THE REINVENTION OF RIA MAE Q & A WITH HALIGONIAN SINGER/SONGWRITER

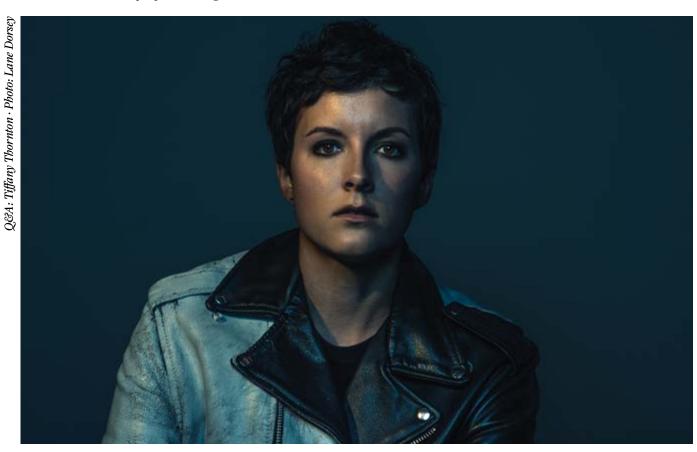
It's hard to believe that singer-songwriter and Haligonian Ria Mae was ever shy. With the hit song "Clothes Off" and a record deal with Sony Music, Mae is on a role. Her self-titled album showcases her ability to transition from folk to a pop-infused sound almost effortlessly. Local Connections chats with Rae about perfectionism, music and Maritime camaraderie.

YOU HAVE BEEN WRITING SONGS SINCE YOU WERE A KID. WAS THAT SOMETHING YOU ALWAYS GRAVITATED TOWARDS?

Yeah, I come from a family that has a lot of writers, novelists and poetry writers. My mom was a bit of a songwriter. I think it was just a normal thing in our family to lock yourself away and just write. I think for some families that would be weird; like, 'What's wrong with this kid? Four days in her room without coming out.' In my family it was just okay; it was like, 'I hope the songs are going well.' That was a normal thing for me. I never had a diary; Iwouldjustrecordsongsonatapeplayer. I was always encouraged and I did well in school, so my parents never really had a reason to worry. I was fascinated with songwriting and trying to get better. I wondered how some people were so good at it.

HAD YOU BEEN SINGING THE SONGS YOU WROTE? DID PEOPLE TELL YOU THAT YOU HAD A GREAT VOICE GROWING UP?

I always sang, but I don't think anyone would say I had a good voice, especially when I was younger. I worked really hard around college; I was working in construction management and then got laid off for about a year. I made myself get up every morning and sing. I always wanted to be a good singer and I just wasn't. I really wanted to be good; I was hard on myself. So I woke up really early and would sing eight hours a day and developed my own style. I am happy with my voice now but it's been a long haul.



YOU HAVE DABBLED IN A BIT OF ACTING, LIKE IN THE VIDEO FOR YOUR SONG "GOLD." HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT ACTING MORE?

I definitely think about it. To me it's really similar to performing on stage and getting into an emotion. I feel like most people that can perform on stage can act a little bit. It's something I would like to do more of.

IT'S AMAZING HOW MANY PEOPLE IN THE INDUSTRY OUT HERE WORK TOGETHER AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER, WHICH YOU DON'T SEE IN MOST CITIES. DO YOU THINK IT'S A MARITIME THING?

I never realized that it was a thing until I started touring more and hearing stories from musicians in other cities where it was more competitive. I think it's so great, and we are so lucky. I feel like when I go home to Halifax, even musicians who are still struggling I feel genuine support from them. And I feel genuinely happy for people who came before me or who are coming up now. It's a wonderful thing, and we sure have some weird cross-pollination. Yeah, it's definitely a Maritime thing.

I LOVE THE TITLE OF YOUR HIT SONG, "CLOTHES OFF." HOW DID THE TITLE COME TO BE?

I had written that song in Montreal. I actually wrote the song with the clothes dryer going, and I think it was subliminal; with the clothes dryer going and the circular beat - I wrote an entire line. I usually write the title for my songs last.

YOU'RE TOURING A LOT THIS SUMMER AND INTO THE FALL. WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT BEING ON THE ROAD?

I am having a lot of fun this year on the road. Switching my last show from a folk show to a pop show was great. I always feel inspired when I don't know what I am doing, which is what happened with this last album. Making a poppy, hip-hoppy album and with this show making it bigger. Showing what I really want to pull out from the album and doing it live. To me it's so fun! I am glad that I get to experience both the writing and the performing; they are both so different.

DID YOU EVER THINK THAT YOUR CAREER WOULD SKYROCKET THIS FAST?

In one way I never thought that this whole year would happen. Yet in another way I had always hoped and worked towards it. There were a couple years where I was doing so many jobs; it looked like music was not working out for me. But I had always visualized this. I put out "Clothes Off" on my own before the album was done. I had this weird gut feeling in August, and I just was like, "This needs to go out now." I was saving up money to finish the album, and I had to make that choice to finish the album or just put the song out. I put the song out, and ten days later Sony called.

ANY NEW ALBUMS OR SINGLES IN THE WORKS THAT WE CAN ANTICIPATE THIS YEAR?

We just put out a new single called "Ooh Love." We just put that to radio. I was in L.A. recently filming a video for it. That video will be coming out probably in August. I will be touring a lot and working on some new music.



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