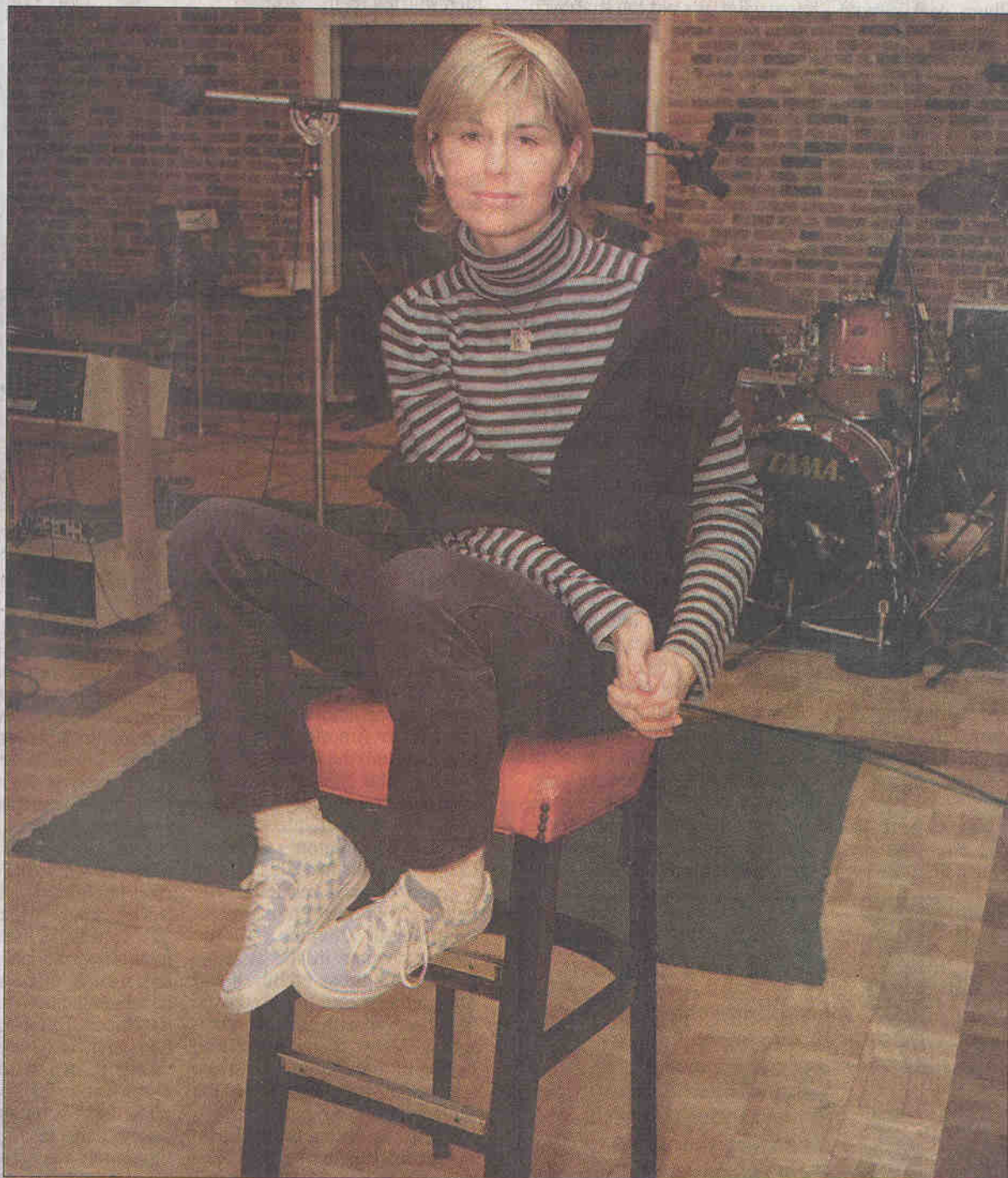


# EMPHASIS

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The Record  
The Intelligencer.

**Her illness left her ...**



Staff photo by Laurence Kelly

**Lauren Hart** works on her latest CD at Studio 4 in Conshohocken. She is the daughter of the late Gene Hart, known for decades as the voice of the Philadelphia Flyers.

# ... inspired

*Lauren Hart has beaten cancer and is looking forward to the release of another CD. Tonight, she will join several area artists at the first Songwriters Original Showcase of the year to perform songs from her new album.*

BY NAILA FRANCIS  
Staff Writer

Lauren Hart is tired of the sad stories. Looking back on the last three years, the daughter of Gene Hart, the late, legendary Philadelphia Flyers announcer, has much for which to be thankful. In 1999, after releasing "Painted Ride" to regional critical acclaim, she lost her dad — known for decades as the "Voice of the Fly-

ers" — to cancer.

Hart, who has been singing in bands since she was 14 and is perhaps best known locally for singing the national anthem at the Flyers' home games, had just begun writing songs for another CD.

Struggling to come to terms with the loss of the man she often referred to as her "best friend," Hart received even more bad news.

She, too, had cancer, a form known as non-Hodgkin's lymphoma — or, as she ironically points out, NHL.

But rather than bow to her circumstances or give in to self pity, Hart, who lives in Bryn Mawr, immersed herself in her songwriting and continued to sing at the National Hockey League games.

Three years later, she has beaten her illness and is looking forward to the release of another CD, "Drive." Tonight, Hart will join several area artists at the first Songwriters Original Showcase of the year in Ambler to perform songs from her new album.

"I've always been fascinated with her style of music," says Rick Denzien, one of this evening's performers and one of the founders of Slot One Entertainment Inc., which sponsors the show.

## If you go

**What:** Songwriters Original Showcase featuring Lauren Hart, Jive 5 Minus Two, DENZIEN, Stephen DiJoseph and 5-2-9  
**When:** 7 tonight  
**Where:** Act II Playhouse, 56 E. Butler Pike, Ambler  
**Tickets:** \$15  
**Information:** (215) 643-1313

"Her voice is just so clear and unfettered, very free and her musical style is very current. But more than that, she's an inspiration because of the tribulation."

Hart never understood how people who overcame life-threatening illnesses could look back on their sickness as a gift.

Now, she is ready to join their ranks.

"In the last three years, having been through all the things that I've been through," she says, "I've learned that all the cliches, all those little sayings, like 'Stop and smell the roses' — they couldn't be any truer.

# Hart

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Confronting a fatal illness, I got sight and vision that you usually only get at the end of your life."

For years, Hart was anxiously searching and planning, trying to hustle her music, wondering and worrying where she was going with her career.

Her first album deal — with Columbia Records in 1996 — fell through, and several attempts to buy back the rights to the finished work were unsuccessful.

Following that disaster, she started her own label, Gypsy Girl, to write, produce and finance her work.

The resulting album, "Painted Bride," was a quirky pop-rock mix with smart lyrics and a breezy delivery that sometimes belied a more heartfelt introspection.

It received airplay, and Hart went on tour to promote it, even performing on "This Morning" on CBS in New York City.

She subsequently received an offer from another label, Red Ant/BMG, but that company went bankrupt, once again dashing her hopes of an industry victory.

Hart had played at the inauguration of former President Bill Clinton and, with her band, opened for acts such as Tori Amos, Fiona Apple, 10,000 Maniacs, Tina Turner and the late Frank Sinatra.

But her hard work appeared to be leading nowhere, or so she thought, until she became sick and was forced to change her perspective.

"Before I was sick, I was always stressed out," she says, "but I missed the point for a long

time. I think we're given such a short amount of time here and to think that one person is going to figure it out and change the world is a great notion, but the reality is the small things we do every day all add up.

"In the last few years, I've written a record, regained my strength *and* regained my hair. It may not seem like a lot for that length of time, but you know what, it's not too shabby."

Hart wants her new album — to be released in late winter — to reflect that hopefulness.

She promises a sound a little different from her previous efforts.

"Drive" will deliver music more influenced by the artists she listened to growing up — everyone from Aretha Franklin and Gladys Knight to Jimi Hendrix and Chrissie Hynde — and the artists who inspire her today, including those of the new neo-soul movement, such as India.Arie and Jill Scott.

"Instead of being more acoustic and folk," she says, "I wanted to be more aggressive. My style of writing hasn't changed. My singing hasn't changed, but I wanted to try a new approach, to change people's perceptions of who I am."

Like the classic soul artists of the '60s and '70s, she hopes her music serves as a medium for audiences to connect.

"I'm just the voice of what we go through every day," she says, "life and loss and love and hope. Life isn't always pretty. The majority of it can have a lot of sadness, but there is always hope, always a door open somewhere, and I want people to find a sense of comfort in knowing that we all go through this together."