



March 21, 2010

Ash Devine's music brings out smiles in fans

Shows mix beats, clowning

By Tony Kiss

Singer-songwriter Ash Devine wants to leave a smile on her listener's faces. And not just from the music.

Her performances mix original songs, an upbeat attitude and a passion for clowning. While she's probably not running away to join the circus, Devine combines singing and heartfelt clowning into an act that can be called unique.

And rather than just work the coffeehouses and music rooms, she's often found playing in nursing homes and assisted living sites. "People will come alive when music is given to them," the 24-year-old performer said.

On Wednesday night, she returns to one of her favorite venues, BoBo Gallery, 22 Lexington Ave. "It's the place I play most often," she said. "I enjoy the atmosphere."

Originally from Blacksburg, Va., Devine has been in Asheville about six years. She's part of a crop of young local singer-songwriters who've been a bit below the radar, performing as often as possible but still looking to break through in a bigger way.

Most recently, she entered the Great Blue Ridge Talent Search at White Horse Black Mountain, where she was passed through to the competition's second round, still under way.

"I am still evolving as a performer," she said. "I would say that it's been a little difficult. I've been here six years and I still don't have a dedicated band, but I was still in school (at UNC Asheville) and was pretty busy with that.

"There is so much competition among the singer-songwriters. I found weekly gigs here and there, but they would fall through the cracks, depending on the venue."

Playing for senior audiences in nursing rooms has given her a platform not often explored by local musicians. Adding clowning to the mix has expanded her opportunities. She has a "larger vision" to join with other musicians and artists and organize a tour that would include an educational component and travel by a fuel-efficient green vehicle.

Devine began clowning two years ago, when she toured Haiti with a group from the Geshundheit Institute, founded by the physician Dr. Patch Adams. It changed her life, she said.

"I felt it was exactly what I was missing in my education," she said. "We visited orphanages, hospitals and an abandoned baby unit."

Returning to Asheville, she began to explore clowning.

"You can be a clown whether or not you're dressed a clown," she said. "Bright colors help a lot. It helps you stand out. I don't wear any makeup. I do wear a clown nose a lot of the time. The clowning is really starting to blossom right now. There is a distinction between me as a songwriter and a clown,

but they are starting to merge.”

Additional Facts

IF YOU GO

Who: Ash Devine with Cailen Campbell and David Brown.

When: 9 p.m. Wednesday.

Where: BoBo Gallery, 22 N. Lexington Ave.

Learn more: <http://ashdevine.net>, www.myspace.com/ashdevinemusic, and www.bobogallery.com.
