

DENISE KING

Artists aren't made, they are born; born with an innate sense of wonder and a unique perspective of the world. Denise King is no exception. Always having a love of music, it wasn't until the age of thirteen that she was introduced to Jazz by an uncle, Herbert Tatum, who had an extensive collection of Jazz LPs. This love was further cultivated by family, when a cousin Cynthia, shared her passion for the stylings and energy of Nina Simone. Her "studies" involved hours of listening to the Jazz greats, both vocalists and instrumentalists. Denise borrowed phrasing styles from Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Nat "King" Cole and Frank Sinatra. She gained an appreciation for lyrics from Lil Jimmy Scott, Nancy Wilson, Carmen McCrae and Nina Simone. Listening as intensely to Jazz as she did R&B or music of her era, she had no idea that her listening sessions were preparing her for a career in music.

She was "discovered" by a friend who heard her singing outside of her home in Philadelphia and introduced her to the world of Jazz performance. The early gigs were difficult in that she was painfully stage shy. But with the help of Sam Reed, sax man and leader of the legendary Uptown Theater Orchestra she overcame her stage fright. Her early performance experiences involved sharing the stage with many legends, Butch Ballard, Arthur Harper, Sam Dougherty, Cecil Payne, Jymie Merritt, Bootsie Barnes, Lex Humphries, Phil Wright, Christian McBride, Dexter Wansel, Duane Eubanks, Lonnie Plaxico, Sid Simmons, Dr. Guy Ramsey, Derrick Hodge, Chris Beck, Billy Paul, and many, many more. They taught her the importance of having something to say every time she stepped up to the microphone and also stressed the importance of telling a story through the words and music and not just singing the song. Their instruction paid off. One night while performing at Zanzibar Blue in Philadelphia, Denise met Dexter Wansel, writer, arranger, producer, and A&R director at Philadelphia International Records. That meeting would forge a work relationship that has spanned twenty years.

Denise King has sung at almost all of the top venues in Philadelphia, several in New York, Paris, Turkey, Brazil, Africa, Germany and Japan during the past 25 years. She started her musical career in her thirties and has proclaimed herself a torch bearer. A keeper of the flame. She holds the preservation and presentation of the traditional style of Jazz singing close to her heart. No gimmicks, no pyrotechnics, just an intense focus on the melody and the lyrical content.

It is this philosophy that finds her in Paris, Milan, Israel and all points in between acting as the Ambassador-ess for the nostalgic sounds of Jazz. From her warm and welcoming presence on stage, the subtle nuance of a bygone days, and the recordings that speak to the natural elegance of an era that greatly influenced her life, Denise King is keeping the romance and nostalgia of all the great ladies of Jazz alive and well.