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Interview with Karen Jones

Jazz and Pop Singer Karen Jones

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Karen Jones the master of it all, her aroma is refreshing, resilient and relevant. This Brooklyn New York native speaks Italian fluently, French and Spanish are among the list of foreign languages she can intrigue you with, and if that's not enough she understands Portuguese. Karen Jones has traveled the world and received most of her life's lessons about music in Italy where she spent 15 years of her young adult life.



Karen Jones
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Karen Jones talks about growing up as a famous musician's daughter, her love for women, and maintaining a healthy relationship while on the road fighting off men to finally

achieve her acceptance. She talks candidly about how she believes you cultivate a healthy relationship. She understands that being with someone 24/7 is not for everyone and that space is good, it makes your times together more interesting.

Karen Jones, the intellectual, beautiful, worldly Jazz artist, poet and counselor shares with you how coming out about being lesbian or bisexual clears your mind, and sets you on the road to your success, whatever your path may be.

Lesbian Life: Explain what you mean in your bio when you say "Eclectic" is your Modus Operandi?

Karen Jones: I'm eclectic and eclectic means you can't really put me in one genre even though many people have tried. I do a little bit of this, a little bit of that, I'm a jazz vocalist but I can sing pop, I can sing rock, I can sing...pretty much anything and in almost any language (laughing) so I'm eclectic, I just don't stick to one form of art.

Your vocal style range from jazz to rock to Italian ballads that is a wide range of musical styles, who where some of your musical influences?

Of course Sara Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Barbra Streisand, oh my goodness Chaka Kahn, Earth Wind and Fire, Al Jarreau, Dianne Reeves, Nancy Wilson. I'm very lucky because I was allowed to listen and follow so many different styles of music when I was growing up. My dad was a musician, he played with Count Basie during the fifties he had a music degree from Howard University and he always wanted me to be exposed to as much music as possible. I was exposed to classical music at a very young age and because I could sing and my parents were very supportive of my talent they put me right

in school to expand on it.

Your father played with the Count Basie Orchestra for over 10 years what was it like growing up in a home where playing music was how your father put bread on the table? Did you at that time want a music career or where you turned off by what you saw him experience as a musician?

Well I was certainly influenced by what he experienced because my dad had to take a second career when I was born because my sister was ill. He joined IBM at that time and became a manager for the new computer industry. He always said to me "The music industry is a very tough business". I really didn't want to be a singer at the time, I wanted to be a doctor, I wanted to be...I don't know what I wanted to be, I was just discovering everything that I could be, you know trying this and trying that so my dad was not very happy about me choosing a musical career because he knew how difficult it was for him. But he didn't force me because he saw that I was doing well with my musical choice, but he said "Whenever you want to go back to school, I'll pay for it". He really believed in education and did not want me to be ignorant about the music business.

At school, your life was busy with music, choir, piano lessons, track and field, and theatre, how were you able to balance it all and what made you choose music over other school activities?

I was really good in music and I loved it. So when I was in school it chose me (music) because I just couldn't spread myself that thin.

You grew up in New York is that right?

I grew up in Brooklyn and then I moved to Connecticut. It was a huge culture shock.

How So?

(Laughing) When I was about 13 my dad got a great job at a big insurance company so we moved from the city to the suburbs and I had never been in an all white neighborhood that was a very big shift in my life--big change from hanging out with Blacks and Puerto Ricans and then all of a sudden being surrounded by white people.

Your bio states that you are international respected. Tell us about that...how were you able to obtain that status?

It was interesting because it just kind of unfolded - when I got to Italy it was really different and very difficult. Once again I was in the same kind of situation, being exposed to a different culture from growing up in the city then to the suburbs - and now I'm going to Europe. They speak a different language they have a different culture and I guess that's kind of like my life in terms of being exposed to new experiences. When I got to Italy, I didn't know where to start, I thought I wanted to model but black models weren't very in at that time. Finally I was out one night just hanging out and I heard this girl sing and I said... you know what, I sing better than she does (laughing). I could do this! I was just out of college and I said I could make money singing and I started making money. From zero I created my career- from there I toured all over Italy and worked with very famous people. I went to Paris and Amsterdam, I had a couple of singles that were on the club charts then I was on tour in Holland. I worked on a cruise ship which cruised all over from North Russia all the way down to Egypt, so I just have been pretty much everywhere.

You are beautiful; may I ask...what is your nationality?

I am African American and Cape Verde which is located off the coast of Africa 200 miles south of the Canary Islands.

Do you play any musical instruments?

Yes, I play the piano

What about your writing and music production, how involved are you in that?

On my last CD I wrote one song - a jazz tune, finally because I had been writing for years and I just haven't had the opportunity to have it produced so I produced myself on my Jazz CD which is called "Romance".

Are you lesbian or bi-sexual?

Lesbian

[Keep reading](#) for more about Karen's perspective on how being a lesbian affected her career and how she keeps her relationship alive...

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That is really hard to say, sometimes I would say it has - especially with the Italian men because they were not able to get into my panties when they found out I was gay maybe there interest may have waned.



Karen Jones

© Maurizio Martinoli

So I take it that that hindered your career because the Italian men could not sleep with you?

Yes that hindered it. Then of course after being in the business for so many years, (I lived there for 15 years) my reputation grew, I don't think that it was a hindrance anymore because everybody knew...and people honored me for my talent and abilities

What would you say to a young up and coming lesbian/bi-sexual artist who feels like she is not as accepted because of her sexuality.

Wow, that's a really good question I would say to them...be yourself no matter what, don't allow other people's judgment run your life. Don't allow people's validation or invalidation of you dictate who you are. Just be you no matter what, and when it seems no one is paying attention you got to really love yourself even more to choose what works for you.

Are you currently in a relationship with a woman?

Yes!

How does she feel about you being on the road so much?

I believe that she knows that I would not make a choice that would purposely hurt her in that sense. I may talk to people, flirt with people, but I would not put my dirty laundry in her face. I travel a lot so I'm away for long periods of time, she knows that I am going to go out and, I'm not going to limit my life because she's not there and she also knows that I am going to call her almost every day on Skype and see her face and let her know how much I care for her and keep a

connection. But she knows that that's my life and it makes me happy and she wants to see me happy, as I would like for her to be happy.

So what would you tell someone who was in your shoes and trying to maintain a healthy relationship?

In any relationship, each person has to be their own person, they have to live a life that is conducive to creating what makes them happy, and whatever creates their joy. The time that you guys spend together has to be quality time, and the time that you spend apart has to be quality time for yourself, so enjoy the time you have for creating your own life doing the things that you love to do, and your partner should do the same. When you get together there is more to talk about (laughing). But if you get caught up in resenting that the person isn't there, then you're going to create even greater stress for the relationship. Not all relationships are meant to be together 24/7, not all relationships are meant to be a day to day thing and maybe in the end if you look at it from a different point of view you'll see that having those moments apart really helps you to appreciate your partner a lot more so that when you finally do get together you can enjoy that time even more.

What's next for Karen Jones, where do you see yourself in the next 2-3 years?

In 2-3 years I see myself as continuing to create my show in terms of my singing. I'm adding more things to my life. I think that any artist should continue to add and ask the question "what else is possible, what else can I add to what I do"? So I'm in the process of working on a blog that I am creating a whole website for. Within that blog I'm going to show some other artistic things I have been working on which includes; a whole new style called "video poetry" I write a lot of poetry as well. I also plan to add this poetry to my show so I create a whole other dimension to how I express my eclectic nature. So these are some things that I am working on now and hopefully watch them grow and become a strong influence in the lesbian, black, and all of the communities, you know the cross over communities...international as well.

Where can our readers find your video poetry?

You can check it out at [Facebook](#) I have about four video poems up on this site and I did everything for them, I wrote the music, I selected the fonts, I took the photographs, I'm in them, I think there is one shoot of me in all of them and I edited them. So it's like an all me production.

Where can I readers find your music?

They can find it on [my website](#), they can check out some of my jazz stuff and I think there are some links that will send them to some other stuff that I've done which is more pop dance music. I did a lot of dance music when I lived in Italy.

Is there anything we didn't cover that you may want to share with our readers?

I think that it is very important for people, especially lesbians to be yourself...it's really important that they work on themselves and bettering themselves. The other business that I have is that I work with a company called Access Consciousness (the source of ultimate change) and it's something I've been doing for eight years. I've facilitated and started it in several countries in my travels, I'm in Italy, Korea. Everywhere I go I bring it with me and I share it with people and it's about just being more conscious and aware of what's going on around you, and that includes most of all what's going on inside of you. It's something that I teach, it is something that I facilitate, if anyone ever wants to know anything about it they can write to me directly [kajwords at yahoo.com](mailto:kajwords@yahoo.com) and I can tell them more about it, especially when you are feeling lost or you're feeling moody or you always want to fight someone, or always want to prove something to someone especially about being gay. Write to me and I will get in touch with them.

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