

Joan Belgrave, the Grammy-nominated singer, songwriter, and producer has released her sixth solo project, entitled *Oooo Boy* along with a beautifully produced video of the title song, which was filmed, partially at the Berry Gordy Mansion in Detroit. Keeping that Motown groove, the “Oooo Boy” character is played by Mark Scott, Lead vocalist for the Miracles. The project was produced by Grammy award winning producer, Sanchez Harley (Aretha Franklin, Patti Austin, Yolanda Adams, Shirley Ceasar). *Soul Tracks* says of the project “showing off her renowned pipes on music that has a timeless feel.”

Based in Detroit, Joan is the consummate vocalist, equally adept with big band, blues, standards, gospel and contemporary R&B alike, while holding fans and critics rapt at prestigious venues like the Detroit Opera House, NJPAC, New York’s Metropolitan Room, Catalina's in Los Angeles, and Chicago’s Jazz Standard. "Belgrave's voice is so soothing and sexy, she could give a pit bull goose bumps" the *Detroit Metro Times* raved while *jazzREVIEW* has called her "a class act and a beautiful talent." The artist herself explains it best: "I love singing with every fiber of my body. I have to sing because music is my core."

The trajectory Joan has followed from singing gospel in the Baptist church as a young girl and entertaining family friends in Michigan to becoming a critically acclaimed performer who's delighted sold-out crowds across the globe traces a fascinating course. Joan's mother, who also sang, introduced her to classical baritone vocalist, Dr. Willis Patterson. "He took me under his wing and trained my voice," she says. Moving to Hollywood, Joan pursued a professional singing career but soon shelved her musical aspirations in order to raise her three children. She reached a critical juncture when her father passed away. "I went back to Michigan and my mom asked me to sing at the funeral," she says. "I hadn't sung publicly for 15 years. When I went back home to California, it was almost like a waterfall had opened up. I couldn't stop singing if I wanted to."

By the late-'90s, Joan had fully immersed herself in music. She began writing songs and recorded *Emotions Blue* (1998), her tribute to Billie Holiday. "I really related to her" she says. Joan's chameleonic musicality fueled her follow-up *Variations* (2005). "It was a variety of *me*," she explains about the album's concept. "I had blues, gospel, jazz, and R&B going on there. I never want to limit myself to jazz because I am not *just* a jazz vocalist. I'm a *vocalist, period*." All recorded in California once she felt she had given her children a “solid foundation”. Unfortunately, her finding her musical voice again, caused her 16 year marriage to end.

Relocating to Detroit, Joan met her musical soul mate, legendary trumpeter Marcus Belgrave. He bought three copies of *Emotions Blue* and *Variations* after hearing her sing during a jam session at Bert's Marketplace. "I didn't know who Marcus was when I met him," she confides. At the time, Joan was producing a B3 concert with Dr. Lonnie Smith, and hired Marcus to open the show. Their professional partnership gradually grew into a romantic relationship. The couple wed and released their first of two collaborations with New Orleans saxophonist Charlie Gabriel, *You Don't Know Me: A Tribute to New Orleans, Ray Charles, and the Great Ladies of Song* (2007). "Marcus was the last living member of Ray Charles' original band," Joan explains. "We had a Louis Armstrong show and a New Orleans show. Marcus wanted to do something for Ray." The trio followed up with *Marcus, Charlie, and Joan ... Once Again* (2009) where Joan's voice duly complemented the superb musicality of the album's two jazz virtuosos.

Joan resumed her solo career with *Excitable* (2009), which Detroit-based Blue Rivers Records re-released in 2014 along with a video for Joan's smooth and soulful re-recording of her self-penned "Hey Love" (2013). She released *Merry Christmas Baby* (2014), recorded "Please Send Me Someone to Love" for Blue Note Records president Don Was, and even ventured into techno with producer Carl Craig on Tribe's "Where Am I" (2009). In between headlining the Detroit International Jazz Festival, Toronto Jazz Festival, Ontario Jazz Festival, Ascona Jazz Festival in Switzerland, and the annual Don Was Detroit All Star Revue concert, she continued to produce her own shows throughout Detroit, in addition to being a lead vocalist with **the Motown Legends Gospel Choir**.

JOAN BELGRAVE / BIOGRAPHY

Sadly, Marcus Belgrave passed away in May 2015. "Marcus wasn't just my husband," she says. "He was also my musical partner. When Marcus was young, his father told him to listen to singers. I think that's why we gelled. He would talk to me through his horn." Marcus remains an inspirational force for Joan, who recently composed "I'm Not Going Anywhere", which is now released on the "Oooo Boy" project. She says it's a song that helped her understand that even though you may lose someone, they never really leave you. They remain inside you always. In his memory, she founded the Belgrave Scholarship Fund for young musicians and the Marcus Belgrave Legacy Ensemble which debuted to rave international reviews at the sold out show for the Winter Jazz Festival in New York, City.

Whether onstage or in the studio, Joan Belgrave reaches listeners through a voice that holds a world of musical wonders. Her thrilling versatility and passion for music shines through every note she sings. "No matter what's going on, the music is my savior," she says. "It always has been." Music takes Joan Belgrave to new heights. Join her for the flight.