

'A LOCAL LEGEND,' SHE CAN PLAY THE GUITAR

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In the cold, dark practice studio attached to her Ashford home, Desiree' Bassett plays loud and fast with a huge smile that shows her braces. She tosses her long hair around as her hands fly over the guitar strings and the neck of the guitar one recent Monday afternoon.

"I like to show off what I can do and show people how serious I am about my career," the 15-year-old says.

Desiree' started playing the guitar when she was 3. She played her first full-size guitar at 5, and she won a talent competition when she was 12. At 14, she played side stage at Ozzfest in **Hartford**. Now she's 15, and has captured the attention of rock music legends Rik Emmett, Dicky Betts and Joe Satriani.

Desiree' has four major endorsements and is working on an album with her band, Desiree' & the Time Machine. Her producer is bass player Doug Wimbish from Living Colour. Desiree' is only the second person ever to sit in and play with Living Colour. The other? Carlos Santana.

Desiree', a 10th-grader at E.O. Smith High School in Storrs, practices every day for several hours, sometimes as many as eight. She has three shows scheduled in December and recently completed a very secret recording project in Arizona. "Somehow I manage to balance it all out and get it done," Desiree' said.

"With honors," added her father, Dan Bassett, who was watching her practice.

Bassett manages his daughter, books her shows and plans all of her trips. He and Desiree' actually learned to play on the same guitar, which Bassett bought in the 1980s.

This summer, Desiree' was featured in Guitar Player magazine, and her father said she is "a local legend down at the GC [Guitar Center in Manchester]."

"You should have seen my face when she came out in the July issue of Guitar Player magazine," Dan Bassett said. "I'm extremely lucky to be her dad."

Desiree', who likes country music, jazz and blues, took guitar lessons from professors at the University of Connecticut, and she now gives lessons to others.

"Basically, I listen to a lot of music," Desiree' said. Satriani is her favorite guitarist, and her favorite singers are Reba McEntire, **Carrie Underwood** and Celine Dion.

Desiree', however, doesn't let music take up all her time.

"She's a motorcycle daredevil," her father said. She has been riding quads [four-wheel vehicles] on their 12-acre property since she was 5.

"I have two dirt bikes and a quad," Desiree' said. "I'm kind of trying to lay off jumps."

She also likes to make jewelry, draw, go fishing, swim and jump on her trampoline. She enjoys spending time with her 10-year-old sister, Jessica, and is currently working on her 69th anime/comedy video to post on YouTube with her others.

"She's a true artist in every sense of the word," her father said.

Keith **Hansen**, of Florida, runs Desiree's fan club. He heard her play at her home when he was invited over while the truck he was driving for the Ozzfest tour was in for maintenance.

"I went in and watched her play and the rest is history," Hansen said. "I could not believe what I was seeing."

Hansen, a former disc jockey, and Desiree's father talk every day to exchange ideas that will increase her exposure to the public.

"She has unbelievable talent and she loves what she does," Hansen said. "She loves to play. This particular artist just grabbed me by the soul."

After high school, Desiree' hopes to go on tour.

College is a possibility, and Desiree's father said both Berklee College of Music in Boston and UConn have shown interest in her. For now, the family is focused on making sure she gets through high school at the same high standard she has established as an honor student.

"We're not going to jeopardize her education for the music," Dan Bassett said.

"[Playing guitar] is one of my favorite hobbies; it's something I'm attached to," Desiree' said. "I'm going to keep practicing and focusing on my music and keep writing songs."

Desiree' Bassett's website is www.desireebassett.com.

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