

Graceful Magic // by Quita Blackwell

Allison Jenkins is a "gypsy" of sorts, a nomad of musical style. The singer-songwriter seamlessly drifts back and forth from jazz to rock, wooing listeners with each note and lyric she leaves behind. The lead vocalist of the Jackson jazz trio Swing De Paris and the rock band Wooden Finger, Jenkins talked with BOOM Jackson about how she found herself entrenched in what she describes as a "mysterious magical art."

How did you become the lead singer of two bands?

I have known Swing de Paris' guitarist David Keary for years. In 2007, I sang live with them for a ballet David choreographed, and that led to a few additional songs along the way. They are some of the greatest musicians I have ever met.

Wooden Finger is the rock band I started with my husband, Matthew Magee.

What is your song-writing process?

What inspires you?

When I write alone, I sit down at the piano and let my hands find something on their own, then I start working melodically with that. Sometimes something comes to me while I'm sleeping or even biking.

I am inspired by just about anything. A song can be snatched from literally anywhere and fleshed out in any number of ways.

Who are your major influences?

Musicians such as Edith Piaf, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Ute Lemper.

What song would be the theme song of your career?

"Grace" by Jeff Buckley. Music is a hard lover to love truly. Once you commit, you sign on for a lot of heartache, struggle, insecurity. ... To be able to write and sing how you feel and have one person get it makes it worth all the "grace" it takes to suck up those bad moments.

What are your hopes and dreams as a singer and for the bands?

As a singer and as a band, I want to continue to grow and change and embrace whatever comes rocking my way. I want to get better, learn more, create more and reach more.



One-third of jazz trio Swing de Paris and member of the rock band Wooden Finger, Allison Jenkins is a cross-genre singer.

What do you do and listen to when you are not performing or writing?

I teach voice and piano. I love to cook and read. Right now, I am listening to a great deal of vinyl from Mussorgsky to The Black Keys. I love the live sound of it and the delicious crackle and spits the records make.

Do you have a hidden talent?

I am pretty good at impressions, and I have a secret desire to one day voice a cartoon character.

If you could have lunch with any celebrity, dead or alive, who would it be?

It's a tie between Jeff Buckley and Nina Simone. They were both such amazing talents, and so complicated. I feel I could learn a lot from both.

How can fans-to-be gain access to your music?

I play with Swing de Paris on a fairly regular basis at Underground 119, Hal & Mal's and the Parker House.

Visit Wooden Finger at www.woodenfinger.com or www.myspace.com/woodenfinger and Swing de Paris at myspace.com/swingdeparis.

Ebony and Ivory

Come in your best casual attire and share in hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar at Jackson 2000's Friendship Ball 2011 on Saturday, March 5, at 7 p.m. downtown at Hal & Mal's (200 S. Commerce St.).

Former Jackson Mayor Russell Davis, former Alcorn State University president Walter Washington and several others founded the organization in 1989 to promote racial harmony in Jackson.

Lee Unger, Jackson 2000's co-chairman, says the Friendship Ball started in 1993 to provide a social atmosphere for discussion between Jackson's diverse racial and ethnic communities with the intention of also supporting various charities.

"The ball is an avenue to bring people of different races and ethnicities together to really just have an evening of camaraderie and fun," Unger says.

Jackson 2000 will honor two people for contributions to racial equality and harmony in the state: business owners Lee Harper of Koinonia Coffee House and Jeff Good of Mangia Bene restaurants. All proceeds from this year's ball will benefit Parents for Public Schools and Operations Shoestring.

These Days with Jewel Bass will perform. Tickets are \$20 per person; \$10 with a student ID. For more information, visit www.jackson2000.org or e-mail co-chairman Todd Stauffer at todd@jacksonfreepress.com.



Jewel Bass of These Days with Jewel Bass performs at Friendship Ball 2011 on Saturday, March 5, at Hal & Mal's.