

Five Feet Fab

Kim DiVincenzo puts her mind where the music is

By Charlene Arsenault

When Kim DiVincenzo was a salesperson at WXLO, she was determined to be the best salesperson. She devoted her time and energy to it, and did become one of the station's top sellers.

That's the way DiVincenzo approaches anything she tackles. But at the same time, she was angry and frustrated inside. Yeah, she might have been doing great at her job, but it felt like a big Jersey barrier.

"I was flipping out inside because I couldn't concentrate on music," says DiVincenzo. "I was pissed off and angry. I wanted too much and didn't know how to get there. I loved the job at WXLO and I was good at it. It sounds cheesy, but I'm one of those people who is determined to get things done and get them done right. I wanted to be the top salesgirl, but I'd go home and go 'Wait, stop doing this. You really want to do music.' "



DETAILS

Who: Kim DiVincenzo
When: Mondays, with Josh Teter and The Late Messengers
Where: Tammany Hall, 43 Pleasant St.

She moved out of her childhood home in Holden and into Worcester, where a new neighbor proved to be the spark she needed. Jon Short, who plays in Josh Teter and The Late Messengers, convinced her to dig into finding places to play out. "Scared shitless," she did just that — and now is a regular at coffeehouses, and played weekly runs at Rage and The Art Bar. Now, she splits the bill with The Late Messengers every week at Tammany Hall, and she left WXLO this past August for a sales job with less pressure.

It took DiVincenzo awhile to get to a "professional" point with music. Since she was a youngster attending Wachusett Regional High, she signed up with choirs that she mostly hated singing in. She grew to love singing, and got noticed, when she found musicals and the jazz choir. Then at Fairfield University, where she majored in communications, she eventually earned a coveted spot in the college quartet. It was a spot that allowed her to solo often. Singing became something she could actually "do."

"So then, I was like, 'Well, learn the guitar and get it over with,' " says DiVincenzo. "In high school, I never picked it up. My mother played, and she pulled out this Martin 1963 classical guitar for me. I took lessons from Pete DePasquale [the guitarist in 9Teen], and kept playing through college."

A guy DiVincenzo dated at Fairfield helped her focus her talents, and she started to write some tunes. She still keeps a journal — even of those horrid first attempts. Reluctantly, she shares with us some random lyrics from one of her first workouts with the pen: [Journal entry, Feb. 24, 1999] "The flow of all things continue on and on. The pages of our life turn to stone."

It's good to look back at things like that to feel the progression. DiVincenzo is a lot more comfortable singing and playing solo now. She's far more confident singing than she is playing the guitar, but she's catching up. Playing a mix of acoustic pop rock, she is influenced by intense songwriters and melodies: Radiohead, the Indigo Girls, Dave Matthews, Jeff Buckley and Guster, to name a few. DiVincenzo says it's not uncommon for her to get compared to Michelle Branch.

"Some people will say I sound like Jewel, too," says DiVincenzo, who's written about 20 original songs, and will pepper her performances with covers, "but there's more power and funk in my voice than in Jewel's. Maybe like Fiona Apple, but her voice is deep."

Standing at five feet, the audience is often stunned at the voice that comes out of such a small frame. Right now, she's got a demo of songs she recorded as a thesis project in college, but says her main goal is to get back into the studio for a genuine debut album.

"I'm trying to figure out what the right moves are for a solo artist," she says. "I have all these ideas."