



## *Singer Tré Taylor*

**Leading  
Teaching  
A Deliciously Fun Life**

**Written by Jean Bartlett**  
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Every Wednesday night in San Francisco's Historic Fillmore Jazz Preservation District, magic happened at Agonafer Shiferaw's Rasselas Jazz Club. In the window was the simple announcement, "Martini Wednesdays." What that meant was the crowds poured in, and stayed, from 9 p.m. until 2 a.m., to hear Tré Taylor and The Dangerous Martini Quartet roll out the red carpet on jazz standards made famous by such legendary folk as Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. Singer Tré, who for my money can sing anything—during this interview she burst (appropriately) into song several times: holding meticulous soprano control on the Barbra Streisand hit "Songbird," sashaying out Peggy Lee's "Fever," and thrill-striding the emotional James-Bond-zinger "Gold Finger"—said these shows were as much fun for the band as they were the audience.

"We put a little comedy into the show," she said. "I would do an obscure song by, for instance, The Ramones (a punk rock band), and turn it into a bossa and literally the crowd went wild. Because we were 'Dangerous Martini,' and James Bond is all about martinis, we also did James Bond movie themes."

Tré is a Pacifican and she and guitarist Doug Wendt founded Dangerous Martini in 1999. Known prior to that moment as Doug and Tré, the two were playing essentially wherever a stage door opened, until one night, the new band name came to them in San Francisco's Mission District.

"It was a night in the gutter!" she laughed heartily. "A lot of vodka was involved! Doug and I had been schlepping looking for gigs. We were exploring this new club, The Butterfly Lounge. All of a sudden somebody said, 'Hey, you guys need a bass player.' So we sat ourselves down and came up with the name 'Dangerous Martini.' The next thing, we found our bass player, Mark Petrella, through the *Bay Guardian* (San Francisco's free alternative newspaper which ran from 1966 to 2014). Boom! A band was born."

After Tré and Doug, the band's next longest standing member goes to Ruben Salcido. A Pacifican, Ruben is an in-demand flute and sax aficionado. He played with Dangerous Martini for 11 years.

Tré did have a day job. She worked in Silicon Valley and she lived in San Jose. But her foot was ever on the gas pedal to do and give music. Tré Taylor and Dangerous Martini played a recurring list of stages in Silicon Valley. They packed the house at San Francisco's cabaret capital, The Plush Room. (Gone now, just like Rasselas.) They did the big jazz circuit in Napa during the summer. One extra sweet memory was the time they played a Crosby family event at Bing Crosby's estate in Hillsborough. Tré met Bing's widow, Kathryn, who the singer described as "lovely

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and so much fun." Tré also sang with Bing's "beautiful piano. That for me was the ultimate." That piano made its famous debut in the Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly and Frank Sinatra 1956 film, "High Society."

Dangerous Martini lasted 13 years, and there is a lot more after and a lot more before. But where did it all begin?



The singer at age 5.

"Probably the real inspiration was my maternal grandmother, Ruby Mines. She was a very glamorous, fabulous woman and my first jazz influencer. She would come out with her big 78 records—old jazz, Big Band, and New Orleans Dixieland jazz—and put them on the phonograph under that big heavy needle. I loved and love that music."

Ruby also swept her granddaughter up and away from a difficult childhood.

"This was during the summer. I was like this little princess with my wealthy grandparents, staying at their homes in Beverly Hills and Las Vegas. My grandmother and I would 'do' lunch at Chasen's in Beverly Hills." Closed in 1995, it was the favorite of a long list of Hollywood elite, including: Elizabeth Taylor, Gregory Peck, Marilyn Monroe, Warren Beatty, Shirley Temple, Johnny Carson and Carol Burnett.

"My grandparents were also high rollers in Las Vegas, so the limo would come pick us up and take us somewhere, or the helicopter would. Then I would come home to the middle class suburbs, playing the role of the unwelcome stepchild."

Tré describes her father, a Korean War veteran, as "the tall, handsome, dark, brooding, tortured-artist type." He is a fine artist but he made his living as a construction painter "literally on the Golden Gate Bridge" for 29 years. And yes, Tré got to ride up the bridge's elevator with her dad. It's a tight fit, holds three people maximum, and it goes within 30 feet of the platform. "Once you get to the top, it is really, really beautiful." Tré's father would sometimes carry a message from his daughter in a bottle and then sail it off the top of the bridge into the Bay.

Her dad was born and raised in a Polish neighborhood in Montclair, New Jersey. Her late mom, also a fine artist, was from Idaho and descended from a "long line of open-range cattle herders."

"She was a petite, beautiful, elegant, shit-kicking, very funny, spiritual, book-loving, fiery-red-headed woman and a 'Jill-of-all-trades. She was also always attracted to the wrong sort of guy."

"She was an amazing artist," her daughter continued. "And that is what she started out as, a fine artist. She did portraits. She also worked as a seamstress, but she designed the clothes she made. I had some beautiful dresses."

Her mom became an interior decorator for a furniture store, opened her own fine furniture store in the East Bay, then went back to college, got straight A's, and became an AutoCAD Drafter doing blueprints. Tré's mother is Tré's favorite person ever.

Tré's folks met at the College of Marin in the late 1950s at a night art class. "I was destined to be an artist," Tré laughed.

Her mom also had a tumble-y childhood.

"Both my mom and her mom were beautiful and glamorous, and they'd head out to 'find a man in uniform!'" Tré laughed, turning her voice into a comfortable Southern twang. (She has done voiceover.) "My grandmother finally found her man in her third husband. He was a Marine who was a pilot and who happened to be this Jewish genius who went into the oil business and struck it rich. They met when my mom was 16 and going to San Rafael High. Just a few years later, 1962, their granddaughter, me, was born at Marin General in San Rafael."

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When things went south for her parents, Tré and her little brother ended up with her dad and stepmom, while her mom battled depression. Tré also had/has dyslexia. Not diagnosed until she was an adult.

"My parents didn't understand. My teachers didn't understand. I didn't understand. Everybody thought I was just really slow. But it helped make me who I am because I still found ways to learn – and it taught me that I am strong."

For Tré, hers was a life of contrasts.

"One minute I'm eating lobster with my grandparents in Las Vegas, or presenting perfect table manners in Beverly Hills while learning about classic movie stars and high society. The next minute, I'm back in Rohnert Park (Sonoma County) living a much more humble existence."

In her family, Tré was the assigned "black sheep."

**"I was the kumquat born into a family of oranges."**

"I was the kumquat born into a family of oranges. I didn't even have to do anything bad. In fact I was a good girl. I was a born-again Christian at 14. Nobody I knew did that, certainly no one in my family. I was just the odd one out. I always did my own thing and found my own way."

The singer said from age 4, she wanted to know the "Why?" to the big questions; like why was she here and what was really going on. When she was in junior high, she went with one of her friends to her friend's Pentecostal church, the Assemblies of God. Along with her friend, she sang in the church's choir – and she could sing. But she didn't much think about the fact that she could sing. She mostly just fell in love with gospel music along with soul and R&B. She also dug deep into religion.

"My family wasn't religious, but I was weird enough to explore them all at a young age," she said. "I've been sprinkled, christened, dunked, splashed and anointed by fire, water, air, earth, sage and Gris- Gris (a Voodoo amulet). I got them all covered just in case!"

While she has examined religion deeply – "because I wanted to know" – she eventually let them all go. But the music stayed. On her own record player as a kid, she had a stack of faves – Al Green, Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight and Etta James.

"They were all big influencers," she noted, "along with the 'Bugs Bunny/Road Runner Hour,' The Rocky & Bullwinkle Show's 'Fractured Fairy Tales,' Steve Martin, Carol Burnett, Lucille Ball, Eartha Kitt and Peggy Lee. They raised me up!"

When she was 18, she sang for the first time by herself in front of a crowd of anywhere from 1,000 to 1,500 people. It was at Santa Rosa's biggest auditorium. A cheerleader at her high school, and that year's Homecoming Queen, Tré was running for Miss Rohnert Park. It was 1980 and beauty pageants were a big deal. Tré sang "Songbird," the title track from Barbra Streisand's 1978 album.

Spontaneously, she leant her 4-octave range to a few lines of the David Wolfert/Steve Nelson song. "*Songbird sings from the heart / Each word can tear you apart ...*" It was one of those "wow" interview moments.

As it turns out, there was also a big reaction to Tré singing that song at 18. The audience seemingly stopped breathing and when she was done, they jumped out of their seats and gave her a standing ovation.

"From that moment, I was hooked. Because that was better than any drug that anyone can take and it gave me a sense of validation I had never known. It changed the course of my life."

Moving forward, Tré encapsulated some of her life events. "I majored in psychology and business administration. I kissed a few toads. I married, divorced and kept the name Taylor. I always wanted a family of my own, but I accidentally forgot to have kids."

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Additionally she became a Master Neuro Linguistic Programming Practitioner and Certified Hypnotherapist. She found modern ways to work with her dyslexia: podcasts, Kindle Reader, Audible and some narration software. She worked for motivational speaker Tony Robbins right at the beginning of the Dot Com boom. (This is not in chronological order.) She worked as a singing waitress at San Ramon's famous "Nightclub on the Wild Side"—the now closed, Bobby McGees. Her in-the-spotlight characters were Clara Voyant and Rita Fortune, the house gypsy.

She read Carlos Castaneda.

"Doing the ayahuasca!"

Pronounced "eye-ah-WAH-ska," ayahuasca is a psychedelic tea, used as a traditional spiritual medicine in ceremonies among the indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin.

"It's not recreational. It's a teaching plant."



**Tré sings it out, with guitarist Bernard Bagshaw on photo left, at a Winters Tavern, Diamond Head Jazz gig, Pacifica, CA, 2020.**

Tré also did years of vocal training—studying at California Jazz Conservatory in Berkeley, as well as under the respective direction of renowned vocal coaches Raz Kennedy and David Stroud. She was the lead vocalist for the band, Soul Singer, and toured the country in R&B, Americana and Big Funk Dance Bands throughout the 1980s and 1990s. She's had agents and appeared as an artist on other artist's recordings. Within the next year, her own record will hit the online and in-town media stores. You can currently hear her on multi-talented musician (and Pacifican) Ian Butler's profoundly good, recently-released record: "In My Hand." Links to that further down.

She's had heartaches and health scares and chronic health issues. All of that pulled her off the music circuit for a number of years.

"You have to find what works for you," she advised. "I don't dismiss Western medicine, but I had to fire all the doctors to save myself."

She also moved to Pacifica in 2009.

"How did I discover Pacifica? Thirty years ago, I had a fight with my then boyfriend and just went driving. All of a sudden I was on Highway 1. Where am I? I turned into Rockaway and stopped in Nick's for a Bloody Mary. I opened up my *Bay Guardian*. That was when we used to look for apartments, and jobs, and bass players in

the *Bay Guardian*. Rockaway became my secret getaway, because I discovered it at a crossroads. I used to come here every quarter just to figure my life out."

She also learned to go with her mystical experiences and natural intuitiveness. She said that comes from the Lithuanian side of her family, her father's side.

Then there was her public art.

Her first art car was a 1973 T2 VW Camper Bus. She hand-painted the outside in leopard print. She sculpted the bumpers into custom art, tiki-totems. She customized it inside and out, right down to her Egyptian cotton sheets.

"I was having health problems and part of healing myself was being in nature. With my VW bus, I could just roll on in, flip up the back and I was home."



Jean Bartlett, author ([www.bartlettbiographies.com](http://www.bartlettbiographies.com))

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Tré learned how to spend time out in nature, "without suffering," the former-motel-only camper laughed. A foodie and a chef, she learned how to cook for the masses. She had a food blog: Bad Girl Barbecue. She learned so much, she started the West Coast Glamping Community, Glamp-O-Rama. She called her bus: The Leopard Lounge.

"We are a bunch of fun folks who gather together a few times a year and set-up luxurious tents, restored vintage trailers, classic camper vans, and other fun recreational vehicles, and glamorously camp in select remote places all over the United States."

The Leopard Lounge Camp heads to music festivals and other fun events. Upcoming is the Strawberry Music Festival coming to Grass Valley, CA, in May.



Tre Taylor photos, above and below, both shot in Pacifica, CA.

**Tre's first work of public art, The Leopard Lounge, a 1973 T2 VW Camper Bus.**



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"The funny thing is, I didn't know this was an 'art car.' I just thought that there was an unspoken law that if you buy a VW Bus from Berkeley, California, you've got to paint it. It's not a hippy bus, because I gave it a 'hep.' I put the 'hep' in hippy!"



Tré Taylor photo

**Hanging with the "glamping" community, Strawberry Music Festival, Grass Valley, CA, 2018.**

Tré's got a different van now—glamorous on the inside, demure on the outside. She kept, loved, and labored over The Leopard Lounge for 15 years. When she was ready for a change, she sold it to a burlesque dancer.

"She's the perfect person to take care of The Leopard Lounge. Her husband is a mechanic and she hopes to add a full roof rack and a stripper pole to the top."

Tré named her second art car: "The Squirly Whirly Art Car." It was featured on CBS San Francisco "Eye On The Bay."

"And the dashboard was nuts, literally nuts," she guffawed. "I made a mosaic out of nuts. It was really fun. I also glued 650 spinning wheels to the outside of my car, along with some squirrels. It was to heal myself from depression. And it forced me to get out. It forced me to laugh every day. "



Tré Taylor photo

**The Squirly Whirly Art Car at the Golden Gate Bridge 75th Anniversary, May 27, 2012.**



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The singer noted that once you do "crazy public art," you discover others who do the same when you drive into a town.

"I now know a lot of other art car artists and we get together at least once a year from the Western U.S. and Canada. That's how I met Avril Hughes. We met at an art car event and then we found out we both lived in Pacifica."

The late fun, funny, creative Avril Hughes, married to (repeat those adjectives) Ian Butler, named her art car: Groovalicious Purple Princess of Peace.

"It was a friendship meant to be," Tré smiled.

Tré had a third art car.

"That was my Naughty Gnome car," she laughed. "I had that for a while in Pacifica. It was drive-by offensive graffiti! You'd come up behind me and these little gnomes would be flipping you off or giving you a bare ass."

"My art is about bringing out my inner child," she went on to say, "about snapping out of a bad state and remembering to smile."

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There was a long while after Dangerous Martini when Tré didn't sing with bands. She worked on her health, she worked on solutions for the solutions she was given for her health, she worked a day-job, she glam camped. In 2019, all healed up and ready to swing, her buddy and old bandmate Ruben Salcido invited her to sit in with the band, Diamond Head Jazz, at Pacifica's wine bar, A Grape in the Fog. It was Valentine's Day and the first time Tré ever did a set with mostly strangers, except of course Ruben. There was no rehearsing, she brought in no charts and together "with these fantastic musicians," sweetened the house with the old Chet Baker tune "You Don't Know What Love Is," followed by: Dave Frishberg's "Peel Me a Grape," Rodgers' and Hart's "My Funny Valentine," the Stoller and Leiber composition "Love Potion No. 9," and rounded it out with a song by Nat King Cole.

"We all fell in love," Tré said.

Led by Dennis Kong, Diamond Head Jazz band members are: Dennis Kong (bass), Bob Jay (piano), Ruben Salcido (saxophone), Mark Yee (baritone saxophone), Hanne Tylvad Andersen (drums), Katrine Spang-Hanssen (drums), Bernard Bagshaw (guitar), Bobby Simcox (guitar) and Tré Taylor (vocals). Sometimes band members switch it out due to other music tours/event bookings.



Paul McGregor photo

**Diamond Head Jazz in Foster City, Holiday Jazz in the Library, December, 2019: Dennis Kong, Ruben Salcido, Tré Taylor, Bob Jay, Katrine Spang-Hanssen and Bobbie Simcox.**

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Of course Ms. Taylor has something new and delicious she is adding to her plate. She is taking all the lessons of her journey to date – glamping, event planning, cooking, food blogging, psychology, hypnotherapy, humor, public art, her experiences creating five short comedy films (not even mentioned till now) – and her voice, her phenomenal vocals, into a bigger arena. She is starting her own online Music & Food Entertainment YouTube Channel, production company and online mercantile.

"It's an online inspiration channel, with food, music, art and little life lessons," she said. "You see, I have always been able to find ways to heal myself with music, art, writing and community and I want to call out, to all my fellow outcasts, weirdos, creators, musicians, artists, designers, misfits, expressionists of novelty – to believe in yourselves. I am creating a gathering place for us all to play and collaborate so that we can demonstrate and share, how to call back our childlike spirit and come out and play!"

"I truly believe if we bring creative balance back into our culture – right-brain creativity into a science-based, left-brained dominant society – we can create more balanced and better humans for the future...create a deliciously fun life!"



To hear snapshots of Tré Taylor singing track 10, *Forever Kiss*, and the title track on musician/composer Ian Butler's recently-released CD "In My Hand," click [here](#). (Available at cdbaby.com, either as a physical CD or digital download, and available at Florey's Book Co. here in Pacifica – Ian Butler's "In My Hand" is chock-full of outstanding listens.)

To catch Tré Taylor in concert, which includes such local Pacifica stages as – Winters Tavern, A Grape in the Fog and Pedro Point Brewing – follow the Tré links below. Stay tuned for Tré's own highly anticipated CD release later in the year along with news on her online inspirational channel."

**Tré Taylor** at: [tretaylor.com](http://tretaylor.com).

Music calendar: [tresjazz.com](http://tresjazz.com)

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