

# Vive Les Girls!

HEY DONNA, STILL WANNA?

TOP ROCK GIRLY JOCK TALKS SHOP

## HZSoGood

“Stuff you didn’t know you wanted to know”

#139-December 2009

### And now, ladies and gentlemen...

...make that, *And now, ladies*. A play in two acts.

## ***Does Donna still wanna?***

### ***(yes, she does)***

**D**onna Loren says “thank you” when you tell her she’s still the sexiest girl next door. And it’s true: the years have done nothing to diminish her charm. See for yourself at [www.donnaloren.net](http://www.donnaloren.net).

A few weeks back, the one-time queen of the beach flicks, the “Dr. Pepper girl” who belted out the hits on *Shindig!* and made the variety show rounds (back when there was such a thing as a variety show) was my guest via phone (from Hawaii, so the ultimate beach) on WRNJ. We not only talked about those days but also what Donna’s done “post-retirement” (in 1968, she left the biz for a tougher job, being a wife and mom).

**The thing most people probably remember about you is being in all those American International beach movies.** I was in four of them, and it all began with Dr. Pepper. When I signed on to be their spokesperson and became the Dr. Pepper girl, part of their ad campaign was sponsoring the movie *Muscle Beach Party*. The fellow in charge of the advertising company wrote that script. Suddenly I found myself seated at Big Drag’s (Don Rickles) beach shack

holding a Dr.Pepper, and from there I was introduced to Dick Dale and performed the duet with him on "Muscle Bustle."

**So here's this series of films about young people dancing and having all kinds of fun at the beach. What was going on behind the scenes? If Perez Hilton was around then, would he have had a lot to blog about?** I'll cut to the chase. It was more about the infamous Bill Asher, who was directing the films. He had a trailer on set. I was a minor and very protected by my parents. My adopted father, who was also my manager, was glued to me at all time, so I was a voyeur watching the beach bunnies, the surfer girls being invited into Mr Asher's trailer.

**You appeared on one of the early episodes of TV's *Batman*, which you had to have taped before the series went on the air. Did you have any idea this was going to be the phenomenon it was?** Absolutely no clue. Although I remember driving up to the studio where there was a chain link fence before you could pass through the guard gate, and there was already a battery of teenagers trying to climb the fence. When I met Adam West and Burt Ward, I realized *Batman* was really special, but I had no idea it would become iconic.

**Protecting Donna from all kinds of Jokers.**

**I tell people who are too young to remember you that you are your generation's Britney Spears. I hope you take that as a compliment.** I really appreciate that! Actually, we had a similar start because I love to sing and so does she, we both appeared on the *Mickey Mouse Club* when we were the same age. Of course, it was a different time, and I was in a unique situation: I had a very close watch on me at all times because I was always the youngest and a minor in the group. And by the time I was 21, I retired.

**Appearing on so many TV and variety shows, you were arguably the most visible female singer of that era. To me it's ironic, since most other female singers who had hits at that time didn't get the exposure you did, yet you had a hard time jumpstarting your recording career. Why do you think that is?** It's always been a mystery to me, seriously. And, you know, I continued to record. When I was going through my first divorce in the early '80s, I decided to go into the studio. I was married to someone who worked at Warner Brothers studios. Actually, that's where we had met: I was an artist on Reprise and he was a producer at Warner Brothers (editor's note: that was legendary producer Lenny Waronker). After many years we separated, and rather than going to counseling, I ended up going into the studio, and my dear friend James Burton assembled his Elvis band and actually saved my sanity during a traumatic time in my life by going in and just making music. (Note: you can listen to Donna's early recordings, such as "Hands Off," on YouTube.)

**What happened to all that music?** All of it was locked up in boxes in my garage all these years. My current husband decided to make some space and clean out the garage, and he said, do you think these tapes even play? So he started checking everything, and ultimately that resulted in this latest CD, which I never really intended for anyone to hear, but I'm very happy to share my music from that difficult time in my life. Now I am going back into the studio, compelled to make more music.

**One recording of yours that jumps out is actually a re-recording of a song you performed in *Beach Blanket Bingo*, “It Only Hurts When I Cry.” You can’t help but hear the emotion you bring, which certainly wasn’t there the first time.** Obviously, the beach party movies were sort of silly and meant to be fun, but the meaning of the song is obviously profound. So now I’ve exchanged my youth for wisdom!

**The other thing people should check out at [www.donnaloren.net](http://www.donnaloren.net) are your new photos. You must be drinking the same stuff Dick Clark drank all those years.** Thank you so much! I’ve just been blessed with lots of love and joy. I’m happily living here in Hawaii, where I love to be. It’s just a choice, I guess. The one thing I admire is this new thing, 60 is the new 40.

**Maybe I should have asked if she can sing Whitesnake’s “Here I Go Again.”**

**Then there’s that shot of you and Betsy (above). I don’t know who to look at.** I raised my children in that! That went from baby buggies to surfboards!

**What’s next for Donna Loren?** I’m working on my next album. Stay tuned!

**You can get *Magic*, Donna’s CD collection of songs she recorded during those crazy ’80s – featuring a knockout remake of Dusty Springfield’s “Wishin’ and Hopin’” – at <http://www.donnaloren.net/>.**