

Second Front

WEEKEND PROFILE: JOSHUA 'BUBBA' MURRELL

Murrell brings back a Grammy

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THE DAILY IBERIAN

Joshua "Bubba" Murrell of New Iberia recently returned from a life-changing trip to Los Angeles. He brought home with him, as a souvenir of that trip, a shiny new Grammy with his name on it.

For the first time in record industry history, a Grammy was awarded in a new category — Best Zydeco or Cajun Album, and Murrell fit right into that category.

Murrell received the prestigious award for mixing and co-producing the winning album by Terrance Simien and the Zydeco Experience.

A native of New Iberia, Murrell, 53, has been in and out of the Teche Area for years, honing his craft. He spent time in California and Tennessee before coming home to Louisiana when his father, longtime NISH band director Joffre Murrell, was diagnosed with cancer.

After his father's death, Murrell, with an ever-watchful eye over his mother who soon began to show signs of Alzheimer's, decided it was necessary to put down roots once again in New Iberia.

Having been involved with gospel artists in Tennessee, it wasn't long before Murrell teamed up with Brenda Lowry for a gospel duo act. The two soon decided they wanted to experiment with other types of music and happened upon Ronnie Vice's Blues Jam in Lafayette.

Lowry and Murrell learned a few songs together which

Murrell said got to be so much fun that it got him back into playing music even more. The pair entered a Blues music contest and won earning them a trip to Memphis, Tenn. The win prompted the pair to start the band Blue Merlot and begin work on an album. Murrell describes Blue Merlot as a blues rock band with a little bit of Americana thrown in as well as historical influences from the 1930s and 1940s.

"Our style is more of a historical approach to blues," Murrell said. "Definitely more up tempo and more fun stuff."

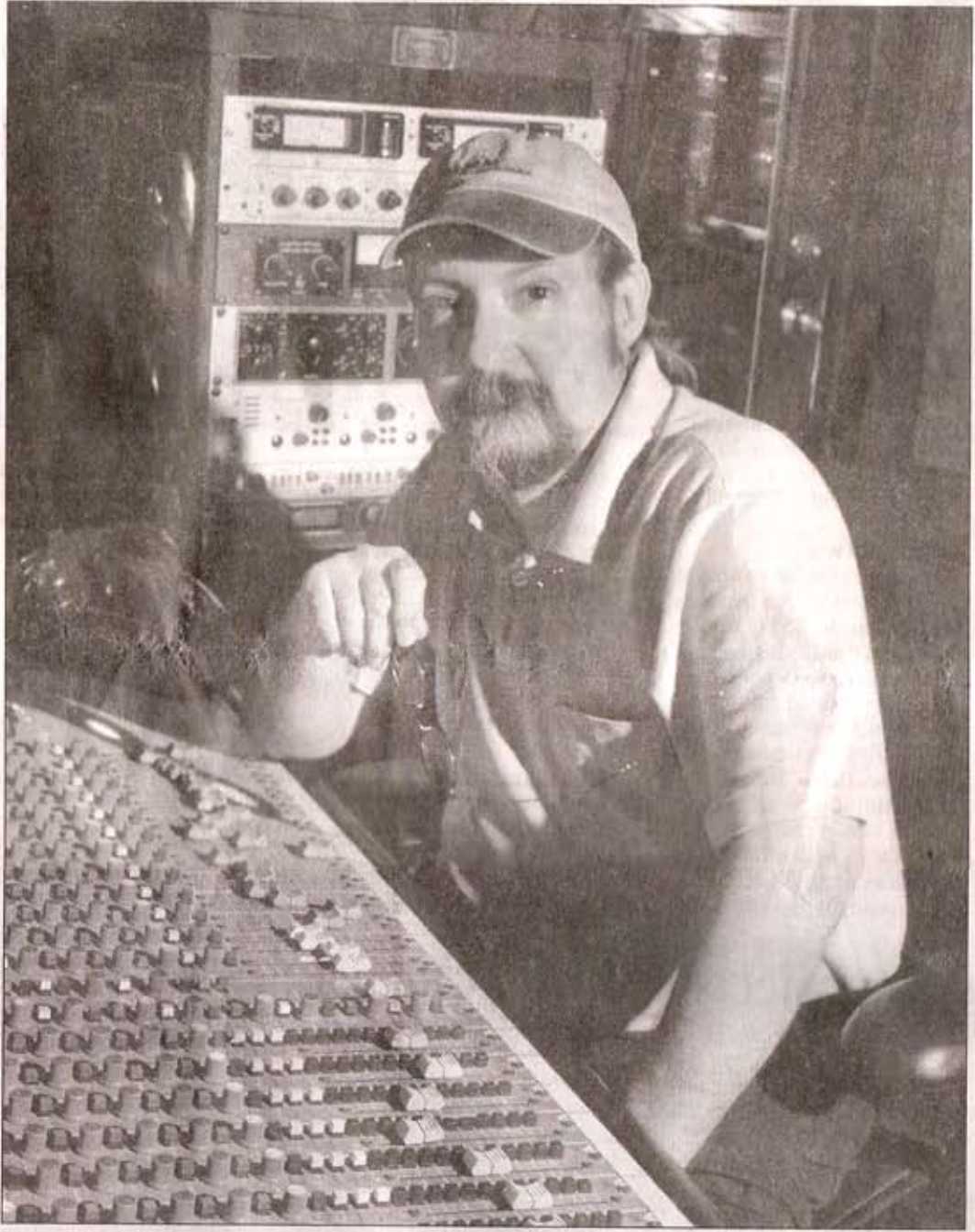
Of his trip to Los Angeles for the Grammy awards, Murrell said that "the whole experience was a little bit crazy at first."

"For me it was definitely a meet and greet, a great networking opportunity," Murrell said. "I got to talk to the owner of the largest independent movie studio, folks involved with artist management and talent agencies and folks in the gospel industry that I have known for a long time."

Murrell got to hobnob with a few big-time stars too. He said that Fergie, of the Black Eyed Peas, was seated eight feet away from him and Stevie Wonder, John Fogerty, Vince Gill and Amy Grant among others where all seated around the man from Louisiana.

In a very humble way, Murrell said that his Grammy win is not about him.

"This is a gift," Murrell said. "It's a responsibility



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Joshua Murrell, who won a Grammy in Los Angeles, is at the controls in Teche Theater studio.

that I have now to help others achieve the same goals and with the bit of clout that I have now its very possible for me to do that."

Murrell is extremely busy these days. He plays with his band Blue Merlot and continues working with Brenda Lowry on their gospel duo act. He also lends his talents playing keyboard and bass with Ronnie Vice.

He is busy in the recording studio producing tracks for several artists and is helping out with the restoration of the Teche Theater in St. Martinville, which will house a state-of-the art recording studio.

"The storms have centered everyone's attention on Louisiana music and how much of a profound difference it has made historically," Murrell

said. "Its going to be an item that will be getting a lot of attention.

Imagine the national exposure we will be getting, the bright light that really works to keep hope alive. Forget FEMA, the Red Cross, the insurance companies screwing everybody, this is something that local people can grab hold of and have some faith in."