

Teen from page E1

gosh. OK. I had to rethink everything like whether or not I was going to take time off from school."

To head out on tour, Ali took time off from studying Afro-American studies and government at Harvard. She is planning on returning in the fall.

She also deferred a year of school to finish her well-received R&B CD "Kiss the Sky" (MJJ Music/Will Smith Enterprises). She tapped into several producers' talents for "Kiss the Sky" including Rodney Jenkins and Shawn Stockman of Boyz II Men.

"Working with Rodney, Rodney lives and breathes music. I worked with him in like three different studios and each one he had a bed so he could sleep there literally. That's his life. He's also really young so he likes to party, have fun, play and laugh," Ali explained.

"Working with Shawn Stockman, he's really cool, laid back and relaxed, very peaceful and very patient."

Ali, who appears in the movie "Jawbreaker," hopes to continue

to balance school, music and acting. "Music and acting) they both kind of fulfill different things. Acting is totally different because it creates a person. You create an image and a being and a whole history for somebody. You make stuff up. There's something that's really exciting about that," she said.

"With music, it's kind of being as true to yourself as you possibly can. Because it's scarier it does make it more exciting and it does make it more rewarding. This is the most exciting thing I've ever done - ever, ever, ever."

The 'N Sync, Tatyana Ali and Divine show is one of two teen-oriented concerts that hits the Detroit area this weekend. Voices of Theory performs at the teen club La Boom in Walled Lake on Friday, March 26.

How Divine
Never mind the music, Kia Thornton, one third of the group Divine, has one thing to say. "I love Jay-Z," she said of the Grammy Award-winning rap artist. "Put that I love Jay-Z and

we gonna get married." Back to the music. Blending R&B, soul and gospel, the members of Divine were put together three years ago by managers Nathan Garvin and Gillian Manigat. Thornton, 17, along with Nikki Bratcher, 17, and Tonia Tash, 18, were pursuing solo careers until Garvin and Manigat came along. None of them have regrets about joining a group instead. "We were really anxious to be in the business. Now we can't see it no other way. Before we came out we got the name Divine to hear people on the radio say our name, and to see our name in magazines. It's all about Divine now," Tash explained.

"It was more like fate because usually when girl groups come together, there's attitudes and people say they can't get along and all that stuff. As soon as we got together, we just clicked. Our voices blended. It was just like magic," Bratcher added.

The trio's debut "Divine" (Pundamental Art Entertainment) has already spawned the hit "Lately," brought to the girls by

executive producer Ruben Rodriguez. The album also includes a cover of George Michael's "One More Try," "I Never Thought," featuring Lady Mecca, formerly of Digable Planets, and the fun "Feisty Tules." The three began singing as children at their respective churches, places that proved to be suitable training grounds.

"It's a really good training ground. Everybody's willing to help you. They don't demand you because maybe you can't sing or you can't sing as good as someone else. They always make you feel good and they help you in areas you need help in," Bratcher said.

The last couple years, boy bands like Backstreet Boys, Hanson and 'N Sync have ruled the charts. Now with Britney Spears recently topping the charts, girls are making ground in the market. Singers like Ali and Divine are paving the way.

"Time for girls to rule!" Thornton said. "There are girls like Xscape but they're older. It's time for young girls to come out and rule."

Concert



Jazz Master: Teddy Harris Jr. plays keyboards for a Count Basie tribute 3 p.m. Sunday, March 28, at Clarenceville High School Auditorium, 20155 Middlebelt, (south of Eight Mile), Livonia. Concert features Johnny Trudell's Big Band and guest artists trombonist Al Grey, and vocalist Harvey Thompson. Tickets \$15 and available by calling (248) 474-2720 or (734) 459-2454.

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ESSEX INN

Oscar
from page E1

Readers favored Tom Hanks to win for Best Actor, Gwyneth Paltrow for Best Actress and Steven Spielberg for Best Director.

In case you missed the Academy Awards on TV, here are the highlights:

- Best Picture — "Shakespeare in Love"
- Best Actor — Roberto Benigni, "Life is Beautiful"
- Best Actress — Gwyneth Paltrow, "Shakespeare in Love"
- Best Director — Steven Spielberg, "Saving Private Ryan"
- Best Supporting Actor — James Coburn, "Affliction"
- Best Supporting Actress — Judi Dench, "Shakespeare in Love"
- Best Original Song — "When You Believe," from "The Prince of Egypt"
- Best Foreign Film — "Life is Beautiful"

For more Oscar highlights, visit the Web site, Oscar.com.

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