

SATURDAY, MAY 26, 2007

Dennis Jones: the interview



I've met someone special on the forum of the [Luv' fan club site](#). His name is [Casper Janssen](#). He has always been kind to me (everytime I've sent him an email, he has answered it). When I have a question about [Luv'](#) or the Dutch music scene, I know I can ask him. He's a real music encyclopedia. His career is special. He's a professional singer and his artist name is [Dennis Jones](#). Twenty years ago, he won a TV casting show on [Veronica](#) (a famous Dutch channel) and he scored four hits in the singles charts in the Netherlands (*[Don't Wanna Give Up](#)* (peak position: #31 in 1988), *[Heart Of Gold](#)* (#32 in 1991), *[Ma Belle Amie](#)* (#36 in 2005) and *[African Baby](#)* (#62 in 2006). His discs have been recorded, produced and mixed by the "crème de la crème" of the studio musicians, top producers and sound engineers in the Netherlands. He has also made a lot of live performances and has worked as a background singer for famous Dutch stars ([André Hazes](#), [Bonnie St.Claire](#)...). He has worked in a record company (EMI) to promote famous acts and runs the [Liz Mitchell fanclub](#) ([Liz](#) is [Boney M](#)'s lead singer and a good friend of him). Two years ago, he performed at [José's](#) fan club day in Oirschot. Last week I've decided to make an interview with him because I think he's a interesting person. In this interview, [Dennis Jones](#) talks about his influences, his best memories as an artist, [Liz Mitchell](#)and of course [Luv'](#)!!! Enjoy!!!

Luvorama: When and how did you realize that your voice was a "Gift of God", that you were talented? Do you play an instrument?

Dennis Jones: I always loved music and simply started singing with my favorite records when I was a little kid. I made my stage debut in 1974 when I was 6 or 7 years old. Already then I loved to sing for an audience. And so I developed my voice and learned myself how to sing. I took guitar lessons when I was about 12 years old. I'm not a great guitar player, but I can play good enough to compose my own songs. I never play guitar on stage or in the studio. I also play a little bit of piano, keyboards and drums which I learned myself. I wish I was a good piano player.

L: Who were your inspirations (bands, singers, actors) as a teenager? Who are your favourite artists now?

D.J: Well... that's a lot. My first records were Dutch folk music (**Vader Abraham, Corry & De Rekels**), which I took off my parents LP collection. Still today I love this music. When I first heard "**Mississippi**" of **Pussycat** in 1975 I was captured by the voice of their lead singer **Toni Wille**. I've been a fan of **Pussycat** and **Toni** since then. Good and honest songs and great melodies. Her voice has always been an inspiration to me. She can sing everything; pop, country, soul, rock, folk... you name it. And all with the emotion and soul of a black singer. Her voice is unique and very recognisable. I love singers who have their own sound.

My whole world changed when I saw **Boney M** on television with "**Ma Baker**". This really blew me away. The song, the sound and this stage performance were so brilliant for that time (and still are today!). Since then **Boney M** is my favourite group ever. Their music was such a great combination of styles, and they had great songs. "**Rivers Of Babylon**" is absolutely my number 1 song of all times. Still today I get goosebumps when I hear it. **Frank Farian** (**Boney M** producer) is one of the best hit producers on the planet and I love all his productions (**Eruption, Precious Wilson, Milli Vanilli, No Mercy, La Bouche**), and **Boney M's** lead singer **Liz Mitchell** has one of the finest voices I know.

I grew up in the disco era and **Donna Summer** is another favorite of mine. Besides the fact that she has a great voice and fantastic songs,

many of them became classics in pop music. Technically she is the best singer I know. Listening to her voice taught me a lot.

I always loved "happy feel-good music" and other artists I loved (and still do) are [ABBA](#), [Luv'](#), [Maywood](#).

Besides that I love black music like [Rick James](#) (may he rest in peace), [Mary Jane Girls](#), [George Benson](#), [Chaka Khan](#), [Al Jarreau](#), [Earth Wind & Fire](#), [Lionel Richie](#), [Whitney Houston](#), [Diana Ross](#), [Marvin Gaye](#), [Natalie Cole](#) etc.

On the other hand, I also always had for more "serious" pop and rock music. I'm a huge fan since 30 years of the rock band [Cheap Trick](#) (known of "[I Want You To Want Me](#)"), I love [the Beatles](#) (better than [the Stones!](#)), [U2](#), [The Police](#), [Blondie](#), [Paul McCartney](#), [UB40](#), [Bob Marley](#).

And I love country & western: [Dolly Parton](#), [Johnny Cash](#), [Kenny Rogers](#), [Dwight Yoakam](#), [Tammy Wynette](#), [Garth Brooks](#) etc. because most country songs are great songs because of it's simplicity. [Dolly Parton](#) is a wonderful composer.

Today my favorite artists are [John Legend](#), [Coldplay](#), [John Mayer](#), [Keane](#), [Corinne Bailey Ray](#), [Amy Winehouse](#), [Mary J Blige](#) etc. I prefer more traditional soul above the current R&B movement. Dance music is a strong movement and I also listen to a lot Dutch folk artists like [Jan Smit](#), [Rene Schuurmans](#) etc.

One of my favorite Dutch artists of all time is [Andre Hazes](#), who was the biggest Dutch folk singer of the last 30 years. His songs were great and he had the most beautiful simple but honest lyrics ever written in Holland. I had the honour to work with him and to do backing vocals for him. Sadly he suddenly passed away almost 3 years ago. To me he was the greatest Dutch artist ever, a great person who never forgot about his roots.

L: You took part in Casting shows (one of them being a TV show on Veronica in 1987), what's your opinion about the current casting shows? What are the differences with now and then?

D.J: Yes, I won a TV casting show in 1987. The biggest difference is the fact that back then they really searched for new talent. Today these casting shows are not about talents but about the TV show and to get as many viewers as possible. For the talents there is a a short-term

strategy. When I won the TV show in 1987, there wasn't such a big hype as the winners have today when they win these shows. Fact is that the people who produce these shows today don't care about the artists. It has more to do with marketing than with talent. That doesn't mean that the artists who win these shows today aren't talented. But their rise goes so fast, so they don't have the time to develop themselves, and before they know their career is already over. They are not given the time to really become great artists and entertainers. This is sad for the talents, because there's still a lot of talent around. Sadly record companies don't have a long term strategy with the winners and talents of these casting shows, so most of them are forgotten within a year. I didn't had a lot media exposure when I won the TV casting show, and in fact we never used the fact that I won this show when my break through single "*Don't Wanna Give Up*" came out. But thanks to this show I got the chance to meet the right people who helped me along, like a producer and songwriter and also a good manager. The casting show didn't led me to a recording contract. After winning the show I went into the studio with producer [Leslie Laverman](#) and we recorded "*Don't Wanna Give Up*". First after the recording was finished, we started looking for a record company which was interested to release my song and luckily we found one and "*Don't Wanna Give Up*" became one of the summer hits of 1988 here in Holland.

L: How did you choose [Dennis Jones](#) as an artist name?

D.J: My real name is "[Casper Janssen](#)", which is not exactly the right name for an artist. When I made my first single at age of 17 in 1985 my record company chose an artist name for me, "[Tommy Foster](#)". I always hated that name. After two flops the record deal was over and I had to start all over again. When I did the casting show in 1986 I used my real name. Shortly after that I started doing live gigs here in Holland. Since "[Janssen](#)" isn't a very artistic name here in Holland I changed that simply into "[Jones](#)", so I did some gigs as "[Casper Jones](#)". Then a German agency arranged some gigs for me in Germany. Two weeks before my first German gig the promoter phoned me and he had to print the posters for my gig. He told me that the name "[Casper](#)" sounded very silly in Germany and he suggested to name myself "[David](#)"

Jones". I said " that's not possible, because **David Bowie**'s real name is **David Jones** and also the lead singer of **The Monkeys**' name is **David Jones**." I asked him to think about it, but that was not possible, because the posters had to be printed that day. So I suddenly said "well, then make it **DENNIS Jones**" and since then it stayed that way. I wanted an easy name, not too difficult and easy to remember.

L: What are your best memories in your career? Your best live performance?

D. J: There are several "best memories" in my career.... my first performance in 1974 as a little kid, my first single in 1985 (although it was a flop), winning the TV casting show in 1987, the first time you hear your record on national radio and then scoring my first hit in 1988 with "**Don't Wanna Give Up**" in the Dutch Top 40. That was a great feeling. And of course working with the very best Dutch studio musicians. I worked with great people like **Onno Vandelaak** who discovered me in 1984. He has produced many great artists in the '80's like **Centerfold, The Star Sisters, Patricia Paay, Ten Sharp, Angie Bowie, Dana Gillespie**. Other great people I worked with are the producer/engineer **Erwin Musper** (who produced/engineered/mixed **Def Leppard, Bon Jovi, Scorpions** and many great Dutch artists like **Toni Wille, Robbie Valentine, Normaal**), **Ronald Prent** (who worked with **Mick Jagger, Tina Turner, David Bowie**), **Okkie Huysdens (Stars On 45)**, **Rene van Verseveld** (a Dutch producer who today works in L.A. for people like **Enrique Iglesias, Ike Turner, Paris Hilton**), **Peter Schön (Dolly Dots, Marco Borsato, Krezip, Anita Meyer, Gerard Joling)**. Today I'm very proud of the fact that I work with one of Dutch most successful producers of today, **Kees Tel**. He's really a sound wizard, works very fast and has a very commercial ear. Performing live is always a highlight. There are several highlights. One of them was performing live with a band on TV with my hit "**Heart Of Gold**". Another highlight when I did 3 prom concerts in a football stadium here in the Netherlands with a big symphonic orchestra. Besides singing my regular repertoire I also had to sing excerpts of the musical "**West Side Story**", which was a complete new experience to me. It was a big production, a huge stage and the audience went wild.

L: What's your worst memory in your career?

D.J: Losing recording contract in 1993 with **Red Bullet** was a logical but not a pleasant experience shortly after I recorded an album for **Red Bullet**, which never was released. You don't record an album to stay in the vaults. Everything fell apart. I lost my manager, my producer and friend **Onno Vandelaak** immigrated to Ireland and I felt I had to start all over again. I thought my singing career was over. Although I kept doing live performances all over Holland and did session work as backing vocalist for many Dutch artists, I had to wait 12 years before my recording career continued. In 2005 **EMI** released a "best of" album of my material recorded between 1985 and 1992, which led to a new recording contract for **Berk Music**, which is my current record company. Another difficult memory of my career was singing at a funeral. This was for a person who always loved hearing me sing, and singing at his funeral was very emotional. I hope I never have to sing at a funeral again.

L : When did you first meet the Luv' ladies? What do you think about their current comeback? What are your favourite Luv' and José songs?

D.J: **Luv'** is very special to me. When I met my manager **Wally Mackey** in 1987 at the pre-selection of the **Veronica TV Casting show**, he immediately wanted me to record a single. He was the singer of the pop group **Lemming** in the '70's, which was produced by **Hans van Hemert**. He arranged that I could record with **Hans** but **Hans** had a busy schedule so I had to wait a few weeks. In the meantime, I met **Leslie Laverman** who wrote "**Don't Wanna Give Up**" for me. I loved that song, so I let **Hans van Hemert** go and went into the studio with **Leslie**. Although I don't regret that I decided to work with **Leslie** back then, I still think it's a pity that I didn't work with the most legendary Dutch producer ever: **Hans van Hemert**. He's responsible for many worldwide hits for artists like **Mouth & McNeal**, **Kamahl** and of course **Luv'**. My first meeting with a **Luv'** girl was in 1987 or 1988. I did performances with her, and her artist name was **Sharon Vice**.... we had the same management/booking agency and her real name was **Diana van Berlo**. We worked several times together, and shortly after that she was asked to join the new formation of **Luv'** to take the place

of **José Hoebee** who didn't want to take part of the "new" **Luv'** with **Marga Scheide** and **Michelle Gold**. Although I did meet **Patty Brard** several times at showbiz parties in the '90's, we never seriously talked with each other. My first meeting with a "real" **Luv'** lady was at a fan club day a few years back in Breda where I had the pleasure to meet the wonderful **José Hoebee**. Besides the fact that she is a great singer, she's also a wonderful and down-to-earth lady. I think that part of her character is because of the fact that she comes from the same area here in the Netherlands as I do. We both come from the south of the country where people are far away from arrogance and have a no-nonsense attitude. She's a very warm hearted sweet and sensitive lady. Since then **José** and I keep in touch every now and then, but not too often. Of course, I also think **Patty** and **Marga** are great but I don't have a personal connection with them. **Luv's** come back is great. It's wonderful to see that the ladies are good friends now, after all the differences which have been all over the press here in Holland. **Patty, Marga & José** still have a great connection. It is very unique because beside **Luv'** there aren't many groups of the '70's which can say that they still perform in the original line up. I loved the reality soap and I think for **Patty, Marga and José** it's pure fun what they do now. They don't take themselves too seriously and show that they have a lot of humor. Many of their songs are still classics. My favorite **Luv'** songs are *"U O Me (Waldolala)"*, *"You're The Greatest Lover"*, *"Let There Be Love"*, *"My Number One"*, *"My Man"*, *"Ann Maria"*, *"Trojan Horse"*, *"Welcome To My Party"*, *"Mother Of The Hearts"*, *"Dream Dream"*, *"Trojan Horse"*..... too many to name.... I think **Luv'** never did a bad song. Simple but great catchy melodies, wonderfully sung and brilliant productions which sounds as fresh today as it did back then. My least favorite is probably *"Don't Let Me Down"*. My all time favorite **José** track is *"Time Goes By"*.

L: You founded the **Liz Mitchell** fanclub , when did you first meet her? What do you like in her voice? What's your point of view about the fact that 4 **Boney M** groups exist? Don't you think it's a pity?

D.J: I didn't found the fanclub. **Peter Moree** did it in 1993 and shortly afterwards in 1994 we met and then we decided to run this fanclub together. Since then **Peter** has become one of my best friends. I met **Liz Mitchell** in 1994 and we've been seeing each other a lot since then

and we became friends. For me there are two different [Liz Mitchell](#)'s; 1) the person & friend [Liz Mitchell](#) 2) the artist and singer [Liz Mitchell](#). As a friend we've been invited several times at [Liz](#)'s house in England to stay there for a weekend and it was great having [Liz](#) and her group performing as a surprise at my wedding in 1996. She is a very caring and spiritual woman. As an artist, she did incredible things as lead singer of [Boney M.](#) She's a fantastic stage performer and she has a beautiful, powerful and warm voice. No one sings like her. She's unique. When she sings she sings from the bottom of her heart. No one can sing "[Rivers Of Babylon](#)" like she can. Still today [Liz Mitchell](#) tears the house down with her live performances. She is very a very pleasant person to work with, but also very, very professional. The fact that several formations tour the world as "[Boney M.](#)" is a disgrace to the legend of "[Boney M.](#)". Especially because, besides [Liz Mitchell](#), none of the other formations contributed to the music of [Boney M.](#) These people only mime to the original voices of [Liz Mitchell](#), [Marcia Barrett](#) and [Frank Farian](#) and put up a cheap show. [Liz](#) is the only one who has the official authorisation from [Frank Farian](#) (who owns all the rights to [Boney M.](#)) to carry on the name "[Boney M.](#)". [Liz Mitchell](#) is, together with her group, the only one who can reproduce that magic sound of [Boney M.](#) live on stage.

L: You know I'm French. Do you know the current French scene? Which French artists and productions do you like?

D.J: I like [Daft Punk](#) and [AIR](#). One of the [Daft Punk](#) guys is the son of the [Ottawan](#) producer. France has a huge musical history. Two years ago I was at a concert of [Charles Aznavour](#) here in Holland..... I believe he was already 80 years old back then. This is one of the best concert. This man is incredible.... He recently released a great new album. [Aznavour](#) still belongs to the current scene. What legend is this man. He's one of the greatest artists ever and is to compared with [Frank Sinatra](#), [Dean Martin](#), [Elvis Presley](#) etc. I also love the work of [Gilbert Becaud](#) and [Dalida](#). And my own music is very much influenced with reggae, I love to listen to [Alpha Blondy](#). His album `[Jerusalem](#)` is a classic.

L: You used to work (or still work) in a record company (EMI) because of your knowledge of the music business, which artists did you promote?

D.J: International artists like [Robbie Williams](#), [The Beatles](#), [The Rolling Stones](#), [Coldplay](#), [Tina Turner](#), [Diana Ross](#), [Air](#), [Joss Stone](#), [Pink Floyd](#), [Norah Jones](#), [Queen](#), [Kate Bush](#), [Depeche Mode](#), [Julien Clerc](#), [Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds](#), [Joe Cocker](#), [Placebo](#), [UB40](#), [Simple Minds](#), [Roxette](#), [Lenny Kravitz](#), [Corinne Bailey Ray](#), [KT Tunstall](#), [Amos Lee](#), [Janet Jackson](#), [Chemical Brothers](#), [Daft Punk](#), [Aznavour](#), [George Michael](#), [Tiziano Ferro](#), [Stacey Orrico](#), [Eternal](#), [Javine](#), [Paul McCartney](#), [Maria Callas](#), [Anita Baker](#), [Radiohead](#), [Deep Purple](#), [Genesis](#), [George Harrison](#), [Duran Duran](#), [Kim Wilde](#), [Faith Evans](#), [St. Germain](#), [John Lennon](#), [Lisa Marie Presley](#), [Lily Allen](#).. Also some of the greatest Dutch artists like [Bløf](#), [André Hazes](#), [Trijntje Oosterhuis](#), [Dulfer](#), [Rob de Nijs](#), [KUS](#), [Guus Meeuwis](#), [René Froger](#), [Gerard Joling](#), [Gordon](#), [De Toppers](#)... all had number 1 hits and albums here in the Netherlands.

L: What do you think about the current economical and ethic situation of the Dutch music business?

D.J: It's difficult. The music business changes quickly. But as long as people love music there will be a business.

L: Don't you think it's a pity that Dutch singing productions aren't more successful? Haven't you heard of a French law which obliges every radio station to broadcast at least 40% of French productions? Do you think it's good?

D.J: In Holland there is a different situations than in France. Radio stations here are free to play what they wanna play. Allthough national radio stations don't support all kinds of Dutch music, the situation is getting much better because of many commercial radio stations. Thanks to typical Dutch artists like [Marco Borsato](#), [Bløf](#), [Jan Smit](#), [Guus Meeuwis](#), [Frans Bauer](#), [Ch!pz](#), [André Hazes](#), [Gerard Joling](#), [De Toppers](#), the Dutch music is still very successful and has a very big share in the Dutch music industry.

L: Which Dutch and international music producers do you like?

D.J: Dutch: [John Ewbank](#), [Marcel Schimscheimer](#), [Hans van Hemert](#), [Onno Vandelaak](#), [Fluitsma & van Tijn](#), [Oscar Holleman](#), [Kees Tel](#), [Tiesto](#), [Fedde Le Grand](#) International: [Frank Farian](#), [Mark Ronson](#), [Rodney Jerkins](#), [Trevor Horn](#), [Quincy Jones](#)

L: With whom would you like to record a duet?

D.J: It depends on what kind of song it is. I love the voices of [Donna Summer](#) or [Beyoncé](#)....Last year I had an idea to ask [José Hoebee](#) to record `[When The Rain Begins To Fall](#)` ([Jermaine Jackson](#) + [Pia Zadora](#)) with me, but then suddenly [Gerard Joling & Gordon](#) (2 Dutch famous singers) recorded the song and had a hit with it. It would have perfectly fitted José's voice and mine. But because of the recording of [Gerard & Gordon](#), it never came so far to ask [José](#), but maybe who knows in the future? I recently recorded a new single with a legendary Dutch group which will be released later this year.... I'm very proud to have recorded with them..... Who it is? I'll tell you later.

L: What are your future plans?

D.J: Next month my new single "[I'd Love You To Want Me/De Zon Die Zal Schijnen](#)" will be released and the follow up single is also finished. I hope to start with the recordings of my album soon, and I plan my life always to be filled with music.