

# Growing up punk

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It's a lot less "Shake, Rattle and Roll," and much more "Rock-a-bye Baby." Three local musicians know what it's like to walk the line between rockin' all night and parenting every day.

**Q** In a brisk evening in late October, Jen Longwell strolls through the baby section of Target with the joy of a 6-year-old on a shopping spree at a toy store. I'm convinced she'd even have an exuberant spring in her step if not for the fact that she's 18 weeks pregnant.

It's quite a site to see. With her ballooned tummy (at just 5 ft. tall, her doctor says she's "so short, there was nowhere else for it to go.") and scanning-gun in hand, Longwell scans items into the store's baby shower registry. Anything's fair game — blankets, playpens, hats, socks, booties, bibs — as long as it doesn't have a certain yellow, honey-loving bear on it.

"I absolutely cannot stand Winnie the Pooh stuff," says the 30-year-old soon-to-be-mommy. "It's going to be on my baby shower invitations — *Please no Winnie the Pooh.*"

So instead of items featuring Pooh, Piglet and the gang, Longwell opts for anything with her favorite animal, a giraffe, on it. At one point she spots a Cart Tunes musical shopping cart bar cover for \$1.98.

"I have to have one of these," she says shocked by the price. "One, because it has a giraffe on it and, two, because I shop a lot."

It's the second must-have thing she's come across since she began shopping for baby items. The first was a Johnny Cash onesie that a friend bought her for the baby shower, which reads "I Crawl the Line" across the front.

She's not waiting until the baby shower for the shopping cart bar cover though. She's more than happy to buy it herself.

Like many Rochester music fans, I first came to know Longwell as Jen "Purr", the energetic guitarist for local glam-rock band The Purrs and now her new band The Lucky Cats (who she still practices with once a week while pregnant). The idea that her home life was more *Full House* than *The Osbournes* had never crossed my mind.

"When you're on stage people just want you to be Jen Purr," she says. "They don't want to know about your responsibilities or know that you're normal."

Longwell lives in Greece with her husband Brian, 26, who works in technical operations for Genesis Communications, and their two

Boston Terriers, Mira and Ariel. The couple met in 2001. Jen was managing at Bruegger's Bagels on Monroe Avenue when her boss' nephew came to town.

"I hated him," she says of the man who would eventually become her husband. "I hated working with him. I hated everything about him. He was just a punk kid."

The two had spent weeks annoying each other at work when one-night Jen's dinner-date canceled on her at the last minute. Surprisingly Brian offered to take her, a move that changed her entire opinion of him.

"I ordered a lot and it came to almost \$100," she says about their dinner at Red Lobster. "I was so mean to him and he dropped all this money on me. I was like, 'If he's willing to do that, he's not horrible. Let me give him a chance.'"

The two continued to date and Brian proposed to her two years later in the same booth at Red Lobster where they ate on their first date. They married in April 2005.

"I feel lucky to be with someone that loves me so much and wants to share this experience with me," says Jen of Brian, who she admits is the opposite of the guys she used

to date. "I've dated a lot of 'rock star' jerks in the past."

Nowadays the couple divides their time between work (Jen is a paralegal at Gordon & Schaal and teaches English at Bryant & Stratton at night) and getting the house ready for the baby.

After spending 45 or so minutes shopping and talking with Jen, her transformation from a 20-something glam-rock star to a family oriented future mom is no longer all that surprising.

"I always wanted to be a mom," she says as she rubs her stomach. "I was adopted, so I wanted to just give my kid everything, because you always have a 'my own mother didn't want me' feeling, and I don't want my own kid to feel that way."

The last item we look at in Target is a Soothing Motion Glider Seat that plays music. Jen presses play and begins to sing along with the "Go to Sleep My Sweet Child" melody. It was a fitting ending to our shopping adventure and a moment that perfectly sums up where Jen Longwell is in her life. The glam rocker is now singing lullabies. ♦

continued >>

&gt;&gt; from page 21

# Not such a wild child

When he's not rocking with The Emersons, this guitarist is happy to be 'just dad'

**A**aron Stormo doesn't sing to his 4-week-old daughter, and he's got a pretty legitimate reason for not doing so. "I like it better when she doesn't cry," says the 28-year-old daddy.

This may be why Stormo is the guitarist for local punk-rock band The Emersons and not the lead singer. A fact that he whole-heartedly agreed with when we visited with him, his wife Angela and their newborn daughter Elizabeth, at their home in Greece a few weeks ago.

"My buddies have been asking what's it like, and I can't put it to words," says Aaron of having his first child. "There's nothing to compare it to."

Prior to Elizabeth being born, Aaron's life was fairly routine. He'd work eight to 10 hours a day driving tractor-trailers, which he still does, then come home and spend time with his wife or go to band practice once a week. Most of that is still pretty much the same; just add in baby duties such as changing diapers, bathing, feeding and one particular activity he's grown quite fond of.

"One of the greatest things is just holding her," says Aaron. "She's got these huge eyes that are just moving around taking everything in. To see a little person at that stage of life, they don't know what's going on and you have responsibility for that. It's kind of scary, but I wouldn't change it for anything."

On the night we visit Aaron, he relaxes in a chair in his living room holding Elizabeth as she alternates between the wide-eyed gaze he describes and sleep. Aaron has a new routine, and as he puts it, "I wouldn't change it for anything."

The seemingly calm aspects of the guitarist's homelife are in stark contrast to the rebellious, Ramones-like punk-rock of The Emersons (highlighted in such songs as "Total Freak Out" and "You'd Better Make Way").

The band's wild style is semi-jokingly described on The Emerson's MySpace page ([www.myspace.com/theemersons](http://www.myspace.com/theemersons)) — "Bars that they play at sometimes have to make a beer run. The people are so overcome by the awesomeness that they must take to heavy drinking to deal with the rock."

While Aaron himself has never been much of a rock 'n' roll wild child — having joined The Emersons five years ago (a year before getting married and buying a house) — he says a majority of the party-hard rockers he's seen aren't likely the same when they're at home.

"Most people; what you see onstage is a personality they put on," he says. "That's not always the case, but most of the time. I'm sure Axl Rose isn't Axl Rose with his kids, if he's got kids, or Steven Tyler or whoever. When they're home they're just dad, and I think most people are like that."

Aaron says the time he spends now with The Emersons is more like a guys-night-out.

"All guys have their nights," he says. "They play bowling, or softball, or whatever. We just play instruments instead of hitting a ball."

And even during those times he's still "just dad." Whether he's home or not, he's learning it's a full-time gig.

"I'll be out at practice or whatever, and every once in a while I'm thinking, 'I wonder what she's doing,'" says Aaron of his daughter. "Talking to my parents they're like, 'Yeah, it's always like that. You're 28 and I still get that sometimes.' That's part of the territory I guess." ♦



*Aaron Stormo of The Emersons*

The proud papa with wife Angela and their 4-week-old daughter, Elizabeth.