

Coffeehouse Crooner Dreams Big

"A good soundman is like frosting in the middle of the Oreo."

By Michael Hemmingson

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'A few months back I had this amazing music dream," says local acoustic soloist Kim DiVincenzo, sitting with her laptop at Hot Java before going onstage to play. "It is kind of that cheesy famous music scenario: I was playing onstage with my full band, and I had just released a new CD under a label for the first time. It was the kick-off tour, and we got to play one of the biggest venues ever, with thousands. It was so cool because I can remember the adrenaline rush and how amazing it felt to be up there rockin' out to a huge room that was totally into the show. I could see people singing along and it was awesome and then I woke. It took me a few minutes to come back to reality."

Kim often performs at Twiggs, Lestat's, and the San Diego Sports Club.

TRICKIEST PROBLEM PLAYING LIVE?

"Getting good sound. It is amazing how bad sound can totally ruin your performance. That is why you always hear people giving props to the sound guy during their show, because a good soundman is like frosting in the middle of the Oreo. The cookie doesn't taste the same without it. An artist has to be able to play strong live shows if they ever want to really gather a good following, and I think having great sound is a key part of that. When there is a bad mix in the monitors and you are struggling to hear yourself, it is so hard to get into the performance and really feel the song. Instead, your lips are moving and your arm is strumming, but you are really thinking about how 'not on' you are."

INSTRUMENTS USED?

"I currently play a Martin 000C16 acoustic. It is surely my baby. When I travel or just when I want to grab the guitar and go to the beach or something I play my 'little Martin,' which is similar to a baby Taylor. The sound that you get out of that thing is incredible. I am going to add a pickup to mine so I can play it out live sometimes. It is so small that it actually feels like the correct size for me. I also have a Samick Les Paul electric (Greg Bennett Design). I love this guitar, and once I have my band put together I will play it out more. I have been through two other guitars as well. My first guitar was actually an antique that at the time I had no real appreciation for because I was just learning. It was my mother's Martin 1963 classical. She told me I could try it out and see if I like playing before I got my own. I fell in love right away, even though now I cringe at the fact that I was banging out the G chord on this delicate guitar. Then I bought myself a Takamine acoustic, and a few years later I moved on to a Taylor 414CE, which was a beautiful limited-edition guitar. After moving out to San Diego I realized the Taylor was too big and not really fitting for me. So I found my Martin."

FAVORITE MUPPET?

"I would have to say I had a thing for Kermit. How could you not love him?...Funny that he got it on with Miss Piggy, his complete opposite. She was a loud and rambunctious drama queen."

BEST GIG?

"A recent show at the Knitting Factory for the L.A. Music Awards. I had no idea what to expect. The show was in the Alterknit Lounge, which is a smaller room in the venue that had a wonderful, intimate feel. I don't know what it was, but I have never been as 'on.'"

WORST GIG?

"One of my Borders Books and Music gigs back in Massachusetts unexpectedly went all wrong. They provide you with their own PA at Borders, but that night the staff couldn't find all the right cords. We ended up scrounging up enough stuff, and when we went to sound check, the guitar wouldn't amplify. I ended up having to play without the guitar plugged in, but the mike worked. Meanwhile...people were just sitting there, sipping their lattes, staring at you, waiting to hear some music."

SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION?

"I was on the snowboard race team in college, Fairfield University, and we were at our Friday night practice at this really small mountain. I got off the chairlift and stopped to strap in. I looked up to see Kevin Bacon and his son in front of me. I guess he lives near there and takes his son to ski all the time. It was a slow night, and no one else was there except the three of us, so I thought, 'What the hell, Kim? Take a moment and say something to him.' I looked up at him and said, 'Hi.' He said, 'Hi.' Then there was, like, a dead silence...then stupid me says, 'I loved you in *He Said, She Said*.' And he said, 'Oh, yeah...thank you,' and that was it."