

I once asked a friend of mine who had just seen and heard Louise Salvadore perform how he would describe her physically and musically. He told me her looks were exotic and her voice was pleasingly rich and restful. To tell you the truth, I couldn't have said it any better, although the restful part really depends on the song she sings. I first heard this gifted artist at a night spot in Mansfield, Ohio almost 30 years ago. By that time she had already become an accomplished performer.

Louise credits the exotic (not her description) looks to the fact that her mother was of German descent and her father was from Manila, capital city of the Philippine islands. Their daughter was born and raised in Houston, Texas, and from a young age she enjoyed music and musicals. Early on, she discovered music was an easy way to express herself because she loved it so much.

Her mother recognized Louise's affinity for the stage, whether as a singer, dancer or actor, and sought out opportunities for her daughter. Louise never really enjoyed the talent show routine, where relatively unknown artists would perform with the hope of being discovered. There were no reality TV shows like *The Voice* back in the 60s that could provide aspiring vocalists with

Louise Salvadore

a voice you remember

immediate entrée into show business. With her mom as her parental agent Louise was pretty much on her own.

By the time she was 16, she had attracted the attention of many in the Houston area and was cast for the lead in *Suzy Wong* at the Houston Theatre. While she enjoyed acting, it was singing that came more naturally to Louise Salvadore, and she aggressively sought out opportunities to put her talent on display. When she was invited, at age 17, to join a show in Chicago headlined by Sally Rand, the original fan dancer, her mother okayed the invitation. Louise moved to the windy city.

After a short stay there, it was back to Houston and then on to New Orleans. There, along with



paying gigs with the theatrical group "The Bachelors Show" and others, she would often jam after hours with some of the legendary names in music — people like Pete Fountain, Fats Domino, Dizzy Gillespie and Little Richard. Some of the participants played the piano, trumpet or sax, while for others, like Louise, their voice was their instrument.

There was another well-known performer who befriended the twenty-something, struggling singer when she was still in Houston. His name was Liberace. He was the headliner at a place called the Cork Club, and Louise got to know him at one of the after-hours places where musicians hung out. Liberace admired Louise's talent and offered to introduce her

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to others in the business that might be able to help move her career along.

While in New Orleans, Louise also made the acquaintance of another talented musician who was, at the time, a member of Al Hirt's traveling orchestra. His name was Michael Olsheski, a great saxophonist who just happened to be from Mansfield, Ohio. Their love of music soon extended to love for each other and, in December 1967, they married.

It wasn't too long before Louise had a new audience of one eager to hear her "restful" voice. Son Bryan joined the family and a decision had to be made. Would he grow up in "The Big Easy" (New Orleans), or in Mansfield, his father's hometown? Louise said that she and Bryan's dad felt that the Midwest upbringing, close to home and family members would be a better choice. That, plus the fact that both she and Mike could pursue their music careers from almost any place, made the decision easy.

As it turns out the apple didn't fall far from the music tree. Bryan is an accomplished jazz saxophonist because,

at age 10, he picked up the instrument and hasn't put it down since. A graduate of the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, Bryan has traveled the world (including three years in London) and performed on the cruise ship circuit playing with some of the best known musicians in the jazz genre.

When Louise moved to Mansfield in the early 70s she sang at various venues around the area and built a loyal following. Many still vividly recall having heard her sing at local spots, like Adam's Rib, or at weddings they either attended or participated in. When asked to define herself as a vocalist, Louise will tell you that she doesn't like to be pigeonholed as "only" a jazz singer. She prefers to say that she is a "free-form" vocalist saying, "I like to sing what I like and what the people for whom I'm performing like."

For most of the last ten years, Louise has been singing on Saturday nights at Haiku, a restaurant on the Short North in Columbus. Her group is called, simply, "Louise Salvador and Company", and the musicians who enhance her vocals are

Bob J. Mills on piano, Terry Douds on bass and Matt Wagner or Joe Ong on drums.

When you see Louise Salvadore for the first time in a long time, you find yourself saying, "She looks the same as she looked in 1980, or 1995, and her voice also seems locked in a time warp, a good one." She told me that she has always enjoyed physical fitness, adding that, like pro athletes, performers must pay attention to their bodies as well as their voices; keep them in shape, if you will.

One of the first pieces of unsolicited information that Louise shared with me was her age — she's 68. While staying active, both personally and professionally, has certainly helped to keep her mind, body and voice functioning at a high level, she said that what really keeps her young are her two grandchildren, Annie, who is four, and Isaac, age two.

The first line of a promotional piece about Louise that I read said, "She is a take-charge performer with star power!" That is a spot-on description of this exotic performer with that rich voice. 