

After a year living on a catamaran off the coast of Australia, 23 year old singer/songwriter Sarah Whitteron has moved back to the open remoteness of the drought-ridden orchards and hills surrounding her hometown of Cootamundra. Kate Christy caught up with her and found a talented and inspiring young artist who's committed to her creative lifestyle ...

Sarah Whitteron



Singer/songwriter, Sarah Whitteron: "I don't think there are many limitations in living in the country."

do but the feeling of home and being safe any time of the day in any part of town is priceless. Cities were individualistic places with selfish behaviour for me, whilst living in a small community I feel apart of a generous group of people all the time. I only really got that vibe when I was at a great event in a city, not in every day living.

You seem to be making the most of your time in Cootamundra, teaching, playing gigs and writing music. What kind of response are you receiving from the community?

I love living in Coota. The local community is so supportive and nurturing. My gig can be sold out a weeks in advance.

When I tell people I haven't seen for a while that I am living as a musician in Coota and making an album it takes a minute to register because it is not the normal answer. But then they say, "Well tell us when it's launching and we will come and support you," and they genuinely will show up.

We have a varied and growing music scene here and some super talented musicians who I have had the privilege of working with. The Arts Centre has given local musos a place to work and the community support behind my music, the centre and the arts in general are all growing at lightning pace! ■

Sarah is involved with the Australian Songwriters Association and coordinates the monthly song writing showcase, The Wax Lyrics, at the Phoenix. Her new EP will be released in December.

Kate Christy is the Projects & Promotions Coordinator at ERAP Tel 02 6921 4584

How did the transition from open sea to dry arid countryside affect you?

The biggest thing to upset me moving back to Coota is the drought. Knowing many local farming families, it is heartbreaking: friends become scared and mentally tortured by the unpredictable weather patterns. On a boat you live and die by the weather but there is so much rain on the coast. It was not until I came back that I realised that coast and country are worlds apart.

You mentioned that you lived in the city prior to your sea adventure. What are the advantages and disadvantages to living in a small country town after having experienced the abundant culture of a city?

I don't think there are many limitations in living in the country. You create the limitations in your head. At first I had trouble finding other musicians to jam and work with

but in my town I have found the most talented teenagers and it is exciting working with young people who have so much to give and endless energy. There is a limited opportunity to work with experienced musicians but you can always visit the cities to see gigs and attend workshops, you just have to research a little harder.

Advantages that I have found in my town are numerous. Because I am known in the region and have a local fan base I can put on gigs at my leisure and am guaranteed a crowd and the fact that it takes three minutes to get anywhere means I get a lot more done in my day. The cost of living is lower so this gives me more cash to spend on equipment etcetera.

The vibe which comes from living in the country is one of truly belonging and the people are heartfelt and genuine. I found cities exciting with lots of things to see and

March

2 – 4 March

👁️ Portland Art Exhibition View displays of premier artworks from local and Australian fine artists. Crystal Theatre, **PORTLAND**
Contact Maree Statham Tel 02 6355 5784

3 March

👁️ *Hina Matusuri Dolls Festival*
A traditional Japanese festival that dates back many hundreds of years. The main feature of the festival is a display of dolls. **COWRA**
Japanese Garden & Cultural Centre
Tel 02 6341 2233

6 – 9 March

👁️ *Cowra Festival of International Understanding* Focuses on Cowra's relationship with international communities. Cowra Shire is proud to claim it has over 45 different nationalities living within its community. **COWRA** Tel 02 6340 2069.

6 – 16 March

👁️ *Design Tech* Touring exhibition featuring the highlights of Design Tech major works **GRIFFITH** Regional Art Gallery
Tel 02 6962 5991