Music Matters – Sarah McKenna



An acoustic guitar, a beautiful voice and a passion for music.

Sarah has been gigging all over the Coffs Coast lately. I was impressed when I caught her recent performance at Rattle Restaurant in Emerald Beach, so I had a chat with her to find out a little more.

She spent most of her childhood years in Bellingen. She was born into a musical family, and she had a yearning to sing and write songs from a very early age. In her youth, Sarah spent time experimenting with her singing voice, and over time developed the captivating sounds that she now shares with us.

Sarah doesn't get too hung up on the technical aspects of music. Instead, she prefers to focus on the 'feeling' of a piece, letting her passion take the lead.

She 'toyed' with the guitar in her youth, and started playing it more seriously as a teenager after getting a couple of informal lessons from her cousin who was a competent guitarist. It was during this time that Sarah perfected the fingerstyle method that she uses today.

Like a lot of musicians, Sarah experienced a gap in her musical career when she started a family of her own.

When her children aproached school age, Sarah decided to study music at TAFE to refresh her skills. This proved to be a good decision, as she quickly picked up from where she had left off and got the timely confidence boost that she needed

to pursue her musical career.

Apart from those few early lessons from her cousin, Sarah is mostly self taught. She mentioned enjoying playing guitar in Open Mics with local musicians, saying that playing alongside others is a great way to observe different techniques. She has also used online platforms such as Ultimate Guitar and YouTube to immerse herself further in her craft.

Sarah is deeply passionate about song writing and original music. I have been enjoying streaming some of her songs on Spotify. There are several more new songs on they way, and I even heard a rumour that there is a film clip in the pipeline.

She is looking into developing a project called 'Creative Collections'. This project would give small groups of musicians, a platform where they could play their original songs in a paid gig format. The concept is in early stages, but Sarah is investigating the pros and cons, and all the red tape involved to get the project up and running. I have a feeling that if it is possible to get this happening, Sarah will find the way to do it! Watch this space.



Sarah's songwriting techniques are quite varied. She feels like every song has it's own personality, it is like an emotion or a feeling. Some songs arrive effortlessly, as if they've simply been handed to her. Others begin as a chord progression saved on her phone, or lyrics that come to her while playing a melody on her guitar.

Some of Sarah's musical influences are: Shawn Colvin, Joni Mitchell, Jewel, Celine Dion, Pink Floyd, The Beatles, Tracey Chapman, Sade, Bic Runga and Kasey Musgraves.

Sarah enjoys rubbing shoulders with other musicians, and I got the impression she is always open to collaboration. With the right crew, she may even be tempted to join a band.

~ Brad Nelson