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## Accolades keep coming for Berklee senior and rising musician

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(Courtesy EmilyElbert.com)

Musician Emily Elbert, who released her second album last week, is named in the October issue of Glamour Magazine among the top 10 college women of the year.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

On her 14th birthday, Emily Elbert played her brand-new guitar the same way Boston sports fans follow their beloved teams – until it hurt.

So it seems natural that the teenager from Texas who strummed away for hours – until her fingers bled – on that first night with her first guitar would later move here and create a "second home" for herself in a city known for its thick-skinned attitude.

"I just tried to keep going," said Elbert, recalling that memorable night.

"When you get an instrument like that, it's yours to transform and yours to build your own sound. I was so eager and energized about it that I just couldn't stop," said the 21-year-old folk and jazz artist.

She has produced two albums – "Proof" released a week ago, and "Bright Side," which debuted in 2006 – and launched her music career while

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transitioning from her high school near Dallas to Berklee College of Music. The college senior has received nearly a dozen awards in the four years since "Bright Side," including "Best New Artist of 2008" from local album adult alternative radio station [WUMB-FM](#).

Her latest honor: In its October issue, Glamour Magazine included Elbert among its 10-most-impressive female college students.

"Remember the names of this year's winners – you'll be seeing them again," says Glamour.

Elbert hopes so, and in a phone interview Saturday, one day before performing a show in Canton, she said she was honored by the recognition.

"I wasn't allowed to tell anyone," said Elbert, who first received the news in May. "So I was excited, but quietly excited."

Like with her first guitar, it was love at first site for Elbert when she visited Berklee and Boston for the first time several years ago.

"It was over. I was like 'OK, that's it, I have to come to Berklee,'" she said recalling her tour of the college while deciding where she wanted to study after high school. "There are so many students and so many great musicians ... and it's always sort of glowing and evolving."

In between touring and writing and recording new music, Elbert takes advantage of that learning atmosphere. At Berklee, she has learned to play new instruments, like the drums and bass, beside her prior knowledge of piano – her first instrument – and guitar.

Her newest album was co-produced with a Berklee professor and musical contributions came from a "rotating cast of Berklee alums" from the United States, India, Mexico, Israel, Brazil, and Japan.

"It was really a fun, exciting experience, because it just encapsulated all of that passion that I feel around Boston," said Elbert of the recording experience. Her first album was all done back home in Texas when she was 17, "But, this is a new chapter of my life – my Boston record. I produced it here, I wrote the songs here, and the players are all back here."

Balancing college life and her personal endeavors has been a whirlwind for Elbert, who lived in the Back Bay near her school until recently moving to the Fenway.

"It's quite a juggling act. But, Berklee is great because they're very flexible and encouraging and most of my teachers and a lot of administrators are all musicians, so they come from a really understanding perspective," she said. "It is a lot to try and do both, especially as you play more and put a new record out. It's crazy. But I love being at Berklee."

Staying connected with fans is especially important, Elbert has found.

Even before she had discovered her passion for the guitar, millions of people, many her generational peers, had already discovered how to illegally share and download copyrighted music on-line. Trying to launch a career in the music industry has never been easy, especially when your fans have found a seemingly guilt-free way to circumvent the normal process by which artists are paid for making music.

Nevertheless, Elbert remains optimistic.

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“It’s sort of a tricky equation really, trying to figure out where the balance lies. It is a completely new business,” she said. “A lot of people are saying ‘Oh, the music business is dead,’ but it’s being reborn. There is no longer really a mold where you say, ‘OK, this is how I should go about it,’ because really you have to create your own.”

For her, it has meant using the Internet to promote herself, connect with fans on her [website](#) and through social media, and to experiment with other ways to be paid for her hard work.

Like most people her age, she is not entirely sure of what she wants to do after college in the next few years or where she wants to be.

“I’m just kind of playing it by ear. I have a lot of goals, but my goals are musical, and career-wise. I love being in Boston right now. It’s my home base, and I just want to continue to travel and connect with people,” she said.

Three days before heading to Hollywood for a second show celebrating the release of her second album, Elbert will host and perform at her first CD release party at Café 939 in Boston on [October 2](#).

“I adore playing in Boston, especially because there’s such a supportive community from Berklee,” said Elbert. “This has absolutely become my second home.”

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(Courtesy Facebook)

Emily Elbert beside an enlarged version of the October cover of Glamour Magazine.

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