

ENTERTAINMENT

Rebbie Jackson revisits place where it started

Jackson christened her career with an MGM performance

By Ramon Savoy,
Sentinel-Voice
Editor-in-Chief

Savoy: Is this your first time in Las Vegas?

Jackson: Oh, no. I was here years ago ... it must have been around 1976. My family had a family show in which they traveled all over the world. I joined the show around that time and the first place I ever performed was in Las Vegas at the former MGM Grand Hotel, now Bally's. We used to come here about three times a year; we'd be here two weeks at a time every time.

Savoy: You're the eldest sibling in the family. Were you the one who started it (singing tradition)?

Jackson: No, it wasn't that way. We all had a musical background. My mom used to sing to us a lot and we'd entertain one another by singing at home. She used to sing country-western and we used to harmonize and things of that sort, and then one of my brothers started playing the guitar after one of my uncles taught him. Then the boys started singing round the house and listening to the Motown sound, emulating groups such

as The Four Tops, The Temptations and The Miracles. They started rehearsing with one another and practicing. That's how it got started. My dad started working with them a lot, making sure they'd continue to practice, giving them the instruments and they joined a talent show years ago at the high school down the street from us.

Savoy: I know a lot of African-Americans (singers) started in the church. Did you ever sing in the choirs?

Jackson: No, not really. When I was a little girl, I used to sing a little bit in one of the churches. We belonged to the Lutheran church, but we weren't really involved in choir or anything like that.

Savoy: Who was the first person to notice your family had talent?

Jackson: I think it was the uniqueness of all of my brothers performing together. And just to see the professionalism and the dedication to what they were doing and how polished they were—I think that's what contributed. That really stood out in people's minds. That allowed them to perform not just in Indiana, but in areas such as Wisconsin and



REBBIE JACKSON

Michigan and Illinois and surrounding areas in the Midwest.

Savoy: It's been quite a few years since your first album (Centipede) and subsequent releases. Why did you take a hiatus?

Jackson: I really never stopped being part of the music scene. I wasn't recording albums, but I always performed. I had been touring all over the world. I was also involved with Story Line, especially in the American

Dream, the Jackson Family Honors and the 2300 Jackson Street video. So there were things I was doing, but I wasn't quite as involved as I had been. I was spending a lot of time with my family.

Savoy: Are you married?

Jackson: Yes, and I have kids. I've been married a long time. I've been married almost 30 years and I have three children. I'm not a grandparent.

Savoy: Did your family have something to do with your low profile?

Jackson: To some extent. I was fortunate enough that whenever I did tour or whenever I went out I wasn't gone so long that I was away from my family too long.

Savoy: You have two daughters and a son? Do they like this industry and are they learning about its rigors?

Jackson: Believe me, they know that part, because since they were born, they've seen both sides of it. Just being in a family like ours, you see a lot and you hear a lot. Things are printed and said that are not always true. But they have to stay focused and well grounded and I hope I've inculcated that in them.

Savoy: It seems like you get more adulation in foreign countries than stateside.

Jackson: It's both ways, really. I think foreign people demonstrate their enthusiasm or loyalty in a different manner. For example, I hadn't been to Europe in years. When I do go, everywhere I went, the fans were there, they followed me sometimes. It's amazing the support that you get, but the family has a tremendous backing here too. I think there's been a lot of pressure from the media to try to discard that, but

it's definitely there.

Savoy: Were you honored to have your latest CD on your brother's label?

Jackson: Yes, very excited about that.

Savoy: Did he help in any way like he helped with "Centipede"?

Jackson: Yes he did, especially on the album single "Fly Away," which he co-produced. He wrote it and sings on it. It's funny. I've been working a lot with my brothers on different projects. There's a lot going on with them because they're getting back together and releasing some material. That's exciting. So it's like a big family thing right now.

Savoy: Are there any last words that you'd like to pass on?

Jackson: I have a special affinity for this area because I first started out here. I didn't know what to expect when I got up on that stage, and I was elated by the support that I got from the public, so it is a special place for me. I just want to thank all the people who have supported my family and me over the years. It means a whole lot and I really appreciate that because they make it possible for us to do what we do.

Simon sings praises of the gospel, reflects on career

By Lanier

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Prior to walking away from his career as a respected R & Blues superstar to become a minister, it could be said that, "Joe Simon had it all."

Simon's ballad — on his life — began on the street corners of his Simmesport, La., hometown, with him harmonizing gospel music with childhood friends.

In 1960, he became a member of the Golden Tones, a gospel group that provided him with his first recording opportunity. In 1964, he recorded and leased "My Adorable One" to Vee Jay Records. This recording garnered significant airplay and sales and his career as a solo R&B artist. His first national recording success came with "Let's Do It Over" on Vee Jay Records, written by Dan Penn and recorded at Muscle Shoals, Alabama.

In 1966, Simon joined forces with the legendary WLAC Radio personality, John "R" Richborough. This union gave birth to Sound Stage Seven Records in Nashville and resulted in a series of hits such as: "The Choking Kind," "You Keep Me Hanging On," "Nine Pound



JOE SIMON

Steel," "My Special Prayer," "Moonwalk," "Misty Blue," "No Sad Songs."

In 1970, Simon and Richborough left Sound Stage Seven and moved to Spring Records where Simon became their leading artist and partial label owner. Over the following 11 years, Simon produced a long string of R&B and crossover hit recordings that included "Your Time To Cry," "Drowning In The Sea Of Love," "Power of Love," "Get Down, Get Down (On The Floor)," and the sound track album for the Warner Brothers movie "Cleopatra."

He made several guest appearances on the "Tonight Show," "American

Bandstand," "Soul Train" and just about every television variety show.

With something troubling him and not knowing exactly what it was, Joe produced and recorded the country album and single, "Baby, What Love Is In Your Eyes," that supported the influence country music had

on his career. While still searching for that elusive something, he became the owner and principal recording star of Posse Records, this endeavor would spark his departure from secular music.

Simon began rediscovering who he was. Slowly his new calling took form.

"I had everything a man could want in life in a material way. But it didn't fill this certain void I kept experiencing."

The defining moment came when I read the stunning words

of the Apostle Paul — a very affluent, brilliant and scholarly man for his day, who had studied at the University of Rome and spoke fourteen languages fluently. Paul (See Simon, Page 15)

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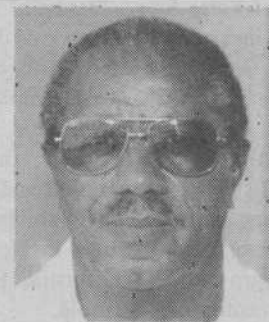


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