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Jersey Outlaw

After dark, this South Jersey dentist drops the drill and grabs the guitar

BY CHUCK DARROW • COURIER-POST STAFF • MARCH 13, 2008

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When it comes to leading double lives, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde have nothing on Dr. Wiener and Mr. Lee.

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By day, James Wiener is a successful dentist and CEO/owner of Primadent, which operates thriving practices in Haddonfield, Marlton and Audubon.

By night, Jimmie Lee is the self-styled "Jersey Outlaw," a sunglasses-sporting singer-songwriter who has, on his own, released three CDs of high-octane, original country-rock, as well as a "greatest hits" compilation.

While music has been a passion for Lee since he was a youngster growing up in Margate, it wasn't until a few years ago that he got serious -- make that very

serious -- about writing, recording and performing material that is two parts raucous rock-infused country in the vein of "MuzikMafia" acts like Big & Rich and Gretchen Wilson, and one-part classic-rock (heavy on the Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers).

"When you grow up in a Jewish family, you're either a doctor or a lawyer. It's ingrained in your head that that's what you're going to do," says Lee, whose brother is a physician.

Being a dutiful son, Lee, who lives in Voorhees with his wife, Linda, and sons Blake, 7, and Colby, 4, followed his parents' wishes. And during the years he built his practices, music definitely took a back seat. But he couldn't keep the music inside him forever.

"I started doing this seven or eight years ago, but started getting real serious in 2004, when I got ahold of David Ivory," he explains, referencing the suburban-Philadelphia-based producer-engineer who has worked with such acts as The Roots, Patti LaBelle and Silvertide.

Once he hooked up with Ivory, Lee decided to go whole-hog: He estimates he's spent well into six figures on recording with Ivory, (as well as on home recording equipment), and on professional-grade CD packaging and promotional materials. He has also hired a Nashville-based radio promotion person to pitch his songs to country stations across the country.

Which makes it evident that this is more like a crusade for Lee, rather than a mere hobby.

"Since I was a kid, I always wanted to be a star. That never left me," he says unabashedly. "As I get older, I find I want to put more time into it, and do more with it. It's my passion. My love."

According to Lee, who composes on piano and guitar, his wife didn't always understand this aspect of his personality. "She said, 'You have to grow up and stop being a kid,'" he recalls. "I said, 'This is what happens when you have dreams and a passion.'"

Today, Linda appears to have at least accepted her husband's obsession. "I'm proud of what he does, he absolutely loves it," she says. "I think he's come a long way."

However, as far as she's concerned, Lee has missed his true show business calling. "He should be a comedian. I think he's hilarious. He always has everyone cracking up. But he doesn't want to do that."

On the other hand, at least one of his patients believes Lee is definitely on-target, musically speaking, and



James Wiener is split between operating a trio of successful dentistry offices and making serious inroads into the music business.

(Photo provided)

AUDIO

- ▶ "Gimmie a holler, Hell Yeah" by Jimmie Lee
- ▶ "Electric Rodeo" by Jimmie Lee
- ▶ "Country Rocker" by Jimmie Lee
- ▶ "Cross Country 4 Wheel Drive" by Jimmie Lee
- ▶ "kickin' ass" by Jimmie Lee

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thinks it's kind of cool that he has such a rockin' dentist.

"It's exciting, in a way," offers Gary Rooney, a 53-year-old New Jersey Turnpike employee from Audubon. "I tell all my friends: 'This is my dentist. What does your dentist do on the side?'"

Lee, says Rooney, has actually been a source of motivation for him.

"Growing up, I wanted to learn to play guitar. I saw his show, and saw what he did, and I've been taking lessons for a year. It's hard, but he inspired me to keep going."

Currently, Lee and his band are prepping for two upcoming dates: Prospectors Steakhouse & Saloon in Mount Laurel (April 12) and 38 West in Lumberton (May 16). He promises it will be more of an experience than a concert, helped, in part, by what he calls the crew of female "fly dancers" who are part of his act.

"I'm an entertainer," he says. "Big & Rich have midgets (onstage). I have dancers. I'm the type of guy who's into the "wow factor." "

And, Lee promises, he'll continue his quest for fame, regardless of expense and challenges that confront him.

"Nobody's going to remember I was a dentist," he says. "People remember you if you write a hit song."

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