

THE BIG BOPPER

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Legend Has Katy Connections

Written by Michelle Chong | Photography Courtesy of the Big Bopper Jr.

For Katyite Jay Perry Richardson, “the day the music died” means more than just the loss of three iconic American rock ‘n’ roll musicians. It also marks the loss of his father, Jiles Perry “JP” Richardson, also known as the Big Bopper, only 28 at the time of his tragic death. The Big Bopper had been traveling with fellow performers Buddy Holly and Ritchie Valens when their plane went down in Iowa. Jay was born two months after his father’s death.

Often decked out in a leopard-print suit jacket with a mic in hand, Jay Perry Richardson now sings American pop classics like “Chantilly Lace” and “The Big Bopper’s Wedding” during tribute shows to his father several times a year. The Big Bopper Jr., as Jay has dubbed himself, is also working on a biographical movie about his dad, to keep his musical legacy alive.

Rockabilly Roots

Having grown up in Beaumont, the Big Bopper got his start in the music industry at the town’s small radio station. A songwriter at heart, he penned many tunes for artists like George Jones and Johnny Preston, before becoming a recording artist himself. His fame and influence quickly spread, eventually leading to inductions in the Texas Radio Hall of Fame, the Texas Country Hall of Fame, the Texas Rockabilly Hall of Fame, the Iowa Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame.

“He’s in five different genres of the entertainment field and I don’t know if you would find another artist [that has done that],” shares Jay. “My father was a crossover artist before there was a term for it. I think he was one of the original rappers... but there wasn’t a term for it [in his time]. My father also is the innovator and creator of the world’s first known music video.”

A Movie on the Horizon

For the past 25 years, Jay has received several scripts from writers interested in making the film about his father’s life, only to have nothing pan out. After many years of perseverance, he has recently been working on a script with John Mueller and is hopeful the project will come to fruition soon.

The Big Bopper was killed, along with Buddy Holly and Ritchie Valens, in a 1959 plane crash while on the Winter Dance Party tour.



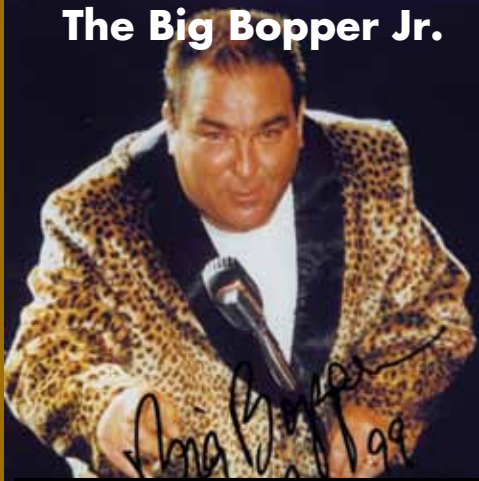
The Big Bopper during a performance at the Kato Ballroom in Mankato, MN on Jan. 25, 1959, shortly before his tragic death on Feb. 3, 1959

HELLO, BABY

The Big Bopper (also known as Jiles Perry Richardson) made a name for himself in the late 1950s with rock 'n' roll hits like "Chantilly Lace"

The Big Bopper Sr.

The Big Bopper Jr.



Jay Perry Richardson of Katy hopes to preserve his father's memory by touring as the Big Bopper Jr. and helping produce a movie about the Big Bopper

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- Old Maid
- Pink Petticoats
- Preacher and the Bear
- White Lightning



Visit officialbigbopper.com for more info

It is something I believe my father deserves," shares Jay, who owns Big Bopper Productions. "Buddy Holly has a movie. Ritchie Valens has a movie." He reminds Big Bopper fans that shortly after the release of each of their movies, both Holly and Valens were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

The upcoming biographical movie will focus on the Big Bopper's life, beginning with his upbringing in the Texas oilfield. "My grandfather was a roughneck in the oilfield," recalls Jay. "They had very little money." Despite being poor, his family had a lot of heart, which got passed down to Jay's father. "My father was right on the cusp of everything they had dreamed of," he shares.

Jay hopes the movie gives fans an up-close look at his father's passion for performing and his contribution to the American music industry. "I think [a movie] is the best way to get it out there," he says. "I do what I can by going out and performing. From a historical standpoint, I just think it is important for people to get an opportunity to learn about dad. If you don't care, you don't care, and that's fine. But if you want to know, I think a movie would put it out there."

The Big Bopper's Music Lives On

Throughout the years, Jay has collected personal belongings of his father, donating many items to museums. Performing as the Big Bopper Jr., he has toured around the world singing many of his father's most well-loved songs. During tribute shows, many fans have mentioned to him how much he looks and sounds like his late father. All of this is meant to help keep his father's legacy alive. "Since I started performing, I like to think I have kept his name alive and kept him in people's minds," shares Jay. If you would like to see the Big Bopper Jr. perform, visit officialbigbopper.com for show dates. KM



MICHELLE CHONG is a senior at Cinco Ranch High School. She believes her purpose in life is to drink coffee and write... and she does both in the name of journalism.

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