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performing arts

# Expressing emotion through performance

*National songwriting competition unearths fresh young talent*



Emma-Louise Lobb

Emma-Louise Lobbs' career as a musician is certainly moving fast. The 17-year-old was recently chosen as the winner of the Category C Grades 11 and 12 in the 2008 Australian Children's Music Foundation (ACMF) National Songwriting Competition.

Plus, her winning song *Insomnia*, which took a mere two weeks to write, is now part of her debut album recently recorded by Nigel Pegrum from Australian Sun Records and soon to be available in record shops.

"I am very excited about that," Emma-Louise said.

It was the students' practical music teacher at Cairns State High School who told her about the ACMF competition and who had encouraged all of her class to enter.

To get ideas flowing for the song, Emma-Louise reveals she used a rather unusual method.

"I wrote it in this little confined room in my music department," she said. "I turn off the lights so I can think.

"I think the teachers thought I was a little bit crazy," she grinned.

"I don't write my ideas down on a piece of

paper, so I can change it as I go. I used to forget what I wrote but now I figure that if I forget the words, they're obviously not good enough."

Emma-Louise is not from a musically focused family and only started playing the guitar when she moved to Cairns about six years ago. As a youngster, she grew up in Townsville and moved with her family around Queensland.

"A friend of mine played the guitar and I thought it was cool," she said. "Then my parents gave me a guitar for Christmas."

It wasn't until some years later that that Emma-Louise became serious about playing. She says her music is mostly about personal experiences and relationships.

She decided to change schools at the end of Year 11, moving to Cairns High School specifically for its high quality music program and last year completed Year 12. She has been accepted by Griffith University to do a Bachelor of Popular Music this year.

Now that she has finished high school, she is even busier with her music and is playing numerous gigs, mostly along the Queensland coast.

"I try to write a song every couple of weeks," she said.

The patron for this year's ACMF competition, 'Dicko' Dickson from Australian Idol and Vega 91.5, was impressed with the overall excellence of the songwriting in the competition for 2008.

"We had a real bun fight trying to pick the top three in the senior category," he said.

"I would encourage all students to enter as there are so many well-connected judges in who want to get in touch with entrants and help advance their talents."

This is the sixth year that competition has been held. A total of \$40,000 in prizes was distributed to the winning students and their schools.

The ACMF founder, Don Spencer OAM said the songwriting competition was created to give children and youth the opportunity to participate in music.

"It is an unfortunate fact that more than 75 per cent of public schools in Australia do not have a specialist music teacher," he said.

"There is not enough emphasis placed on the emotional wellbeing of a child. Through music, children can find a way to express their emotions and channel their energy and abilities into something positive and creative."