

## DiVincenzo and Robertson raise the acoustic bar

By Michael Kuhlmann

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Some names will always brand cities. For Kentwood, La., it's Britney; for Houston, it's Beyoncé; for San Diego, it's Jewel.

After all, San Diego is one of the hot spots for those ubiquitous coffeehouse singer-songwriters who perform acoustic sets. Stop by enough of them and any guitarist with a decent voice could be the next Jewel. How do you up the ante? You attend college, learn how to hone your craft and become a computer nerd.

At a petite 5 feet tall, local artist Kim DiVincenzo has attained some lofty achievements. She garnered a nomination for this year's Los Angeles Music Awards and was asked to coordinate Go Girls Music Fest 2005, an ovarian cancer benefit concert for The Lynne Cohen Foundation. The fest, which will take place at the Hard Rock Cafe tomorrow night, will showcase the talents of Renata Youngblood, DiVincenzo, Dropjoy, Evan Bethany, Ren Daversa, Annie Bethancourt, Pi, Mermaid's Journey and the Victoria Robertson Band. Backtrack four years, however, and DiVincenzo's passion for music can be traced to Fairfield University in Connecticut.

In her senior year of college there, DiVincenzo, who earned a bachelor's degree in communication, didn't waste any time putting her creative mind to good use for an independent study. With a knack for graphic design and musical sensibilities she inherited from her mother, the self-described "computer girl" took a semester to make geek sound good.

"Since I worked in the media center, the director of the radio/TV program said, 'Why don't you produce your own demo, learn ProTools, put together a CD and help us write a manual on it?' " DiVincenzo, now 24, recalled. "I was so scared that I knew I had to do it, and so those were the first songs I had ever written."

Six songs later, the Massachusetts native debuted her album, was nominated Wormtown Sound Award 2004 for "best solo acoustic artist," packed up her stuff and headed to San Diego. It was here that she applied her marketing and promotion skills to reach a wider audience.

"You can do so much yourself, and (the recording industry) expects that now," DiVincenzo said. "It's almost more now that major labels are for distribution – that's why you want to get on a major label. They want to pick up artists who have already secured a big fan base, have touring experience, have a really strong demo CD and have laid down all that groundwork."

Victoria Robertson, 26, who will perform with DiVincenzo, provided another insight as to why independent artists are saturating the local music scene.

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### DATEBOOK

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**Go Girls Music Fest 2005**  
*7:30 p.m. tomorrow; The Hard Rock Cafe, 909 Prospect St., La Jolla; \$6; 858-454-5101 or [gogirlsmusicfest.com](http://gogirlsmusicfest.com)*

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"Now, (they) can make their own distribution deals with companies, and the cost of recording is going down," she said. "There are some good-quality recording studios out there that won't charge you an arm and a leg."

After she graduated from UCSD with a visual arts degree, the classically trained singer with the supermodel looks (she actually does model) decided to take a stab at the singer-songwriter thing and ended up being nominated (for best new artist) at this year's San Diego Music Awards.

But much like DiVincenzo, she, too, can channel her inner geek. In fact, just talking about music editing software gets her all giddy.

"I really started getting excited working with ProTools and all this ear candy – you've got this awesome synth pad and you've got these computer sounds," Robertson, a former Miss San Diego, said while mimicking Tetris sounds.

"I used to do a lot of stuff with my acoustic, and I found that a little limiting – and it was very competitive in San Diego," Robertson said. "I really enjoy electronic pop. I like the idea that I can sit down in front of a computer and make the sounds and beats myself, and I don't have to be a drummer or a bass player. I'm not even a keyboard player, but I can work it out."

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Michael Kuhlmann is a Union-Tribune intern.