

# 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; I would just record songs on a tape player. 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.

Q&A: Tiffany Thornton • Photo: Lane Dorsey



**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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