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Meet Talia Denis: The 12-Year-Old with an X32

Posted on May 21, 2013 by Sherry Lipp

One of my favorite things about attending the NAMM show each year is getting to meet all the musicians who stop by our booth. Some are seasoned professionals who've been around for years, some are up and coming, and some are just getting their feet wet in the industry.

This year one of my biggest surprises was meeting 12 year-old singer/songwriter Talia Denis. Despite her young age, Talia is already making an impact in the music world.



Photo credit: Lawrence Basso

And guess what?

She bought her very own [X32 Digital Mixer](#) using the money she has earned through her performances.

Talia took some time out of her increasingly busy schedule to chat with us about her music and her X32.

How long have you been performing and how did you get started?

My first unofficial performance was when I was 4 years old. I was at one of my father's company holiday parties and the band they had hired for entertainment took a break. I asked my father if I could go up and sing a song. I don't think he thought I was actually going to do it, so he said yes. I walked up, grabbed the microphone and sang the song "Angel" by Sarah McLachlan. I have been performing my own music with my band since I was 10 years old.

Almost every night I watched some kind of music performance, from James Taylor to Iron Maiden to David Gilmore to Beyonce. I was always watching and listening to music. That is what first motivated me to become a musician and a performer. I have been surrounded by music for my entire life.

What is your songwriting process – do you come up with lyrics first or music, do you write with someone?

I write alone and with an amazing writer, musician, producer and engineer named Brian Mansell. He is in Los Angeles and I am in upstate New York, so we communicate online via audio and video chatting. Sometimes I fly out to the West Coast or he comes here. Typically I write music first, and then the name, an idea or a feeling will come to mind. I write lyrics as the idea grows in my mind.

Who inspires you as a songwriter and musician?

There are many – Sarah McLachlan, Peter Gabriel, and Hayley Williams from the band Paramore inspire me as a singer. To be honest, Brian, my songwriting partner, has been my biggest inspiration as a musician and songwriter.

He has done so much for me. He can play pretty much any instrument and he comes up with the coolest arrangements. Other than Brian, I have to say that Sara Bareilles, RUSH and MuteMath – that band is just totally amazing – have really inspired me. I have also gotten to know some amazing world class musicians such as bass players Tony Levin and Michael Visceglia, and drummers Jerry Marotta and Sterling Campbell. You can learn a lot from people who have been professional musicians for so long and have achieved so much.

What drew you to the X32?

First, I want to say that I know I am only 12 years old, and because I am so young, people often don't realize that I earn money from performing. A lot of people don't know that I study both live and studio sound. I actually research and buy a lot of my own gear. I travel with my own PA system and light show that I purchased over time with the money I have earned from touring and selling merchandise.

I have a sound engineer who usually does sound for me, but for one particular show I had to use a different guy. At that time, we were using a different digital board that I used to own. The new sound guy told me that the X32 was just about to come out. My father and I did a bunch of research on it, and once we saw what the X32 could do, we sold the other mixer and bought one right away. That turned out to be a great move.

How do you use the X32?

I mainly use the X32 for mixing and recording live shows.

What do you like about the X32?

There are so many things to love about the X32. There are 32 Channels of MIDAS preamps with motorized faders, and a good number of effects generators with really nice reverbs, delays, and other effects. I used to have three extra outboard effects units that I would run with my previous mixer, but I have sold those. Everything I need is in the X32. You can run all of the effects and other settings from the nice big screen, which is much better. A lot of times I play with other bands and the scene memory and recall is great. The motorized faders make recalling a scene from a sound check very fast and easy. We record every show when I am touring, and it is easy for my sound guy to do a virtual soundcheck with tracks recorded from the last show. This makes our actual sound check much shorter.

What is the highlight of your music career so far?



Photo credit: Lawrence Basso

Well there are a few. First, I LOVED headlining my own tour last year. Playing shows in a different town every night is really exciting and fun. I performed with Rusted Root at the last show of my 2012 Summer tour. I have been able to meet some really amazing people in my short career. The B-52s have been very nice to me. They have invited me to their shows and allowed me to watch sound checks. Peter Gabriel's band, especially Tony Levin, have been very good to me. It was amazing to have drummer Sterling Campbell, drummer Jerry Marotta, bass player Michael Visceglia, and guitarist Zak Soulam play on my first record. I am lucky to have a pretty long list of highlights for someone my age. I think the big highlight this year will be the release of my new record. I have worked very hard on these songs and I think people are going to be surprised with the new music I am making.

Keep up with Talia at her [official website](#).

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