

Cover Story

Going Places with Karen David

By: Tirusha Dave

Her bio quotes her as a “stylish singer, songwriter and actress,” and she is all that and then some more! At age six, she was handpicked by actor Bill Cosby to star alongside him in a TV commercial for Jell-O and oh, did I fail to mention that she also landed a role in the hit movie, “Batman Begins”?

Yes, I’m talking about the one and only, Karen David, herself!

Born in Shillong – at the foot of the Himalayas – and raised in Toronto, Karen David can be coined as “ever-alluring.” She has never let herself be restricted or controlled by such things as ‘boundaries.’ She’s crossed hurdles, strived to prove she can be the best, and has shone in front of Hollywood and Bollywood greats.

One of Karen’s noteworthy moments, as an actress, came when she landed a supporting role in the acclaimed film, “Provoked”, starring Aishwarya Rai.

CM: Karen, it’s a pleasure to finally sit down and do this interview with you! For those who are unfamiliar with you, give us a quick one-liner on who you are and what you do!

KD: Everything summed up in one line...that’s tough! Uh ... ok ... hello! My name is Karen David; I am an actress, singer, and songwriter. My journey began in the Himalayas then went to Toronto, and then London, England. Oops, that’s two lines!

CM: How supportive was your family when you told them that entertainment was the field where your career would be headed?

KD: My parents have always been open-minded and have always encouraged my older sister and I to dream big. Of course we had to get straight ‘A’s in school and nothing less! My folks have told me since I was five years old that I had to work really hard and take the initiative myself. They also told me that they had no connections to the music and acting industry so it was going to be up to me to make things happen for myself, but I always had their support and for that, I am so lucky and truly blessed.

CM: With regard to your singing career, you recently released your debut album called, ‘The Live Session EP.’ Tell us a little bit about it.

KD: It’s my second EP release. My debut album is planned for a fall release. We’re all headless chickens at the moment as we have the album deadline just around the corner. I grew up in a house filled with love for all kinds of music, and my parents would take my sister and I regularly to the local amusement park to hear some of the music industry’s greatest legends perform: *Smokey Robinson*, *Herbie Hancock*, *The Temptations*, *Dionne Warwick*, *Kool and the Gang*, and *Neil Sedaka* to mention a few. I wanted to record a ‘live sessions EP’ of some of my forthcoming album tracks – in the old school tradition. With no computer in sight, ‘The Live Sessions’ EP was recorded organically and live at Antonio Feola’s Fish Factory Studio in Dollis, North London, on equipment from the golden age of valve technology. This has given the recordings a truly distinctive feel where ‘The Live Sessions’ vividly captures what my rockin’ band and I sound like, live.

CM: What has the buzz been since you released the EP?

KD: My fans have been writing in to my MySpace site or coming to my gigs telling me how much they enjoy the EP, which is super! Glowing reviews have been coming in, so I am one happy lady.

CM: Are you ready to hit the fans with a full-fledged album yet?

KD: Absolutely and they have been so patient, but it’s in the mixing stages at the moment. I’m so excited. I’ve waited a long time for this but it has been well worth it. *Johnny Douglas* (hit maker behind the likes of *Kylie Minogue*, *George Michael*, and *Estelle*) has been working in the studio putting the finishing touches on the album and it’s sounding great! It is such a pleasure to see each song marry into the next one to create a whole album.

CM: You worked with A.R. Rahman for the movie “Provoked.” Tell us about this amazing experience!

This put her in the limelight with personalities in the Bollywood film industry, and the soundtrack for the film had her working with one of the best composers to come out of India, A.R. Rahman; together they wrote and recorded “Alive”, the theme song that personifies the essence of Kiranjit Ahluwalia’s story.

Recently, Karen finished filming Universal Studios’ prequel, “The Scorpion King: Rise of the Akkadian”, in Cape Town, South Africa. In this movie she plays the spirited, aggressive, and beautiful ‘Layla.’ The film is directed by Russell Mulcahy, and she co-stars opposite Michael Copon (One Tree Hill), Randy Couture, and Simon Quarterman.

Fall of 2008 marks the release of this film, her second EP, and an album release! It has been a journey in the making, and I had the chance to sit down with Karen and talk about her past, present, and future!



KD: I’ve known A R Rahman now for about 7 years. ‘Alive,’ which was the theme song for *Provoked*, was our third collaboration. Each time we have worked together, it has always been an adventure. He brings out the best in me and always challenges me as a songwriter, and performer. Writing with Rahman is like walking on a high balance rope, blindfolded: you don’t know where you’re going but you know when you take the blindfold off, the end results are nothing short of brilliance.

CM: Okay, let’s just say your name was called out at the Grammy’s for ‘Best Female Artist.’ Which three people would you thank first?

KD: I know it’s the ‘done’ thing but it would have to be 1. My angels above, 2. My family, and 3. My fans.

CM: Now, on to interviewing Karen the actress! You have an amazing resume when it comes to acting. Let’s talk about your role in ‘The Colour of Magic,’ in which you played Liessa and ‘Take 3 Girls’ which came out in 2006, in which you played the character of Lyla who was “a beautiful Indian girl with a voice like an angel.”

KD: For Liessa’s character in the novel, which doesn’t wear much, more like *Chain Mithrel*, the casting director told me that I wouldn’t be naked but I would be showing some flesh. I wasn’t too worried as I had read the *Terry Pratchett* novel and knew that it wasn’t going to be anything distasteful. When I read the script, I was highly amused by the scenes where Liessa and *Rincewind* are hanging upside down sword fighting, and I thought to myself that this could either be fun or my worst nightmare! It was pretty tough fighting upside down; your sense of co-ordination is completely gone! Lyla’s character was quite a complex and mysterious character. She was a singer indeed, but she had also been a drug addict, had run away from home and had a lot of personal issues and dilemmas. It’s those complexities that attracted me to the script. Playing Lyla meant a lot. I got to dye my hair crazy colors – blonde and blue streaks, have a nose ring, and tattoos – it was so much fun to play a character who is so opposite from me. She was reckless, very street wise but had a good heart deep down.

CM: It seems that many people don’t know this and it surprises me, but you were also in one of the biggest films of 2005, ‘Batman Begins.’ What was shooting such a mega-blockbuster like? Did you get a chance to mingle with the stars, such as Katie Holmes?

KD: I had a very small part in *Batman Begins* but it was my first step into doing Hollywood films. I only had three lines, but when I attended the premiere and saw my name on the credits at the end of the film, I had a lump in my throat. It was a taste of what I had wanted and dreamt of for so long. It made me even more determined to work harder and be the best actress I could be. It was such an inspiring moment. *Christopher Nolan* is a brilliant director, and his attention to detail is impeccable. Working on such a huge set and meeting *Katie Holmes*, *Michael Caine*, and *Christian Bale* on the set was a bonus!

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Q: Dear Dr. Trivedi, my wife and I have been married for 10 years and for most of this time, she has been prickly and angry. Now, more than earlier, she takes her anger out on our seven-year-old daughter and me. We have not had a decent conversation in months; all the words between us are either about running the household or words of disagreement. My wife is under a lot of stress at work but so am I. I am so tired of her angry tirades I just want to leave. I have tried to talk to her but she doesn't respond at all except in anger and frustration. What should I do?
Hari

A: Anger in relationships is typically the result of a disagreement between two or more people. Personal anger is also the result of one's unmet expectations. Anger usually comes with a lot of energy but it is negative in nature. Hence, it is used by most people in a negative way to bring harm and destruction. You will need to do the opposite of this to remove anger from your relationship. If your wife understands this same idea, the two of you can work in harmony to remove anger. Having a therapist or a marital counselor to guide the process is highly recommended.

First, each of you will need to separate your anger from the situation. You do this simply by telling yourself that getting angry about the situation yourself is not an option. Most often, we tell ourselves that it's OK to be angry because the other person did something to make us angry. By doing so, we feel justified in our own anger. If you have observed that she is acting out of anger, you don't want to feed the anger by having your own angry reaction. As difficult as it may seem, stop reacting to your wife's anger. She should work on doing

the same when you express anger towards her.

Instead, figure out ways to divert the tremendous energy contained within anger in a positive direction. When you feel angry, do something energetic like lifting weights or going for a jog. Distract your anger from thinking only about how your wife is acting.

You can't change how your wife feels or the choices she makes. But, you do have a choice about how you think and what you do yourself. Allow your actions to show compassion and understanding that will help stop the anger from flowing between you and your wife. This will also benefit your daughter as you will role-model good anger management skills for her.

Q: Hello Dr. Trivedi, my 4-½ year old daughter is becoming very difficult to discipline, especially after the arrival of her baby brother. She recently picked up a trinket at a department store and I got into trouble because she put it in her stroller! She has begun talking back. She also has hit her teacher at preschool. I am getting desperate. I have tried reasoning with her, spending one on one time with her and having my husband spend time with her as well. I need help in determining an approach for her.
Roshani

A: It is not uncommon to see an older child regress to younger immature behaviors upon the arrival of a newborn in the family. The attention that was directed solely at the older child prior to the baby's arrival is, all of a sudden, redirected at the baby. Subconscious feelings of jealousy make the older child compete for attention thru regressed behaviors. These behaviors are also a way for

your older child to express stress. You seem to have recognized that and begun spending more time with her. This will reassure her to some degree.

Reasoning is not a skill that 4 ½ year olds possess. They learn better through direct consequences. Reasoning can create confusion for the child at this age and frustrate the parent. Slight tap on the hand with the word 'No' is more effective in shaping this child's behavior than reasoning.

More practically, dividing up your play time to allow special bonding time with each child by themselves is likely to help. It would also be helpful to engage the older child in activities that are more age appropriate for her instead of having the same toys and activities for both children. Having others who can help your older child get positive attention for her own age-appropriate achievements is a great way to encourage acting her own age. Having good self-esteem will prevent oppositional behaviors such as hitting.

Finally, being patient yourself and allowing time for children to work things out are often the best remedies. Some situations are inherent to the interactions between your children. Over time, your daughter will relate better and work things out more calmly.

Dr. Trivedi is a Board-Certified Psychiatrist. He treats children, adolescents and adults. Please visit www.MINDvantage.com for more information.

Send your questions to: theparentschatroom@citymasala.com.

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CM: If you could re-enact any role such as Ingrid Bergman's character Ilsa Lund from 'Casablanca,' or Judy Garland's character Dorothy Gale from 'The Wizard of Oz,' which character would you want to be and why?

KD: Good question! There are so many roles I would love to re-enact; Audrey Hepburn's character, Holly Golightly, in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Halle Berry's character, Audrey Burke, in *Things We Lost In The Fire*, or Charlize Theron's Aileen in *Monster* and Doris Day in *Pillow Talk*. I could go on and on! There are so many parts! What interests me in a particular character are their complexities or simplicities; I love a challenge and the more challenging a character is, the better and more fun to play!

CM: What if you woke up tomorrow morning to a phone call from Karan Johar or Sanjay Leela Bhansali from Bollywood and they asked you to be in their next movie, would you jump at the opportunity?

KD: I've never done a Bollywood movie before, so if the part was right for me, of course I would consider it! The experience of acting in one would

be a great experience to add to the resume!

CM: Do you think that cross-over films such as "Bend It Like Beckham" or "Bride & Prejudice" are helping to bring forth South Asian talent from within our community to the eyes of mainstream viewers?

KD: Absolutely! Having been in a cross-over film myself, *Provoked* with Aishwarya Rai, Naveen Andrews and Miranda Richardson, I have seen that it has attracted audiences from different demographics. I was so excited when *Lagaan* was nominated for an Oscar in the Foreign Film category. It didn't win but plenty more people went to go and see it after it was nominated. Cross-over films are the way forward and I hope to see more films like *The Rising*, (which I loved!), come into the forefront of mainstream cinema.

CM: Where do you see yourself five years from now?

KD: Ideally, with some more Hollywood films and good television projects under my belt, my first having been released and touring and then the release of the second album, and having a family. A

tall order, I know!

CM: What advice do you have for the young girls across the country that want to make a career in singing and acting but are too scared to do so?

KD: Don't let hard work put you off from wanting to follow your dreams. Dreams do not come for free. You have to work at them to make them a reality, but if you're determined, have a good attitude, and are focused, it will happen for you. There is room for everyone if you want it bad enough. Never take short cuts to where you want to go. Play the game right, and lay the foundation which will give you longevity in your career. Most importantly, be true to yourself and have faith.

CM: What final words do you have for all your fans, supporters, and the readers of CityMasala magazine?

KD: Thanks Tirusha! To the readers, thank you for reading and for your support! It means so much. Drop me a line on my website, www.karendavid.com, and say hello! I check in daily! My site has the latest on my album, gigs, upcoming appearances and films.