

## Martina Laird plays Paramedic Comfort Jones



Martina was introduced to acting quite young. “My brothers and sisters are older than me and had left home by the time I was seven, so my parents thought that I would benefit from drama classes, especially as I was also quite shy.” At 10, she wrote a play called *Cinderella Strikes Again* that her drama group staged. “By default I ended up playing Cinderella.”

Growing up in Trinidad, Martina never considered acting as a viable profession. “I knew that I liked acting, but all actors in Trinidad have to maintain a steady job in order to earn a proper wage, while they do acting on the side.” Coming to university in England, she was suddenly surrounded by people who were going to drama school. “They were planning to ‘just be’ an actor, and I thought, ‘wow, what a great concept’. I ended up breaking the news to my mother over a bottle of champagne, towards the end of my degree. I told her what I really wanted to do was go on to study acting.”

Martina studied at Webber Douglas and after drama school did fringe work, theatre productions and children’s television. To make ends meet, Martina also started teaching at a weekend arts college in North London. “The whole place works on the most wonderful vibe. It paid the bills and I loved teaching the children. When the classes weren’t on and I really needed work, they found me a place in the office doing admin and working as a project co-ordinator for summer classes. They also helped me when I was directing on the fringe.”

A year before *Casualty*, Martina was in a play at the Royal court with *Casualty* co-star, Adjoa Andoh. She also starred in number of television productions, including *The Knock* with another *Casualty* co-star, Kwame, and was lucky enough to go to Antigua for a week to film the episode.

**Age:** 31

**Home town:** Port of Spain, Trinidad

**Similarities with Comfort:** “We’re both very independent, but probably tend to save the ‘falling apart’ for when we’re alone. When we’re on the job, we are very capable, strong and reliable, that’s our public face. Her faith is a very strong, defining feature for her and is something that we don’t really share in common. She is very clear in her religious beliefs, whereas there’s nothing that I would ever say I believe in is an absolute. Those levels of surety are the main differences between the two of us.”

**Comfort’s good and bad points:** “She’s great, she’s outspoken, passionate, alive, generous, warm, funny and she enjoys a good time – I think she’s fun. It’s so great to play someone who’s that vibrant and vital. She needs to be true to herself and if she can’t be, she won’t stay in a situation, for instance her marriage. I think that shows a strength of character. She can be too outspoken sometimes, but always has the best interests of others at heart. Often she’s the only person to have the guts to say what everyone else is thinking.”

**Martina’s real-life *Casualty*:** “I went to the local Emergency Department recently, having had my neck burnt by a product at the hairdressers. Coming straight from work, I was in my full paramedic outfit, which confused a lot of people waiting in the hospital. The lines of reality and fiction were definitely blurred.”

**On-screen romance:** “She’s a woman of firm opinions and beliefs and leaving her husband was not done lightly. So when she finds out that new boyfriend Fin has not been honest with her about his daughter, after all she has given up for him, she feels completely betrayed and retreats from their relationship. I think that the feelings that she has for Fin must still be with her, she’s just trying to suppress them.”

**Favourite food and music:** “I have recently got heavily into making jerk chicken at home. I have invented, and am in the process of refining, my own recipe which I love; so much so that I have to stop myself from making it all the time. At the moment I love exploring old Seventies R&B and funk but while I’m making my jerk chicken it has to be ragga on the stereo. The neighbours must think, ‘ah there she goes again, making her jerk chicken’.”

**How do you keep in shape?:** “My routine at the moment is to do yoga and meditation in the morning if I have any time off. That keeps me sane and level. But I’m going to have to get back into training, as I have been asked to do a charity run and I’d like to show off and complete it in a good time.”

**How do you relax?:** “My yoga and meditation keep me energised as well as relaxed but I’ll happily admit that I like nothing better than to come home from work and have a glass of wine. I’m not pretending to be a new age guru!”

## Did you know?

- Martina recently bought herself a flat in Bristol, close to the set. She’s currently decorating it and that includes putting glittering moons on the wall of her bedroom!