

L.I. Spotlight

By Iris Wiener

In a time when punk and rock dominate Long Island venues, Stange is a breath of much needed fresh air. For the past five years Stange, an East Islip native, has granted lucky listeners as far as Pennsylvania her uplifting words and radiant voice, earning her a devoted fan base that can't get enough of the unique sound that she has so carefully guarded as her own. With an album on the shelves and a non-stop tour schedule, Stange reflects on her rewarding career thus far, and looks toward the burgeoning possibilities in her future.

Stange's well-received album, *Lifetime Guarantee*, is an honest remark on her devotion and love for her art and her fans. "It means the most to me when people come up to me and say 'What you said,' or 'The lyrics in that song really *really* meant a lot to me.' Because that is what it boils down to," she says vehemently. "A lot of people get into this because they want to be famous and stuff like that. I realize that is a piece of this type of career, but its more than that. It's about showing people that there's hope."

It's clear that the glitz and glamour of stardom do not cloud Stange's attitude or style. As she performs to small crowds in book stores and coffee shops, she interacts with audiences, helping everyone from young children to seventy year-old men clap and dance in time with her peppy beat: not a hard feat considering the up-tempo sound and catchy tunes that emanate throughout the room. "If you're not into what you're doing than you shouldn't be doing it. I feel I owe it to them to give them everything I have." And the smiles



from her new and old fans never fail to reveal that she's successfully done what she set out to do.

Stange always knew that singing was her passion, and utilized her untouchable drive and collectivity to follow her dreams. "I always knew I was supposed to sing. I just started by getting involved in every way I could, I would sing the national anthem for every sport event that would let me, and I also started singing in local coffeehouses on Long Island. When I went to St. Joseph's college, the second day of school I walked into the athletic director's office, he thought I was crazy, because I was just like 'Hi, I sing. Two years later he called me up to sing at the opening of their new gym!'"

With gymnasium performances in her

past, Stange moved onto bigger and better gigs. A popular presence at The Downtown, she's showed her chops as an opener for national acts Jordan Knight and Jai Rodriguez. "Jai gave me his \$800 Versace belt, he cuffed up my sleeves. It was just interesting to meet someone from The New Kids on the Block! I didn't believe it until I saw it!"

But Stange is already headlining her own big shows, as many witnessed in February at the Leap of Faith concert at the New Covenant Church in East Meadow. A faith-based performer, Stange credits much of her success to her deeply ingrained beliefs and religious foundation. "I believe in the relationship with God and that is actually what keeps me motivated no matter what comes through in the day. I know this is what I'm supposed to do. I don't want to put myself in a box and say 'I'm a Christian artist.' I am a Christian, and I am an artist, you can never take the Christian out of it because that's who I am. I'm a songwriter so everything that I write is coming out from within me. I really just want to let people know that there's goodness."

Much of the sentiment exhibited in her music clearly comes from a family that has touched her in many ways. Stange feels very close to her album *Rhythm of My Heart*, a set of four songs dedicated to her aunt, whom recently passed due to breast cancer. "The lyrics just poured out. Never would I have thought that the stuff would have been put on the CD to raise money for breast cancer, because I wasn't even thinking about her breast cancer," she remembers. "I was just thinking about how much of a kind and humble person she was. Someone could be the biggest moron in the world, and she would still be so nice

Janine Stange

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to them, and I just somehow wanted to pay tribute to that. It needed to be something big, because she meant so much to my family and me." Stange has since performed the title track, "Rhythm of My Heart" for 1 in 9, a Long Island breast cancer and action coalition.

A lyricist with sincere compassion and relativity, she writes from the inside, instilling feelings of calm optimism in her listeners. "I don't write my songs just because I say 'This is what everybody's going to love to hear.' I write them because it's what I'm feeling at the time, and I'm really conscious of that. I want people to listen to the song 'All Right' when they feel like they're in a hopeless situation, because it's going to help them. I tell people at pretty much every show, 'If you're dealing with a situation that seems impossible, there is hope.' I believe that everybody on this earth has a purpose."

Stange's undying sanguinity never fails to prove her purpose. With upcoming appearances all over Long Island, audiences can continue to enjoy the uplifting soul that makes her music as powerful and entertaining as it is. "Somebody had told me 'Can you think of doing anything else?' And I said 'No.' Because if there's anything else in the world I can imagine doing then I shouldn't be doing this. I believe in helping people, and I believe that I can be an instrument in helping people. I know sometimes all you need is one word, and it can change your life forever. But no matter what, it's all about the music."

Rhythm of My Heart and *Lifetime Guarantee* are available at Borders Books in Westbury, and on Ms. Stange's website, www.janinestange.com. Janine will be performing at The Crazy Donkey on June 6th.