

Kalomoira: The Real-girl Rules!

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Because, for the most part, I have little better to do with my time than write letters to people and lifestyle magazine pieces that almost nobody reads, I sent the article I wrote about Greek-American pop-singer Kalomoira, to her pop's restaurant in New York. I thought she might get a kick out of it, as most people are pretty much gaga to see glossy information about themselves in print. I know this is true because sometimes I even used to write articles about myself for *Athens News*, just so I can, as Andy Warhol used to say, "remind myself that I'm still there."

Much to my surprise, she wrote back to me. Much more to my surprise was the tone of genuine, sincere thanks and appreciation in the note. We exchanged a few e-mails and a breezy, uptowny blah-blah phone call ensued, which resulted in our informal telephone interview.

I've lived in Athens since 2000, and have witnessed the career development of Kalomoira since her introduction to Greek radio and TV in 2002 on the *Fame Story* television program. After her contest triumph, a barrage of talk show appearances and radio singles were unleashed on Greek audiences with enthusiastic results. Kalomoira became a household name and teen icon to hordes of good girl Ellinidas almost overnight.

I'm here to tell you, straight from the heart of a middle-aged pop-radio geek, that the Kalomoira you get on the TV is same girl you get in real life. There is not a single brainwave of catty weirdness, ego-trip self-worship, airs of superiority or just plain affected mall-babe discontent about her. A nicer, more down-to-earth, real-girl you may never find.

The secret of her success is so straightforward, easy to understand and commonsensical it is almost unnerving to hear. Hard work is the only requirement for positive, productive achievement. She stays in shape, takes voice lessons, writes new material all the time, plays and sings with other musicians and is ready to consider new work offers whenever they are offered to her. Ergo, her phone is pretty busy these days. Several TV stations in Europe are offering her program contracts for the fall/winter season.

Her current contract with her Greek music company has nearly expired, so we should be hearing new material from the ebullient Greek-American chanteuse sometime in the near future. It appears Greece really lost out big-time when Kalomoira left our country to pursue her career elsewhere. In America, the Greek communities in urban centers like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Miami treat her like visiting royalty. She has been parade queen in city festivals, and is considering doing a club tour of major American cities.

And, amazingly, her real-girl image has become a real-girl reality. After living in Manhattan and Athens for many years, the core-urbanite cutie now lives in the ultimate, quintessential American suburb of Arlington, Virginia, with her significant-other, the affable and laconic, George.

Her success in Greece, similar to the successes of Greek pop-singers Sakis Rouvas and Tamta, come from talent, of course, but also from brute personality and genuine care for people.

Pop/Bouzoukia singers are ten-a-penny in Athens. And, although she has been absent from Athens for more than a year, Kalomoira's name still generates excited responses whenever it is dropped in conversation. She was all over the nightly news broadcasts when she visited Athens and the islands this summer, leaving audiences mouth agape at her whiz-bang, yet homespun sincerity and signature Greek-lish repartee.

Although pop music tends to be a largely superficial culture, with lots of hairspray and glitz, people can still see through an ersatz façade of saccharine pathos in a nanosecond. Singers like Rouvas, Tamta and Kalomoira keep their fan bases strong and dedicated not because they shift styles with the times, but because of their genuine care for the people who enjoy their product and support their work. These three singers could make club appearances in central Athens and just tell jokes for an hour and people would still line-up to buy tickets because of the connection they feel to them. People see the good parts of themselves in these types of entertainers, and it pleases them greatly to feel attached to their personalities.

Kalomoira appears to be a very open-minded, clever and talented young woman who is capable of keeping her career options open, while still being selective about the work assignments she will accept. With any luck some intelligent and savvy Greek entertainment companies will understand they have a real uncut gem available to discuss some business collaborations that, with proper handling, could easily benefit both European and American business interests. Kalomoira Sarantis is, believe it or not, something of a national treasure, and, with the right guiding hands, could be something much more than a cute pop-siren with a catchy name.