifice that’s made to be in front of so many people, “but I love performing. I love how it feels to be in front of a mass of people, giving them what they want,” Ricky explained.

Fondly recalling the music he heard as he was growing up, he noted, “Listening to Frankie Beverly and Maze, the mood would just lighten. The same with Luther Vandross, the Jackson Five, and the Staple Singers. My mother would clean the house and have that kind of music playing”.

Ricky said, “I listened to The Sugar Hill Gang and LL Cool J, but when NWA hit the scene, a light went off, the truth about the streets, love, and hip-hop, I knew for sure I had a lane to ride in.”

Looking back on an eventful and exciting career, Ricky appreciates the opportunity



Ricky & Corey Bickham
PHOTO BY TENISHA SLAUGHTER

to have performed at Lil Wayne’s Lil Weezyana Fest, which takes place every summer in Champions Square to celebrate New Orleans artists.

“It was so great to see what they were doing, and I felt like I belonged on the stage that night, and over the years leading up to it, I earned my right to be there.”

Discussing his foundation and the work it does, Ricky said, “It is so important for families to keep relationships intact, especially when they are incarcerated. I know firsthand how hard it is to be hours away from a loved one. My vision is for this to be



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICKY B



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RICKY B



a community mission. I’d like to purchase a van and have transportation companies involved in making this happen, but there’s still work to be done.”

Every year in December, his foundation, with his brothers, #barbarasboyz, set up on the corner of Sere and Gibson streets in Columbia Parc, formerly the St Bernard Project, for their holiday food giveaway. They generously provide 100 hams and turkeys, with fixings, to families so they can enjoy a nice meal during the holiday. That location was selected because it was the last place Ricky’s mother lived before she passed.

Another event the LYFE Foundation hosts is in May, coinciding with Mother’s Day. They named it “Memories of Mothers” (MOMS) Brunch, where they serve brunch to 75 people who have lost their mothers. “It’s a room full of love, old memories, and newly created ones with live entertainment and great food,” Ricky explained.

In the summer, the foundation partners with local churches and other nonprofit foundations in the community for a back-to-school giveaway. Backpacks filled with school supplies are provided.

His inspiration comes from the community and what he witnesses on a daily basis. As he states, “I hear what’s going on in the world and look at how it impacts

society; what makes us happy or sad, what makes us grow, what is the future going to be? There is always a positive side, and that is what I want to make songs about. Tap into me and stay tuned #onelove.”

For more information on bookings, please visit: www.legendsent.com. To support or become a sponsor with The RickyB for LYFE Foundation, please email [rickyb@](mailto:rickyb@legendsent.com)

legendsent.com. You can also follow RickyB504 on Facebook and on Instagram @Rickbeeda_mf1. Now available on all streaming platforms is “Talk Like It.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICKY B



PHOTO BY BLIPTHEFLYERMANN AKA SHOT BY BLIP