

ASK STACEY

IN AN INDUSTRY THAT'S HOOKED ON BODY IMAGE AND LOOKS, STACEY NORMAN DOESN'T HAVE TWO SECONDS TO WORRY ABOUT IT ... SHE'S TOO BUSY TAKING OVER RADIO

By Heather Ingarfield

if the moonwalk and the robot had to come together to create a new dance style, this would be it. By 'it', I mean the intricate footwork Stacey Norman is doing for me mere minutes into meeting her at this month's cover photo shoot in Hout Bay, Cape Town.

I'd crashed the set, accidentally waltzing straight into a shot where she was cracking one-liners into the camera. Embarrassed, I scuttled off, thinking I'd blown my chances of getting an interview with the 27-year-old

947 Highveld Stereo DJ, but Stacey, once she had changed and was 'feeling more human' in her casual black slacks, slogan tee and high-tops, was dancing for me and lovingly teasing her mom about always liking the pictures she hates.

'I don't know how to be anything other than what I am or who I am. I'm pretty funny, I'd like to think – I laugh at myself all the time. I can't stop myself from laughing at myself,' she tells me.

Her listeners and some 14 000 Twitter fans find her pretty funny too, tuning in every day to her

SNL (Stacey Norman Live) show from 9 am to 12 pm, where they can laugh, cry and joke with Stacey. 'What you hear – my quirks, my laughing, the way I construct things on air – is who I am. I live and die by my personality, which is fine by me.'

No pressure, right?

Not for Stacey, because what's obvious just moments after being around her is that she's found a winning combination that's equal parts self-confidence, talent and authenticity, with a pinch of not taking life too seriously.



“ I DON'T FEEL THE PRESSURE TO LOOK A CERTAIN WAY AND BE A CERTAIN SIZE. I'M NOT MILEY CYRUS ”



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 Balanced Life Magazine – South Africa



SOLID AS A ROCK

Stacey credits her success to her strong family connections – both in her upbringing and the way in which she got her foot in the door of radio. ‘My mom will tell you that my entire career is owed to her,’ she says.

This, in part, is true. When Stacey was in Grade 11, KFM launched a six-week programme called the Youth Day Experience, which gave learners the opportunity to design, construct and broadcast their own radio show. ‘I didn’t want to do it. But then I got a call from one of the presenters, who said my mom had written the most beautiful letter about how great I am, and they’d love me to be part of it.’

After a successful programme and a year of PR post-matric, Stacey was offered her own show at Primedia’s KFM. ‘I was 19 when I went on air for the first time. I’ve never been that nervous in my life – I wanted to throw up.’

But she made it through, and eight years later, Stacey is still with Primedia, hosting the popular mid-morning slot on Highveld.

While many 19-year-olds would have struggled to hold their own on radio, she had been unknowingly preparing for it her entire life. ‘My dad put me on the stage when I was quite young, I was always encouraged to do things in front of people,’ she explains. ‘I also did a lot of plays, I was always the narrator at school events, and I was head girl and house captain. My sister and I have been set up to perform, but not in a weird Jackson-family-pressure way. We were simply given opportunities to shine.’

While Stacey is shining on air and with the side projects she’s dabbled in (‘I’m now the voice-over artist for a well-known cellphone chain,’ she says. ‘Soon you will hear a familiar voice saying, “For information, press 1”’), it’s her family that helps to keep her grounded. ‘Family is very important to me – what else do you have? When you get along well with the people who happen to be related

to you, it’s convenient because a) they’re around; and b) if you ever need a kidney, you can give them a shout.’

TRADING ON PERSONALITY

After almost a decade on air, and with her online #AskStacey videos, where listeners ask ‘genuine questions that I have to guess my way through’, Stacey has established herself as a down-to-earth, unpretentious, say-it-how-it-is presenter. ‘I’m not really a time and temperature kind of presenter. I’m not always graceful, I’m not smiley all the time, but I want to be relatable. Everything I put out is me.’

That must leave you feeling so exposed and vulnerable, I say.

‘Oh yes, it’s easy to become insecure because I’m literally trading on my personality. But I have learnt not to worry about the negative feedback, because not everyone is going to like me. You can’t keep everyone happy all the time.’

‘There are people who are going to be annoyed with me, and if they have R1’s worth of airtime, they’re going to send me a text and tell me what they think. And that is fine – for every person who has something bad to say, there are 10 people who are happy. As long as the numbers are in my favour. That comes with time and I have become more self-assured in my craft, my space and as a person.’

BODY BEAUTIFUL

Stacey’s unflappable personality and approach to her craft has left me wondering whether she has the same refreshingly honest outlook on the image and body pressure many women face these days.

‘To be honest, I don’t feel the pressure to look a certain way and be a certain size. I’m not Miley Cyrus, so my looks aren’t all that relevant. Plus, I’m in radio, so win for me! If I have an “I’m fat” kind of day, it’s fleeting. Normally, my boyfriend will say something like, “You’re being ridiculous”, and that’s the end of that.’

Stacey and the boyfriend in question – creator and blogger of My City By Night and ‘the girl in the relationship’ Ricky Hendricks – have been dating for nearly five years after meeting during the 2010 World Cup. Stacey was tasked with finding some of the off-field action for her KFM speciality show, *The Scoop Extra Time*. She took to Google and after keying in ‘Cape Town Nightlife World Cup’, stumbled upon a blog that involved two guys scouting out the hottest spots in the Mother City. So she called them in to be social reporters.

‘Our first date was at the Fez. We sat at the bar for four hours. It was very unexpected. He was very unexpected. We laughed, we joked, and bada bing, bada boom, here we are, years later.’

<p>BEEF OR CHICKEN?</p> <p>‘CHICKEN. ALWAYS CHICKEN’</p>	<p>APPLE OR ANDROID?</p>
<p>FIND ME ON INSTAGRAM</p> <p>@STACEYNORMAN17</p>	<p>FAVOURITE HOLIDAY DESTINATION</p> <p>‘CAPE TOWN’</p>

STACEY ON DECK
 A radio DJ’s guide to the top tunes

- 1 ‘POUR SOME SUGAR ON ME’ – DEF LEPPARD**
- 2 ‘SHOWER’ – BECKY G**
- 3 ‘THE WAY YOU MAKE ME FEEL’ – MICHAEL JACKSON**
- 4 ‘I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY’ – WHITNEY HOUSTON**
- 5 ANY SONG BY ELLA HENDERSON**

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WOULD YOU rather...

- Be famous or have a famous best friend? **‘Be famous.’**
- Wear only Crocs or clogs for one whole week? **‘Clogs – I’d rock that.’**
- Live life according to the motto ‘Hakuna Matata’ or ‘YOLO’? **‘YOLO!’**
- Sing a duet with Rebecca Black or be one of the kids in her music video? **‘Sing a duet. Obviously.’**

cover girl

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

Surprisingly, Stacey hadn't been harbouring radio plans while growing up in Cape Town. In fact, it wasn't something she'd considered at all.

'I wanted to be a food technologist. I love eating food and I enjoy preparing it.' That's anything from Thai green curry and Mexican chilli to mascarpone scrambled eggs. 'I am always eating. I love sharing food, the clinking of the glasses, the celebratory aspect of food. It's really the only time people talk, because you're too busy holding your knife and fork to pick up your phone.'

So what about the recent trend towards avoiding carbs like the plague? 'Oh please. I usually make something that comes with an accompaniment of carbs. Hit me up some of that naan bread. I'm only in this butter chicken game for the naan bread. But I also love crap, like KitKat, and I'd sell my soul for a TV Bar. I could eat a slab of Top Deck in one go and not even flinch. I have chocolate down to a fine art.'

So, to that already winning combination of talent, self-confidence and authenticity, we need to add carb-lover and spontaneous dancer. Stacey really is a rare find. ■

THE SWEETEST THING

For Stacey and Ricky, every night they're able to have dinner together is special.

'I've worked during the night our entire relationship. We don't know what it's like to come home and have dinner together.' While they try to make every day exciting, Valentine's Day is definitely a time to lay on the romance. 'Last year, I took the day off, unbeknown to him. I had a bottle of Champagne chilling and I assembled all his favourite things on the counter: a PS game, macarons, boy flowers (normal flowers, but for him) and little sweets he likes. When he got home, I was sitting in the middle of everything.'

