

★ STAR POWER



Hailey Stelmachline

# VON IVA

If you're tired of hearing the hype about the latest bands that sound like yesterday's oldies, Von Iva, a genre-busting all-girl trio from San Francisco, is hitting the big screen this month in the new comedy *Yes Man*, starring Jim Carrey. They're what LA Weekly calls "an ass-shaking mix of soul, disco and dirty, raw rock 'n' roll." With Kelly Harris, aka Lay Lay, on the drums and Bex on synthesizer, *INSite* caught up with lead singer Jillian Iva to check in on their whirlwind tour and find out what it felt like to sing with Zooey Deschanel on the set of a Hollywood movie.

Lindsay Smith

**How did Von Iva get started?**

Well, we used to be a four piece, and the original bass player, who's had a baby, and the other three members were just kinda jamming and thinking about starting a band and had played in other bands before, so it was kind of a serendipitous meeting when I met them. They liked my voice, and here we are.



**Do you feel like everything has happened too fast for Von Iva, or has there been a steady progression?**

I feel like there's been a pretty good progression, being as this is my first band, I didn't know what to expect—we didn't go in for fame and fortune, we just went in for the love of music—and we've just been fortunate that things keep coming to us, falling in our lap, from doing songs for TV shows and being featured in a movie. But I wouldn't say it's been easy. We've been fortunate to have music that people respond to.

**People have labeled your sound as dance-punk, soul, disco, and rock 'n' roll. How do you feel about people trying to define your music?**

You know, it's interesting. I still stutter when people ask me to describe our style—I don't think we're genre-specific, which I think is exciting. I like to hear people's take on it and how they perceive it, and everyone seems to be a little different. The only thing that's frustrating is when we go to play a show and we're dealing with a soundperson who's used to dealing with just guitar and bass, and they're not sure how to get our sound to come across correctly.

**What were your musical influences growing up?**

My mom raised me with her good taste in music; she loved The Supremes and Aretha Franklin and Tina Turner, so that was always a big influence for me.



**What did you like best about making your new EP, *Girls on Film*?**

I felt the production of the new songs was really exciting. We spent a lot of time working on it—we actually camped out at a friend's house who has a recording studio in Indiana and we really put a lot of time and thought into the songs. I got to take multiple vocal takes and work with layering and harmonizing, so for me personally, that was the best part.

**What was the hardest part of recording the new album?**

You know, being holed up in a house where all you do is learn to eat and breathe ... it's amazing being able to do that, but it's also frustrating. I was sleeping in the same room as the vocal booth. You become entrenched in the music and you over-analyze it, so there's frustrating moments and exciting moments. The hardest part would be the moments of frustration until the epiphany hits, like "Ah-Ha! That was what we're looking for."



**Where did the name *Girls on Film* come from? Any connection to the movies?**

It's kinda tongue-and-cheek—it's derived from the Duran Duran song. We're going to be in the movie *Yes Man*, so literally, we're girls on film. Also, the cover is stills from the video shoot that we did, and we thought that looked really cool.

**How'd you get involved in *Yes Man*?**

We were in the right place at the right time. Our CD was over in Capital Records, and the cover caught the eye of the music supervisor, and he said, "Let's see how it sounds." So, he liked the sound, and the next thing we know we're at a meeting in Beverly Hills, and then we're in a movie.

**What was it like working with Zooney?**

It was great. Obviously she's a very talented musician. My standpoint in the beginning was, "She's a singer, I'm going to be in the back with the tambourine. That's cool," but we wrote songs before we met with her. She was very gracious. She said, "You've got such a great voice, I can't imagine you not singing with me," and the next day she came up to me with the director. She's really down-to-earth and a super nice lady.

**What did you like best about being involved in the making of a movie?**



Haley Sheimadine



Melissa Moseley

Van Iva with Zooney Deschanel on the set of *Yes Man*.

Being put up in a really nice hotel room for two weeks straight, where all you have to do is sit in a rehearsal space and go and jam with Zooney. And obviously being behind the scenes and seeing the inner workings of how a Hollywood movie is made—so much goes into one little scene, hundreds of people everywhere, plus meeting Jim Carrey after watching him from back in the day. It was so much.

**You got to meet Jim Carrey?**

We were on the set early, make-up and blah blah blah, and in the trailer, and then he walked in! I thought, "Gulp, shit, this is the real deal, a movie star, ok—dress-up time, this is business." I have to say I was nervous, for sure, and then after the first song he came up and was like, "Man, you guys are great! Super awesome!" I thought: Big sigh of relief. He's really cool; he's a funny guy. It was interesting to see how professional he was and how into each scene he would get before filming.

**How was writing the song "Yes Man" for the soundtrack? Was it hard to write something tailored to a particular film?**

No. Becky and Kelly came up with the instrumental part of it, and we were given part of the script for the part where Zooney and Jim initially meet, and it was inspiration—it was like being given words to use that I could plug in and have fun with. Having the script was like already having the picture, and it made it really easy.

**Why do you think your live performances are, to quote your fans, "legendary"?**

I think it's the unpredictability. I definitely never know what's going to come out of my mouth, to tell you the truth, and as far as musically, we all put our heart and soul into it, and we have a lot of fun with it. Plus, we have extended endings to our songs, and we never know what's going to happen. The audience never knows where it's going to go, and it makes it exciting for us each time, and that comes across to the audience that we're actually emoting, and I think people respond to that. I've been known to vamp it up.

**Vamp it up?**

You know. Run around, get in people's faces. I was always in the front and center before I was in a band, looking up at people and being enamored, so I can put myself on the other side and humanize the experience. There's no separation between me and the audience—no "I'm up here and I'm down there"—so I get all up in people's business.

**So you're already a month into your tour. Any memorable moments?**

It all starts to blur together. Last night was pretty amazing. That was a great show, being in the middle of Manhattan, playing the show, like "Wow, are we really here?" We even like shows where there aren't a lot of people there, but the people who are there are so into it. Then all 10 people there buy something and then have us sign their shirts. There's always something entertaining. We get a great response wherever we go.