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Meet Gwen Hughes | Musician and Actor

February 15, 2023 · Leave a reply



We had the good fortune of connecting with Gwen Hughes and we've shared our conversation below.

Hi Gwen, we'd love to hear about how you approach risk and risk-taking

I am ridiculously curious. Because of this, I am not afraid of risk if it's something I am interested in learning, or an experience I want to have. This started many years ago when, after getting a corporate advertising job, I gave it up to go on the road singing for almost no money. As my Dad always said, "You have to do it to know," and this has pretty much been my motto for life. After the road gig ended – and even though I had never done it before– I got offered a house gig in Atlanta leading a band – so...I created a band. I surrounded myself with players who knew more than I did and learned from them.

The other part of my Dad's edict has helped too: "If you haven't made any money in 5 years, then you might need to do something different." He means that doing something you love is fine, but don't be a starving artist. I think I was then driven the need to succeed at my passion – music and singing – and preserving my career by actually making a living at it. So, I work long days, have generally had additional sources of income – part-time jobs, acting work, voice over work, even playing characters in murder mysteries – and have made a very good living. I am blessed.

Risk is fuel for me. Without a major label deal funding it, I have toured 15 countries all over the world, performing my original music, generally with musicians based in whatever country I am performing in. This globetrotting started with a simple dream to perform in Paris – which then led to Croatia, then the Czech Republic, then a decade with the same band in Slovenia. And again, I balanced the dreams with pragmatism and made sure I was making an income on these tours.

The answer is always "yes" for me, especially if I am learning something new. I could go on with other examples of "yes:" doing a one-off audition for a show just because T Bone Burnett was the music producer – and getting 3 years of work out of it; writing original songs for film and TV; being a Board Member and Grammy Museum Ambassador for The Atlanta Chapter of the Recording Academy; digging a water trench for a village in Kenya; getting married (later in life); and skydiving.

Making a list of things like the above makes me both uncomfortable and filled with gratitude.



Let's talk shop? Tell us more about your career, what can you share with our community?

The brand of my/our music is jazz – but it's a label I fought for a while. I wanted to be a "rock star," not a "jazzier." But jazz is the music of exploration, so I eventually gave into it's allure. I am a pop singer that can "hang" in jazz, so the music is an interesting amalgam of all my influences from both the pop, theatrical and jazz world. I call my original music "soul jazz," which is another way of saying it's a blend of my love of r&b music and jazz. (In fact, the US State Dept. sponsored two (2) tours in Eastern Europe of our band performing American soul and jazz classics.)

I think what sets us apart is being accessible – we make jazz fun. I love performing and I try to have band members – and this has been a process of trial and error over many years – that also love performing. That way the audience gets a good show as well as good music.

Of course it hasn't always been easy and sometimes, I have felt very alone in some of my decisions about my career. But there is no true "failure" I can name, just "teachable moments" for how to do it better next time (or move on to something else).



Any places to eat or things to do that you can share with our readers? If they have a friend visiting town, what are some spots they could take them to?

I love the outdoors, a good meal, and hanging with a few friends – not a big crowd. So, an al fresco restaurant like Canoe (Vinings) is a destination spot...The Old Vinings Inn with its beautiful patio...Anis Bistro (Buckhead). The Yellow River Wildlife Refuge in Stone Mountain does wonderful work with rescued wildlife (thank you, Micah Cadwell, for introducing me to it). And I live very near the Chattahoochee River, which the Riverkeepers have done a magnificent job of rehabilitatiing – we walk and run next to it as much as we can. I adore animals, so visiting/volunteering at Furkids is nice – especially at their beautiful new facility in Cumming, GA. And Georgia has so many lovely wineries now – Wolf Mountain Vineyards is one of my favorites.



Shoutout is all about shouting out others who you feel deserve additional recognition and exposure. Who would you like to shoutout?

Oh my goodness, there are SO many! My family, first and foremost – most significantly, my father, Richard, a writer and creative soul who understood my need to explore. But also my solid rock Mom, Beth– who made me learn to play the piano — and equally-creative brother, Kevin (now a superstar teacher in Atlanta). My high school piano teacher, Pearl Barfield, who taught me how to read chord symbols (so I could sing and play, rather than just play) and high school chorus director, Randy Wilbur. Pianist Bill Wilson, who, many moons ago, gave me important pointers on how to lead a band (“know your keys;” “know how to end a song”). The amazing Drew Young, producer and mentor on so many projects. Guitarist Steve Cunningham, a true partner in the exploration of my original music. Tomi Purich, who has brought me over to Europe for so many years and manages our band so well. Kabir Sehgal, for always showing up right when I needed to be inspired to create music again. The countless clients and clubs that gave me work and joy and make me a better musician. The agents and promoters who continue to give our band work. The on camera agents and casting directors who took a chance on me, especially Alexander White Agency. The beautiful friends and colleagues from The Grammy Board in Atlanta. Gina MacFarland, who is generous and always makes me look better than I do. Eric Johnson, who has been a friend,

employer, and “patron” for almost 30 years. And my amazing drummer, fellow God-seeker, roadie, driver, sound tech, happy-song inspiration, and husband, Mike Hinton, who makes every day and every gig better.



Website: www.gwenhughes.com (<http://www.gwenhughes.com>)

Instagram: [@gwenmusicfilm](https://www.instagram.com/gwenmusicfilm)

Twitter: [@gwenmusicfilm](https://twitter.com/gwenmusicfilm)

Facebook: [facebook.com/gwenmusicfilm](https://www.facebook.com/gwenmusicfilm) (<http://facebook.com/gwenmusicfilm>)

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOgYTxJyoJdlhMvwGvWyPfw>
(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOgYTxJyoJdlhMvwGvWyPfw>)

Other: Tour Dates, Booking & Press: info@gwenhughes.com On Camera Representation for Film, TV and Commercial: Alexander White Agency (<https://alexanderwhiteagency.com/>)
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