

Four queens embrace eight flags

MARK KAUFMAN
For the News-Leader

In 2004, Mark and Donna Paz Kaufman began to invite the singer/songwriter friends they had come to know while living in Nashville to perform for friends and neighbors on Amelia Island in “An Evening of Story & Song.” Having a clear sense of the difference between writing a song and being a good entertainer, they have been quite selective about the artists invited to perform.

Since they had already seen Queen of Hearts perform together as a group as well as some of the Queens doing solo shows, the Kaufmans were quite confident they would appeal to an audience here. And did they ever!

When Queen of Hearts first came to Amelia Island in 2007 to perform, they played to a standing room-only audience of more than 200 people. With a range of musical styles and exquisite harmonies all the while, the Queens’ choice of songs had the audience dabbling at their eyes one minute, because of poignant

lyrics, and wiping away tears of laughter the next.

Able to interact with each other and connect with the audience in such a smooth and comfortable way, Queen of Hearts is the real deal – four individual singer/songwriters, each with her own repertoire of original material, whose chemistry together far exceeds the sum of the parts.

The four Queens (Ellen Britton, April Amick Caughtman, Helen Lewis Moore and Suzi Ragsdale), each a recording artist and passionate performer in her own right, have performed in clubs and concert halls from coast to coast, but primarily in Nashville. The enthusiastic response they experienced here stood out as one of their most memorable. So it only made sense for the Queens to record “Amelia” to the tune of Paul Simon’s “Cecilia.”

There’s nothing like an appreciative audience to warm the heart of a singer/songwriter. In Nashville, where hundreds of songwriters compete for the chance to play in small clubs, it’s not uncommon for there to be just a handful of people in the

audience – usually friends and family. Some have even joked that songwriters will break out their guitars to play for three people waiting for a bus. So it’s no surprise that many of the talented performers the Kaufmans came to know in Nashville before moving to Amelia Island are thrilled to travel here to perform.

Queen of Hearts is the featured artist at this month’s “An Evening of Story & Song” on Saturday, Dec. 16, with songs from their CDs that each of the Queens has penned as well as their familiar repertoire of lush harmonies, meaningful lyrics and witty banter. The Queens will perform at Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture, located at 1430 Park Ave. in Fernandina Beach. General admission seating is limited for the 5 p.m. show; wine bar opens at 4:30 p.m. Tickets for the performance are \$35 and may be purchased in advance at StoryandSongArts.org or by calling 904-601-2118.

Mark Kaufman is the co-owner of Story & Song Bookstore Bistro.
mark@storyandsongbookstore.com



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Queen of Hearts, from left, April Amick Caughtman, Ellen Britton, Suzi Ragsdale and Helen Lewis Moore.

Brighten your space with updated lighting

JEANETTE GASKILL
Coastal Cottage

When thinking about the flow of space, ambience and atmosphere in your home, lighting can be one of the most fundamental elements. Brighter lights can make you feel alert and awake, whereas dimmer, softer lights can be relaxing and sleep-inducing. Before starting your search for new lighting, you should consider your decorating style. Different designs lend themselves to different décor elements, including the type of light fixtures in your room. So, whether your style is more midcentury, contemporary, farmhouse or modern, you want to find lighting that enhances the look rather than detract from it. While it is possible to mix different design and lighting styles, you want to be careful that they don’t

clash.

1. Make a lighting plan

If you’re starting from scratch or redecorating a room, create a mini brief or lighting plan that tackles the essentials. Think about what activities take place in each room (eating, relaxing, working), key features of a room you want to highlight and what architectural boundaries you may need to take into account. Consider style, scale, output and even color temperature of lights before you go rushing into design decisions. Early planning makes for less headaches and rushed last-minute decisions.

2. Layer your lighting

Take a layered approach to lighting with different light sources across different levels to create ambience and interest in a room. Use lighting to make the most of a room’s size and shape – uplighting makes a room feel larger, low hung pendants will create an illusion of height and clusters of lighting make large rooms seem cozier.

3. Make sure the lighting is helpful

Consider what tasks you may be undertaking in each room where lighting can affect or aid you. Cooking requires more concentrated lighting, therefore a combination of bright down-lights and recess lighting in cabinets and above stove tops is useful. For reading, flexible and directional lighting aimed away from you is better. Powder rooms require a combination of sidelights and down-lights. Dimmers will quickly become your new best friend, providing an energy efficient and effective way to quickly change the atmosphere and warmth of a room.

4. Choose the bulb carefully

The bulbs you choose should be more than an afterthought, racing through the supermarket when you realize they’ve blown. You should consider the following:

- How bright do you need your space (watts)?
- What atmosphere are you trying to achieve

(color temperature, e.g., lower temp is more similar to candlelight, while higher temps are more akin to a blue sky outside)?

- Should energy efficiency be considered (for more frequently used lights)?
- Are you trying to make a design or focal statement (with scale, shape or colors)?

5. Use spotlights to highlight your favorites

Use lighting to subtly (or not so subtly) focus on a feature wall, architectural element or key possession (like your mahogany leather sofa or winged armchair). Wall-mounted lights symmetrically arranged on either side of a statement mirror above the mantelpiece of a fireplace will add warmth, sophistication and elegance to a room.

6. Make your guests feel welcome

Spotlights work well pointed at the center of a dining table to draw people in.

7. Light the way at night

Midnight bathroom breaks are made worse with harsh lighting that causes temporary blindness upon flicking a switch. Invest in directional floor-level lighting in hallways, staircases and the bathroom to create subtle warmth and a guide.

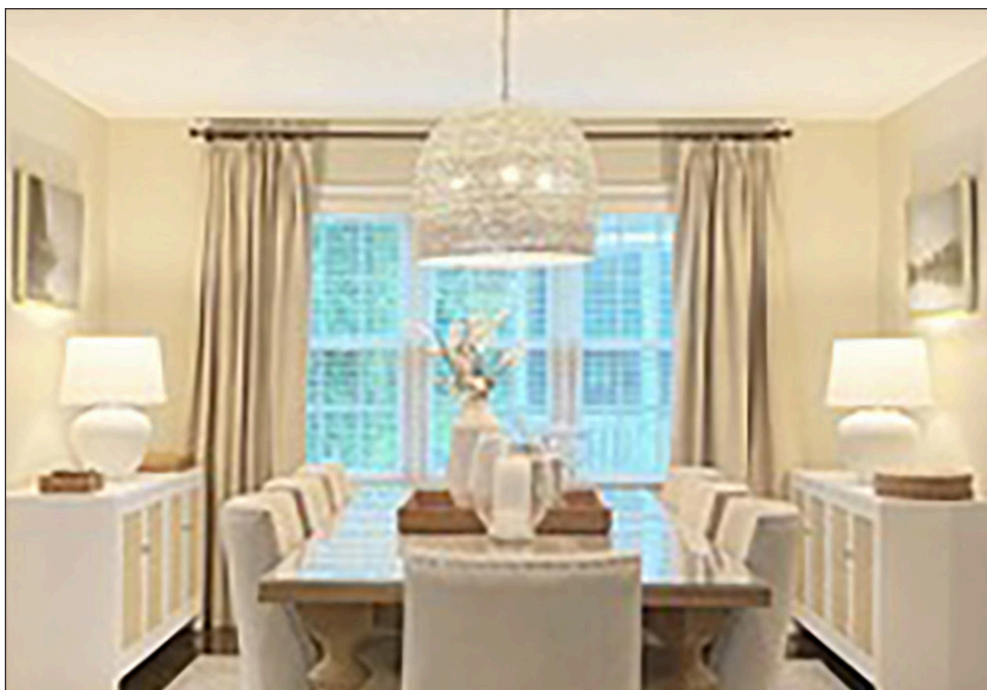
8. Less is more

Keep theme, color schemes and material finish consistent throughout the home, especially when it comes to lighting. Too many different styles in a sordid array throughout the home can be confusing on the eye and will cause uneasiness. Neutral, lighter tones will open up a space and make it appear larger, statement pops of color (e.g., through lampshades) will add interest, while darker hues add a touch of luxury and cosiness. Keep it simple and consistent.

In the end, even if you have varying aesthetics in different rooms in your home, there should still be a connection between your spaces. Whether you opt to paint all your walls the same color or utilize similar accent colors throughout your home, a common thread creates harmony and unity within your spaces, which ultimately leads to a well-designed home. Similarly, you want to have some level of coordination among your lights. There are numerous ways to do this, including through the color or finish of the metal, the type of glass globe or shade and the bulbs that you use. You don’t have to have the same fixtures in every area of your home, but it’s important to coordinate in some way so your rooms don’t feel disconnected from one another.

For best visibility of the photos, log into the e-version of the News-Leader. Here you will see our photos in color and, particularly for this column, you can see how the light functions in the room.

Jeanette Gaskill is the lead designer for Coastal Cottage of Amelia. She loves being able to work hand-in-hand with her customers to design the spaces they dream of. Gaskill knows that interior design is very personal so she considers it an honor to be invited into her customer’s homes. As part of the process, she takes time to get to know her customer’s personality and tastes, which is always reflected in the final result — she can make magic.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

