

Melorie Jane Full Biography

Melorie Jane is an award winning South African contemporary jazz artist who has received acclaim for her work in her multifaceted career. Her innovative approach and expression of Afro-funk jazz has made an impact in the jazz sector. She has been praised for her energetic and original arrangements. Her debut album- *More or Less* (2021) – a fusion of contemporary South African jazz, was nominated in five musical categories at the Mzantsi Jazz Awards in 2022. She won the Best Jazz Album as well as Best Female Jazz Artist.

She has also won the Best of South African Jazz Album of the Year 2022 after her debut album was top of charts on Vuka Online Radio for 11 months. Radio personality Nothemba Madumo raved about *More of Less* as “absolute brilliant” in her programme, The Urban Jazz Experience on Metro FM. In addition to her work as a solo artist, Melorie Jane collaborates extensively with other musicians and heads up *The Melorie Jane Quintet*.

Melorie Jane released her second album *Hold the stars* in May of 2024, a few months after her quintet was featured at the 2024 Cape Town Jazzathon Festival. She also performed for ministerial dignitaries in the Democratic Republic of Congo and at the opening of the prestigious St Regis Hotel in Muscat, Oman in the same year. Melorie Jane (31) released her latest single and music video on the first of January of 2025 and has since performed at the well established Jazz on the Rocks Festival (2025), the inaugural Table Mountain Jazz festival (2025) and the prestigious Cape Town International Jazz Festival (2025), and absolute highlight for her career. She also has several exciting new projects in development. Follow her career – new releases and live performances - on social media and listen to her music on online streaming platforms.

Formative years- music was key

The South African jazz artist and vocalist was born in Pretoria. Her speciality is the piano. Melorie Jane (full name Melorie Jane de Villiers), from a young age was immersed in music, sports, and academics. Her music career began when she was seven, she joined the local school choir (Lynnwood Primary). She played the piano by ear, before starting formal lessons at age nine. Her early love of the piano was instilled by her father, who supported and nurtured her dreams from the get-go. One of her profound memories is playing piano, with her dad. Growing up in a family which nurtured love of the arts, she visited art galleries, exhibitions, went to the theatre and concerts. Her mother, a visual artist, was equally supportive of her music and her choice to embark on a career in music.

Early music influences

Melorie Jane was drawn to world music from the Putumayo CD collection, songwriters such as Bob Dylan, rock bands Coldplay and Muse and the Buena Vista Social Club. At school (Die Hoërskool Menlopark), she did not play in bands and she was unfamiliar with jazz as a genre. In terms of the piano, she was exposed to church music, rock, and pop.

University studies

Building on her early music success as a child in the choir and piano, she embarked on university studies and received a Bachelor's in Music from the University of Pretoria (2015). This was followed with a Master's in Music Performance (2021) from University of Stellenbosch, with majors in jazz composition and performance (piano). It was at The National Arts Festival in Makhanda (formerly known as The Grahamstown Arts Festival), where she was exposed to South African and international jazz. The music department of the university at the time, pivoted around classical piano. Jazz piano as a first instrument was on offer but there was minimal instruction available in other areas of jazz practice. Students were encouraged to craft their own pathways by seeking input from the jazz sector, which Melorie did with passion as she skilled herself in jazz and in particularly jazz in South Africa and in Africa. She cites Phuti Sepuru and Charl du Plessis (University of Pretoria) and Pierre-Henri Wicomb (University of Stellenbosch) as key mentors in her university years. When she encountered the world of jazz, she was smitten by the vibrancy and energy and the opportunity to engage audiences in live performance and that crosses over to her albums.

Afro-funk jazz

In 2012, Melorie Jane, established *All the More*, an afro-funk jazz group which performed at venues in Pretoria, Hard Rock Café Menlyn and Marais Street Acoustics. The group was particularly popular with students and young people.

Solo career

Melorie moved to Franschhoek in 2017, and her solo career germinated. Her debut single '*Till the Morning Comes* (2017) and *Different View* (EP, 2018) captivated audiences and critics. Her career took a meteoric rise in 2021. During the pandemic and lockdowns, she used the time of isolation to hone her composing skills and voice. The release in 2021 of her acclaimed debut album, *More or Less*, catapulted her into the limelight.

Awards and acclaim for debut album, *More or Less*

More or Less was nominated in five musical categories, two of which, she won the Best Jazz Album as well as Best Female Jazz Artist at the 2022 Mzantsi Jazz Awards.

In, Melorie grapples with themes such as the process of "finding and expressing one's idea of home, identity and self". Tracks such as *Mr Tswai* and *Sense of Home* were influenced by South African jazz composers such as Kyle Shepherd, Carlo Mombelli and Bheki Mseleku. Other tracks illustrate the influence of contemporary jazz, for instance *Amina* named after jazz artist Amina Figarova. Each composition has a story which is key to Melorie Jane's creative process.

Solo artist performance highlights

As a solo artist Melorie Jane had the privilege of opening for multi-Grammy Award-winning artist PJ Morton during his Africa Tour (2023) in Whitney April's band. She has performed on stage with iconic South African artists such as Anna Davel, Lana Crowster and the late and great Gloria Bosman, as part of the University of Stellenbosch Big Band. In 2024 Melorie made her first international appearance in the DRC (Democratic Republic of the Congo), performing for ministerial dignitaries after the inauguration ceremony of President Felix Tshisekedi.

The Melorie Jane Quintet

The Quintet has been featured on the Espresso Morning Show, PFORE Online Radio (USA) and on Sirius XM Radio Station. Last year Melorie Jane Quintet performed at the 2024 Cape Town Jazzathon Festival, and after the release of her second full album, *Hold the stars* (2024) and brand new single, *Dancing and laughing (From Vir Elsa)*, she has graced the stages of the Jazz on the Rocks Jazz Festival (2025), Table Mountain Jazz Festival (2025) and the Cape Town International Jazz Festival (2025).

Isolation, resilience, and significance

Melorie's music is diverse in terms of its scope and influences and reverberates across multiple themes such as isolation, resilience, and the significance of community, family, and friendships. Her dedication to her craft is intertwined with gratitude for the influences which have shaped her artistry and journey as a South African Jazz artist. As a young artist she is grateful to her peers, teachers and mentors who have inspired her and continue to inspire her curative output particularly as an innovator and presence in South African jazz, with a personal and distinctive sound.

Follow Melorie Jane's jazz journey - new releases and live performances- on social media and listen to her music on online streaming platforms.

Melorie Jane – discography

2017 – *Till the Morning Comes* - *Melorie Jane Trio*- featuring Melorie Jane on piano and vocals, Gilbert Sithole (bass) and Thato Tswai on drums.

2018 – *Different View*- EP- *Melorie Jane Quintet*- featuring Melorie Jane on piano and vocals, Gilbert Sithole (bass), Thato Tswai (drums), Lehlohonolo Ntsoko (saxophone) and Nstikelelo Jack Mcwabe (trumpet).

2021 – *New Day* - *Melorie Jane Trio*- featuring Melorie Jane on piano and vocals, Alex Mayers (bass) and Jarryd West (drums).

2021- *Amina* - *Melorie Jane Trio*- featuring Melorie Jane on piano and Jarryd West (drums).

2021- *More or Less*- debut album. Featuring Melorie Jane on piano and voice, Neo Mathebula (trumpet), Jed Petersen (saxophone), Alex Mayers (bass), Lilavan Gangen (drums) and Jarryd West on drums on *Amina*.

2024 - *Vir Elsa* - Single featuring Melorie Jane on piano, Chadleigh Gowar on bass, Chanté Phillips on drums, Bonga Mosola on trumpet and Danél Dippenaar on alto saxophone

2024 - *Hold the stars* - Latest album by the *Melorie Jane Quintet*. Featuring Melorie Jane on piano, Chadleigh Gowar on bass, Chanté Phillips on drums, Bonga Mosola on trumpet and Danél Dippenaar on alto saxophone and flute

2025 - *Dancing and laughing (From Vir Elsa)* - Latest single and music video by the *Melorie Jane Sextet*. Featuring Melorie Jane on piano and voice, Chadleigh Gowar on bass, Chanté Phillips on drums, Bonga Mosola on trumpet, Ryan Hendricks on alto saxophone and Ashmit Malan on electric guitar.

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