



L.I. Sounds

The Acoustic Blizzard

The Village Pub South
Amityville

Bands gathering to perform stripped down versions of their own material sounds like a format best saved for a weekday evening, as most clubs would rather reserve the weekend slots for major draw cover bands and money-in-the-bank "tribute" acts. But against all logic, the calendar insisted that this was Friday night as I pulled a seat towards the stage for *The Acoustic Blizzard* at The Village Pub. Brian, the owner of the Pub, deserves a huge thumbs up for carrying the torch to keep original music alive on the Island. And his investment in the original scene is paying huge dividends as some very talented performers and songwriters are bringing lots of great music as well as a growing audience hungry for something different to the club.

One of the early highlights was Darcy Wright Avolin's heart-filled set. She had the crowd from the first note and single-handedly made the case that the original music scene is alive with moving renditions of "In The Movies" and "Wooden Soldiers" among other selections from her catalogue.

Host Jeremy Gilchrist treated us to a six song set featuring mainly his own creations. Gilchrist possesses a warmth and vulnerability that makes him an instant crowd favorite, and his sense of humor and laid-back stage manner made him a perfect choice as emcee. Each of his songs was well received, and his performance of Counting Crows' lesser known gem "Sullivan Street" helped seal the bond



between musician and audience while serving as a fitting setup for his dozer "When The Millennium Really Began".

Robin Eve Chifan and Frank Walker make up Ewalk, an acoustic storytelling duo who strum and harmonize about their world and surroundings. Nights like this were made for an act like Ewalk, and the crowd was ready to follow the pair wherever they wanted to take them. Robin

wrote "The Facts Don't Count" about the relationship she shares with her young daughter, and delivered the lyric in a way that brought the entire audience into her mother/child experience. Ewalk ended with Harry Chapin's "Mr. Tanner." The musical tale is very consistent with the band's style so it wasn't hard to see what moved them to choose this cover.

Local heroes Forever Falling followed and ran their songlist without much more than a "thank you" to the crowd between numbers. Frontman Rob Upham piloted the three piece unit through a bottom heavy seven selection show. Hal Eisenberg took on the bass playing chores as the band continues to search for a steady member, and his contribution kept FF sounding like a complete and polished unit. The large percentage of the audience was familiar with Forever Falling's music and held nothing back in showing their approval of the band's choices for this intimate show.

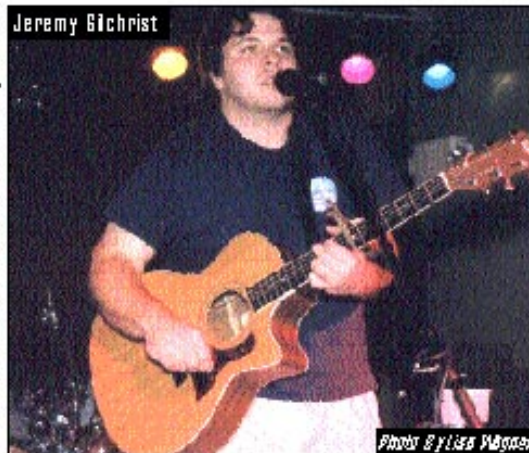
Armed with a keyboard and six string, Deborah Lombardi brought her soft tones and heavy lyrics to the stage and stole the crowd's attention with music from her independent cd. "At The Bottom" showcased both Lombardi's darker voice and jazz piano training, while guitar selections "City Limits" and "Something About A Man," lifted her poetic abilities into the forefront. Though having only about year of stage performing experience under her belt, Lombardi has a presence and command of the room which is usually only found in more seasoned artists.

The acoustic format took a backseat as the much-anticipated set by Eva began. Singer/writer Rebekka Carol fronts this five player group that mixes sound, styles and

genres in their own special rock n' roll blender, and the result is something unique and tasty with a tight driving foundation. Although performing for only the second time with a new guitarist, Eva was at full strength. Each player has a mastery of their instrument, and Rebekka brings enough power and attitude to the stage to make this band as hot as any act on the New York Island circuit.

"We're trying to do something here, but

Jeremy Gilchrist



I'm not exactly sure what," was frontman Jim Fitzgerald's preamble to Devia's set. The trio of club vets have come together and gelled as a fresh and inventive act with influences that range from classic rock to today's more cutting edge rockers. The music was well rehearsed and the vocal harmonies played well against the strong, chopping chord backdrop. I was actually blown away by these guys and couldn't wait to get home and take their disc for a spin.

The Acoustic Blizzard at The Village Pub was a success on many levels, and hopefully this is just the start of a long running weekend series.

■ - Dan Brown