

The daughter of famed dragster racer Fred Hanssen, Karina is quick to credit him for influencing her musical taste.

"I think he secretly wanted to be a Rock star," she confides. "He got me listening to Elvis, Freddie Mercury, AC/DC, and he was a fan of girl singers like Lita Ford and Joan Jett. He has good taste! I seem to have always been singing, it's something I just do. I didn't discover it, I've been doing it since I was little. I really only took it seriously about six years ago though."

Honing her craft around Norway, she spent time playing shows with a band very familiar to Fireworks readers, TNT. Karina happily explains the happenstance that allowed the union to happen.

"The drummer from TNT is from the same city that I live in and we just kinda got into a deal where we'd tour together. It was a Norwegian tour and it was really cool to watch how they did it. I was their warm up act and it was a great experience. They are definitely the definition of a 'Rock' band because backstage you'd have to go far away to escape the smell of weed!" she laughs.

Even more impressive is the time the young singer spent with the late, great Jon Lord.

"That was amazing, I have to say," Karina responds, the enthusiasm in her voice obvious. "I was really sad he passed away because we actually talked about doing a collaboration. He was someone I watched growing up and when I met him, I expected he would be difficult to get in touch with, but he was the nicest person I've ever met. My manager knew him because Jon had a manager or an agent who was from Norway. He was doing a practice session for 'Child In Time'. It's such a high song and Jon said that they needed someone to help sing the high parts. I figured that was my chance, so I said 'I'll do it!' I wasn't even sure I could reach that high, but I decided to take a chance!" she laughs. "I really admired him, he always cared about who he was working with, it was always 'Are you okay, do you feel good?' He'd always check if you were feeling tired or needed a break, it was never about him and that really impressed me."

# Karina

*Up and coming singer/songwriter Karina Hanssen has been plying her trade in her home country of Norway, touring with the likes of TNT, before setting out to make her debut album 'Rebellion'. James Gaden talked to Karina about her influences, her album and working with a bona fide Rock legend...*

With those great experiences under her belt, Karina was keen to strike out and make an album of her own, a real statement of intent. It's a fusion of Rock, Pop and Electronica, so I enquire about the creative process she employed.

"I co-wrote everything," she reveals. "I want to stand behind this album let people know this is my story, everything was written about a time in my life. I worked with six different producers and they all have their own way of working. One would do everything on acoustic guitar, another would do something else and I'd always come in with references to say 'Hey, I really like this beat, that guitar part...' to help shape what I was going for when we put the bass down

or whatever. The music needed to slam, so for me, the louder the drums were, the better!"

And slam it does, for even on the tracks where the keyboards are more prominent than the guitars, the energy throughout the record is ever present.

"Yeah, it took me a long time to finish this but now I've got what I wanted," Karina agrees. "I've found all the elements. I wanted to make it *me*, not like anybody else. I think I've taken the Rock elements, put a modern touch on it, a hint of Dub or Electro, you can see what I like from different genres. I feel I always have to get the energy out so I always like to sing quite brutal, it's almost like therapy in a way, to get it out."

It would be easy to assume this was her first time working under studio conditions, but despite her youth, Karina is more seasoned than she appears.

"I've done it in Norway - this has been a long journey. It feels like I've made three albums really, because I'd record stuff and then end up dropping it because it didn't feel like me, you know? It kept getting influenced by other people telling me maybe I should do this, or that. It's finally come to the point where the team I have all want the best for me, so it was down to me to say 'This is what I like' and they'd back me up because they understood what I was going for. I love 'Play Dirty', that was the last one I wrote for the record. As things have gone on I feel the album definitely became lighter and more playful, because in the beginning I was getting a lot of heavy stuff out. When I wrote that one, I was more in the mood to want to play! I had a hat I was wearing that said 'Play Dirty' and I just thought it was a perfect title. 'Trigger' is one I wrote to describe things that get me really angry and worked up - traffic is the main thing at the moment! That's my song to tell people to get out of my way. I couldn't pick just one from this selection though as a favourite, every song is a part of my life telling a story."

Karina's image is one of a rebellious Rock Chick, but she's keen to dispel the notion that such an image might be a carefully crafted marketing ploy to sell her album 'Rebellion'.

"No, it's pretty much what I feel," she explains. "I grew up in a really small town where everyone knows everyone else, and if you try and do something a bit different people judge you. I've always wanted to do something different, even when it was down to buying clothes, I didn't want to wear what everyone else was wearing. I've never listened to what people tell me I should do, so 'Rebellion' sums me up pretty well. I feel really strong about what I'm doing, it feels right, it feels good and things seem to be coming together. I'm working hard, trying my best and wanted to succeed but I feel that I couldn't really have done anything any better. I've got the album I wanted now and I'm proud of it, so I've done my job!"



Photo: Bjorn Christiansen