



Lindsay Rae

# Jenny Dee & The Deelinquents

## *Retro Soul for the Digital Age*

by Sara Brown

Ever since she was a child, Jennifer D'Angora, lead singer of Jenny Dee & the Deelinquents, had a thing for Motown girl groups. The clothes, the dance moves and the catchy vocals were seductive to the impressionable young girl. She was so inspired by this music that she would eventually form a modern version of the '60s girl groups she admired.

"I love a good pop song, so I'm probably more inspired by the writers than the groups themselves. But singers like Ronnie Spector, Mary Weiss and Martha Reeves really drove the songs home for me," says D'Angora. "Not to mention the production - sweeping strings, timpani, you don't get stuff like that anymore."

Her dream of starting a girl group would have to wait a little bit. Before belting out soul numbers and silky smooth melodies, D'Angora rocked out on the guitar for beloved Boston bands The Dents and The Downbeat 5. However, once The Dents broke up the plucky singer found her opportunity to make her dream a reality.

"After The Dents broke up, I was thinking that I'd like to do something different. Not just the same stuff acoustically, but a different style of music. I absolutely loved girl group music of the '60s, and I thought it would be wild to do that music and actually put together a girl group with moves, a band - the whole shebang," said D'Angora.

Once the decision was made, Jenny Dee quickly

starting writing music. "I'm either inspired by events, people, parts of things I hear or by sitting down and just playing guitar. I go with what I hear in my head, revisit, rework, repeat," says D'Angora on how she approaches songwriting.

After an initial batch of songs was written, she played them for Ed Valauskas, her husband and resident recording genius at Q Division Studios in Somerville, MA. Valauskas liked what he heard and started the new musical project in motion, introducing D'Angora to some of his friends. "He had just played a Nick Lowe tribute with Tony Goddess, Eric Anderson, Eric Salt and Phil Aiken and he loved working with those guys. So they became the band," says D'Angora. "I had

to find girls who would want to do more than just sing on stage, and I knew my sister Beka would do it. We originally had a coworker of mine as the other backup singer, and when she left, we replaced her with Tony's wife Samantha."

Once the lineup for The Deelinquents was solidified, the songwriting continued. That work eventually spawned their debut album *Keeping Time*, which was released in March 2010. "Keeping Time to me is a mix of poppy girl group, torchy girl group, and a little bit of rock and soul thrown in," says D'Angora. Not surprisingly, the record was produced at Q Division Studios. "Matt Beaudoin at Q Division shares a love for the girl group sound and really nailed the production on the record," she continues. The production ultimately yielded an album rich with fun pop songs that pay a nostalgic tribute to the old Motown tunes D'Angora grew up loving. Yet the record transcends the genre, sounding modern, fresh and relevant.

Along with an enchantingly unique sound, Jenny Dee & The Deelinquents are also revered for their live performances. With the amazing outfits and groovy dance moves, the Boston band sure knows how to put on a killer show. "I always hope to be engaging and entertaining," says D'Angora. "A good live performance is one that seems too short. You're never checking your watch. The music should keep you interested, and what's happening on stage should actually be a reaction of the music."

D'Angora can rest easy that she is most certainly "engaging" and captivating on stage. Her on-stage charisma may have something to do with her charismatic influences. She cites Blondie, Queen, The Beach Boys, The Rolling Stones and The Beatles as some of her inspirations. One of her biggest influences, however, is the New York Dolls. "I have started every show since my first one with The Downbeat 5 with a saying, 'WWDJD?' (What would David Johansen Do?)," she laughs.

Jenny Dee and her vivacious soul sisters have quickly become local favorites in the bustling college city. They even opened up for quintessential Boston band Aerosmith at Fenway Park last summer. D'Angora credits Boston for fostering her creative spirit. "So many cool bands before me have made Boston what it is. I'm lucky enough to be in The Downbeat 5 with JJ Rassler, who was in DMZ and The Queers - two very legendary underground New England bands. He's like a mentor to me, and introduced me to music by Willie Alexander, The Real Kids, Barry & the Remains, Robin Lane, and many more," says D'Angora. "He's a walking history lesson of Boston Rock. Through discovering these great bands and seeing even more on my own, it definitely motivated me to create music of my own."

That motivation led her to form Jenny Dee & The Deelinquents and ignore the doubters. At first, with such a drastic sonic and visual change, some



Beth Oram

"A good live performance is one that seems too short. You're never checking your watch."

longtime fans wanted D'Angora go back to the sound they were familiar with. "So many people told me when we first started that they'd rather see me with a guitar on, playing rock. I still really love that and miss it a lot right now but I'm glad I didn't listen and stuck with it," she says. She may miss the rock, but plenty of new fans are in love with The Deelinquents, so much so that she was named Female Vocalist of the Year at the Boston Music Awards this winter.

While D'Angora was the primary songwriter on the group's debut, she hopes that will change on future recordings. "The band is full of talented musicians and songwriters in their own right. While it was important for me to write the

first album myself, just to prove to myself that I could do it, the next record will definitely feature some songs by other members of the band. I'd love for this band to be a vehicle to showcase their writing, too," said D'Angora. As if the first record wasn't enough of a showcase for her talents, the band recently released a fantastic 7-inch on purple vinyl, featuring killer cuts "Big Ol' Heart" and "Don't Boom Boom."

All in all it looks like life is close to perfect for the lead singer. "I'm having the time of my life," she beams. While she may be asking, "What would David Johansen Do?" it looks like soon many will be asking, "What would Jenny Dee do?" [jennydeemusic.com](http://jennydeemusic.com)