

COLLIN COUNTY

COMMUNITY PROFILE

One-man act juggles multiple names, talents

Plano: Performer also writes music, produces records, pens stories

By LAUREN D'AVOLIO
Staff Writer

Plano resident Bobby Charles is a triple threat on dual levels: He's an accomplished musician, a new author and a record producer.

The 61-year-old also answers to three names: his given name is Robert T. Shumate, his pen name is RT Shoemake, and Bobby Charles is the moniker he goes by with family and friends.

The Dallas native considers himself a performer. In his heyday he shared a stage with Ray Charles. He wrote "The Jukebox has a 45" — performed by Clinton Gregory — which leapt to No. 8 on the country chart in 1992.

George Jones and Keith Whitley have recorded songs Mr. Charles wrote.

"I'm still writing music, occasionally, but I'm actually more into record producing," Mr. Charles said. "The main three things I do now are performing, writing as an author and record production."

Mr. Charles said he hasn't produced any well-known tracks but is content, at this stage in his career, to work with blooming artists.

"Especially when I was younger I worked with a couple of bigger stars: Roy Orbison, Vicki Carr, Bobby Bare," he said. "I toured with them as a musician, playing saxophone and piano."

Mr. Charles' newest CD, *Classics in Blue*, includes catchy beats like "I've Got My Mojo Working"



SMILEY N. POOL/Staff Photographer

Bobby Charles performs every Thursday evening at Swan Court Restaurant in Richardson. The Dallas native, who once shared a stage with Ray Charles, also performs Friday and Saturday nights at Tino's in Collin Creek Mall.

and the soulful "Blue Monday." His sound is a hybrid of blues greats and old school bebop — both seemingly unexpected vibes from a red-headed man with a mullet seen on www.bobbycharles.net.

Mr. Charles, a.k.a. RT Shoemake, wrote a suspense thriller, *The Julian Joke*, printed in 2003. Though the book is not available for general consumption, Mr. Charles will be conducting a book signing from 2 to 4 p.m. Aug. 20 at the Borders on Preston Road, be-

tween Park Boulevard and Plano Parkway. Borders has agreed to carry the novel and test the waters on its prospective popularity.

"I wrote music from 1984 to 1993, but I'd never written anything other than music," Mr. Charles said. "Back in '96 or '97, we got a new computer, and a little while after that I started making up short stories. Then, I got onto the idea of a novel."

Mr. Charles' Web site describes the plot as "... a tragic loss, a near

(main character) Eric Wayne Elliot is about to begin a voyage that offers him another chance at romance."

Mr. Charles finds time to tickle the ivories multiple nights per week at two Collin County venues. Every Thursday evening from 8 p.m. to midnight he can be found at a crimson piano at Swan Court Restaurant — located on Central Expressway between Renner and Campbell roads. Fridays and Saturdays he plays Hispanic melodies

MORE ABOUT MR. CHARLES

Name: Robert T. Shumate, a.k.a. Bobby Charles, a.k.a. RT Shoemake

The four guests at my fantasy dinner party would be: Jack Nicholson, Mrs. Tom Landry, Fred Couples and Little Richard.

My hobbies are: Golf and Texas Hold'em

The book I most recommend others to read is: *The Bridges of Madison County*

I think the best thing about myself is: Being able to retain closeness to a wide range of lifelong friends.

My greatest hardship was: Learning to deal with my form of OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder).

My favorite restaurant is: Gaido's in Galveston.

My ideal vacation is: A cross-country junket on a passenger train.

I'm happiest when: I'm with my wife in a room with an ocean view.

If I won the lottery, the most extravagant thing I would do is: Purchase a small log home in the Texas Hill Country.

If I could change one thing about my community, it would be: Having more time for neighborhood folks to hang out together after work and weekends. (Oh yes, an overpass at Park and Preston in Plano wouldn't be bad, either.)

Mall, from 9 p.m. to midnight.

Mr. Charles' friend Tino Trujillo, 72, owns the latter eatery. Mr. Trujillo called Mr. Charles "a great pianist" and said he has clientele who flock solely to hear Mr. Charles perform. Periodically, Mr. Trujillo said, the friends ham it up in a duet.

"He lets me sing because I sign his checks," Mr. Trujillo joked. "He has a good voice, and he likes neo-

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ALLEN

■ CPR/FIRST AID CERTIFICATION
■ CLASS will be offered from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

series from the Caregiver Support Program of the Collin County Committee on Aging, continues at Frisco Senior Center, 6726

FARMERSVILLE

■ SURVIVOR SKILLS FOR THE SMALL