Kodiak Singer-Songwriter Recounts Ireland Adventure

Tuesday, 25 September 2012

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Kodiak is no stranger to music. World-renowned artists have graced the island with their far flung talents and local musicians are known to entertain community members through the warm August nights and dark December days.

Some local groups have been around for years and others are slowly beginning to spread their sound while simultaneously capturing hearts of the community. So is the case with Ellamy Tiller, the free-spirited musician who came to Kodiak on a whim, fell in love with the island and quickly became its best kept secret. Tiller only came to Kodiak a few years ago, but her love of music spreads back to her Boston roots.

-- (Ellamy Ireland 1 :34 “It all started when I was about seven years old my mother bought me one of those little keyboards and I started playing on it all the time and the next year she started giving me piano lessons. And I just loved it. I loved playing and loved music and I loved to listen to it. My mom, when she was younger, she used to sing all the time too. So when we were little she would get out her guitar and she would sit and sing us songs and we would just sit around and played while she sang and it was wonderful. And we always had the radio on and there was always music around. And so I started playing it myself and I just loved it.”)

Her passion for music carried her through college, where, as a music major, she broadened her skill set fine tuned her craft. After schooling, Tiller headed north to visit a friend one summer in Anchorage, but an unlikely turn of events led her to marine debris clean up on Kodiak and a job offer with the Baptist Mission.

Now days, Tiller’s bejeweled dreadlocks and humble smile can be seen at various coffee shops around town, where the soulful strumming of her acoustic guitar is matched only by her spirited vocal melodies.

While Tiller’s music has enticed Kodiak for years, this summer she threw her inhibitions to the wind and set off for musical adventure on the original emerald isle.

-- (Ellamy Ireland 2 : 44 “I was lucky enough to get a month off this last summer and I had every opportunity to do anything I wanted so I thought about it for a while and I wasn’t really sure where to go or what to do and then a friend of mine suggested that I should go to Ireland and you should just go around in pubs and sing songs. And I thought to myself that would be the awesomest trip ever. And so I decided that was definitely what I was going to do. And people kept asking me, well how are you going to know

where to go and what are you going to do when you get there and where are you going to stay and all these things and I said you know I don’t know and I think I’m just going to go and see what happens when I get there. And so the only plan that I made for my month in Ireland was I had booked a hotel for my very first night once I got off the plane in Dublin because I figured I’d be awfully tired that night to have to figure things out.”)

But within hours of arriving in Dublin, Tiller and her guitar had already booked a show, thanks to a kind stranger that found her wandering the streets of Dublin.

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(Ellamy Ireland 3 : 20 “And I literally bumped into this little old man. And I said oh, excuse me I’m so sorry and he looks at me and he goes do you play that guitar you’re playing there? And I said yes. And he said good, my name is Mike and I’m playing at this pub over this way tomorrow afternoon and you should come play with me. And I was like, are you serious? OK!”)

That random opportunity led to a recommended bus trip to Galway and an incredible month of music, friend-making and ultimately profit. Tiller said her music was accepted first in the prominent community of street musicians and eventually the pubs and coffee shops that lined the alleyways she originally played.

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(Ellamy Ireland 4 :11 “Between the money that I made here, and the money that I made playing there that month, I paid for my entire trip except for the plan ticket. That was incredible because I was expecting to come home broke.”)

Tiller has since returned to Kodiak, where she hopes to continue writing songs and eventually record a full-length album. As for her time in Ireland, she said her gratitude for the generosity she received there can only be expressed through the medium that got her there in the first place.

To hear KMXT’s full interview with Ellamy Tiller, tune in to KMXT this Friday at 12:30 during the Friday Spotlight show. I’m Brianna Gibbs. ###