

a Young

Mercy grad living to make music

STORY BY ROB CULLIVAN

IRONDEQUOIT — Jennifer Marie Heieck, 23, who prefers to go by her stage name Jennifer Marie, is a self-described "aggressive piranha" and "baby barracuda." Although her polite demeanor belies such monikers, Marie is definitely aspiring to live life in a fishbowl.

"I want superstardom," said Marie, a pianist and somewhat bluesy sounding alto singer "I want to be in the limelight, even with the annoying paparazzi. I want that."

A 1995 graduate of Our Lady of Mercy High School whose home parish is Christ the King Church, Marie may have a shot at such a life if she can continue to build an audience for her jazz-flavored pop music. In July, she released a five-song CD titled "Lounge Lizard" that she's currently promoting by playing shows in Buffalo and Rochester. The CD shows signs of influence by such musicians as Joni Mitchell, Fiona Apple, Sarah McLachlan and even a little Beatles, though the lyrics are less imagistic than those artists'.

Marie hopes to also garner performing opportunities in Syracuse, Pittsburgh and New York City. And she said that some major labels have expressed interest in hearing her music. Meanwhile, fans of the Rochester Amerks hockey team can catch her singing the national anthem before the Nov. 24 game at Blue Cross Arena at the Rochester War Memorial.

"I want to play everywhere," she said with enthusiasm in her voice. "I want to play in New Delhi, India!"

A native of Virginia, Marie moved here with her family when she was 10, and has been singing all her life. She started taking piano lessons when she was 10,



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

and has always dreamed of being a famous performer. In an interview over coffee at a local shop, the young woman noted that she has ambition to rival that of any world conqueror.

"I used to think when I was 15 or 16 that life is too short for the world not to know who I am," she said with a chuckle.

However, she's become a bit more introspective in her 20s, pointing out that she's also concluded "life is too short not to know the whole world."

To that end, she decided to expand her horizons a bit by attending the State University of New York at Fredonia where she was a pre-law student.

However, even though she was accepted into a New England law school following graduation in 1999, she decided to take a chance on the music business instead and has been singing in Buffalo for the past year.

While she was busy belting out tunes to Buffalonians, her boyfriend, Jamie Randazza, a financial planner, happened to meet the wife of a guitarist for the folk-

rock band 10,000 Maniacs. This woman referred Randazza to Armand Petri, who's produced for the Maniacs and the rock band Goo Goo Dolls. The rest, as they say in pop musicdom, is history, with Petri offering to produce her CD after meeting her and listening to a tape of hers. Backed by a guitarist, bassist and drummer, Marie recorded "Lounge Lizard" in Western New York and has been pushing the CD at her gigs. One such gig took her earlier this month to Borders Books in Victor. More than 250 people showed up to hear her, including several of her Mercy classmates.

Prior to the show, Marie said she and her manager, Dan Agnew, vigorously promoted the CD among her fellow Mercy alumnae, sending out free copies to 86 former students. The turnout at Borders was the payoff for such investment, she said, noting it was nice to see her fellow

Events

For information on these events, call the hotline for Odyssey, the Diocese of Rochester's young adult network, at 716/328-3228, ext. 218, or 1-800-388-7177, ext. 218, or visit the Odyssey Web site at <http://www.ggw.org/odyssey/events.html>.

● **Wednesday, Nov. 29:** Catholic Coffee House in Fireside Lounge at St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Ave., Rochester. Topic: "Is it True? A Catholic Approach to Scripture," presented by Shannon Loughlin. Co-sponsored by campus ministry and Odyssey. 7:30-9:30 p.m. Bring a mug for coffee.

● **Friday, Dec. 8:** Bowling night at Ladd's Bowling Center, 873 Merchants Road. Time to be announced.

● **Sunday, Dec. 10:** Sushi night at California Rollin' in the Village Gate Mall, 274 N. Goodman St., Rochester, 4 p.m.

If you are interested in ballroom dancing classes, a faith-sharing group, or going to see a Rochester production of "A Christmas Carol," call the hotline for more information.

alumnae because she was unable to make the class reunion a few weeks before.

"Everybody was saying there were more of us at Borders than at the reunion," she said with a laugh.

Marie credited her years at Mercy for shaping her as a young woman.

"Without the distraction of boys, I focused attention on my studies rather than my hair and makeup," she said.

However, as an aspiring pop star, Marie must now focus on her image as well as her inner-being, pointing out how she has to take off her glasses for photos. She adds that she was too much of a model student at Mercy to have the kind of drug-addled, sordid past that some pop stars disclose in interviews. Hence, she will simply have to stick to writing good music if she wants to be placed among the firmament of fame occupied by other pop stars.

"I want to make music that endures," she said. "That'll never go out of style."



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