

= Maria Kanellis =

Maria Louise Kanellis @-@ Bennett (born February 25 , 1982) is an American professional wrestler , valet , actress and singer currently signed to Total Nonstop Action Wrestling (TNA) under the ring name Maria (Kanellis @-@ Bennett) . She is best known for her time with World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) , and Ring of Honor (ROH) as the valet of her real @-@ life husband Michael Bennett .

Kanellis 's career began as a contestant on the reality show Outback Jack in 2004 . In the same year , she placed fifth in the Raw Diva Search , but was later hired by WWE as a backstage interviewer . Kanellis began competing in the ring as a wrestler in 2005 . She also posed for the April 2008 cover of Playboy magazine , which was incorporated into a storyline on Raw . She released her debut album *Seven Sins* on April 13 , 2010 on iTunes .

= = Early life = =

Kanellis was born in Ottawa , Illinois . She has two younger siblings ; a brother and sister named Bill and Janny , respectively . Kanellis grew up with an interest in playing sports , particularly volleyball , basketball , and softball . She graduated from Ottawa Township High School in 2000 , before spending some time as a student at Northern Illinois University . Before her career in wrestling began , Kanellis regularly competed in beauty pageants .

= = Professional wrestling career = =

= = = World Wrestling Entertainment = = =

= = = = Diva Search and debut (2004 @-@ 2005) = = = =

She competed in the Raw Diva Search in 2004 , deciding to enter the contest after seeing an advertisement while watching Raw . Even though she only placed fifth in the contest , she was hired by the company . She stood out in the contest by giving fellow contestant Carmella DeCesare the finger after being eliminated from the contest . Maria began making appearances in Ohio Valley Wrestling (OVW) , WWE 's then @-@ developmental territory , under head trainer Paul Heyman . She contributed booking ideas , and her work at OVW earned her a spot on the Raw brand roster . Maria was brought on to Raw as a ditzy backstage interviewer and the host of WWE KissCam in November 2004 . Her gimmick involved her asking wrong questions , irritating and amusing WWE Superstars and Divas this gimmick would last until 2008 .

In 2005 , Maria began a more physical role , and was defeated in her first official match on the January 10 , 2005 episode of Raw by Christy Hemme in a Lingerie Pillow Fight . She also competed in a Fulfill Your Fantasy Diva Battle Royal at Taboo Tuesday for the WWE Women 's Championship , but was the first to be eliminated , courtesy of Trish Stratus and Mickie James . In another physical moment , Stratus slapped Maria so hard that one of her fillings legitimately fell out . On November 14 , Maria competed in a non @-@ title Diva Battle Royal at the Eddie Guerrero tribute Raw show . Maria stood by herself for most of the match , only getting involved when she saw the opportunity to eliminate a competitor , and ultimately eliminated both Jillian Hall and Victoria . She was one of the last three women left in the match , but was eliminated by both Melina and Trish Stratus .

On the November 28 episode of Raw , Maria interviewed then @-@ Raw General Manager Eric Bischoff , and asked him whether or not he thought he was going to be fired . He then booked her in a match with Kurt Angle out of spite , and Maria was laid out with the Angle Slam . As a result , one week later , Maria testified in the trial against Bischoff , who was being fired because of his controversial actions as General Manager . As Mick Foley questioned her , she answered , " Last week Bischoff abused his power in a way that was both malicious and capricious , and it 's this rash

of discourse that ultimately led to a locker room of disdain and mutiny , and it should be grounds for his immediate dismissal . "

===== Various feuds (2006 ? 2007) =====

In early 2006 , Maria defeated Victoria in a match . Afterwards , she was attacked and stripped of her clothes by Vince 's Devils (Victoria , Torrie Wilson , and Candice Michelle) , but she was saved by Ashley Massaro . During a commercial break that night , Vince McMahon announced a Gauntlet Bra & Panties Match for New Year 's Revolution between all five girls . At the event , Maria was the first to enter the Gauntlet match and eliminated Michelle and Wilson before being eliminated by Victoria . The match was ultimately won by Massaro . On April 10 , episode of Raw , Maria received a shot at the WWE Women 's Championship , but was defeated by the defending champion Mickie James .

Maria teamed with John Cena to take on Edge and Lita in the main event on the February 6 episode of Raw . Maria scored the victory after a spear meant for Cena hit Lita . One month later , Maria lost a singles match to Lita . After the match , Edge was preparing to spear Maria , but Mick Foley ran in to help her . On October 16 , Maria won a Fatal Four @-@ Way Bra and Panties match against Victoria , Candice Michelle , and Torrie Wilson to advance to the semi @-@ finals in a Women 's Championship Tournament . Maria , however , lost in the semi @-@ finals of the tournament to Lita .

On the January 1 , 2007 episode of Raw , Maria attempted to interview Kevin Federline , but was instead slapped by Melina and called a " bitch " . This led to a match between the two later that night , which Melina won . At New Year 's Revolution , Maria and Candice Michelle ran to the ring during the Women 's Championship match between Victoria and Mickie James to stop Melina from interfering , helping James retain the championship . For two consecutive weeks afterward , Maria had two tag team partners , Mickie James and Jeff Hardy , respectively , to take on Melina and a partner . She lost the match with James , but won the other with Hardy .

===== Relationship with Santino Marella (2007 ? 2008) =====

Maria began an on @-@ screen romance with Santino Marella in June 2007 . She also resumed competing in the ring occasionally , often jobbing , or losing quickly , in short matches . On the November 5 episode of Raw , Marella was confronted by the returning Stone Cold Steve Austin for criticizing his movie , The Condemned . As a part of the storyline , the argument ended as Marella received a Stone Cold Stunner from Austin , who then went backstage , only to return with a Budweiser beer truck to hose down Marella and Maria with beer .

After former Playboy cover @-@ girl Ashley Massaro 's return in early 2008 , Kanellis engaged in backstage segments where Massaro suggested Maria should be on the cover of Playboy , including at the Royal Rumble , to the disdain of Marella . As a part of the storyline , Maria defeated Beth Phoenix on February 18 , to " earn the right " to be on the cover of the magazine . During her Playboy cover unveiling , Maria 's cover was plastered over with images of Marella . After Marella offered an ultimatum of posing for the magazine or staying with him as a couple , she stated , " No man and no one is going to make this decision for me " and broke up with her on @-@ screen boyfriend . Maria , along with Ashley , (who had replaced an injured Candice Michelle) were defeated by Phoenix and Melina at WrestleMania XXIV in a Playboy BunnyMania Lumberjill match . After the match , Maria passionately kissed the Master of Ceremonies , Snoop Dogg .

===== SmackDown (2008 ? 2010) =====

As part of the 2008 WWE Supplemental Draft , Maria was drafted to the SmackDown brand . She made her debut on the August 1 episode of SmackDown by defeating Victoria . On the October 17 episode of SmackDown ! , Maria won a " Las Vegas Dice on a Pole " match to become the number one contender for the WWE Divas Championship , but lost a subsequent match for the title against

then @-@ champion Michelle McCool .

Maria participated in the Raw Divas vs. Smackdown Divas match at Survivor Series , where she eliminated Jillian Hall , but her team ultimately lost the match . On the December 5 episode of SmackDown ! , Maria got an upset victory over the Divas Champion Michelle McCool , but she was defeated by Maryse in a number one contender 's match for the title two weeks later . At the Armageddon pay @-@ per @-@ view on December 14 , Maria teamed up with Kelly Kelly , Mickie James and McCool defeating Maryse , Jillian Hall , Victoria and Natalya in an Eight @-@ Diva Santa 's Little Helper tag team match . On the December 26 episode of SmackDown ! , she served as a special guest referee in the Divas Championship match between Maryse and McCool , where Maryse became the new champion . After the match , McCool turned heel and attacked Maria , injuring her shoulder . Maria returned and attacked McCool during a match , on the January 21 , 2009 , episode of SmackDown . On the February 10 episode of SmackDown , she defeated McCool following interference from Eve Torres . Over the next several weeks , Maria competed in various tag @-@ team matches against McCool , with Maria winning three out of four matches . She also competed at WrestleMania XXV for the " Miss WrestleMania " crown , but was eliminated by Victoria . Throughout June , Maria served as the special guest referee in Diva matches .

Maria made her in @-@ ring return on the July 3 episode of SmackDown , teaming with Melina to defeat LayCool (Michelle McCool and Layla . Soon after , she entered into an on @-@ screen relationship with Dolph Ziggler , despite her being a fan favorite and him being a villainous character . At Night of Champions , Maria accompanied Ziggler to his match with Rey Mysterio for Intercontinental Championship . In the following weeks , Melina implied that Ziggler was cheating on Maria , which Maria did not believe . Maria and Ziggler later broke up on the October 10 episode of SmackDown in a backstage segment , after she cost him his match with John Morrison .

Maria then took a brief hiatus from the ring to film the Celebrity Apprentice , but returned on the December 4 episode of SmackDown by helping Mickie James fend off an attack by LayCool . She made her in @-@ ring return the following week , teaming up with James to defeat LayCool . On December 14 , Maria won the Slammy Award for Diva of the Year , which was voted for by WWE fans . On the February 12 , 2010 , episode of SmackDown , Maria began an on @-@ screen relationship with Matt Hardy . Her last match in WWE was a six @-@ person @-@ tag @-@ team match on the February 25 episode of WWE Superstars , where she , Hardy , and The Great Khali lost to The Hart Dynasty (Tyson Kidd , David Hart Smith and Natalya Neidhart . Maria was released from her WWE contract on February 26 .

= = = Ring of Honor (2011 ? 2015) = = =

Maria confirmed on her Twitter account that she would be appearing at Ring of Honor 's Final Battle pay @-@ per @-@ view on December 23 , 2011 . She accompanied her real @-@ life boyfriend , Mike Bennett , as a villainess , in a three @-@ way elimination match against Jay Lethal and El Generico for the ROH World Television Championship . At the event , Bennett was unsuccessful in winning the title . Kanellis continued accompanying Bennett at the January 7 , 2012 , tapings of Ring of Honor Wrestling , where she was dubbed the " First Lady of ROH " .

At the June 21 tapings of Ring of Honor Wrestling , Kanellis accompanied Bennett and Brutal Bob Evans to ring , where they lost to Eddie Edwards and Adam Cole . After the match , Kanellis , Bennett and Bob attacked Cole and Edwards , but were stopped by Sara Del Rey , who Edwards had brought in to neutralize Kanellis . At the Boiling Point pay @-@ per @-@ view on August 11 , Maria and Bennett lost to Del Rey and Edwards in an mixed tag team match . Kanellis ' storyline with Del Rey ended abruptly the following month , when Del Rey signed a contract with WWE . In September 2012 , Kanellis and Bennett became involved in a storyline with Mike Mondo after he kissed Kanellis during one of Bennett 's matches . Mondo continued to cost Bennett matches , until Glory by Honor in October , when Bennett defeated Mondo to end the feud . At the November 3 tapings of Ring of Honor Wrestling , Maria accompied Bennett to the ring where he unsuccessfully challenged Kevin Steen for the ROH World Heavyweight Championship . On December 16 at Final Battle 2012 : Doomsday pay @-@ per @-@ view , Kanellis along with Bob accompied Bennett to

the ring where he defeated Jerry Lynn in his final ROH match before retirement . At the Border Wars pay @-@ per @-@ view on May 4 , 2013 , Kanellis accompanied Bennett to the ring where he was defeated by Roderick Strong , despite Kanellis attempting to interfere on Bennett 's behalf . On September 19 , Maria and Bennett defeated The Brutal Burgers (Brutal Bob Evans & Cheeseburger) in a Intergender tag team match . On October 26 , during Bennett 's match with Kevin Steen at the Glory by Honor XII pay @-@ per @-@ view , Kanellis tried to interfere but was attacked by Lisa Marie Varon .

Kanellis and Bennett returned to ROH at the January 4 , 2014 , tapings of Ring of Honor Wrestling which aired on February 1 , with Kanellis helping Bennett defeat Cedric Alexander . Throughout the summer , Maria and Bennett would get involved in Matt Hardy 's feud with The Briscoes , which would result a tag team match at the Best in the World pay @-@ per @-@ view on June 22 , which Hardy and Bennett would lose despite Maria 's interference . During the feud , The Kingdom stole Jay Briscoe 's title ; Matt Hardy customized it as the Iconic Championship . At All Stars Extravaganza 6 , Bennett and Maria customized the title as the Championship of Love . They were interrupted by Jay Briscoe 's brother , Mark . Bennett and Kanellis left ROH after the December 19 , 2015 , Ring of Honor Wrestling taping , after failing to come to terms on a new contract with the promotion .

= = = Other promotions (2012 ? 2015) = = =

On February 25 , 2012 , Maria won a tournament to determine the inaugural Family Wrestling Entertainment (FWE) Women 's Champion . The victory also marked Kanellis ' first championship in professional wrestling . She held the championship until March 24 , when she lost it to Winter in a three @-@ way match also involving Rosita . In July , Kanellis regained the championship from Winter . Kanellis successfully defended her title against Angelina Love at FWE : No Limits .

In September 2012 , Kanellis made her debut for Chikara , managing Mike Bennett and The Young Bucks to the finals of the 2012 King of Trios tournament . Alongside Gavin Loudspeaker , Kanellis hosted the 2014 National Pro Wrestling Day . On October 4 , 2014 , Maria lost the FWE Women 's Championship against Ivelisse Vélez

= = = New Japan Pro Wrestling (2015) = = =

On April 6 , 2015 , Kanellis managed Bennett and Matt Taven to capture New Japan Pro Wrestling 's IWGP Tag Team Championship at Invasion Attack 2015 . The following day , NJPW announced that , due to Kanellis ' popularity , the promotion had booked its first match involving female wrestlers since October 2002 , which would see Kanellis team up with Bennett and Taven to take on Amber Gallows , Doc Gallows and Karl Anderson at Wrestling Dontaku 2015 on May 3 . Kanellis pinned Amber to win the match . On July 5 at Dominion 7 @.@ 5 in Osaka @-@ jo Hall , Kanellis accompanied Bennett and Taven to their first IWGP Tag Team Championship defense against Doc Gallows and Karl Anderson . The Kingdom lost the match and the championship , after Doc Gallows superkicked Kanellis , which distracted Bennett , leaving Taven alone to lose the match .

= = = Total Nonstop Action Wrestling (2016 ? present) = = =

On January 5 , 2016 , during Impact Wrestling 's premiere on Pop TV , Maria made her debut as a heel introducing her husband as " The Miracle " Mike Bennett . In February , Maria started her first feud in the company , with Gail Kim , the then TNA Knockouts Champion , after the latter refused Maria 's help to make her go " mainstream " . On the April 19 episode of Impact Wrestling , Maria won a ladder match to become the new TNA Knockouts Division Commissioner .

= = Other media = =

In 2004 , she was a contestant on the reality show , Outback Jack . She made it to the final three

before being eliminated .

During the week of November 5 , 2007 , she appeared on five episodes of Family Feud with several other WWE superstars . She also appeared on the February 6 , 2008 episode of Project Runway with some of the other WWE Divas . On August 17 , 2008 , Maria , Candice Michelle , and Eve Torres were on an episode of Sunset Tan . Kanellis later appeared on VH1 's Top 20 Video Countdown , along with John Cena . On December 17 , 2009 , she was a guest host on G4 's Attack of the Show . Kanellis began a new career as a mixed martial arts announcer for HDNet on March 26 , 2010 at the King of the Cage event in Reno , Nevada . Kanellis was also a contestant on the Celebrity Apprentice , which premiered in March 2010 . She was eliminated on the May 16 episode . She placed fifth out of fourteen contestants .

Kanellis was first asked to pose for Playboy when she was nineteen years old , but she turned down the offer in fear of embarrassing her sister . She eventually posed for the cover of the April 2008 issue , with an accompanying nude pictorial . For the pictorial , she chose her own wardrobe and made the black hooded jacket she wore in one of the photos . That same year , FHM named her 53rd of 100 on their " The Sexiest Women 2008 " list . With WWE transitioning to PG content a few months after Kanellis 's pictorial and Playboy itself announcing it would go non @-@ nude starting with the March 2016 issue , Kanellis was ultimately the last active WWE Diva to pose nude for the magazine .

Kanellis is also a singer and released her debut album Sevin Sins on April 13 , 2010 , with " Fantasy " as the first single .

In early 2011 , Kanellis starred in online comedy webshow Funny or Die , and in March 2011 she launched her own perfume line called Signature . In September 2011 , Kanellis launched her DVD line in conjunction with Code Red DVD called Maria 's B Movie Mayhem .

In January 2014 , Kanellis and Bennett launched a weekly podcast called Mike & Maria in Wonderland .

== = Discography = = =

== = = EPs = = = =

2010 : Sevin Sins

== = Filmography = = =

= = Personal life = =

Kanellis previously dated fellow wrestler CM Punk between 2005 and 2007 , after the pair met during their tenures at OVW . In a December 2011 interview , Kanellis confirmed she was dating Mike Bennett , and they later got engaged . On October 10 , 2014 , Bennett and Kanellis got married . Following her wedding she became a step mother to Bennett 's son Austin .

In 2013 , Kanellis began working toward an associate degree in art at university .

= = In wrestling = =

Finishing moves

Beautiful Bulldog (Running bulldog) ? 2006 ? 2007 ; 2009 ? present

Diving clothesline ? 2008

Diving crossbody ? 2008 ? 2009 ; used as a signature thereafter

Signature moves

Bronco buster , with theatrics

Cartwheel evasion

Headscissors takedown

Enzuigiri

Monkey flip

Multiple pin variations

Inside cradle

Roll @-@ up

Schoolgirl

Sunset flip

Roundhouse kick

Seeing Stars (Handstand calf kick)

Split ? legged fist drop

Thesz press

Nicknames

" First Lady of ROH "

" The First Lady of (Professional) Wrestling "

Wrestlers managed

Santino Marella

Dolph Ziggler

Michael / Mike Bennett

Matt Taven

Adam Cole

Matt Hardy

The Young Bucks

Managers

Santino Marella

Candice Michelle

Trish Stratus

John Cena

Entrance themes

" Pa @-@ Pa @-@ Pa @-@ Pa @-@ Party " by Jim Johnston (WWE ; 2005 ? 2006)

" With Legs Like That " by Zebrahead (WWE ; 2006 ? 2010 / FWE ; 2012 ? 2014)

" Sevin Sins " by Maria Kanellis (FWE ; 2012 ? 2014)

" S.U.M. " by Avenue F (ROH ; 2010 ? 2014)

" Something for You " by David Rolfe (ROH ; 2014 ; used while part of The Kingdom)

" Something for You / Suffer Unto Me " by Avenue F & David Rolfe (ROH ; 2014 ? 2016 ; used while part of The Kingdom)

" Fire Guitar " by Fabio Codega (NJPW ; April 5 , 2015 ? December 9 , 2015 ; used while part of The Kingdom)

" Forever in My Dreams " by Thomas Bergersen and Nick Phoenix (TNA ; January 5 , 2016 ? present)

= = Championships and accomplishments = =

Family Wrestling Entertainment

FWE Women 's Championship (2 times)

Pro Wrestling Illustrated

PWI ranked her No. 21 of the top 50 female wrestlers in the PWI Female 50 in 2008

World Wrestling Entertainment

Slammy Award for Diva of the Year (2009)