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From Tasmania to Prince George



Teresa MALLAM/Free Press Anita George gives the crowd at Artspace Sunday a sampling of her trademark powerhouse voice and soulful original lyrics during her opening set.

By Teresa Mallam
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When she deftly took off her red shoes, slung the guitar over her shoulder and began singing in her bare feet, you just knew it was going to be a good concert.

Tasmanian born singer songwriter Anita George (she now lives in Melbourne) played Artspace Sunday to what I'm sure will become a solid fan base in Prince George. Quite apart from her talent as a contemporary folk roots blues artist, George - she opened for Melbourne mate Chloe Hall - has a quick wit and way of reaching out to people that clearly endeared her to the audience.

She began with the shoes.

"Well now that you've seen how classy I am, I'm going to take off my shoes because I'm more comfortable singing in my bare feet," she joked. Then she made friends. "Have you seen our van? It's the pink and white one parked outside, you can't miss it. I've been in Canada for three months and now I feel Canadian. We just came back from a gig in Prince Rupert. I've already seen three bears and they're very cute - at a distance."

Easing into her first song, Oh Father, George said she was inspired to write the song a few weeks ago when she saw a roadside shrine. A bout of homesickness for her home town of Melbourne led to penning Nowhere Near Me Tonight which she performed onstage with Hall doing backup vocals. Her silky, sultry voice has a great range and she sweeps you away with the powerful emotion she packs into each song.

Described as an artist with a unique fusion of acoustic folk roots, she truly is delightfully different.

Still, it's the wonderful words that stay with you. Every time she delivered another original tune, you got to see more of that talent. Particularly with soulful songs like Collide about a broken relationship. Her lyrics seem to come right from the heart - "I never asked you for much, and I never wanted you to be any more than you are" and, as George tells it in one of her "bearing the soul" moments, she's never had much luck with relationships.

Her sister, she reveals, has a happy marriage and a young son. A song George wrote for her infant nephew when he couldn't sleep and performed for the crowd Sunday really struck a special chord.

The artist proved she is also an accomplished guitar player, thrilling the audience time and time again with her captivating musical stylings. For an opener, George played a long set which gave music lovers a chance to get to know her. The Australian songbird is a rare treat - a solo female vocalist who can sing beautifully, write moving songs, play guitar wonderfully well and exude warmth for the audience all at the same time.

Anita George has two albums to her credit, Shooting for the Moon released in July 2005 and The River released in October 2006.