

Gazette.Net

Music for the masses

Montgomery County Agricultural Fair has almost everything covered

story by Jordan Edwards | Staff Writer

Pay the \$8 admission to the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair, and you'll find what you're expecting — a tractor pull, a rodeo and deep-fried Oreos. These traditions are dependable, like an old pair of Levi's. The one thing that does change is the music. All the livestock and kettle corn may invite visions of pedal steel guitars and cowboys, but this year's stable of acts is varied in both style and age.

If you prefer something a little more grown up and eclectic, Side FX might be more your style. D.C. based, but full of members who call the Maryland suburbs home, the band began as an artistic release for vocalist Kim Cameron.

"The corporate world was not rewarding for me," she says. "You have to really want to be in the office a lot and dedicate a lot of your life to products and services that you don't really believe in."



The 9-to-5 grind wasn't the only inspiration for Cameron to take up music full time. She also used her brother-in-law's recovery from carcinoma melanoma as encouragement.

"It was the way I felt about him and the way I would feel if he left," she says about her first song. "It took us a good two months to put that down into a recording. After that, we sat back and thought, this is kind of fun."

Side FX's sound is hard to pin down. At times, Cameron's radio-friendly alto floats over driving guitars. More often than not, the band maintains an adult contemporary pop-rock vibe. That may sound like an insult, but just when you think you have them pegged, a reggae beat or bouncy bass line comes creeping in from behind. And even though guitarist Chris Nikpora emigrated to the U.S. from Iran as a child, the country's influence still plays a big role in his life.

"The Middle Eastern part never went away," he says. "I still listen to Middle Eastern music. Sometimes I grab bits and pieces and incorporate them into my playing."

In addition to tools like the Internet, the band is exploring some unorthodox methods to reach new fans. Their debut album, "Contradictions," is on sale at unexpected retailers like Hu's Shoes in Georgetown, and they have begun talks with industry professionals in the Philippines.

"It's very interesting," Nikpora says. "A lot of bands market their music overseas parallel to what they do in the States. That's very exciting for us."

They stand by their music, but Side FX has also shot a couple of videos. The latest clip, for "Simple Touch," has been receiving attention for its sultry beach scenes.

"So far, my significant other has been pretty supportive, but I sort of challenge that with my latest video." Cameron jokes. "I did get some eyebrows raised when I released it this week. That was more of a shocker to him, although he kind of knew it was coming. I don't think it's his favorite video."