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>> Kathryn Joosten (far left) with Lily Tomlin in *Desperate Housewives*. Kim Cameron says, "Part of what makes musicians so creative is that they're disorganized. I'm the opposite."

## FROM TECH EXECUTIVE TO ROCK MUSICIAN: KIM CAMERON

"Music has always been my true passion," says Kim Cameron, 43. She was lead singer in a high school band, and, later, a backup singer for a group that regularly performed in Washington, D.C. Fresh out of Wichita State



**"Sometimes I'd break into tears, thinking, what have I done?" Cameron says. Now her songs are played on 70 radio stations.**

University with a journalism degree, she went into radio. "Then I stumbled into information technology, making training videos." The monetary rewards kept growing, along with her IT expertise. At her last job, she made more than \$200,000 a year. "Once I got a taste of the good life, with my corporate career, I was too insecure to leave it," she says.

Then, in March 2007, her brother-in-law was diagnosed with liver cancer. Overwhelmed with emotion, Cameron wrote her first song, "Never Forget," which launched her transformation into a full-time singer-songwriter. People who heard the song were so encouraging that Cameron realized she had a real talent. Fourteen months later, she'd pulled together a repertoire of songs. a band called SideFX (a play

on "side effects" used in recorded music) and a business plan. In 2008, she quit her IT job. It was hard to walk away from the money, she says, but "if you're going to pursue your dream, you should do it 100 percent."

She hired a promoter, a Web site developer, a public relations person and an executive assistant. During the first few months, Cameron would often run *Rocky*-style up the steps in front of the Lincoln Memorial to burn off her anxiety. "Sometimes I would break down in tears, thinking, what have I done?" But by February 2009, performing for active servicemen and military veterans in New York City, she looked every bit the confident, sexy blues-rock star. She introduced her song "My Hero," telling them about her conversation with a soldier who had just returned from two tours in Iraq. She found his story heartbreaking, and this song was her response. "His courage and strength/Kept us safe," she sings. "I'll still call him my hero."

The next month, she celebrated the debut of her first album, *Contradictions*, at the legendary Blues Alley Jazz and Supper Club, in Washington, D.C. ("a genre-shifting album that seamlessly introduces an intoxicating blend of late night jazz, smooth blues, catchy funk, easy rock, and gentle groove-driven pop," raved one critic).

Today, Cameron's songs are played on 70 radio stations and on Sirius—and her brother-in-law is cancer-free. She sells her CD, as well as SideFX T-shirts, caps and ringtones on her Web site, [sidefxband.net](http://sidefxband.net). She's working on licensing her songs for use in ad campaigns and other business ventures to bring in more money. "I could have done this before, but I did not have the confidence," she says. She has a three-year plan to help her turn a profit. Getting just one song produced, she says, requires \$5,000, not including marketing. "I don't need to be Madonna to make a living," she says. "There's a lot of room for women like me." 🐦

Aileen Jacobson writes about the arts for the *New York Times* and other publications.

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