

NEW MUSIC

A big year for This Little Bird

Inspired by Marianne Faithfull, This Little Bird is captivating audiences with her sweet voice. Ian McCabe meets her

When we refer to this talented musician as This Little Bird, those unfamiliar with her might think we're being disparaging and impolite. But we're not. Honest.

"I played a gig recently and the girl I was supporting asked the promoter who was on first," she says. "He pointed to me and said 'This Little Bird is.' She thought he was being rude."

It's a common and a somewhat intentional misconception. This Little Bird is in fact the stage pseudonym of Seaham-based singer-songwriter and photography student Rebecca Young.

It's a name which is partially inspired by the Marianne Faithfull song of the same name, but also a light-hearted play on words on an old derogatory term towards young women.

"I thought it would be funny to see that on posters and be introduced as This Little Bird. Like, check out that bird" she laughs. "It also adds a bit of mystery and I didn't want to just be called Rebecca Young. As a stage name I feel that's a bit generic and dull."

Soft spoken and angelic, it's hard to believe This Little Bird was once the bass player of the eccentric Sunderland rock band, The Small Screen Light Show, a band that once shared a billing with mega star Lady Gaga at a Swedish music festival.

Last year the band decided to go on hiatus, with the majority of its members moving to Brighton for their studies. Rebecca, 20, remained in the North East, picked up her six-string, Lola, and decided to go it alone, playing shows across the region and gradually picking up a following along the way.

Her sound is a complete departure from the band's loud and fast in-your-face approach, with more of a rich and intimate folk sound inspired by the likes of Laura Marling and the Swedish duo First Aid Kit.

Rebecca's voice ranges from powerful and arresting to soft and tender and her narrative style of songwriting takes listeners on an emotional journey. Her lyrics range from stories of missed friends to depressed sailors and mermaids. Her song Romance is Not Dead even received national airplay via Tom Robinson's popular BBC 6 Music show.

"This is really the kind of music I like to write and play," she explains. "Some of it's biographical, but I like fairytales, stories and

writing about characters. I just write about whatever just pops in there."

Moving to the front of the stage and being the centre of attention has been an eye-opening experience for the modest Rebecca. "It's been a big difference. When I played with the band in the past, Mattie, the front man, was always the focus. He was quite wild, being as outrageous as he could. Now all eyes are on me," she says. "I'm still not quite sure what do in between songs and I've developed a stage voice that sounds nothing like me. It's all very different, but it's good, I'm enjoying it."

This Little Bird has plenty of gigs under her belt and has been a regular fixture at all of the usual venues throughout Newcastle and Sunderland, be it solo or backed up by members of Sunderland band Chased by Wolves. She also credits the regional music scene for aiding her growth. "I've met a lot of people since I've started playing on my own," she says. "They influence what you do, give pointers and even introduced me to new artists that have had an impact on my song writing."

One highlight came at last year's Split Festival in Sunderland, which saw This Little Bird open the weekend at the fringe tent, sharing the bill with the likes of Beth Orton. "That was daunting, but it was fun to be apart of. The fringe tent was great for promoting local talents" she smiles.

Rebecca ponders when asked to recommend other similar local talents and then smiles: "The girls, listen to the girls."

The independent music scene has traditionally seen the males outnumber female, but Rebecca believes the local scene is producing a healthy dose of gifted female acts. "There's a lot of talented girls popping up all of a sudden, like Natasha Hall and Amy Holford. They're not women yet and that scares me, they're all really good. Gender doesn't matter though, as long as you are yourself and you're talented, that's all that counts."

Rebecca plans on capitalising on a successful year for This Little Bird by recording more songs for an EP. If things keep going the way they are, This Little Bird will be more than an amusing play on words.

To keep up to date with This Little Bird, with future dates and downloads visit www.facebook.com/thislittlebird



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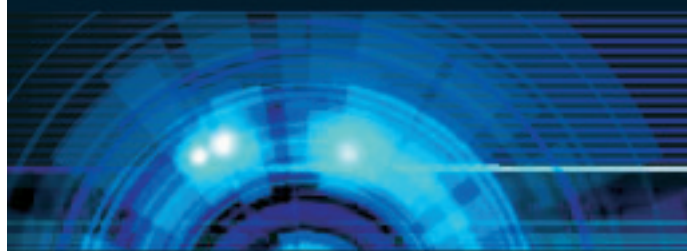
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