



## FOLLOWING THEIR FLAME

THE TOUGH AND TALENTED WORLD OF YOUNG MUSICIANS

By Timothy Dumas

The four young performers here "got it" all through their own efforts, but got an extra push from their parents and their own drive to play. But their parents' love and support, including their parents' financial support, is a big part of their success.

Cheryl B. Engelhardt is a 21-year-old singer and songwriter from Greenwich, Conn. She has been playing guitar since she was 12 and has been writing songs since she was 15. Her first single, "Empty Alibi," was released in 2004 and is now available on her debut album, *Shoes Off and Run*. She is currently working on her second album, *My Heart Goes Along*.

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A piece about 4 local musicians and their various places in the road to success as a performer. Below is the section on Cheryl.

#### THE ROAD BEGINS



This is a fact only Cheryl B. Engelhardt would know: "If you slow down the sound of a hummingbird, then look at the actual sound speed of a humpback whale, they fit. They're identical." Okay, so she was a biology-music double major who briefly worked for the U.S. Geological Survey, counting mussels in the Delaware River. Yet the hummingbird oddity seems specially made to delight a young songwriter with a quirky lyrical gift.

"Sometimes I turn down the volume/When I meant to change the heat," she writes in the immensely appealing "Empty Alibi." In "Out There," she sings of a shaky love affair, "My conscience takes my body's side/My heart goes along for the ride." In "American Diner," she describes how "Metal anythings and neon nothings/Greet the traveling someones." It would barely matter if Cheryl wrote less well, because her knack for the killer piano hook is so consistent on *Shoes Off and Run*.

Like the other three performers in this article, she writes a lot of gently rocking ballads that could win broad appeal. Unlike them, she holds down a full-time job. She wrote her songs while working as a personal trainer, a courier and an assistant at a film-editing house in New York City. She recorded them on days off and after work (with bandmates Elijah Steele, Jon Price and Michael Calabrese), and in the small hours of the morning (alone, trying to perfect her vocals). She got the CD manufactured herself, distributes it through Internet sites such as Amazon and CD Baby, and promotes it by playing anywhere she can, chiefly in tiny clubs within subway distance of her Harlem apartment.

Now she works as an apprentice at Big Foote Music (owned by R. P. and Sherman Foote of Greenwich), which composes for commercials and film. The job is ideal for a budding recording artist (especially one who must pay off debts accrued putting out a CD). She learns so much about the technical aspects of recorded music that she would stay in the job even if *Shoes Off and Run* began to take off.



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But where does she go from here? "I never said, 'I want to go be a rock star,'" says Cheryl, a daughter of John and Elissa Engelhardt. "I would have been happy to have one copy of that CD on my shelf. I already feel like the luckiest kid in the world." She laughs and adds, "For me, success will be when I'm out of debt."

Cheryl's modesty is refreshing, but one can see she has started down an unforgiving road. As surely as her voice grows stronger and her songwriting gains confidence, the music business will throw up its roadblocks, as one supposes it must. Not everything can sell. Not everyone can be heard. But in a world of blah music, the hope remains that these four will find the audiences who are seeking them out, without yet knowing it.