

Beresford makes a connection taking on the Hoedown Showdown



By Brock Weir

When Aurora's Shannon Beresford has something on her mind, she doesn't keep it bottled up inside.

Rather than taking to Twitter or other forms of social media, however, she lets her feelings come out in song. Through her songs, she is able not only to jot down her own feelings, but put it out there for others to hear and relate to. For her, this connection with the audience is important and is one she hopes to foster next month as a semi-finalist in the 2014 Hoedown Showdown.

An off-shoot of the 2014 Wild Wild West Hoedown, semi-finals will take place during Aurora's Ribfest where the top 20 will be whittled down to a top ten. These ten will then take the stage on Friday, September 12 under the Hoedown tent to show off before the entire community, before winning a chance to perform at the main Hoedown event the following evening.

'I started writing lyrics when I was really, really young,' says Ms. Beresford. 'I would come home from school and literally lock myself in my closet and just write words down and put a melody to them. I wasn't musically talented back then, I didn't have ways of expressing it with an actual song, but my brother and father are self-taught with their own guitars. I got really jealous one day and thought, 'That's it! I am just teaching myself!' and once I knew how to play the guitar, I was able to put my lyrics into an actual melody.'

Ms. Beresford can't go very far without finding some form of inspiration. Inspiration comes not only from her own experiences, but also those of her friends, going through relationship issues and the regular trials of life.

'I see people holding hands, walking down the street, and I just think about what their lives are like,' she explains.

In this, her second year participating in the Hoedown Showdown since it was revived in 2013, however, she relied on the songs of others to get her through to the next round. Doing battle at Theatre Aurora to secure a place in next month's semis, she sang One More Girl's 'When it ain't Raining'. Ms. Beresford says she really related to the song made popular by the Canadian duo, and made a conscious effort to put their song out there for more people to hear.

As she hit the stage, there was nevertheless a little snag. After making the finals last year, she felt nervous but confident as she stepped up in front of the judges. She took their critiques last year to heart and learned that rather than sit playing guitar, she should work on her presence and take advantage of the space on stage.

'I was a little bit nervous, but [Chris Seldon] was one of the judges last year and I kind of kept in touch with him over the past year,'

she explains. ?I felt a little bit more at ease that he was watching me because he saw me last year, but my guitar strap broke about two seconds into my song. It threw me off a little bit, so I was more nervous than I expected to be, but I just really wanted to make it to the next round.?

Evidently, something did the trick for the life-long country lover and when she gets up on stage at Ribfest, she will be accompanied on the guitar by her brother. The Beresfords grew up in a household of music. Not only did they listen to music regularly, but their father also played bluegrass guitar regularly. Although she likes pop and dance music, country is where her heart is.

?It is the songs that tell a story,? she explains. ?Every song has a meaning and every song is relatable. I think that is why there is such a large fan base out there because every single person can relate to at least one song and one story that is told through it. For me, it is that I am able to write down what I am feeling and I am able to express that. That is the best part ? that we can see on some level that we can kind of relate and go through the exact troubles as someone else. If I put a song out there about a boy, and he hears it, he knows exactly how I feel.

?I hope judges see that I am not just a girl that sits on a chair and writes music. I really want them to see the energetic side of me. I want them to see I am able to get an audience's attention and keep them wanting more.?