

A Rising Star: Wayland singer launches music career with her EP

By **Geoffrey Silver**/ Special To The Town Crier
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For Wayland High School senior Danielle Ashley, this summer has been the launching point for her budding musical career. On July 29, the 17 year-old singer-songwriter performed on "Bode Miller Night" at sold-out Holman Stadium in Nashua, N.H., home of the Nashua Pride of the Can-Am Independent Baseball League.

The evening game between the Pride and the Brockton Rox featured world-renowned Olympic skier and New Hampshire native Bode Miller, who was making a one-game appearance for the Pride. Before the game, Ashley wowed the audience, playing nine songs during a 45-minute set on the roof of the dugout as the crowd swelled to its 3,000 seat maximum capacity.

For Ashley, "Bode Miller Night" represented what she calls, "(My) first huge venue."

"Because I really like baseball, being in a baseball stadium was kind of a comfort zone for me, but at the same time, it was a little bit nerve-wracking to be in front of so many people," she said of the event.

Predictably, "Bode Miller Night" gained Ashley tremendous exposure, already spurring offers from other Minor League baseball teams for pre-game performances. For future shows, in addition to the baseball stadiums, she is planning to play at "All Ages Night" at the Natick Arts Center and at the Burlington Mall where the Apple Store is looking to schedule local iTunes artists.

Previously, Ashley had only played at scattered performances ranging from school coffeehouses to small Starbucks crowds.

"My focus has been on finishing my album rather than performing," she said, but she also attributes her age as a factor in the difficulty of finding performances. As a minor at 17 years old, Ashley is unable to play in many of the ubiquitous lounges or clubs in the Boston and Cambridge area.

Upon the release of her EP in April, Ashley has experienced a new level of growth in popularity and exposure. She is proud of her acceptance as an iTunes artist, which allows her songs to be downloaded worldwide. While the process usually takes six to eight weeks, if they are accepted at all, Ashley was added into the system after a mere three days, which speaks volumes about the quality of her music.

"I really think I can develop a lot more than I already have, but it's a really exciting time for me," Ashley said regarding this stage of her young career.

Having played classical piano since the age of 10, Ashley began to play the guitar at 14.

"I started writing as soon as I picked up a guitar," she said. Her music falls under the category of what she considers "a wide range of rock, pop, alternative." However, she is able to separate herself by her unique, original songwriting.

"People can relate, have emotions, understand (the music)," she said. "Writing a song can take as long as twenty minutes to three



Wayland High School senior Danielle Ashley with Olympic skier Bode Miller before her performance at the Nashua Pride baseball game this summer. (Courtesy photo)

weeks. Songwriting is the easy part for me; the challenge is in the recording studio where I want to perform the song the way I first envisioned it."

While the school year poses time commitment conflicts, Ashley has embraced the freedom of summer to focus on recording and producing her debut album.

"During the school year, the number one focus is school," she said. "Academics come first."

Beyond academics, Ashley plays volleyball and softball and is a member of the Peer Guidance Program.

"I'm kind of just a regular kid," she said. She is planning on going to college after her senior year.

Ashley views the social effects of her musical career at school positively.

"It is always nice to hear 'congratulations' or people say that they like my music (Music) has connected me to people that I never thought I would be friends with."

Ashley planned to release her upcoming album, which features both guitar and piano selections, around Christmas, but the date has been pushed back because she is still perfecting a few songs.

While hesitant to commit to music as a career path at this young age, she maintains a modest, patient approach.

"I consider this (so far) a success, but I think that I really have a long road ahead of me," she said. "We'll see what opportunities I get, and obviously this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance, so I'm going to take it."

"I'm definitely looking forward to college and hoping music continues and blossoms into something more. We'll definitely see where it goes, and I hope it goes far."

Through the recent success of the release of her EP and her performance at "Bode Miller Night," Danielle Ashley is well on her way.