**RANDY B**

**Biography**

It’s every guitarist’s dream to have the opportunity to jam, even in informal settings, with his heroes on the instrument – and emerging contemporary urban jazz artist Randy B is blessed to have done so three times. At various junctures in the several decades that he was leading his group The Collaboration Band – affectionately named after the 1987 George Benson/Earl Klugh album – at classic venues, residencies and private parties in in his hometown of Houston, the multi-talented guitarist played backstage with Benson, the late Johnny “Guitar” Watson (whom his band opened for) and Grammy winning smooth jazz guitarist Norman Brown.

Now, in an inspiring twist of great fortune and fulfilling a lifelong dream, Randy’s upcoming debut single, the soulfully infectious “Joy and More Joy,” is written and produced by two time Grammy winning guitarist Paul Brown, a multiple Billboard #1 hitmaker whose extensive resume includes numerous recordings with Benson and Brown. The perfectly titled, high octane, brass fired track features Randy playing Brown’s Gibson L-5 (an axe Benson frequently uses), with Roberto Vally on bass and Jeff Smith on keys.

“After that extraordinary experience playing along with George, I challenged myself to practice every day and master one of his classic solos on ‘Weekend in L.A.,” says Randy, whose musical influences include Carlos Santana, Larry Carlton, John Mayer and the sounds of Motown. “Once I did that, I felt like I was finally good enough to pursue a career as an artist. I believe that playing guitar is my heavenly gift and playing is the best way I can think of to uplift my family and my life. I reached out to a drummer friend of mine, Deren Blessman, to see if he knew anyone who could help me take the first steps, and he knew that Paul, whom he had worked with before, would be the perfect guy.”

Brown heard potential in the music Randy sent him, and sent the guitarist a track he had written as one they could potentially record – with the caveat that Randy would learn the melody as it was composed and not try to change it. Brown had given him dates he was available to record at his Funky Joint Studio in L.A. and Randy, ready to roll and recently laid off his longtime “day job” as an electrician, flew out a day early. Brown put the backing track on and Randy, picking up the Gibson L-5 for the first time, played his heart out. Randy was thrilled seeing the excitement in the producer’s eyes and a nod of approval that told him he was good enough and had the chops to succeed as an instrumental artist. The two also tracked another potential future single, “Thinking to Myself.”

In a genre where song titles are often poetic or quirky afterthoughts, there is great meaning behind “Joy and More Joy.” Brown’s original title was “Wesward Bound,” in tribute to the legendary Wes Montgomery, but Randy to pay tribute to his late wife, Joanne. Back in high school, when the two were dating, Randy wrote her a tune called “Joanne” and he felt that “joy” was a special variation on her name and a perfect reflection of her personality and enduring spiritual presence in his life. He has paid homage to her in unique ways before, having her photo embossed on one of his Stratocaster guitars that he played at gigs.

Beyond being a great unsung musician finally on the verge of obtaining wider recognition for his skill and artistry, Randy’s life is a story of triumph over tragedy that will inspire people on many levels to never give up no matter the challenges. In 2006, Joanne passed away in a rollover car accident that also injured his young son and daughter and left him in the hospital for months with a broken neck, unsure if he would live or die. He attributes his almost miraculous healing and recovery to the desire to both raise his children and get back out and play with his band. Though nothing would deter his progress, it was a struggle being a single dad to three kids. His children with Joanne are all thriving adults now; his oldest son is 41, his daughter is 30 and his younger son is 27. He also has another daughter who is currently in high school.

Even after all these years, Randy can’t help but get choked up when he talks about those painful times. “I can’t remember the accident at all,” he says, “but I do remember my daughter saying ‘Daddy.’ We’re all still suffering because nothing has ever been the same without Joanne. I thought about this when I was in the hospital fighting for my life – if I had a million dollars, yet could not change where I am right now, what would I ask for, time or money? Now that I’ve been given the time, I want to do my best to honor her in any way I can. Even though I lost my joy that day, I have more joy because I can see so much of her in my daughter, and my desire to be there to watch and help her grow up helped me survive.”

Long before he launched his musical career playing gigs at Houston’s Doll House Country Club as the youngest member of the TSU Tornados, Randy recalls visiting a great aunt in Odessa, TX around age seven and walking into an old country house where he saw his first guitar ever, laying against the wall. His ongoing intrigue with the instrument led his mom to buy him his first axe at age 10, not long after the family moved up to Detroit, MI.

While he took some lessons back then, Randy was actually more proficient as a kid on drums, even winning a contest in grade school which allowed him to start playing with the student guitarists. The first song Randy ever played on guitar was “Honky Tonk.” He was so proficient by his high school years at Murray Wright High that his friends called him “George Benson” and he was voted “Class Musician” in the yearbook. He was also featured in the June 1980 issue of Downbeat playing “All of Me.”

Inspired by a funny TV commercial of the era, Randy came up with a whimsical extended name e for himself at the time which ultimately proved prophetic – “Randy Copacetic Mister Magic George Benson Clever as Ever Musician Electrician Burns.” After returning to Houston, he fulfilled his early musical ambitions by leading The Collaboration Band for over 25 years. He has also enjoyed a very successful career as an electrician working for years for GEM, the Houston Independent School District and the City of Houston.

“I know I’m just getting started with ‘Joy and More Joy,’” Randy says, “but I told Paul that if I ever win a Grammy, I will give him the 1980 guitar I had signed by George Benson as a gift for giving me this opportunity and such a wonderful debut song to showcase my talents on. I keep telling everyone I will be at the Grammys someday, and that gives me a lot to be excited about and look forward to.”