

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2022

CASHBOX

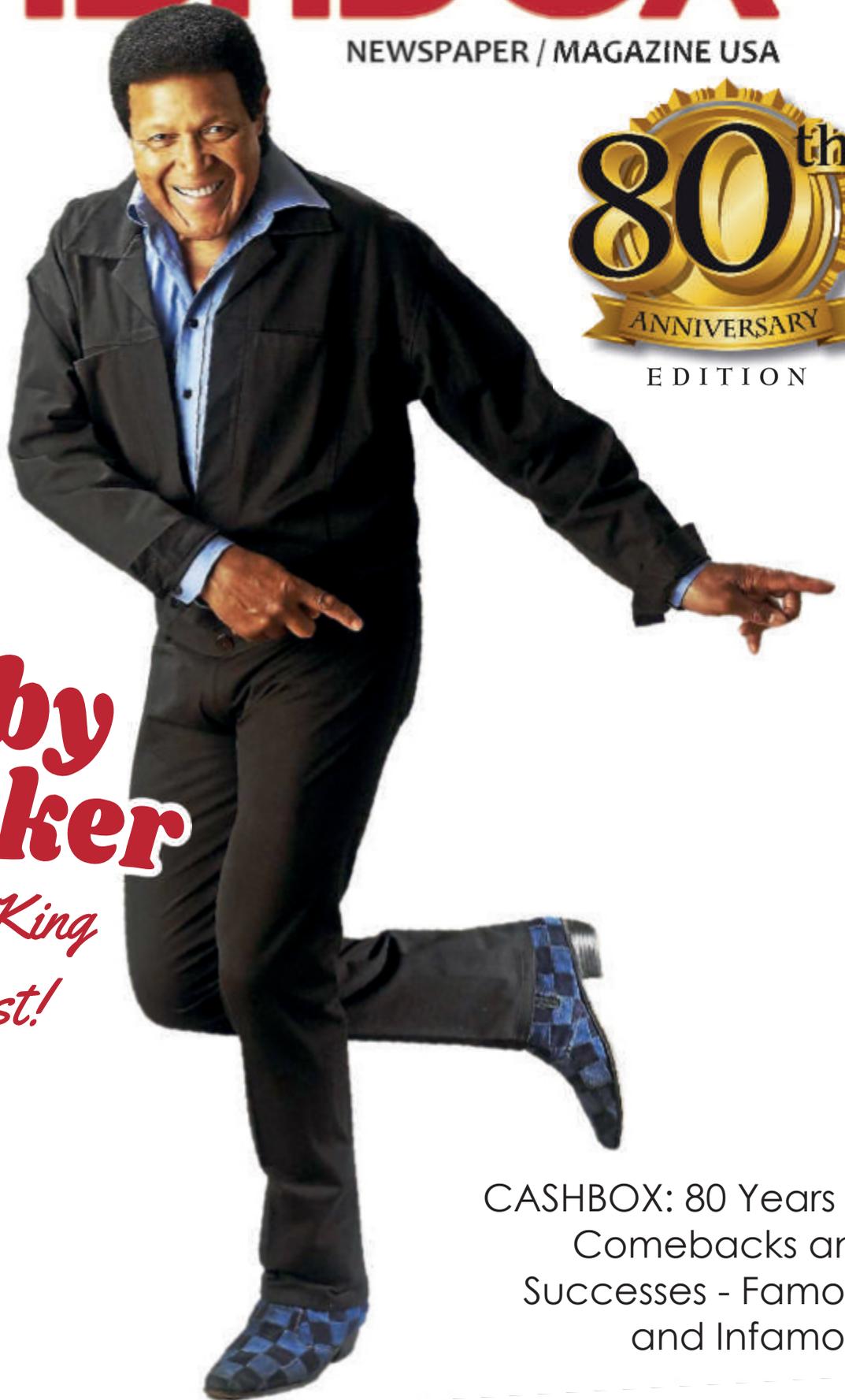
NEWSPAPER / MAGAZINE USA



EDITION

***chubby
checker***

*Still the King
of Twist!*



CASHBOX: 80 Years of
Comebacks and
Successes - Famous
and Infamous

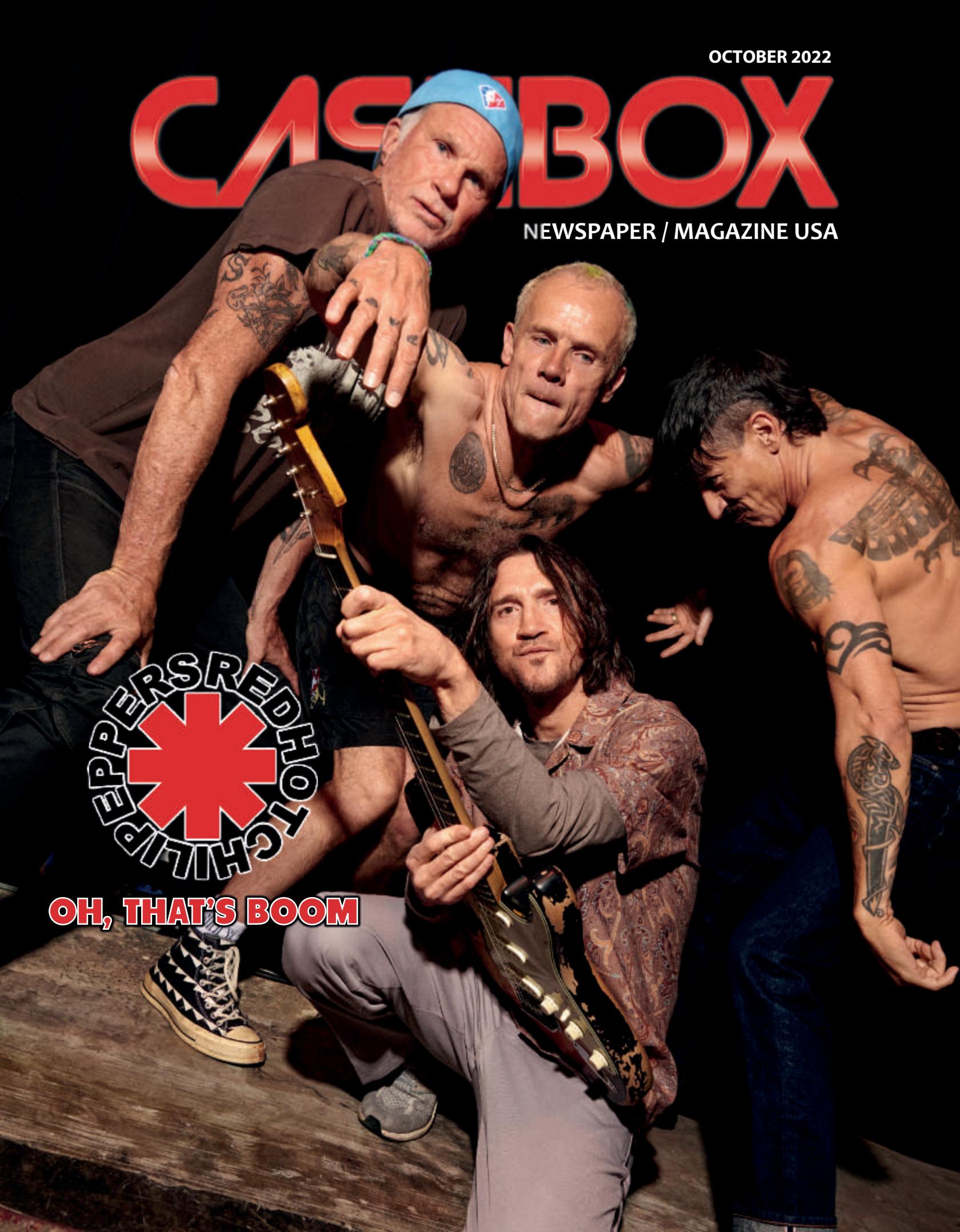
OCTOBER 2022

CASINO BOX

NEWSPAPER / MAGAZINE USA



OH, THAT'S BOOM



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CASHBOX

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Administrative Office and Advertising
17911 Hwy 96 • Kennedy, AL 35574
Phone: 205-662-4826 / Fax: 205-596-4375
Email: randall@wildsandassociates.com
www.cashboxmagazine.org
www.usmusicchartsmagazine.com

SUBSCRIPTION

www.cashboxmagazine.org

OWNERS

BRUCE ELROD / CHRIS ELROD / RANDALL WILDS

BUSINESS OPERATIONS / C.O.O.

RANDALL WILDS

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

RACHEL HODGES

MANAGING EDITOR

JOHN LANIER

ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR

DEBORAH BALILES

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

ROBIN TANNER

ART DIRECTOR

CHRISTINE SCOTT

CASHBOX CANADA

SANDY GRAHAM

MARKETING CONSULTANT

TOMMY SMITH

CASHBOX ARCHIVES

RANDY PRICE

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Lady J Huston

SOUL

By Deborah Baliles

That's How the Lady Does It!

Beginning life as a child prodigy, by weaving together a music virtuoso with a well-read scholar, takes a determination worthy of respect and recognition. It takes an extraordinary kind of lady, a lady known as Lady J Huston.

Lady J was born into the music of St. Louis, Missouri. Her mother, Loyce Pickens Huston had a fabulous contralto voice, compared only to Sarah Vaughan. Mother was popular on the St. Louis music scene, a song stylist covering Jazz, Blues, Pop, and Gospel music. Being the only girl of five children, Lady J would cling to mother, accompanying her to rehearsals and shows. Loyce hit the record charts in the mid-1960s. Both Loyce and Lady J have a preserved catalog of music, videos, memorabilia, family records, and other archival collections in the Washington University Library Archives, St. Louis, as well as in the Missouri History Museum.

The weaving had already begun with a young Lady J playing her first instrument in kindergarten, the triangle. She was dead-serious about hitting all the right dings in the school

concert. Excelling had already begun as well. Fast forward the years to fourth grade, classroom teacher, Ms. Helen Jones-Imes would introduce Lady J to the flutophone. Ms. Jones-Imes, a pianist, taught Lady J to read notes.

Kindergarten would embrace other moments in the sun. One, the role of Mary in the school Christmas play. "I will never forget," she says. "My seamstress mother took a blue, silky head scarf and made it into a robe. Me and my beautiful robe stood staring down on a white Baby Jesus. That was an interesting concept to this little kid." Two, Lady J made the occasional TV appearance on a dance show called The Black Circle Hour (the local version of Soul Train). With cousin David Williams producing, many days would be playing hooky from school, catching a bus, and hoping to get picked to join in the dancing, "I was always selected." This in no

way hindered Lady J in school. She was a good student academically and saw nothing wrong with being called the “teacher’s pet.”

She would go on to read and play drum music, playing single snare, tenor drum, and marching in parades. A very good dancer, Lady J would perform with her mother and her mother’s twin sister, Joyce Pickens Coffey, a comedian. Performing in grade and high school, competing in talent shows; winning and placing provided another source of income for the family.

Seems her aunt was not the only family comedian. Lady J played a role in a high school play, something about a Gospel singer. Hitting the stage with a big hair wig, overdone makeup, and enhanced breasts brought on quite the laughter. That laughter would turn into a standing ovation when Lady J opened her mouth to sing.

Joining the high school concert choir, the director, Walter Young placed Lady J in the alto section, then she was moved to the tenor section. Hearing Lady J goofing off singing high notes, “He switched me to 2nd soprano. I thought he was nuts. My youngest brother and I would compete squealing high notes, but I never sang to it. My voice was cracking, but the director insisted that I continue, even providing personal training after school. Low and behold, my high vocal range manifested into a powerful and beautiful sound.”

Inspired by a Louis Armstrong movie, Lady J picked up the trumpet. Further inspired by Miles Davis, Chuck Mangione, Herb Alpert, and Hugh Masekela, all the while relentlessly practicing, no less would be expected than Lady J surpassing all other students. By the next year, she was the lead trumpeter and choreographer in the high school band and performing in Drum and Bugle Corps. What a thrill marching alongside Tony Randall, as the lead trumpeter in *The Music Man*, St. Louis Municipal Opera House. Singing in church, she attempted to include the trumpet, but that took a bit of transitioning from Classical to Gospel music.

As undeniably talented on the trumpet as she was, there were still uncomfortable confrontations from men who felt threatened, intimidated, or whatever playing alongside her. Being the youngest and only female musician (especially on the trumpet) left the insecurities of others, well, hanging out. We all know that the trumpet is predominantly a male instrument, right? It took Lady J to prove otherwise.

Lady J graduated valedictorian at seventeen, voted the most talented female student, receiving academic and music scholarships to the University of Kansas (Lawrence), and Howard University (Washington D.C.). She majored in music theory/composition, with minors in trumpet, voice, and piano. A young Joyce had grown up, and was coming into her own, soon to become, Lady J.

Now eighteen-years-old, following her sophomore year in college, Lady took a hiatus to perform in St. Louis with

Johnnie Johnson (Father of Rock ‘n Roll pianist for Chuck Berry). She would accept a trumpeter and opening act tour with Blues legend, Albert King. “Mr. King fired a lot of musicians. So, I started charting the music to save time, while new members would play the show. I became the horn section leader, and eventually, music director.”

Lady J experienced wonderful opportunities during the King touring – playing the Apollo Theater, filming a Dick Clark special, filming a PBS TV show, and performing on platforms with Blues stars, B.B. King, Robert Cray, Millie Jackson, John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, Albert Collins, Etta James, Bobby Blue Bland, and KoKo Taylor. Many of her career influences are, familiar greats the likes of Mavis Staples, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight, and cousin, soul-sensation, Ms. Jody.



After the final touring with King, Lady J would find herself at Howard University receiving honors and on the Dean’s List. She recorded an album with the university’s Jazz ensemble, doing shows with Lionel Hampton and Blues pioneer, Alberta Hunter. While in D.C., she performed a show with trumpet superstar, Donald Byrd as well as sit in with two music idols, Dizzy Gillespie and Freddie Hubbard. Too, she was a member of the GoGo music band, D’Shiya, opening for Run-DMC and Pieces of a Dream.

Relocating to Los Angeles, California, partnering with Johnny Stewart, he and Lady J formed the band, Johnny & Joyce & The Choice Band. (Johnny’s brother, Billy Stewart was an R&B star, whose career tragically ended in a car crash,

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<<< *Lady J...continued from page 171*

along with members of his band. Johnny and Lady J would include a tribute around his music.) The Choice Band opened for national acts in the LA area.

Additionally, Lady J would manage to weave in a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Redlands, California.



The Lady J Huston Show

Even so, seeking a faster music career path, Las Vegas, Nevada seemed to be an ideal location. There, Lady J fell in love with the lights of the entertainment mecca, calling it home for the next twenty-five years. Sidelining, Johnny began touring with Bill Pinkney's Original Drifters. When in Vegas, Lady J also joined Johnny performing with the Drifters. Johnny and Lady J would ultimately part ways.

Lady J continued playing in bands, landing a one-woman show at the Fitzgerald's Casino, using the billing and her new stage name, "Lady J Huston." It wasn't long before she was asked to form a Blues band to perform at the #1 Blues club in Las Vegas, The Sand Dollar, Blues Room. Now performing as Lady J Huston & The Fireballs! A most successful band would win many Blues awards.

More from Las Vegas, Lady J closed shows for Gary Lewis and Fabian and performed on the finale show of America's Got Talent with the Audition All-Stars cast. Performing in major hotels and casinos, headlining music festivals, in night clubs, on TV, appearing in magazines and newspapers, little wonder Lady J reigned as the Las Vegas Queen of Blues for many years, and until her departure.

Parallel with a flourishing Vegas music career, for twenty years, Lady J's days were spent working for the Department of Energy (Bechtel) Nuclear Waste Repository. Days had a database and website administrator, systems analyst, and project control engineer. Working on multiple projects and

diversity programs earned her a collection of over thirty employee awards and recognitions. Nights had an amazing performing artist.

Returning to St. Louis, Lady J fell right back into the excellent music niche. Her first show debuted at the National Blues Museum, where she continues to perform. In 1982, she wrote an eighteen-piece big band composition, Hide-Away. The piece finally came into fruition (2018) with the Jazz Edge Orchestra on the St. Louis Blues Society's compilation album of local Blues artists, performed with Grammy winner, Bobby Rush, and Ikette, Robbie Montgomery of Sweetie Pie's.

In 2021, Lady J performed the National Anthem for the opening of a Wynonna Judd show. "She complimented me on my glittery eyelashes, then surprised me with an autographed container of her new eyelashes!"

"Rewards in my career come from people expressing joy in my music. Hearing that they have found inspiration, have stress relieved, seeing great big smiles, and even sometimes tears; it uplifts my heart so. Here I find the motivation, the strength that I need to continue the calling God

has blessed me with." This lady's roll of rewards is staggering. Blessed indeed, in just the few mentioned below.

Lady J was featured in the book, Distinguished Women & Men of Southern NV (2002), published in Marquis Biographies for Who's Who in Finance & Business in America, American Women, and World. She was the recipient of The Barbara O'Rourke Award, Fibromyalgia/Chronic Fatigue Support Group Celebrity Spokesperson (2006). The years 2009-2012 would harvest BMA (Black Music Association) awards, times over – Best Blues Performer and Best Blues Band. The ECE (Entertainment Consumer's Exchange, Inc.) years of 2011-2013 would produce, times over – Excellence in Entertainment, Blues Artist of the Year, Blues Band of the Year; Lady J Huston & The Fireballs were enshrined into The Fan's Entertainment Hall of Fame. Other accolades take in Body and Soul Urban Oasis President's Award (2011), St. Louis (O'Fallon) National Society Daughters of the American Revolution Women in the Arts (2018), winner (2021) National Blues Museum's songwriting competition, Corona You Make Me Sick!, and currently (2022) featured in their exhibit for COVID-19 awareness, in support of the African American community, Pandemic Blues. Lastly, Hide-Away came in semi-finalist in the International Songwriting Competition (2021).

Continued on page 176 >>>

Things have not always been graceful roses and beautiful music. Rather, Lady J has lived a life, often unraveling to the point of breaking. It takes a lady to pretend that all is well, performing her heart out, all the while gathering up handfuls of her own life threads.

A little girl was raised by a single mother of five in the low-income housing called, the Pruitt Igoe Projects, also referred to as the second worst government housing in the country. Lady J remembers it as home, beautiful with a fresh smell when they were new, when they first moved in. At its decline, the family moved to Heaven, a huge three-story home with a full basement. The white residents were retreating to the suburbs, leaving behind massive inner-city homes.

Medical traumas and illnesses have plagued Lady J for a lot of her life. She was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia, a crippling disease of sorts, with constant pain and fatigue. Along with much prayer, aqua-aerobics, and holistic medicines, she was able to resume her career. Only to be told later that she had Lupus, that was followed up with a slew of highly dangerous, and debilitating drugs. Once more she would return to her music. While singing a solo in a Vegas church, forgetting the words, and seeing auras of white, would be the greatest scare and the precursor to tonic-clonic seizures. God-loving Christians in the band, and mother, would take turns caring for Lady J and her home. The doctors had already relinquished hope, suggesting that she get her “papers in order,” find a facility or hospital that could offer extended treatment. Back in St. Louis, the seizures receded. Doctors there found that she had been misdiagnosed; she did not have Lupus. Lady’s health began to improve – from singing in church to the day she was able to return to the stage with a brand-new band.

Lady J is a spokesperson in telling her story of the “journey back from the dungeons of medical anguish.” Her story led to being featured on ABC World News Tonight with Diane Sawyer. “At the end of the segment, I may have sung a few Hallelujahs!” (Various videos are currently on YouTube – simply search Lady J Huston.)

In the midst of her health struggles, Lady J learned a lot about herself, and her heritage as well. Studying religions, she learned the core of being kind and loving, forgiving, not judging, grateful, humble, and being of service. “My spirituality includes the law of attraction and karma, irrefutably, we reap what we sow. Positive thoughts will produce positive results. Negativity takes so much of our energy.”

As the family’s historian and genealogist, she found their namesake, O’Kelley. Her grandmother and most of her siblings could pass for white. With the help of genealogy records kept by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day

Saints, the name The Black O’Kelleys was established for her body of work. Her work has been featured on TV, radio, blogs, podcasts, and in print. She has connected with descendants of slave masters, the O’Kelley brothers, who fathered children with her enslaved great-great-grandmother, Ellen Fisher. DNA testing confirms the blood relationships.

Audiences of black, white, and all other ethnicities are all the same to Lady J, who feels that music is a gift from God to the whole-wide world. “There should be unity in all of God’s children. Until the labor of research, my family had no evidence how our bloodlines were so colorfully intertwined. I so want to see America become a united state. Perhaps, through music, I can be that vessel to help build those bridges.”

Lady J’s new single, *Groove Me Baby* was released on July 22, 2022. An album release party was held at St. Louis’ premier Blues and Jazz establishment, BB’s Jazz, Blues & Soups. The full album release will be in the spring of 2023. On the official release date, the song began rising on the charts of AirPlay Direct, on radio stations worldwide with many great accolades from DJs.

An “in love” Lady J wrote the song in 1992. It has all that gooeey stuff about self-indulgence and forever longing for that one who makes you feel so good inside. It’s a combination of reality and imagination about romance. Lady J’s amazing talents as trumpeter and vocalist (four-octave range), and a fantastic producer are fully displayed here. A musician remarked, “Oh, you’re doing that Bruno Mars, Silk Sonic groove.” Lady J chuckles, “*Groove Me Baby* was written before that group was established” – fans are looking at a R&B, Retro-Soul, and Blues song that lovers everywhere will enjoy cuddling to!

Eyeing a global introduction, Lady J is elated to get back out there. “I’ve been sitting idle on the recording side for far too long. My show is high-energy, foot-tapping, dancing on the floor, or with a chair. It doesn’t matter. My trumpet and I will do dance moves with you, flaring a wild, sequined and feathered boa! The name of my group is The Lady J Huston Show – that is because it is just that, we put on a show! All of the band members are featured on stage. We leave nothing out in giving our fans the time of their lives. We can’t wait to see you and meet you!”

A simple Google of Lady J Huston comes up, “Respected as one of the most spectacular entertainers on the music scene!” That’s how a lady does it!

www.ladyjhuston.com