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Quick

ENTERTAINMENT

Camille
Cortinas

Summer
Ames

Becky
Middleton

Fresh faces

WE SHINE THE LIGHT ON THREE OF DALLAS' UP-AND-COMING SINGER-SONGWRTERS

INSIDE Up All Night at Suite | 'Halloween II' vs. 'Final Destination' | DJ S.O.U.L.Jah

music

CONCERTS, PROFILES, REVIEWS

Sisters of song

Three local singers cultivate a following

Summer Ames, Camille Cortinas and Becky Middleton have all found loyal fans in Dallas, without the benefit of constant blog buzz or headlining gigs at high-profile venues. But it's time more folks found out about these talented singer-songwriters.

Ames recently released an impressive debut EP, *Complicated Daydream*. Her breezy, slightly soulful tunes provide a perfect soundtrack for, well, summer.

You may have heard Cortinas' warm, cheery vocals on catchy commercial jingles for the Texas Lottery and TXU. She developed a similarly upbeat sound as frontwoman of local band Fishing for Comets. She's now working on songs for a solo album, some with a darker side than we've heard from her before.

Middleton has workshopped her material on the coffeehouse circuit for a few years and hosts a regular songwriters' showcase at Opening Bell Coffee. The practice paid off on her latest CD, *No Trouble*, an oft-bluesy pop set recorded at Pleasantry Lane studios with Salim Nourallah.

While none of the women put style above substance when it comes to making music, each seemed to relish the opportunity to get glamorous for our photo shoot. While playing dress-up and trying to achieve the perfect poses, they hit it off so well that they decided to set up a show together. You can see them perform, minus the ball gowns, on Sept. 4 at Opening Bell's South Side location.

Here's more on Ames, Cortinas and Middleton.

Hunter Hawk

Live at Opening Bell

Summer Ames, Camille Cortinas and Becky Middleton will play a special show together on Friday, Sept. 4, at 8:30 p.m. at Opening Bell Coffee's South Side location, 1409 S. Lamar St. \$6. 214-565-0383 or openingbellcoffee.com.



Summer Ames

Age: 21

Day job: Nanny

Hometowns: She grew up in Crandall, Texas, and now lives in Dallas.

Favorite singers as a child: Ella Fitzgerald and Joni Mitchell. "I used to sit on the floor with my Grandma, looking through and listening to old records."

Favorite singers now: Imogen Heap ("Her creativity inspires me") and Natasha Bedingfield ("Amazing vocals and powerful stage presence").

Favorite local acts: Justin Brooks, David Ramirez, Jillian Edwards

When and how you started playing music: "I remember singing as early as 2 or 3, and have VHS tapes of me performing for my family at about age 5. I didn't start seriously pursuing a singing career until I finished high school. I attended LSU for a little over a year on a full vocal performance scholarship, but the primary focus of a vocal performance degree is classical studies for opera, and that's just not me. I then attended MediaTech Institute to learn the skills of professional recording arts and finished last December. And now I'm using it more than ever and even engineered some of the tracks on my new EP myself!"

Sum up your songs in one sentence: "I write about things that are real in my life and the lives of the people I surround myself with."

Favorite places to play in town: Opening Bell, any coffeehouse, Liquid Lounge, Prophet Bar

Complete this sentence: The Dallas music scene is ... "diverse and growing."

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much of a girly girl are you? "I'm definitely between 5 and 6. I appear very girly and enjoy the latest trends, but I also limit my use of makeup, and I'm interested in audio engineering ... which isn't so girly."

Next live shows: Friday at It's A Grind, 2901 Indiana Blvd. 214-954-7109 or itsagrind.com.

• Sept. 4 at Opening Bell — South Side.

Web site: mspace.com/summerames



Camille Cortinas

Age: 28

Day job: Barista at Starbucks, full-time sociology student. Occasionally does voiceover work (you may have heard her in the Texas Lottery "Lucky Day" commercials.)

Hometowns: Has lived in Oak Cliff, Cedar Hill, Flower Mound and Dallas.

Favorite singers as a child: Jackson Browne, Karen Carpenter, the Beatles, Beach Boys, Buddy Holly, Doris Day, Joni Mitchell. "Parental influence," she says.

Favorite singers now: Karen Peris, Elvis Costello, Willie Nelson, James Mercer, Stevie Wonder and Regina Spektor ("because she coughs when she sings").

Favorite local acts: "Anything with Eric Neal in the mix — the Slack, Salim, Woodbelly, Johnny Lloyd Rollins, Danny Balis, Homespun Remedies, Preston Grey and Dogdander."

When and how you started playing music: "I grew up singing in church and school choir. My 17th birthday brought me a guitar. My brother wrote out chord charts and insisted I learn how to play Cranberries songs on my own. Studied art in Italy, took the guitar as a companion and practiced every day."

Sum up your songs in one sentence: "I try to capture the sweet life experiences I've had, but every once in a while a heart-breaker slips through."

Favorite places to play in town: Opening Bell Coffee, All Good Cafe, Granada, Sue Ellen's

Complete this sentence: The Dallas music scene is ... "incestuous."

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much of a girly girl are you? "A solid 5! I'm lucky if my socks match! I don't own skinny jeans. I hate shopping malls and spending money. My sister shops for me. On the other hand, I like pigtails, exfoliating and perfume that smells like cupcakes. I also have the female tendency not to get over things quickly, and expect people to know what I mean without me saying it. It's all a work in progress."

Next live shows: Sept. 4 at Opening Bell — South Side. 214-559-0707 or caven.com.

• Sept. 6 at Sue Ellen's.

Web site: camillecortinas.com

Becky Middleton

Age: "It's a secret."

Day job: "Glorified office temp. Have you seen *The Office*?"

Hometowns: Grew up in Dallas

Favorite singers as a child: Aretha Franklin, Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston. "Well, they are singer's singers. They hit all the notes. It's sad, but you could pop in any early Mariah album and I would still know all the melismas."

Favorite singers now: "Still Aretha ... Aretha any day. But Patty Griffin is my hero. I'm definitely my own person, but I identify with her a lot vocally and in songwriting. She's amazing. I love Norah Jones' style. She can sing almost any genre. Ryan Adams — you just feel the heartbreak. And of course Ray Charles — so much soul."

Favorite local acts: Salim Nourallah, Sam Anderson and the Thriftstore Troubadours, Jonathan Tyler and the Northern Lights, Philip Creamer and his band, Dovetail, Hoyotoho, Johnny Lloyd Rollins and Jack Doyle. "I feel really blessed that my friends are exceptionally gifted. It's so fun to play shows with each other."

When and how you started playing music: "I've been singing since I was born. I grew up in church and school choir, always in performances and competitions. I'm classically trained. Piano? I was the worst at practicing when I was little, so I quit but then picked it back up again in college 'cause they made me. And I started playing guitar just in the last five years or so. I was ready to practice then."

Sum up your songs in one sentence: "My songs are about truth."

Favorite places to play in town: House of Blues, the Prophet Bar, the Loft, the Moon and, of course, Opening Bell.

Complete this sentence: The Dallas music scene is ... "a well-kept secret that you have to search out, beyond the few artists that actually get acclaim."

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much of a girly girl are you? "I'd say a 4, maybe. It used to be a zero, but I've finally embraced mascara and heels since I started playing."

Next live show: Sept. 4 at Opening Bell — South Side.

Web site: mspace.com/beckymiddleton

