

Riding Waves

Slayer of the airwaves, Jillian Barberie, talks radio vs. TV, dating and who she'd switch places with for a day

Words by Vanessa Pascale • Photo Credit: Fadil Berisha

"I did Howard Stern yesterday, *that* alone brought me here," Jillian Barberie tells me. We are seated in the open dining room, just off the lobby in her hotel, at Four Seasons Restaurant. Jillian is in New York from Los Angeles doing press for her new television show *America's Next Weatherman* on TBS, where she is a judge. "I am the biggest Howard Stern fan. He's my kryptonite. He's the greatest entertainer ever," Jillian gushes. Since it's breakfast time and we're in her hotel, Jillian is dressed comfortably in a cotton, olive-green set with her long, dark hair flowing freely and face makeup-less.

In L.A. for the past twenty-five years, the Canadian-born beauty established herself as the fun-loving weather woman with the big personality on *Good Day, L.A.* "I did the weather, but it became more. We had celebrities and cooking segments. I did fashion... I got really, really lucky and I did that for almost twenty years. It was a great gig." The morning show yielded her a number of opportunities over the years. "Casting directors would watch and I got a sitcom from it, a dating show. I did the NFL 'cause all the casting directors loved the morning show. I really didn't audition for anything—I was lucky." Even since the beginning, doors would open for her.

After obtaining her broadcast journalism degree, Jillian set her sights on two cities, Miami and Los Angeles. Miami called first. "It

was the greatest time of my life. I did the weather for Channel 7. They had an all female newscast: two female anchors, a woman doing sports and me doing weather. It was awesome, because no one else was doing that. It was just before Hurricane Andrew 'cause I was there for that, so that was sort of a good initiation into weather. I did that for a year and a half, and then an agent scouted me and he said, 'You should be in L.A.' I was actually married to a guy that played for the Marlins [Bret Barberie], so our life was deeply embedded in Miami. I got the job in L.A. and I moved—he was still playing in Florida," she recalls, "I have many ties to Miami."

Several years later, life imitated art when Jillian was cast in the NBC sitcom *Good Morning, Miami*. "They kept saying they want a Jillian Barberie-type for the sitcom. They met twenty women and then said, 'Oh screw it, let's just meet her!' I was supposed to do three episodes and that turned into 10. It was a sitcom based on a morning show in Miami and I played this outrageous anchor woman. It was fun for me 'cause I did do a TV show in Miami, so it all tied in—just ironic. I've been really lucky. I've had a really good career."

Now, Jillian is in radio co-hosting the daily KABC talk-radio show *The Drive Home with Jillian Barberie and John Phillips* on 790AM and online at www.kabc.com.

Miami Living: Now that you're in radio, what is the biggest difference between it and TV?

Jillian Barberie: It's way harder. TV is easy. I just love television. I'm a natural — meaning I'm very comfortable. It feels natural to me — it always has. Radio is a theater of the mind, while television is very visual and I'm all about the hair, the makeup, the clothes... I'm all about the excitement about being on-air and sharing with viewers — I miss that. Radio is far more — you have to invite the audience in and paint the picture for them as oppose to just seeing it. It's harder.

ML: And you've switched time slots, from midday to the drive home.

JB: We're the drive home, which is a good spot to be in. I wouldn't want to be in mornings up against Howard Stern. I also work at HSN, once a month I'm there for Too Faced Cosmetics — a beauty line that I represent, and I love. The guys who created Too Faced used to work at a makeup counter in Newport Beach and I did a segment called Style File, and showcased them... I'm a makeup queen, and I get to share that with women. I've done my own makeup for 25 years and I always tell women it's not brain surgery — it's fun. I would never let a makeup artist touch my face. Never have. Never will. I love doing it. Now with radio, you don't have to wear makeup, which is so weird. I miss TV, which is why I'm so excited to be doing this show on TBS.

ML: Tell me about *America's Next Weatherman*.

JB: Essentially, it's \$100,000 cash; they have an opportunity to audition for a show which is a huge network show on CNN. It's the morning show there, which is a great opportunity, and they get an agent... We had people from all walks of life, so there were meteorologists, people who actually have weather experience doing weather in smaller towns, beauty queens, pastors, wrestlers... I always say to people, just because you do the weather doesn't necessarily make you a shoo-in. Meteorologists can be so scientific they lose the audience. We were really looking for all kinds of things, but mainly connection. I'm very happy with who we picked.

ML: You started out in weather.

JB: I started out doing the weather in Montreal. It wasn't something I thought I'd end up doing, but I did it. I graduated from college with a broadcast journalism diploma and then I went on to a 6-week meteorological course. There were 75 of us and they picked 6 of us in the end and I started on The Weather Network in Canada. Right out of school, I was on a network. I was like a baby — I was 21.

ML: You're very outspoken, is there anything you've ever said or done that you're like, ugh?

JB: No, I'm a very honest person. It's my truth and I guess it can upset other people and I don't like upsetting other people, but I don't have any regrets for anything I've said. Nothing. What's the point? If you say it, you've gotta mean it, ya know? But if you go on *Howard Stern*, which of course I have, you can piss people off and when you come home you have to be prepared, and that's always been the case for me, but it's my truth.

ML: What would fans be surprised to find out about you?

JB: I'm a complete homebody. I love staying in. I love movies. I don't go out a lot. I'm totally chill. I love hanging out with my kids.

ML: If you could switch places with somebody for a day, in any field, and live what they do, who would you switch with? Is there anyone you've interviewed or talked to and thought, 'I wonder what that lifestyle is like?'

JB: That's a great question! Wow. You know because I'm a mother of two and I'm a hustler, I've worked since I was 14 and am the provider for my kids. I'd like to know what it's like to be just taken care of. I've never been taken care of by anyone, except for my dad, but I was 17 when that ended. I would probably switch with someone who doesn't have to worry about things and life and mortgage and kids. I do have friends whose husbands take care of them, and I'm always like, *what's that like?* It's so foreign to me. I've always been the breadwinner in both marriages. I've paid alimony to men. That's the way it is now for women, so I'd like to go back in time and be the girl — that would be fun.

ML: Are you dating anyone?

JB: No, I wish. L.A. is very hard.

ML: What do you think is the most challenging thing about dating these days?

JB: I wouldn't know — I haven't dated in like a year and a half. I see my girlfriends on Tinder and all that, and it's just not for me. I should get on a dating website or something, but I'm too lazy [laughs]. I went on Match.com and the second page in I was bored. I'm sick of talking about me. It's true! I would like to date, but I'm old school. I'd like to think I'm going to go to Whole Foods and he'll be there in the produce aisle. No, he's busy at home on Tinder [laughs] getting laid. Dating is really hard, I don't know how to do it, I guess. Anyway, my kids (Ruby is 8, Rocco is 5), are my priority.

ML: Greatest perk of being in the public eye?

JB: L.A., it's nice 'cause if they did watch the show I was part of their life for 20 years and part of their morning routine. People are extra nice if you go out to restaurants. I've had people pay my bill and just say, 'Thanks for entertaining me every day.' It's really random, but it's nice that you're part of their routine. It's really sweet.

ML: What is the converse of that?

JB: I think for my kids, they don't understand. So if I go out, they're always like, *Why does everyone always say, Hi, Jillian.* I say, *Mommy's on TV.* I think sometimes it can be frustrating for them. They never want me with makeup on. They see me with makeup and they're like, Oh no, 'cause it's public me. But when I'm like this, and I go out, people will sometimes recognize me, but they know they get to have me to themselves. But when I'm made up they're like, *Oh, it's Jillian* and they have to share me. They're very territorial. **ML**