

# More Than You Know Jane Scheckter

By Elizabeth Ahlfors

**T**

rue or False:

1. Jane Scheckter was a fashion designer featured in magazines like *Vogue* and *Bazaar*.
2. Lauren Hutton modeled her clothes.
3. Jane sang back-up for Bette Midler.
4. Jane sang back-up for Barry Manilow on "Could It Be Magic."
5. Barry Manilow sang back-up for Jane.
6. She was replaced in a film by two unknown guitar players, Carly Simon and Kathy Bates.
7. Jane was hired, cut, re-hired, re-cut from *Welcome Back, Kotter*.
8. She had a #1 disco hit.

If you answered True to everything, you are correct.

Jane Scheckter has led a multi-faceted life with singing as its core. "I've had good days, bad days, made a lot of money, lost money, but this is what I love to do because I love

Eric Stephen Jacobs



Above  
Whatever  
happened to  
baby Jane?

At left  
...More than  
you know



**Below (from left)  
In fashion**

**With young  
Barry Manilow**

**Tuxedo Junction:  
Jeanne Kauffman  
Jamie Edin & Jane**

**Jazzy Jane  
jives it up**

**Julie Wilson  
Erv Raible  
Jane Scheckter**

**JS, Barbara Brussell  
Dodi Goodman**

**Tedd Firth, JS  
Adam James**

Bistro, Stephen Holden  
came up to her:  
"Where have you  
been and why don't  
I know you?"

In an era when  
cabaret

this music." After  
her May 2008  
tribute to Lena  
Horne at  
Broadway Baby

York's Pratt Institute, Scheckter worked as a  
fashion designer by day and studied acting at  
night. "I was making a living! I had windows  
in Bloomingdale's, Saks, and Lord & Taylor.

New York was  
hip and

Scheckter joined two other girl singers—  
Shelly Ackerman and Bette Midler—between  
the comics. "Someone said something to me  
that has been a major quote in my life. She  
said, 'You sing better than Bette, but she  
knows who she is.'"

It was not until years later that Scheckter  
realized how true that was. "Bette's  
offstage persona  
is diametrically  
opposed to  
who she is

playing in the pit. "I got the part of Baby Julia  
and I sang 'Grass Is Better for You Than  
Wine.'" For her 26th birthday, "Barry had  
a big party for me. He gave me a semester  
of dance lessons at Carnegie Hall  
Dance School. He bought tap shoes for  
himself and joined me. We were the  
Fred and Ginger of tap."

Manilow also introduced her to the  
rewards of singing jingles, and she got the  
chance to sing in Milos Forman's first U.S.  
film, *Taking Off*, but was replaced  
by Carly Simon and Kathy  
Bates because they played  
the guitar.

After six years, Scheckter  
decided to quit her full-time  
fashion job, freelance  
overseas, and then try to  
get into theater. Northern  
Italy was her first stop:  
Lake Como in the dead  
of winter. "It was  
so damn  
cold.  
Then on

being  
young was everything."  
Soon, "I was  
responsible for a \$6  
million division, but I did  
not see anything of that  
money, trust me!"  
One of her acting  
teachers, Joan Darling,

asked her, "What do you want to do more  
than anything?"

"Sing."

Darling said, "So sing."

"I got up in class and I sang something,  
a cappella. Darling said, 'It's every bit as  
wonderful as you hoped it was.'" She  
suggested Scheckter call Barry Manilow  
to work with.

"This was before Barry met Bette."

Scheckter went to his tiny Brooklyn apartment  
and he immediately warned her, "I'm very  
busy." Nevertheless, she sang for him and he  
agreed to work with her.

One early gig was at the Improv where

onstage.  
She's thoughtful, intelligent, a little shy  
even, but onstage, it was as if Bette  
zipped into a costume. She went out  
and was raucous and sexy and  
funny. I was just trying to reconcile  
that I could sing a sexy song.  
I wasn't comfortable yet. It was always me  
up there, and I didn't know  
which end was up.

"Bette and I would always take cabs  
home at two in the morning. One night I fell  
asleep on her living room floor. Being a  
designer, I could walk into work at 9:30 or  
10. Then I would go to Barry's apartment,  
take a long lunch, sing songs and go back to  
work." The two were fast friends.

"Barry was tall and skinny and so funny.  
He was smart and played the piano.  
You couldn't help loving him."

In 1970, Barry suggested she audition for  
*The Drunkard* off-Broadway where he was

Valentine's  
Day, Barry wired flowers to me.  
I mean flowers like Maria Callas would get."  
She spread her arms wide. "Like this! I was  
walking around Como with my fur coat on,  
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