

A big bang for the buck

by Deborah Fagan Carpenter

He's a double-fused stick of creative explosive known as Bobby Lounge and Dub Brock.



Wowing the audience with steamy, soulful lyrics, **Bobby Lounge** has explosively closed the “**Lagniappe Stage**” at the **New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival** every year since 2005. The Louisiana word Lagniappe, defined as “just a little something extra,” is just what is delivered on the stage whose performers are slightly off pitch from the usual festival attractions, and when he “bursts onto the stage in an iron lung,” **Bobby Lounge** lands squarely into that definition.

Bobby Lounge is actually **Dub Brock**, who has been building a repertoire of inventive, provocative and supercharged songs much of his life. He compiled a powerful

body of off-color work, rich with sardonic humor, which he initially performed for friends and at local clubs. As his musical appearances became more numerous, he decided to give himself a lounge name with some sizzle, first to maintain some anonymity, but also to add some theatrics to the performance, and so “**Bobby Lounge**” was born.

Unfortunately, a bout with mononucleosis in 1985 led to Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, rendering Brock almost unable to function on any level, especially in his demanding career as an artist and musician. Preparing for and actually engaging in his dynamic performances was an exhausting undertaking. But a regiment of rest and vitamin therapy, along with the awareness that he must pace himself, enabled him to continue producing and performing the original, groundbreaking music.

With encouragement from his friend and manager, John Preble, **Bobby Lounge** recorded his first CD in January of 2005: *I Remember the Night Your Trailer Burnt*

Down. Preble passed the fiery CD around to music journalists and others in the business, and when music producer Quint Davis heard it, he invited the reclusive singer/songwriter to be the closing act on the **Lagniappe Stage** at the **2005 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival**, where he has performed every year since.

Wanting his performance to be “incongruous and a little bit weird,” prompted him to tell his manager, “I’ll tell you what John, if I can burst out of an iron lung, and with a nurse, I’ll do it!” Undaunted, Preble found an old steam cabinet at a junk shop, painted it gray, put it on wheels, and voila’, he had an iron lung! And so, the act begins with a master of ceremonies, speaking in thick Southern patois, explaining to the audience that the performer is infirm and reclusive, at which point **Bobby Lounge** is wheeled on stage by



“**Nurse Pontevecchia.**” After exiting the iron lung wearing a mauve smock, with sequined and feathered shoulder pads, the entertainer takes the piano and energizes the crowd with an amazing and expertly executed gumbo of boogie-woogie, jazz, blues, gospel, and soul rockabilly fantasy!

By his own admission, many of the songs “require parental supervision,” but the influences of lifetime are woven together to create a style that is uniquely his own, not only in the music, but in the riveting, inspired lyrics. And, the songs are just great fun! There is the occasional comment on pop culture

*If I had been Elvis,
And he had been me,
I would not have made all those tacky Hawaiian films.*

And an occasional reference of a personal note:

*You broke my heart,
You didn't care,
You spent my feelings honey, like a millionaire.*

The songs, reminiscent of deep southern blues, often embody the flavor of a syncopated gospel choir, and most of the lyrics are embellishments of the “quirky” misfits he has observed in the course of a lifetime of living in the “quirky” South.

*He traveled far and wide, searching high and low
Vandalized a statue by Michelangelo
Shot down in Great Britain on the palace grounds
Baying at the moon in the Queen's nightgown
The Queen said, “We do not loan out our under things”
He said, “Ma'am, just send me back to Abita Springs”*

The off stage life of **Dub Brock** is that of an accomplished and well-respected artist who creates colorful, whimsical paintings he calls “**Southern Gothic**.” His successful career



as a two-dimensional artist began in the early 1970s, selling his fanciful, but primal paintings in such prestigious spots as the **Arthur Roger Gallery** in New Orleans. He also ardently headed the art department at Southwest Community College in South Mississippi for thirty-five years.

Without a doubt, the colorful culture of the

Deep South lights this creative genius's art. Having spent most of his life in South Mississippi and the New Orleans area, he has a great love and respect for the beauty of the landscape which the almost tropical climate has produced. The verdant foliage is always present in his paintings, and a rich assortment of flamboyant characters from his life appears on canvas. The paintings, a blatant social commentary, usually include imagery, and are heavily laced with sarcasm. While some may be shopping for Tupperware at Wal-Mart, Brock is paying attention to the “shoppers,” keeping an eye out for an intriguing character to paint or about whom he can write. One painting series called, **Pentecostal Women at Howard Brothers** featured women in “bee-hive

hairdos” and “cat-eye glasses.” There was a “**Trailerscape**” series, a “**Dish Receiver**” series and one small series called, “**Jesus Dropped the Charges**,” borrowing from an old gospel song.



“You know, we love our eccentrics in the South,” was part of the answer I received, when during a visit to his studio I asked what it is about the South that influences his work. *“It’s this collision of contrasts! There’s the social situation; there’s blatant ignorance and then there’s a high degree of education and sophistication. There’s a gradual autumn into winter, and then spring and summer come back in a powerful way. You have blistering heat and humidity, but then there’s this lush, green landscape that’s a delicious contrast, and it sends my imagination running wild. And maybe because it’s so rural and we’re so isolated, there are more interesting people to tell stories about.”*

Dub Brock, a gifted storyteller, who is so fascinated with human behavior and so deeply connected to his Southern roots, has the ability to look at a place where many of us live, but may never fully experience. Thankfully, he generously shares his magical view in an honest, inventive fashion, and transposes his insights into evocative, exhilarating, and compelling art and music, both as **Dub Brock** and as **Bobby Lounge**.