

Hey, Jeannie!

Television presenter, radio personality and fitness and travel enthusiast Jeannie de Gouveia is fast becoming one of South Africa's finest exports in the world of entertainment.

We steal 30 minutes with the bubbly powerhouse known as Jeannie D...

By Yi-Hwa Hanna

I'll admit it, I'm actually a little bit intimidated waiting for Jeannie D to walk into the room: Sure, I'm not from South Africa so I hadn't grown up with her as a public figure I knew, but considering every single one of my friends from the country instantly recognised her name, and this is a woman who has been featured in the FHM Top 100 Beauties of the World multiple times—not to mention voted South Africa's favourite personality on the regular—I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I needn't have worried: The petite brunette barrelled into the lobby of the Fairmont The Palm with a huge smile across her face, breezing in like a warm hurricane—and apologising profusely for being just a few minutes late.

"I did my own makeup—I'm not very good at doing my own makeup, and I think I've gotten eyeshadow in my eye so now I feel like I'm going blind!" she laughs. Her moniker, Jeannie D, isn't a name that she chose for herself: When she was an 18-year-old rising star on South Africa's radio waves, her news reader couldn't pronounce her last name and so her producer at the time chose the nickname instead. Since she's passionate about branding, Jeannie went with it, and it just stuck.

Her career goals began early: At 12, she went to the National School of the Arts to study

drama. "I really wanted to be an actress, so I focused very intensely on acting. I won a national acting competition and every acting competition in my league throughout high school. My father was a very conservative man, and he didn't want me to become an actress one day, so he pulled me out of art school and put me into an academic high school so I could get my academics up, so that I'd later be able to go to university. I think in his mind, he wanted me to be a lawyer or an accountant, but sadly I wasn't cut out for that. So the minute I got the opportunity to go to university, I started a Bachelor of Arts, then got a job at the campus radio station where I was then trained by some of the best DJs in the country. At 18 years old I got offered a job in Cape Town for a top radio station. So I packed my bags against my father's will—back then he wasn't very happy about it but he's proud of me now!—and so I started my career in radio. Then I [eventually] got offered a position on TV," she says.

When she started on TV, it was something Jeannie never knew she had always loved, as she puts it. She had found her niche, and what she ultimately wanted to do. Since she has both a South African and a European passport thanks to her Portuguese roots, Jeannie



was offered the opportunity of a lifetime. “[My boss] sent me overseas—I was still basically a child, I was 19!—and she said I need nine assignments from you. They’re going to be super high-end ones. And so I went! I went to the USA for a couple of months, with an amazing director and a very talented cameraman, and we spent days sitting in a hotel room... but we succeeded and got these really amazing stories, and when I got back thankfully the audience liked me, and so my career began. I’ve been on TV ever since—it’s been a 13 year journey so far.” From there, Jeannie got into travel TV, and her shows are now syndicated all over the world. “We’ve been probably the most rated show on the travel channel,” she says.

Being in the public eye for the duration of your adult life has had its impact on the way Jeannie takes care of herself, not just in the way she looks and the way she treats her body. But it does come with its fair share of pressure. “A lot of people ask me about that just in terms of the pressure that comes with my job, but really that’s just the life of a woman, even if you’re working in a corporate environment. [Nowadays] you can’t go to work and try and be the next killer accountant or lawyer if you’re out of shape, [it seems]. It’s all about I believe what I am as a very driven, fast, woman—I have to be fast and fit, in order to have that mentally and spiritually as well. So that actually applies to everyone, and not just women in TV. Being on TV, maybe I get a little more criticism than what I’d like, but it does push me. I didn’t start out in very good shape, and I don’t necessarily keep it all the time—I mean I do travel a lot, and I love eating. I suppose I try and keep my body fit so I can allow my body to enjoy all the best things in the world. If I’m in Italy I’m not going to not allow myself to eat the gelato! So I’ve got to stay fit, and strong, since sometimes I

Treat your body like a Rolls Royce—you wouldn’t put cheap petrol in that, so do the same!



do a lot of extreme sports too,” Jeannie adds.

To keep in shape, Jeannie does everything from barre to HIIT—a recent favourite of hers is a class in South Africa called Switch, which will soon be expanding to New York. “I’m a bit of a shapeshifter since I get bored easily,” she says, adding that she also enjoys doing yoga, and trail walking and hiking,

particularly since South Africa has so many beautiful outdoor locations to do that in. “I’m not a model, I’m a real woman, so I’ve got to keep my shape but be real,” she says. She approaches her beauty and skincare regime with the same holistic attitude: “I’m really fortunate that I come from a family with really good hair! I’ve got really thick hair, but I do look after it. Since

it often has to be heat styled for work and shoots, I have a rule: Before I worry about the style, I worry about the hair condition. Outside of work, I don’t heat style my hair a lot. I have two blowdries a week with a treatment, and I don’t let anyone bring a hot iron or anything with heat near my hair, and that’s it. After years of doing it, I know [the damage it can do]. Having said that, I am a huge fan of the GHD—I think it’s one of the best inventions since sliced cheese, but women must know it’s not something you can put on your hair every morning before work! You’ve got to treat your hair how you would your skin. Be gentle with yourself. Sometimes, freshly washed hair and no makeup can be the most beautiful thing,” she says. Now in her 30s, Jeannie is passionate about taking care of her skin too. She always uses sunblock and does not over-wash her face. “That’s not natural, you’re stripping everything away! A bit of sweat, a bit of nature... then wash it,” she says, explaining that she loves a toner and moisturiser. One thing she won’t scrimp on is eye cream: “I always say to treat your body like you would a Rolls-Royce. You wouldn’t put cheap petrol in that, so do the same for your skin! I use La Prairie eye cream, drink a lot of water, don’t drink fizzy drinks and avoid too much sugar. What’s on the inside shows on the outside, after all.” Other must-haves? A good brow kit, highlighter—she’s not a big fan of over-contouring—and a nice bold lip. As for staying healthy while on the road, Jeannie has a few tricks up her sleeve: Being aware of what you’re putting into your body is key. “Pick your game. There are days you *have* to have that burger, but don’t have that lousy airport burger—have the best burger you can find, with the most high quality ingredients.” In Dubai, that for Jeannie is hummus, falafel, and pretty much any kind of cheese. “I can’t resist that here!” she laughs. ■