Purpl offers promising talent a first step

By Julian Caldwell

Purpl, Hastings' popular Main Street music venue, which also provides programs to help teens and adults meet personal and professional goals outside of the arts, is taking its mission to deliver quality music a step further by creating a new artist development agency called Purpl Records.

Through the entity, Purpl co-owners Adel and Sarah Hinawi, along with Ardsley-based music talent scout and developer Lee Dannay, who worked with Sony Music for 15 years, will help guide its artists through the songwriting and recording processes, as well as the other components of developing a music career.

"We'll be supporting them in terms of helping them understand their music and fine-tune their writing," said Adel Hinawi, who worked as an audio engineer and producer in Kuwait before co-owning and engineering at 33 1/3 Studios in Brooklyn. "Maybe we can work with them on developing their image — whatever they need to be a better artist and more in tune with what's inside of their head."

Unlike a traditional record label contract, there's no specific budget included in the artist agreement.

"We're ultimately talking about ourselves as an artist development agency even though we're calling it Purpl Records, because ideally we might record something and then help them get more of a major distribution deal — really be an incubator for them to build a successful music career," Sarah Hinawi added.

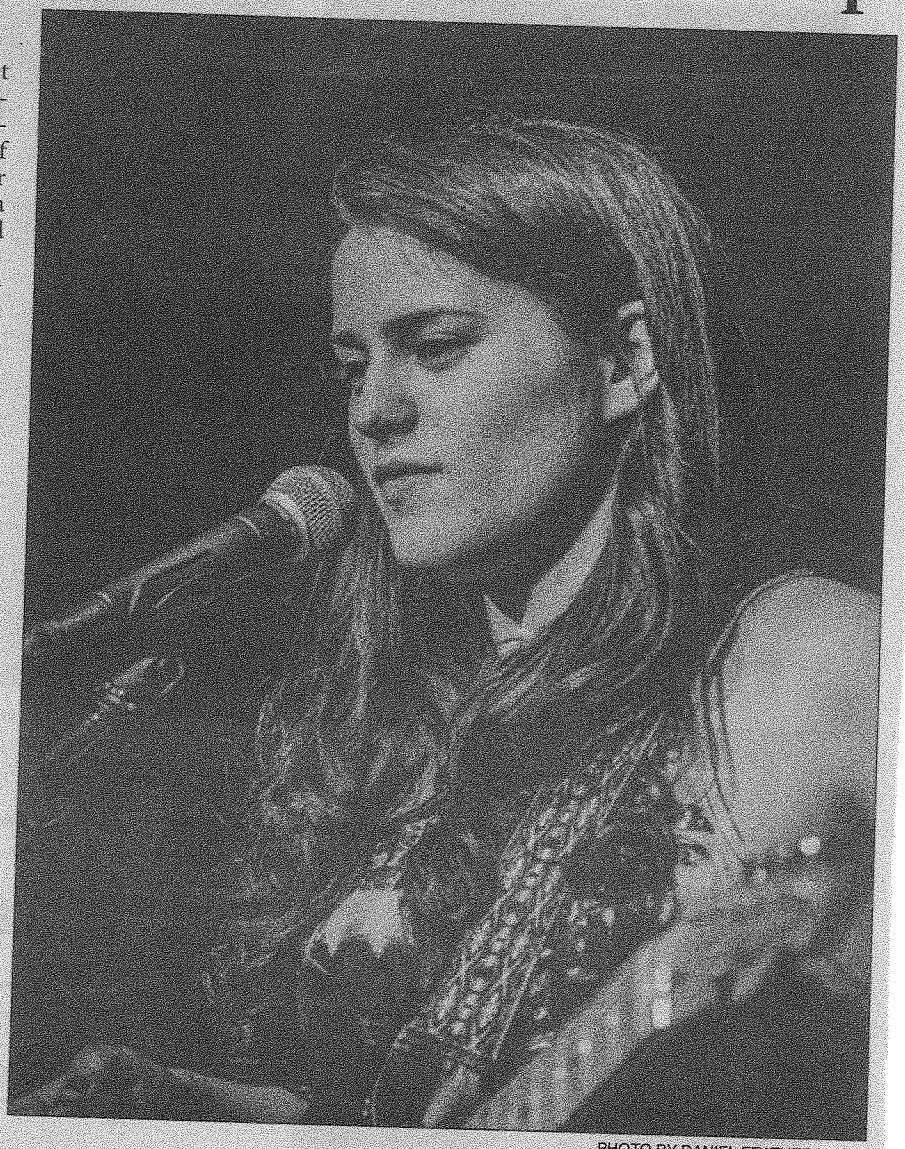
The official announcement was made at Purpl's fourth annual Battle of the Bands on June 13. That event, and the monthly open mic sessions, are staples at Purpl that allow artists to cut their teeth [illegible] that hosts national recording Grammy nominees.

Purpl Records' first old singer/songwriter J long Briarcliff Manor r uated from Briarcliff month and will study the University of South the fall. Mason first per open mic during her s high school at the sugg and has been a regular s

"Her songs were wrote them [when young," Adel Hinawi s she is one artist who ideas and great songs."

"The open mic nigh favorite things to do because it's a really nic creativity and produc because it's developed a of young people and ad and respect each other's Hinawi, herself a singer, also has a background in

"Everybody who play songs," she continued. rule that they could play



Jessi Mason

PHOTO BY DANIEL FEATHERSTONE

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and one has to be original. A lot of people started to actually write music or perform their own music for the first time so they could do their full set. And the more people saw others do that, they were encouraged, so we really created some momentum around creating original work through the open mic night."

With Purpl Records, a concept that the Hinawis have had in mind since opening Purpl — originally The Purple Crayon — in May 2011, the support extends beyond a monthly event.

"It allows us to take it a step further with the emerging artists that come through our doors," said Sarah Hinawi, "and not just be a platform but really use the business savvy that we use with our entrepreneurs and also the wealth of experience and insight that Adel has in the music industry."

"Jessi is somebody who — the first time she played — it was just like, wow, she's going somewhere," said Sarah Hinawi. "She has such stage presence and such self-awareness as a songwriter, and just how well-crafted each song was at such a young age was really impressive. And we've just seen how she's developed over the years and how committed she is to this."

Mason has been writing songs since she was in the fifth grade and released her debut four-track EP, "Hollow," last December. Purpl Records has targeted several songs that she's written and plans to develop those into polished singles during the summer and her breaks from school.

"I'm very excited," Mason said. "It's new and I never thought that this would be my experience. I think a lot of people think of labels as kind of big, scary businesses that don't want to help you, but Purpl is very much the opposite of that, in that they really are wonderful people."

Mason began discussions about Purpl Records with the Hinawis in February, but the couple, who have been married for 12 years, were scouting the young talent even earlier.

"Before we mentioned the record label to her we had a few conversations with her about what her hopes were with her music," said Sarah Hinawi. "She talked about how she sets aside time each day to write and goes to multiple open mics each week. We weren't just looking for somebody with a great voice, we were looki who's really dedicated way that you need to career musician."

Though Purpl Re another artist or two Sarah Hinawi said she lose focus, and is comm Mason as an artist to fu

"I think we're lea open-ended," she said o tiative's future. "We wan first step, which was to f could go somewhere, a could help them go." Adel Hinawi. "Throug the music industry here I've noticed that there a artists in this area, and able to work with som deeper level."