

JESSIE LANE CLARKE was born and raised in England, but moved to the central coast of California when she was 19. Jessie started singing at the age of 16 in her home church, the St. Albans Vineyard, and went on to sing with Matt Redman and Graham Ord in her late teens. Since then she has sung on several Vineyard Music recordings with Darren Clarke and Ryan Delmore among others, and she is the co-author with her husband of *I Love Your Presence*.

JESSIE LANE CLARKE

BACKGROUND VOCALS: IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Jessie Lane Clarke, vocalist and co-author of the song *I Love Your Presence*, offers some quick tips for background vocalists. These tips are excerpted from her article, "Backing Vocals," written for www.heartofworship.com.

Listen a lot! Listen to the band and everything that's going on. Listen for, and be open to, anything that God might be saying or doing.

Lay down your own agenda and defer. Be sensitive to the worship leader – follow his or her lead – and go with the flow of what God is doing. Make sure that you don't 'over-take' or battle with the worship leader either musically or thematically. This is crucial if you are doing spontaneous singing.

Ask lots of questions. Find out what the leader would like in terms of improvisation, 'ad-libbing,' and prophetic contributions – what does s/he want and need from you?

Remember that your voice is an instrument. Don't play down your role. Take the time to work out harmonies and parts. Good vocals are crucial. It's what people are listening to, and what they follow.

Be creative with your harmonies. Try not to get stuck in a rut. However, do be aware that 'more creative' doesn't always equal 'better.' Remember to think of the overall sound, not just your individual voice – you are not singing solo - you are a team player. Being sensitive to this will set you apart as a backing singer.

Know that backing vocals is a different skill than lead vocals. Just because you can do one, doesn't mean you can automatically do the other (but knowing how to do one well can help you learn to do the other well). Recognize the difference. It may sound basic, but many people think that just because they have a great voice – perfect pitch, passion and tone – that they will be a great backing singer. Not so. Bad BV's can be distracting, out of place, overcrowding and just plain attention seeking.

Backing vocals in a worship team is different to backing vocals in a 'normal' band. You are not a token girl (or guy). You are not performing. You are an example. So be a good example of worship, on and off the platform. Demonstrate worship – engage.

Protect your instrument. Look after your voice. But be sensible, don't become a psycho–Ricola sucking, dairy-hating, 'must always have a room-humidifier' fanatic who has lost all sense of perspective. It's always good to be balanced! But do get to know your voice, understand what helps you and what doesn't – and if it hurts – STOP.

Don't get lost. Finally, don't get so lost in worship that you miss what is going on around you (cues, etc.), but at the same time don't get so hung up on the music that you miss what you're actually trying to do – worship.

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