

# Sarah McKenna

Sarah McKenna grew up here on the Coffs Coast listening to her father playing guitar, and **she has always had a deep love of music. After years of feeling too fearful to give singing a real shot**, she finally broke out and took the plunge of starting to perform live, and her music career has taken off ever since.

**Hi Sarah. Can you give us a bit of the back story as to how you got started in your music journey?**

For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to sing. My father used to play his guitar and sing to my sister and I when we couldn't sleep, and I in turn, fell in love with music and the peace it brought me. Unfortunately the fear of singing held me back my whole life until about 4 years ago when I finally decided to take the plunge and enrolled in music performance at Coffs Harbour TAFE. This forced me to get on stage and face my fears head on. The encouragement of the teachers and fellow students really gave me confidence and in March 2022 I had my very first paid gig.

**How would you describe your current sound, and how has your music developed over the years?**

I've always loved the sound of the acoustic guitar and particularly those who played by plucking the individual strings with their fingers. This is known as 'finger style'. Without much intention I started playing the guitar as a teenager and just naturally played in this style and it has stuck with me to this day. I fell in love with this style of playing and it drew me to artists such as James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Jewel, Bic Runga and Tracey Chapman, just to name a few. These artists have heavily influenced my current sound and songwriting.

**Can you talk us through some of your creative process, from an idea for a song to the finished piece? Where do you often draw inspiration from when writing music?**

Someone once told me that people write music for either two reasons. One, is to please others and two, is to please themselves. I write for the latter reason; I write in response to events that occur in my life. When something significantly good or bad happens in my life I find myself picking up the guitar and playing. It's extremely therapeutic and I guess in some ways, it's a form of journaling. It helps me make sense of my feelings and the world around me. I never write music simply for the sake of writing. It's just not how it works for me.

I usually begin writing by playing around with different chord progressions, using fingerpicking patterns and then I find a nice melody and add the lyrics last of all.

**What have been some of the highlights of your musical career so far?**

To share my original songs and have people enjoy them and resonate with the message in my music is the greatest sense of accomplishment I have ever felt.

I've been busy over the past year writing and recording songs for an album I am set to release in winter this year. I've been lucky enough to work with two amazing producers; Jack Butcher from 'flatjacksounds' in Yamba, and Coffs' very own Joshua McGovern who plays around the Mid North Coast under the stage name 'Little King'. This will be the first album I've ever recorded and I'm beyond excited to get it out there and share it with the world.

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Since my first gig in March 2022 things have really taken off for me and I have been lucky enough to play regularly in some beautiful places and venues. Without the support of these venues and clients, my dream of playing music for a living would not be possible so I am very grateful for their support. One place that holds special meaning to me is the beautiful 'Ulong-Cafe in the Valley'. Every Saturday at the café is music day and the locals and café owners welcome musicians from all levels and genres to play to the most music loving audience I have yet to encounter. Playing at the 'Café in the Valley' is the highlight of my month and it is well worth a visit for the award winning food, spectacular scenery and exceptional company.

The last two years have been the most exciting musical adventure. I've had a ball playing at Valley Fest and the Iconic Timber festival; I've sung carols to excited kids at the Coffs Harbour Christmas carols; and travelled to remote and beautiful locations to serenade some lovely couples as they walk down the aisle.

**As well as your originals, you also play some covers. Can you tell us about a few of your favourite artists to cover.**

My true passion is to play my original songs but I also really enjoy finding popular songs and making them my own. From Melanie Safka to Bob Marley to Harry Styles; I feel that my current set list will cater to audiences of all ages and music tastes. I will be joining forces with the talented Mitch Young to form a duo we have named Smitch. This will be a big step away from my current chilled out acoustic shows and we will be providing audiences with a more dance driven, high energy set. We will be covering a wide range of modern and popular upbeat hits covering artists such as Whitney Houston, Dua Lipa and The Weekend. Our first show was at the Pier hotel on the 8th of March!

**What can people expect from a Sarah McKenna live show?**

You can expect to hear some very unique versions of songs like you've never heard them before. You are guaranteed to know at least a few songs from my set list and every week I endeavour to learn new songs so my shows stay relevant and fresh. I of course also love to share my originals any chance I get. My solo style is relaxed yet lively. My voice is where the magic really happens and the soothing melodies are what captivate my audience the most.

**Where can people have a listen, follow your journey or get in touch?**

You can listen to my music on platforms such as Sound Cloud, Spotify and YouTube under the name of SarahMckennamusic.

I am also available as a duo or solo for private functions, including weddings, and can be contacted on 0434 016 397.

I'm looking forward to seeing where my music takes me next. You can follow my journey and keep track of upcoming gigs at https://www.facebook.com/sarahmckennamusic or on Instagram @sarahmckennamusic.

**Thanks Sarah.**