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RISING STAR

Kareema McLendon - Perfumer

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Rising Star: Kareema McLendon - Perfumer

By Margina Dennis

Inspired by her mother to become a fashion designer, Kareema studied clothing and textiles at Virginia Tech. A life changing experience led her from the path of fashion designer to perfumer. Celebrity clients include Marcia Gay Harden

Q: How did you come up with the name Abinoam?

A: I had both the brand's concept and muse for over a year, yet felt like no matter what name I came up with, it just didn't work. In September of 2005, I came across the name Abinoam, and instantly thought "how sinister". Research revealed that he was actually the father of Barak in the Old Testament, and the name means "father of kindness". Beautiful in meaning yet dark and mysterious - it exemplified the spirit of the fragrance.

Q: When and how did you start creating your own perfumes, were you self-taught?

A: Yes, I'm definitely self-taught and ever evolving. The first book I read was Mandy Aftel's *Essence and Alchemy*, just out of curiosity. I was hooked! From there I started playing with organic essences, then moving toward natural oils. For Abinoam, I worked on getting natural and synthetic oils to peacefully coexist in the same bottle. (*grins*)

Q: How tough is it to be in the fragrance business in the age of celebrity fragrances?

A: For the most part, that market has no affect on my business. Those who wear Abinoam wear it because it's a different brand and not because they want to smell like the masses.

Q: What makes Abinoam a different fragrance brand?

A: I'm just another artist bringing my idea of a perfume. To me, what I'm doing is the same as a recording artist bringing to the masses his interpretation of what a good song sounds like.

Q: Who wears Abinoam in your opinion?

A: The Abinoam wearer debunks trends and is Avant Garde in his/her fashion tastes. They appreciate perfume as an art form.

Q: You're launching a Traveling Blending Bar so that you can blend for customers during Abinoam Trunk Shows and Events. What inspired this idea?

A: I wanted to both challenge myself as a perfumer and interact with the people who are fans of the fragrance collection. Where a Couture Perfumer could have up to several weeks to test various combinations, I have about 20 minutes!

Q: What do you see as the future for Abinoam?

A: In the short term we plan to launch another unisex cologne spray in addition to a Eau de Parfum by the end of the year. I'd like to collaborate with new fashion, graphic and interior designers, becoming a talent launch pad much like the fashion house Ruffo Research. Long term I definitely see Abinoam evolving into a lifestyle brand.

To learn more about brand or to purchase fragrances, visit Abinoam.com

