

Boots and the beat

Senior pursues her passion of country music traveling in between Nashville and Charleston

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Senior Isabella Ullo performing for a crowd at HonkyTonky Saloon. Ullo opened for artist Kameron Marlow. Photo // provided



Senior Isabella Ullo sings live at The Veranda Under the Oaks. Photo // Provided



Senior Isabella Ullo poses in a field of sunflowers with her guitar. Photo // Provided

A sea of smiling faces awaits senior Isabella Ullo. She steps lightly down the stage steps and makes her way behind the curtain. Another full night of music for Ullo is now complete and in the books. For Ullo, country music isn't just a hobby or a passion... it's her life. She is a self proclaimed country music junkie.

"It's honestly a lifestyle and a way of life. The boots, the buckles, the jeans, trucks- I love it all," Ullo said.

Ullo can remember feeling a sense of joy from music even during her early childhood.

"When I was super young, around three or four, all I wanted to do was perform. I would get all dressed up and walk around my living room with a pretend mic," Ullo said.

She can even recall walking into her kindergarten class humming Def Leppard's "Pour Some Sugar On Me", while her peers were still listening to the typical songs that five year olds enjoy.

Ullo firmly believes that her love for all music, and especially country music was passed down to her from her mother. Her family has been there for Ullo and backed all of her decisions every step of the way.

"My momma was a big musician her whole life. She was actually about to sign with a label in Nashville but decided to raise my brother and I instead," Ullo said.

Ullo remembers being drawn to music; especially the way it made her feel. She couldn't get enough. After school, Ullo spent her time absorbing everything she could, usually at her mother's work.

"My momma owned a music school so I would be there every day from early morning until late at night singing and learning to play all of the different instruments they had," Ullo said.

She remembers her decision to make a go of her music as a career coming to her quickly and acutely one summer night.

"I was driving down a back road, passing a bunch of small farms and the fireflies were crazy. It was magical. I was like, 'I really want to write this feeling' even though I had never written a song before," Ullo said.

Ullo remarks that, unfortunately, there are no longer many simple country songs about nature and its beauty being written anymore.

"I want to bring that back and I feel that being a young musician that I can reinforce it to a younger audience," Ullo said.

When writing her first song from scratch, Ullo explains how naturally songwriting came to her- almost like she had done it a million times before.

"I had never learned the first thing about songwriting but somehow, I knew how to form a verse, chorus and a bridge," Ullo said.

Ullo takes pride in her work; looking over and over her songs, always looking to better them or tweak something here and there.

"My mom and brother are used to me jumping up from the dinner table and rushing up to my room because I just thought of a new song idea and I have to write it down before I forget," Ullo said.

Ullo explains how her mother and brother are her two biggest supporters in her career.

"When I told them what I wanted to do; they said 'let's do it'. They said, 'You are going to have to work very hard but we will support you one million percent,'" Ullo said.

Ullo's mother and brother can be seen at each of her shows; looking up at Ullo with tears shining brightly in their eyes.

"They believe in me so much. It is a special moment looking out on the wings of the crowd and seeing them. No matter how many times they have heard me sing my songs, they sing them right back with the biggest smile on their faces," Ullo said.

Around March of 2021 is when this became more than just a passion and more like a full-time job for Ullo. She is now traveling back and forth between Charleston and Nashville, Tennessee, every two weeks to ensure that her music is continually getting more and more exposure.

"I'm talking to some really big people in Nashville, that's about all I can say right now. I currently have forty songs done, fifteen are officially copyrighted in the Library of

Congress, and so many are still unfinished," Ullo said.

Ullo elaborates on the balancing act of trying to finish high school while simultaneously juggling her career as a rising country music artist.

"I remember one Friday last spring when I had a show that didn't end until one a.m. and then I had to wake up super early the next morning for a Wando track meet," Ullo said.

Ullo's future looks bright and she is ready to work to make things happen. She considers herself a small-town girl with big dreams. Who knows? The next Taylor Swift might be plucked right out of Wando High School in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

"It's definitely a crazy busy life and I enjoy every second of it because I'm getting to do what I love," Ullo said.

Senior Isabella Ullo's guitar. Photo // Provided