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Small-town Girl, Big-time Dream: Winner Announced for Magna Hoedown Showdown



By Anna Cianni

Schomberg musician Vicki Biersteker is the winner of the 2018 Magna Hoedown Showdown.
The finals took place on September 14 at the Magna Tent in Aurora. Biersteker, 22, competed onstage against nine other up-and-coming country artists and came in first place. The runners up were talented musicians Dustin Bird from Stirling, who came in second place, and Dayna Reid from Elmvale, who came in third.
Congratulations to all the finalists for their captivating performances and for helping make the Magna Hoedown such a success. This year, $538,105 was raised for 20 charities. Great job to finalists Mary Paige St. Onge from Seaforth, Katie Sacco from Toronto, Derek Reilly from Queensville, Molly McNulty from Barrie, Zoe Jayne from Schomberg, Patrick James Clark from London, and Amir Brandon from Toronto.
For winning the province-wide competition, Biersteker received a prize valued at over $25,000, which includes a $2,500 cash prize, Yamaha guitar and amp package, $2,500 styling and gift card package from Upper Canada, two full days of recording at Metalworks Studios, ?The Ultimate Artist Package' with professional management, coaching, styling, and songwriting by industry professionals. She also got to perform again on the second night of the hoedown, before Blue Rodeo.
?It was wild! Friday night was my first time performing on stage with a band, so the second night was actually a little easier.? Biersteker is new to performing and has only been the star on stage three times in her life, all of which were during this competition. ?I was very shocked to win! I was really just going into the contest for the experience.?
Besides singing, Biersteker also plays piano and guitar, but she said she used to hide her music ability when she was younger. In fact, she first sang in front of a live audience for a school play when she was around age 12. ?I'm just excited to not be only playing in my room anymore,? she laughed.
Biersteker auditioned on Aug. 7 in front of judges Steve Hinder, Beverley Mahood, and Tom Cross at Theatre Aurora. She sang Space Cowboy by Kacey Musgraves and qualified for the semi-finals on August 25.
The semis took place in Machell Park at this year's annual Aurora Ribfest. It was on that stage where Biersteker first got a taste of what it's like to perform for a crowd. She said, ?I was so nervous for that performance. It was the first time on stage with just me and a guitar.? Biersteker sang Keeper of the Flame by Miranda Lambert and the judges told her, ?That was a great song choice for you. You made Schomberg proud!?
When she found out she had made it to the top ten and was going to perform at the annual Magna Hoedown for the 30th anniversary, she was floored. ?I was especially excited for mentorship week. To work with such successful people like Tom and Beverley, that's really why I was excited to be in the top ten.?
At the finals, the judges were Steve Hinder, manager of Magna Inc.; Joan Kelley Walker, star of The Real Housewives of Toronto; and Ted Ellis, chair of the CCMA Board of Directors. Walker said they struggled to a pick a winner since the finalists were all very strong.
?We were looking for someone who was comfortable on stage, looked great, and was natural and sincere. Vicki was all those things, so that's why we picked her,? Walker said.

Biersteker revealed that before the finalists performed, ?Tom and Beverley said they were not concerned about who wins, they just wanted a good show. So, I kinda forgot we were in the competition and I just went up and had fun.?
Her family and friends were also there to support her. ?They have been pushing me to do something with music, especially my dad. It just put a smile on all their faces.?
Now, Biersteker plans to get better at guitar with her new equipment and also start performing more. Maybe we will see her on a country stage in the near future. ?This year is definitely going to be my biggest year yet doing music!?