

Coco Jones: The 'Let It Shine' Interview



CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

by Kam Williams

A fresh-faced, bright-eyed, Southern beauty, 14-year-old, Hollywood Records recording artist Coco Jones will grace television sets across the world on June 15th when she stars in the Disney Channel original movie "Let It Shine" opposite Tyler James Williams and Trevor Jackson. Coco plays the role of "Roxie," a teenage singing sensation whose music label is sponsoring a songwriting contest at a teen club.

"Cyrus DeBarge" (Williams) writes a contest-winning song about his love for Roxie but, when he's too shy to claim it as his own, his best friend, "Kris McDuffy" (Jackson) takes the credit. Based on the play *Cyrano de Bergerac*, "Let It Shine" relates a tale of young love with an underlying message about summoning self-confidence.

Coco can also be seen regularly guest-starring on Disney Channel's "So Random" and on "Good Luck Charlie." Recently, she has been in the recording studio with Toby Gad, David Banner, and Rock Mafia. One of the hottest tracks to drop is a duet called "Whodunit?" with "Zeke and Luther" star Adam Hick which peaked on the Radio Dis-

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ney charts at #20.

Born in Columbia, S.C. on Jan. 4, 1998, to former NFL star Mike Jones and talented session vocalist Javonda Jones, Coco was raised in Lebanon, Tenn., where she began singing as soon as she learned to speak. The young actress/singer/rapper's first stage performance was at the age of 6 when she belted out "America the Beautiful" to a wowed crowd of parents at her kindergarten graduation.

In 2010, she released her debut CD, "Coco Jones," featuring songs reflecting her platform of positive values and strong self-esteem. Last year, Coco was one of five finalists in Disney's "Next Big Thing" competition, an achievement which further helped to launch her musical career. And this summer, she will be touring with the "Next Big Thing" talent contest.

Kam Williams: Hi, Coco, thanks for the interview.

Coco Jones: Thank you, Kam, for having me.

KW: What interested you in the role of Roxie in Let It Shine?

CJ: When I first read the script, I fell in love with it. Singing, dancing, and acting! The part was right up my alley. Plus, the thought of playing a rock star was like a dream for me.

KW: The movie is based on the *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Did you read the original play in preparation for the part?

CJ: I read a lot of summaries about the story. I also watched Roxanne, the movie starring Steve Martin.

KW: The lead characters' names have been changed slightly from *Cyrano* and Roxanne to Cyrus and Roxie. Has the story been changed, too?

CJ: Oh, yes, they definitely updated the story, setting it around today's music indus-

try, featuring Gospel and Hip-Hop music.

KW: The movie is also a musical. How much did you get to sing?

CJ: I got to sing a lot. I am singing in five songs from the soundtrack.

KW: What message do you think people will take away from the movie?

CJ: The main message of this movie that everyone will take away is to believe in yourself. Cyrus learns to have confidence in his writing, Chris has confidence in his performance, and my character, Roxie, learns to be confident in her singing. Another great message that girls will take away from Roxie is to love yourself. All girls my age know about wanting to fit in. I think that they will watch Roxie trying to do the same thing with her clothes, make-up, and her entire performance. Over the course of the movie, she learns to be herself, to develop her own style, and to not change herself to please others.

KW: You sing, rap, dance and act. Which is your favorite?

CJ: I honestly love it all, which is why I enjoyed playing Roxie. Through the character, I was able to showcase all of my talents.

KW: You became a national sensation when you were a finalist on Radio Disney's Next Big Thing competition. Do you have a concert tour on the horizon?

CJ: Yes, and I am so excited! I will be all over the United States through 2012. I love to see people enjoy my music and my shows.

KW: You were just signed to a recording contract with Hollywood Records. What was that like, to sign the papers and what kind of music can your fans look for in the near future?

CJ: Signing with Hollywood Records was a dream come true. I am so blessed to get to do the things that I love to do every day of my life. My fans can expect to be blown away with the music I'm writing. The day after I signed my contract, I went right into the studio. My new album will have Pop, Rap, R&B and some huge ballads.

KW: Harriet Pakula Teweles says: You're only 14. How do you balance the demands of school and career?

CJ: Well, sometimes it is hard because my schedule is crazy. I am homeschooled, so my school travels with me. My parents have one rule for me: I can't do any of this if I have any C's on my report card.

KW: Is your online course work mostly an extension of your performance interests?

CJ: Unfortunately, not. It is the exact same work any eighth grader would do.

KW: What do you plan to study in college?

CJ: I'd love to major in Music. I love what I do, but I want to really understand it, more in depth.

KW: The Tasha Smith question: Are you ever afraid?

CJ: No, not really... I guess I'm used to all of it by now. I just tend to feel really excited!

KW: The Columbus Short question: Are you happy?

CJ: I am sooooo happy! I have a great family that loves me, a record deal at 14, and I get to do what I love every day.

KW: The Teri Emerson question: When was the last time you had a good laugh?

CJ: Everyday, especially anytime I am with my daddy. He's so funny! My whole family jokes around a lot.

KW: What is your guiltiest pleasure?

CJ: Purses. When I want to treat myself, I will almost always get myself a new handbag.

KW: The bookworm Troy Johnson question: What was the last book you read?



Coco Jones

CJ: I have read some great books recently: "Heaven is For Real," "Bud Not Buddy," and my favorite, "Tiger Eyes."

And my next book will be "The Hunger Games."

KW: The music maven Heather Covington question: What was the last song you listened to?

CJ: I listen to Glee songs a lot. I like their rendition of "Bust the Window Out Your Car."

KW: What is your favorite dish to cook?
CJ: I like to cook Shrimp Alfredo. It's also my favorite dish to eat!

KW: The Sanaa Lathan question: What excites you?

CJ: Performing of any kind: singing, acting, dancing. I also get really excited during interviews.

KW: The Uduak Oduok question: Who is your favorite clothes designer?

CJ: I am so laid back that, honestly, I'm in jeans and sweats a lot of the time. I like Aeropostale and Hudson Jeans.

KW: Dante Lee, author of "Black Business Secrets," asks: What was the best business decision you ever made, and what was the worst?

CJ: I would have to say the best was when my mom formed a company for me. I write out all of the checks for my performance business. I get to see the money I make and how much it takes to do what I do. My worst decision was not learning Spanish yet. I think it would really help my business if I could do some of my singles in Spanish or a Spanish/English mix.

KW: If you could have one wish instantly granted, what would that be for?

CJ: My personal wish would be to have my own TV show but, if I could have anything, my wish for the world is that no one on the Earth would ever go hungry.

KW: The Kerry Washington question: If you were an animal, what animal would you be?

CJ: I would be a butterfly. A beautiful, purple butterfly.

KW: The Pastor Alex Kendrick question: When do you feel the most content?

CJ: When I'm with my entire family.

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