

Mustard Satin Emilia Dress *TEATUM JONES*  
Glasses *I WEAR WHAT I WANT*  
Earrings *MOMBASA*  
Jasmine Necklace *SHABANA KHAN*

# JHENÉ SAIKO *Souled Out*

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*Special Thank You to* THE BOX HOUSE

@THE\_BOX\_HOUSE, MATT WAYNE AND KATERINA FEDOSOVA

Hoop Earrings White Gold *JASON OF BEVERLY HILLS*  
Couture Gown *OTT DUBAI*  
Belt *X-RAY*



Pink & Silver Blush Dress  
*FARAH AL MESBAH COUTURE*  
10k Diamond Earrings, 5k Diamond Ring  
*GAUDY ATELIER*  
Shoes *GIUSEPPE ZANOTTI*



Words by  
Kimberly Haddad

Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Jhené Aiko is a Los Angeles-native who's dreamy R&B vocals rose to prominence in the early years of the 2000s when she initially signed to Epic Records. The youngest of five, Aiko was raised in a musical household—being inspired by her older sisters and gravitating towards leading artists, including Alanis Morissette, Mariah Carey and Fiona Apple.

The release of her 2013 debut EP, *Sail Out*, became a worldwide sensation and drove the artist's career to great stature, following up with number one hit “The Worst” and the Childish Gambino-assisted single “Bed Peace,” which earned an RIAA-certified Gold nod. In 2014, Aiko released her solo album *Souled Out*, which hit number three on the Billboard 200. Over the last two years, Aiko released the critically-acclaimed “Trip,” authored the poetry book *2 Fish* and has become a fashion icon, working with brands including Tommy Hilfiger, Balenciaga, Chanel and more.

**BASIC:** You were born and raised in Los Angeles, CA. Tell us about your upbringing and some of your fondest musical memories as a child?

**JHENÉ AIKO:** Most of my family is in Los Angeles. I grew up near Ladera Heights in what me and my siblings call “Slauson Hills.” No one is too far away. I was always surrounded by my family and grew up as the youngest of five. We went to the beach often and most of my childhood was filled with sunny days. I was also surrounded by boys a lot. I had a lot of boy cousins so I was kind of a tomboy. I grew up rough, you know, because I played with the boys a lot.

**BASIC:** What prompted you to jump into the music industry and who were some of your earliest influences?

**JHENÉ AIKO:** My older sisters were in a group and I was really, really young, probably five years old. My mom managed them and I would be with her a lot, going to their shows. So obviously, my older siblings were people I looked up to and whatever they did, I wanted to do. They became my musical inspiration because I would be with them and learn all their songs, you know? I just wanted to be part of the group myself. That was in the 90s, so all of the 90s R&B and hop-hop were big for me like Tupac, Biggie, Mariah Carey, Brandy and Sade. Then I got a little older and started listening to The Spice Girls and Fiona Apple, Alanis Morissette, Eminem, and of course, all the greats like Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder. Also, with having so many siblings, I was always hearing the music they were playing, so everyone would sort of play what they liked and I would take note of that.

**BASIC:** You released your single “Wasted Love” towards the end of last year. What does this song mean to you? What were the main inspirations behind the lyrics?

**JHENÉ AIKO:** “Wasted Love” is freestyle. I have a studio in my house and when I would just be feeling a type of way, I would go up there and record. I have tons of instrumentals from producers, so whenever I'm feeling a way, I go up to my studio and start recording. I'll literally just freestyle and in the past, I spent my time really trying to format my music, but nowadays, I like it to just be straight off of path, you know? And that's what “Wasted Love” is. Even though it sounds like a song, it's technically freestyle because I went in and just did takes all the way down. From the beginning of the song to the end of the song, I just kept singing until I really

*“I realized I had so much poetry and I wanted to share it and release it so that I can start a new chapter. I wanted to share it in hopes that people can relate or be inspired to write as a form of healing.”*

sang something. I just think that the song is sort of self-explanatory. I am always inspired by love, whether it be good aspects or the bad aspects. The whole spectrum of love is inspiring to me.

**BASIC:** In 2017, you released the full studio album entitled *Trip*, which was an emotional three-part project that started with a movie. Tell us about your music writing process.

**JHENÉ AIKO:** With *Trip*, it was my second official LP and I wanted to make sure it was more than me just writing songs, which is why I did the movie and the poetry book. They kind of fell into the same project. How I am as a person, whatever I am going through, I have to write about it, whether it's a poem or a story or a journal entry. It's just about where I was at during a time in my life.

**BASIC:** Your first album *Souled Out*, was released in 2014. How has your music, sound and overall mindset developed since then?

**JHENÉ AIKO:** I think I used to be really anal, like everything had to be perfect and I would over think things. Since doing *Trip*, I'm practicing the law of effort, which is why my new album is composed of freestyles and just you know, me just wanting to say what's on my mind and not worry about if it sounds perfect or if I am using the right words. It's just raw emotion. I have less inhibition now and I'm less afraid at this point in my life. I just want to say how I feel and get over it. Since 2014 I have become more mindful. I feel like I am more focused and aware of my true purpose and path. I've always been in complete control. From writing the songs myself, taking

the pictures myself, conceptualizing the videos and sitting with producers to make sure the beat is exactly how I want it. I feel more in control than ever, but I also feel like I have gone through a sort of ego death recently. I am more open to opinions and criticisms.

**BASIC:** Talk to us about the release of *2Fish*. It was part of your M.A.P. mission where you presented an intimate portrait of yourself using excerpts from poems and sketches you began writing at the age of 12. What promoted you to embark on this project?

**JHENÉ AIKO:** I have this big chest in my room that I've been collecting memories in since I was about 12. I go through it every now and then to remind myself of what I've been through and who I am. There's a lot of notebooks in there with so many poems. After I released *Souled Out*, I knew for my next project I wanted to give more. I realized I had so much poetry and I wanted to share it and release it so that I can start a new chapter. I wanted to share it in hopes that people can relate or be inspired to write as a form of healing.

**BASIC:** Can you tell us about any upcoming projects you are working on right now? What does your future look like in terms of being an artist?

**JHENÉ AIKO:** Right now, I'm working on music and a skin care line. I'm writing more poetry and a very special movie. I've been studying sound healing and meditation. I'm also looking forward to designing some clothes and working on a young readers series.

**BASIC:** You have collaborated with many designers, including Tommy Hilfiger, Balenciaga, Chanel and more. Can you tell us about these fashion ventures and what it was like working with these brands?

**JHENÉ AIKO:** I am tiny and not the typical fashion muse. I'm always honored when a designer is interested in dressing me. I love playing dress up so it's always super cool.

**BASIC:** How do you define your sense of style and who are some of your favorite brands or designers to wear?

**JHENÉ AIKO:** I dress however I feel, which changes often. Some days I want to be in a dress and heels, some days I want to be in an oversized sweat suit and sneakers. I prefer to always feel comfortable. I love Balenciaga, Chanel, Dior, Off-White and Heron Preston, just to name a few. I also love stuff like Champion and Nike.



**BASIC:** What are the five things you can't live without?

**JHENÉ AIKO:** My daughter, cats, water, love and self-expression.

**BASIC:** What is your motto or advice you live by?

**JHENÉ AIKO:** Let that shit go.

**BASIC:** What should every woman have in her closet?

**JHENÉ AIKO:** Double stick tape, a lint roller and Narnia.

Custom Sweat Suit *DI MODA ATELIER*  
BY JESSE J. COLLECTIONS  
Yellow Gold Hoop Earrings  
JASON OF BEVERLY HILLS



This Page & Opposite:  
Black Custom Bodysuit *MARIO DE LA TORRE*  
Custom Couture Train *CHARMAINE JOIE COUTURE*  
Necklace *GWENDOLYN G*