

Former River Vale resident Allison Cipris performs in Oradell

BY KEVIN GLYNN
Of Community Life

Former River Vale resident Allison Cipris returns to the area for an acoustic performance at Cool Beans Café in Oradell on Friday, Oct. 7 from 9 p.m. to midnight. Now a Manhattan, N.Y. resident, she performs regularly at The Bitter End, Arlene's Grocery, The Cutting Room and other venues in the city. She describes her music as a cross between Pat Benatar and Sheryl Crow, but her musical tastes expand further to include Led Zepel and Tom Petty, among other classic rockers.

"I tend to write in the style that I like to listen to, so it's more rock based than anything else."

Her roots in the music world, however, did not begin by emulating any of these famous performers.

When she was 6-years-old, Cipris's parents encouraged her to perform in local musical theater to help her overcome a natural shyness.

"I was very much intimidated, which is shocking to anybody who knows me now," she says, laughing. She was able to overcome the anxiety, and continued performing through high school in school plays at Pascack Valley Regional and in some Off-Broadway plays.

After college, Cipris toured mostly in children's musical the-

ater shows for three years, even working for a time as a showgirl on a cruise ship.

"Once I got sick of living out of a van and a suitcase, I settled in Manhattan."

Cipris believes her experience in the theater has played a major role in her rock career.

"It's very important to be engaging and entertaining and sort of draw the audience into your performance," she explains.

In the summer of 2001, after spending some time doing cabaret shows and working as a jingle and session singer for songwriters, she taught herself to play guitar and started playing at open mics. With the help of friends, some musicians she'd met along the way, and after a few auditions, Cipris had herself a band.

Since she started performing her own songs, she has received some positive reviews.

Bob Leone, projects director for the Songwriters Hall of Fame, selected the Allison Cipris Band as one of nine artists chosen from more than 200 submissions to be featured in the "50th Songwriters Hall of Fame's New Writers Showcase." He writes, "Having seen them perform at Arlene Grocery and at Fez, it was evident that this act had everything I was looking for - memorable melodies, smart lyrics, powerful vocals and superb musicianship. This was one of the

easiest decisions I've had to make and this band did me proud."

"I love playing on stage," Cipris says. "I love the power of the electric guitars behind me and being able to jump around and go crazy."

But Cipris is just as excited about her upcoming acoustic performance, a style she hasn't performed in a while. "I'm looking forward to getting back to the bare bones of my music and sort of exploring where things started."

Jefferson Thomas (www.jeffersonthomas.com) will join Cipris in Oradell, singing harmony and playing some of his own songs.

The format for the evening, she explains, will be similar to VH-1 "Storytellers."

"It's going to be the sort of thing where I talk about what went into it and what inspired the song." She jokes that although her songs reflect what's happening in her personal life, she doesn't name names.

Cipris will perform many of her original songs from her album "Not Like You," and a couple of covers in her own style. She plans to perform "Go," which she doesn't perform live with her band very often.

"It's very sentimental ballad kind of song. It's a song that's really more appropriate for an intimate setting."

She will also perform one of her newer songs, "Who's to Blame,"



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLISON CIPRIS

Former River Vale resident Allison Cipris will perform an acoustic concert at Cool Beans Café in Oradell on Oct. 7.

that she says is about both sides of a breakup.

Cipris's parents, who have always been supportive of her music, will be at the show.

"Actually, since they live so close to Manhattan, they come to all my shows. I don't think they've missed one in my entire life."

But for all of her talent, Cipris has no idea where it came from.

"I know I'm not adopted," she jokes, saying that neither one of her parents can carry a tune. "I have no idea where I get my

singing ability from. It's the craziest thing. I think my grandmother may have sang in a choir once," she says through a laugh.

The result of all of her experiences from theater to rock seems to have created an outgoing, expressive young woman with a large personality.

She's all of these things, and yet, she's still somewhat reserved when it comes to discussing anything specific in her personal life. Ask

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