Hunter Hayes still going strong

by Paris Noel

Child prodigy Hunter Hayes began his journey to stardom at the age of two upon receiving a toy accordion from his grandmother, Lynn Clause of Carencro.

"Playing music was never a choice for me," recalls 15-year-old Hunter. "It was more of an instinct. My love for music is that strong."

His fascination with music developed early in life as parents Leo and Lynette Hayes often took the youngster to restaurants that provided live local entertainment.

By the age of five, Hunter had the undivided attention of actor Robert Duval. While indulging in the finest of Cajun cuisine at a local restaurant, Duval was entertained by the talents of the up-and-rising young artist and immediately offered him a two-part scene in the movie "The Apostle," where Hunter is filmed playing the accordion in a church choir.

The youngster's love and devotion for music inspired Duval to contribute further toward the boy's future by giving him a guitar. Hunter has since mastered 10 instruments, one being a mandolin given to him from country music legend Hank Williams Jr.

Throughout the years, Hunter has been seen and heard through a number of entertainment modalities, ranging from music and commercials to movies and talk shows.

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Hunter Hayes blows the audience away during a recent performance on his guitar.

The musical wiz received his first guitar from actor Robert Duvall.

(BNP/Parish Noel Photo)

boy next door has been seen in movies such as "My Dog Skip," "All the Kings Men," "The Apostle" and "Charlie's War."

Commercial advertisements, such as the famous replay of Jack Miller's BBQ Sauce, still is aired today with the tender face of a two year old Hunter Hayes embarking on the first leg of his journey to stardom. Nearly 12 years later, this talented young man is now writing commercial jingles in his very own, newly-established recording studio.

Over the years, the United States has caught a glimpse of Louisiana's own Hunter Hayes as he appeared on the airwaves of many talk shows across the nation. Talk show host such as Regis Philbin and Kathie Lee, Vicki Lawrence and Maury Polvich are just a few.

"Maury Polvich was really interesting," recalls Hunter. "He was really cool to hang out with."

While listed as one of Rosie O'Donnel's top 100 guests, Hunter also is accredited as one of the top 10 child celebrities to visit the show.

In south Louisiana, Hunter is known for his remarkable musical abilities, but the young man's horizons have reached as far away as the White House in Washington D.C. while performing twice before President Bill Clinton.

"I did not realize the honor at the time," recalls Hunter. "I was so young, but now that I think back, its like 'Wow! I performed for the President!'"

Hunter has represented the Cajun culture across the globe while touring places such as Italy and Canada.

Currently, he is establishing his own recording studio-Hunter Hayes Studio-with the guidance and direction of mentor and four-time award winner Tony Daigle.

Hunter currently is working on music demos for many young local artists, such as
Ramsey Gulotta of New Iberia.

Hunter spends his weekends touring with his band LA Hot. His newest CD, titled "Hunter Hayes Live at the CFMA," features traditional Cajun French favorites and is fresh on the market.

Hunter offers a word of encouragement to other teenagers with a dream: "Set your goals and don't give up. Believe in what you are doing and have faith and confidence in yourself."

The child prodigy that South Louisiana has watched grow into an inspiring young man is now an honor student with the goals of a college education and a major label deal in Nashville.

"There have been so many who have inspired me throughout the years," says Hunter. "It comes in stages as different people cross my path."

The Beverly HomebiUies (Home Mortgage Associates) won first place in Theme at the REALTOR Association Gumbo Cook-off that was held at Acadian Village on Oct. 19.

Pictured: Cory Morgan as Jethro Bodine, Arlene Bodoin as Elly May Clampett, Ed Boustany as Jed Clampett, Tessa Boustany as Granny, Jennifer Madson as Jane Hathaway, Brian Fredrick as Mr. Drysdale and Debbie Duplantis as Mrs. Drysdale.