

LESSIA'S CREW

By Jenni-Elise Ramirez, Sophomore,
Dos Pueblos High

"I cross the wild and treacherous Santa Ynez Mountains every Sunday morning, at the crack of 10 a.m. just to be part of Lessia's Crew!" Danielle Ringer, 14, Santa Ynez High.

"My daughter eagerly participates in 'Crew,' sharing her vocal talents with a larger and more enthusiastic audience than she finds at home." Diane

Goodacre, mom. It's said for every action, there's a reaction. Allow me to explain.

Lessia grew up in a family of high achieving classical musicians. Her sister Nina Bodnar is a world famous classical violinist, while her mom Lana runs the well-known Music and Arts Conservatory of Santa Barbara. Her younger brother Misha is the cello playing genius behind the recording duo Bela Lugosi. Lessia herself was a spunky little prodigy on the piano, soloing with the Santa Barbara Symphony at the age of twelve. She can play Rachmaninoff!

But fortunately or unfortunately, however you choose to see it, she also wrote her very first song at the age of twelve. It was a very good song and she was hooked. She said, "Why should I stress? Why should I practice LONG hours just to memorize someone else's notes. Beethoven was a great guy but he's not around anymore. I'd rather pick my own notes out of the air!" And that's what she's been teaching us: to be mini-Beethovens with Dixie Chicks style.

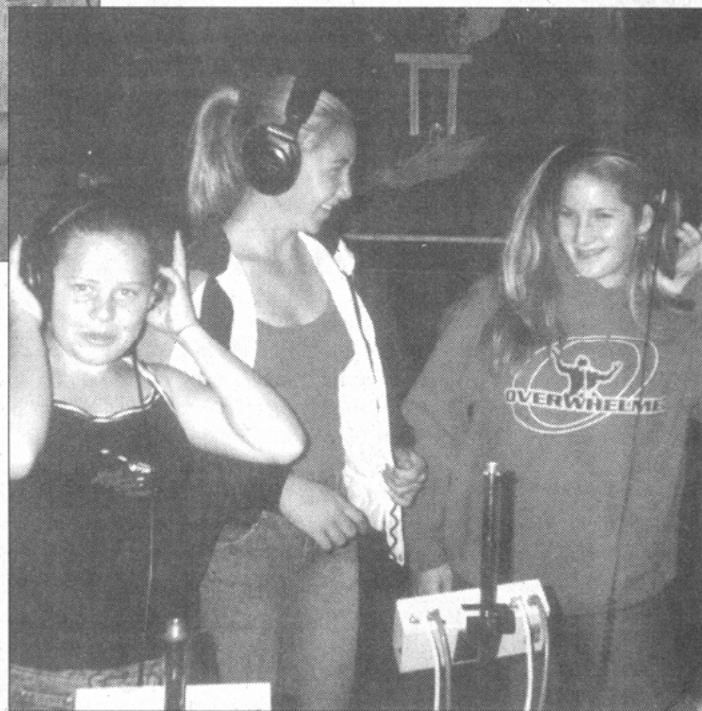
So you see, we're Lessia's "reaction": a non-conformist, laid-back, fun-loving, creative, very enthusiastic group of kids that show up every Sunday morning from eleven to twelve. We sing together, hang-out and arrange pop songs to learn the magic of making music appear. "I like 'Crew' because Lessia's so open to our ideas." Anna Rook, 13, Santa Barbara Junior High. "Lessia is a big inspiration to

us." Tawny Haugen, 17, Dos Pueblos High. "We're laid-back, we're funky, and we're all about fun." Erin Anderson, 16, Dos Pueblos High. "Ours is a choir that sings anything but choir music, and this is a good thing." Becky Tinsley, 16, Dos Pueblos High.

Now for some CREW facts: Our ages range from twelve to eighteen. We

always a full house and feels more like a party. It's very loose and lively. "I love the opportunity to perform in such a informal atmosphere." Katie Jones, 18, Laguna Blanca. "We all get to do what we love to do in a laid-back environment, we have so much fun doing it." Morgan Luria, 18, Laguna Blanca.

We also get to sing a lot in the recording studio. I'm all over both of Lessia's CDs. They're great. I've also soloed on her local TV show "Enlightenment Stew" and of course, we do the Kenny Loggins Telethon just about every year. One year we sang right after the big country star Clint Black and right before Olivia Newton-John. Wow,



average around 18 to 23 kids per season. Most of us are not at all shy, which makes for an abundance of good and bad opinions. We laugh a lot.

The kids are very friendly and supportive of each other. "I like having a special group of friends outside of school that share my same interests." Caitlin Ackerman, 15, Santa Barbara High. Some of us are beginners and some are more experienced. "Mom, lots of the girls in your crew are as good as the American Idols." Says Lessia's son Ari, 13, Goleta Valley Junior High. And like any other group we have our token "talks-too-much," (me), our token, "she's here..she's just late", and our token, "can you sing just a little more quietly?" and our token "boy" who we scared away.

And being in Lessia's Crew comes with great perks: Twice a year we do a big show at Soho. Have you seen us at Soho yet? If not, check us out December 8th. It's

say no more. The people at KEYT are so friendly. They always treat us like the stars that we are.

So if you're a teenage pop singer and you want to join in the fun, don't be shy. Come join us. Were very informal. You can even show up in slippers.

Santa Barbara News Press 2004