Julieann Banks Bio

Julieann Banks is a bit of a rambler, (but then what good story teller or song-writer isn't?), spending half of her adult life in Shreveport Louisiana and the other half in her adopted hometown of Austin Texas where she resides currently.  She is an award-winning vocalist, songwriter, bassist & guitarist, and she does it all with a passion wrought of a lifetime commitment to being a full-time professional musician. The spark of music ignited very early and she had no doubt in her mind about her chosen path as getting kicked out of piano lessons for playing by ear by Van Cliburn’s renowned teacher Nina Plant Wideman morphed swiftly into writing her own songs when she was supposed to be practicing scales. It was a calling then, and it’s now a palpable magnetic energy that shines through her, engaging and electrifying audiences who say, ”*I can tell that you love what you do, it shows*!”.

If you aren’t familiar with Julieann’s work, you might ask, “Who does she sound like?”.  And indeed that’s a tough question because she has made a full-time living playing her interpretations of other people’s songs for most of her life. She loves, and can powerfully and convincingly deliver and own, any style or artist.  From Bonnie Raitt to Prince, Judas Priest to Townes Van Zandt and Tom Petty, Ray Lemontagne to Beyonce and beyond!

Someone recently described Julieann Banks' songwriting and performing as "*sounding  like a cross between Sheryl Crow and Joan Armatrading*".  In an industry of "sound alikes" that's not a combination one runs across every day.   And it's a comparison that's not easy to back up as both artists are formidable performers, songwriters, singers and musicians with their own signature styles.  But Banks can do it with seeming ease.  She flat knocks it out of the park and then some on her brand new 2016 release, "All These Things" while adding a splash of the class and voice of Patsy Cline and a salting of the regional twang and sass of Lucinda Williams just for good measure. If you have your own sound, you should have your own genre, and Banks calls hers "Renegade Soul" and the edgy, electric emotion of her songs and singing are probably what earns her awards such as Austin Music Magazine’s “Best Female Vocalist Rock,” one of the Top Ten in South by Southwest Austin Chronicle Music Awards’ “Best Songwriter,” and Austin’s Local Flavor Music Magazine’s “Best Pipes,” among many others.

The bottom line is – Julieann always sounds like Julieann – just as the works of each of the artists she has chosen to interpret for so many years individually defy comparison.

As 2016 approached, Julieann felt a calling to start getting behind her own music in a big way.  Says Banks of the decision, “*I had been formulating a production plan in my mind and putting together the pieces for about a year, Then I literally woke up one day and said, “It’s time*.  *So right then I made the calls and booked the studio.  Just like that*. She had always been writing her own songs, but had only recorded one solo album. And it had been twelve years since Magazine and Race was recorded at world-renowned FAME studios in Muscle Shoals Alabama in 2004.  Julieann chose not to focus on touring and promotion once that album was finished, but rather continued to hone her guitar and songwriting skills by performing live in casinos, clubs and parties almost every night.

Not this time.  The release of “All These Things” brings a razor sharp focus to every aspect of Julieann’s career path. The new album showcases her songwriting talent framed in a no frills, soulful, "front-porch" style of production.  Julieann’s idea was to do all the vocals and core music tracks in one take.  In one room.  So with the help of her friend, guitarist, co-producer and engineer Mac McNabb, this was acomplished by seating the musicians in a circle in what was approximately a 15 x 15 foot space in McNabbs garage studio.  No isolation was used.  Not an easy feat, but the outcome is a breathtaking magic-making journey to that intimate setting, putting you right there – live -  as the musicians recorded the tracks.   And “live in the room” is Julieann’s forte.  The album features a stellar array of Austin Texas' best talent:  Mike Meadows (Black Swan Percussion, Hayes Carl and more), Rich Brotherton (long-time member of Robert Earl Keen’s band), Leeann Atherton, Casper Rawls, Mac McNabb, Chip Dolan, Paul LeMond and more.

Part of the magic of this album is that you can choose how to listen.   Although Julieann writes with a stinging truth and has a prodigious device for evoking emotions, “feelings” are not forced on the listener.  The production and delivery is so sublime, it can just be a comfortable current in the background, or you can listen with more intent and immediacy and connect with the emotionality and characters in the stories.  *“I tested my demos by painting my living room”*, Julieann says.  *“I noticed that the production of the albums of my favorite songwriters and singers never forces it’s way on me.  My favorite music is usually heavily emotional at its core, but the production is such that it allows the listener to decide how they want to digest it and I’ve found that the result is that these albums usually have a meditative quality as well as a poetic quality.  My favorite music is always an invitation, never an assault.  Not saying I don’t love rockin’ songs, I surely do.  I’m speaking about the production here.  The intent, and how it introduces itself.  I decided that if I could paint the room and just hum along and move through listening to these songs, without feeling like it was forcibly changing my mood or yanking at my focus – it passed the test.  And it passed the paint test with flying colors (literally!).  I was so thrilled!”*

Julieann’s performances are filled with stories, jokes and an easy audience banter.  She has an approachable vulnerability that has kept her in touch with the real people and real stories that populate her songs.   During a recent show she gave some insight into some of the tracks on the upcoming album.  The title track was a song that “fell out of” an accordion she saw on Craigslist and drove an hour and a half to pick up despite the fact that she did not need an accordion.  “Cold City” outlines a brief move to Cincinnati Ohio and is a prayer of penance to be released from an uncomfortable situation. *“The Junkie Song” is a grinning ode to the monster that each of us must grapple with, “different names – same monster”*, says Banks.  Then the gorgeous Patsy Cline-ish “Canto Fado”, a nod to a blues style inspired by a trip to Portugal as a background singer for the late Percy Sledge,  “The Northern Queen” chronicles an actual lovers quarrel that lasted over an entire vacation weekend (*“don’t ever piss off a songwriter*”,  she quips with a laugh).  “The Big Easy” was written in the bathtub…and that’s no easy task!”, she says.  Other songs such as the bluesy and soaring “Moving Still” run to some deeper subject matter and, with those, Julieann lets the songs do the talking with poetic and vocal ease.

Julieann’s first foray into Austin was In 1991 when she moved there to play keyboards with Spy Vs Spy, an offshoot of the Killer Bees that included Papa Mali (Malcolm Welbourne).  Their first gigs were during the SXSW music festival and Julieann found herself hooked on the city’s burgeoning music scene.  During her years in Austin, Julieann has been bassist and vocalist for such notable Austin groups as The Austin Lounge Lizards, Leeann Atherton, The Cosmic Americans (Earl Poole Ball, Casper Rawls), Patterson Barrett and more.  She also fronted national touring show bands such as Rotel & The Hot Tomatoes and The Big Time.  In the mid-1990s Banks formed, managed, fronted and wrote the songs for her original Austin band Apaches of Paris winning many awards such as Ticketmaster’s “Best Unsigned Band” before carrying the group on to legendary regional status.

Julieann’s intent is to bring “All These Things” to your town.  Wherever you may be, anywhere in this world! She says, *“It just feels like the timing is right for a return to roots, to folk, to soul, to harmonies, to real songwriting.  There is an almost palpable receptivity for the real.  There is so much plastic fabrication out there in the digital world, especially in what we are fed for entertainment, that our hearts are calling for us to return to what makes us all inherently human.  A base touching, if you will, of what we all share – which is a broken but beautiful existence together.  “All These Things” is a relating of those ups & downs.*

*No one has a charmed life.  No one.  There is always a balance.  A yin and a yang.  Sometimes you’re the Louisville Slugger, sometimes you’re the ball.  There’s nothing wrong with feeling that sway and swing, despite what media bombardment would have us believe as they encourage us to hide and medicate our vulnerability. So feel, sing, create, live, cry, laugh, try to love.  And somewhere in there you have “All These Things”, a celebration of the ride of life”!  Enjoy!”*

Julieann's resume is as varied as the instruments she plays, including Bass and Vocals for a who's who of Austin musicians including The Austin Lounge Lizards, Leeann Atherton, Earl Poole Ball, Casper Rawls & more.  She has fronted national touring acts including Rotel & The Hot Tomatoes, and her own original band Apaches of Paris.

RESUME

2016 to 2020 – Julieann Banks - Austin Texas– Solo, duo and trio – Guitar, Bass & Vocals

2014 to present – Thundermouse, Shreveport La – Bandleader, Guitar and Vocals

2013 - 2016 -  Shreveport La - Music Program Coordinator for Skilled Nursing Wellness Department

(one on one in-room music programs for 9 different Skilled Nursing facilities)

2013 to 2014 - Vocals and Bass for Drama Club

2010 - 2019 - Vocals and Bass for Casper Rawls, Austin TX

2010 - 2019 Leeann Atherton Band, Bass & Vocals, Austin TX

2009-2010 Austin Lounge Lizards, Bass & Vocals, Austin TX

1995-2012 ASCAP Popular Awards Panel Program recipient for songwriting and performance

2002-07, 2013-14 - Drama Club - Shreveport Louisiana - Bandleader, Bass/Vocals

2004 Danny Click Band - Tour of Switzerland - Backing Vocals

2002 Percy Sledge - Tour of Portugal - Backing Vocals

1995-2002 The Big Time - Austin Texas Show Band - Singer and Dancer

2001 Presidential George W Bush Inaugural Ball - Washington DC

1997 Legends of Las Vegas - Tour of Japan - Singer Dancer

1994 Julieann again tours New Zealand opening for The Midge Marsden Band

1993 Julieann tours New Zealand for two months opening for The Midge Marsden Band

1992-1995 Apaches of Paris - Austin Texas - Bandleader, Songwriter, Vocals and Guitar

1991-1993 Rotel and The Hot Tomatoes - Austin Texas - Singer and Dancer

1991 Spy Vs Spy - (offshoot of the Killer Bees

                                 with Stan Hoffman and Malcolm “Papa Mali” Welborne) Austin Tex

1982 - 1991 - Various cover bands, keyboards & vocals, including her own, Scarlet & The Fever