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Multitasking her way onto the musical road

By Ian Howarth

There are a few miracle success stories in the cutthroat music business, but for most artists success comes — if at all — after a long road of hard work and low-paying gigs.

Many, like Montreal singer Melina Soochan, have youthful enthusiasm and talent on their side to get them through those early years when sometimes the big payoff seems a long way off. Soochan, 25, has both those qualities, plus a determination and optimism that should serve her well in the future. The classically-trained pianist and McGill University School of Music graduate is working her way to the top while juggling a day job, night piano gigs at The Queen Elizabeth Hotel, weekend night club performances and hosting Acoustic Night concerts at various Montreal area clubs. She currently has two videos in rotation on Bravo and CJNT that showcase her songs, *City of Love* (also the name of her six-song EP) and *X-Ray Eyes*. And in the works is her first album, due out in early 2011.

Soochan works hard and long hours, combining the rigours of her day job at Dash, an educational software company, with her musical career aspirations. "For now I need the security of a regular job," she said in a recent interview outside the QE lobby lounge where she sings and plays piano every Thursday night. "I call myself a local performer, but there are so many levels between a recreational musician and a professional one.

Your career path depends on certain milestones." She hopes there will be plenty of milestones and with the support of her mother, who manages her web site, and her business partner Amadine Michaud, who helps with bookings and promotion, she has the foundation laid to map out her musical future.

Soochan cites Sarah McLaughlin, Chantal Kreviazuk and Alicia Keys as some of her musical influences. Her own style, she said, is an honest blend of folk, blues, jazz and pop, while at the same time trying to carve out a sound that is all her own. "I'm open to different styles of singing," she explained. "I'm going for a more sophisticated form of pop, like Lily Allen," Soochan said. Like many of today's artists, Soochan is using YouTube, Facebook and Twitter to maximize her profile. "Self-promotion is a necessity these days," she added. "Especially if you are not signed with a record label, (something she hopes to soon remedy). But self-promotion can take up a lot of your time."

Meanwhile, she is helping her fellow Montreal singer/songwriters by organizing acoustic nights at popular downtown clubs. It's her way of acknowledging that artists simply need a place to play. After barely a year under way, acoustic night has become a real hit with singers and fans

"I wanted not only a vehicle for my music, but to take advantage of the many talented singer/songwriters in Montreal. There's a lot of good music locally that people don't get a chance to see."

Soochan will host and perform another Acoustic Nights at Les 3 Minots, 3812 St. Laurent on Thursday, Oct. 7. Doors open at 7 p.m. and cover charge is \$8. Featured groups are Rough Draft, Dan and Laura, Super Nova, The Big Red Giants, Lady Katalyst and Katie Sevigny.

For more info, visit www.melinas-music.com.