

She isn't Kylie Minogue or Delta Goodrem but the chances are that more people around the world have heard Karen Jacobsen's voice than have listened to either of those Aussie divas.

This Mackay-born, New York-based singer-songwriter is known to millions as "Aussie Karen", one of the most popular voices in in-car GPS units across the globe. One 50-hour voice-over job in 2002 has grown into a whole other identity for this elegant blonde, whose real focus is singing and recording.

"It's so much fun," says Karen, laughing as she refers to her GPS fame. "I have friends text me from all over the world saying, 'I'm driving through the Black Forest in Germany and you're in my car!'"

Karen is gracious about her GPS alter ego, given that her real passion is performing her own music. Having trained at the Queensland Conservatorium and built a successful career in Sydney in the 1990s, she dropped everything to move to New York 10 years ago, at the age of 31.

"One of the reasons I left was that I didn't feel I could be myself, musically," she explains. "The Australian pub rock scene is huge and the indie scene is there, but my music is piano-based and melodic. I felt I needed to be somewhere with a large pop base, where there was an opportunity to find my niche audience. I thought that even if I got a tiny piece of that market, I'd be able to have a healthy career."

Now, with six CDs, marriage to music producer Tom Hudak and the birth of their 20-month-old son Hayden, Karen has very much found her niche. She's one of many independent performers in the US who have bypassed the record label system and used the internet to build a sustainable career.

"The States has such a huge population and endless venues, so you can create something pretty stable for yourself at a smaller level," she says. "There are many creative ways to cross-promote and market your music. You can sell your CDs online, you can have your music on iTunes, and there are a zillion online magazines dying to review your music and link to it."

While New York is still home, Karen is spending time in Brisbane with her family, and has released her latest CD, *Melting Moments*, in the local market.

So now she's in our GPSs and our CD collections – if Karen could just oust the talking clock guy, world domination would be hers.

*MELTING MOMENTS*, \$24.95, is available from ABC Shops. [www.karenjacobsen.com](http://www.karenjacobsen.com)

## Voice directions

Millions of drivers would be lost without "Aussie Karen" Jacobsen but as she tells **Jane Scott**, making music is her chosen path

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SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 6 2009 issue 754

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