

Victoria Vox interviewed by Philip Laubner, WhatWeekly.com - March 28, 2013

In 2011 singer-songwriter Victoria Vox produced a cover song a week, for an entire year to the delight of her fans. In 2012 she upped the ante and wrote an original song a week and figured out a way to get paid to do it. This story is about creative entrepreneurship and how one woman is finding ways to spend her life doing what she loves. What follows is a conversation I had with Victoria recently. Have a look-see.

Phil: How did you come up with the song a week idea?

Victoria: Oh boy. I'm going to be giving you all my secrets. I just know it. ;) Did you ever see the Bridget Jones's Diary? Well, my opening scene on January 7, 2011 was much like the opening scene of that movie, except I was singing, "lonely, lonely..." (I Think It's Going to Rain Today by Randy Newman), instead of "All By Myself" (by Eric Carmen). Eventually I got out of bed, telling myself how great of a song it was, and that I should just go ahead and learn it. So that's how I spent my day. Once I got it down, I decided I would broadcast my success on YouTube. Moments before I hit record, I decided that learning a song a week might be the key to get out of my headspace at times! I then announced my project to the world, and there was no turning back. In October, emails and comments were already coming in about how much people enjoyed the project and that they were going to miss it... and they asked what was next. I knew that I wanted to return focus to my songwriting. The problem was I couldn't commit serious time to writing if I was also touring. So, I thought long and hard about whether or not writing a song a week would be realistic for me, and what I would need to make it realistic.

Phil: Reality and the creative process? Two ideas often at odds with each other. How did you reconcile the two?

Victoria: In late November of 2011 I made the announcement to my fans that I would embark on the 52 Original Song Project. The cost to subscribe was \$52 for the year (for 52 songs). I had 4 people subscribe the first day, and then... there was a lull, a long lull. I began to think, "oh gosh... I cannot dedicate my year to songwriting for \$4 a week!". Enter Kickstarter.com. Their all-or-nothing platform was perfect for what I was doing. I was able to set a monetary goal (giving me about \$125 week) and if I failed to raise my goal, I wouldn't have to do the project. It was a sure way to see if there was any demand for what I was doing. I reached about 70% of my goal in the first 24 hours, and then doubled it by the end of the campaign. I also received monies to my PO Box if people didn't want to create a Kickstarter profile. Come January 7, 2012, the project was funded and I was free to focus on my songs. It was incredible.

Phil: Talk about the process, it's variations, and what you had to do to keep the ideas flowing. I'm sure there were weeks when you regretted the decision?

Victoria: I never regretted my decision, but there were a few weeks that I wanted to bang my head against a wall. Like any large task, it must be completed one step at a time. In this case, it was one week at a time. I had a few rules for myself (which I disclosed to the subscribers). The big one was that I would not write to please; there was no guarantee of 52 excellent Victoria Vox songs and they could be ANY musical style. Giving myself FULL creative freedom was the ticket to completing this project. BUT... I did have to become more aware of when a song was coming on, and most importantly LISTEN to what was coming, and give it the space and time to become something, no matter what. I carried around a voice-recording device. I sang in my car, in the shower, on my bicycle. I let it come to me.

Phil: Two years of creating a new work a week seems like a lot of work for a woman that spends most of the year traveling and performing, do you ever sleep?

Victoria: Ha! Sometimes I take naps ;) I often find that there are not enough hours in the day to do everything I'd like to. So, instead of beating myself up about it, I just do what I can. I love the Hawaiian phrase, "If can, can. If no can, no can."

Phil: I can only imagine that the experience deepened and informed your craft or song-writing?

Victoria: Well, I have a degree in songwriting... I don't think any of the songs were terrible. Am I a better songwriter after writing 52 songs? You bet. Is there STILL room for improvement? You bet. ;) When I was working on the 2011 Covers Project, it was like going back to school. I got to study other songwriter's chord changes, lyrics, and melodies. Things made sense when I analyzed everything. I definitely brought stronger melody writing to the table in 2012. It's very exciting to see experience this growth.

Phil: So you just completed fifty two new originals in 2012. You also just released two new albums, the first being a new Victoria Vox solo album titled Key, and the second album appears to be a band or collaboration titled Boombox Séance. I assume that these albums are comprised of material from the song writing challenge. Is that true? And if so, how did you decide which songs to use, and which to put on each album?"

Victoria: Yes, both of these albums are all from songs written during my project. For the Boombox Séance album (which I consider my alter-ego) was conceived with my two songwriting partners (Aaron English and Jim Troglen) during the Steel Bridge Song Fest. We felt we were on to something, so in some ways, I wrote some of the 52 songs specifically for putting out an album in Boombox Séance style. It was a good challenge. We wrote JUST enough tunes to make a full-length album, while including one cover on the album: Here Comes the Rain Again by the Eurythmics. Key contains 11 tunes (a 12th tune is available for download for those who buy a hard copy of the disc!). I chose these songs with the help of "Key's" producer, Geoff Stanfield. His goal was to put a collection of songs together that were somewhat cohesive, but also to make an album that people would/could listen to over and over again. There were songs that Geoff and I agreed on, others that he fought for, and others that I had originally wanted, but later ditched in the studio... This album is very "me" and I'm super proud of it. A lot of work went into it. It's fun work, of course, but it's still work!

Phil: "I see that you have a show coming up at the Creative Alliance, can we expect to hear material from both of these new albums at that show?"

Victoria: You will definitely hear a lot of new tunes. Most of them will be from Key but I'll do a couple from Boombox Séance (stripped down / acoustic). I will also throw in some favorites from past albums, as well as a few COVERS from the 52 Cover Song Project. One might expect to hear ukulele versions of "Benny and the Jets" and "Physical"!

Phil: What's the biggest take-away you've received from the experience?

Victoria: This whole experience reaffirms that, "I can". Before 2012, I'd have this horrible thought after writing a new song that I would never be able to write another song. After the project I know that I can always write another new song. My Week 52 song by Gillian Welch was "One Little Song", which is a tune about writing more songs, and that everything hasn't been done yet. She wrote, "There's gotta be a song left to sing, cuz everybody can't of thought of everything." Even 52 songs later, I know there are songs left in me. There always will be.

