

Jenie Thai takes a different road to fame

by Adam Earle

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With the advent of the Internet and reality television there have been numerous music star wannabes lately finding fame by simply posting videos or songs online or lining up with other hopefuls in their bid to find the big time. While Canadian Idol, The Voice, Canada's Got Talent, YouTube and Facebook have all worked for some aspiring musicians, that's a road Jenie Thai won't soon be travelling.

Thai's a 23 year old Blues/Jazz singer/songwriter/pianist from Edmonton who's doing things "her way." A pianist since the age of five, Thai graduated from Grant MacEwan University in 2010 after studying jazz and contemporary music and is finding her "big time"

in a unique way. Thai's goal this summer is to travel coast to coast giving live performances in people's living rooms, or as she calls them, "couch concerts."

After applying to Home Routes (www.homeroutes.ca), a house concert non-profit organization, and being told they were full until 2014, Jenie embarked on a journey of her own. Inspired by a few friends who've travelled the world using the hugely successful travel website www.couchsurfing.org, she logged on to get some contacts and the rest, as they say, is history.

"I was actually accepted to the Paul McCartney International School of Music in Liverpool but turned it down," said Thai with a giggle. "I felt that it was time for me to get out



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY JENIE THAI

A WANDERING WOMAN: Singer/songwriter Jenie Thai is travelling Canada, and promoting her new album *Lady Flower* by performing intimate salon concerts in private homes.

there and perform and if I needed I could always re-audition. The thought of being \$90,000 in debt with student loans didn't help either. I love to perform and love sharing my music and this is a great way to do it."

One of Thai's first forays into the "couch concert" scene was actu-

ally in the Heffley Lake area near Sun Peaks at the home of Anne and George Terwiel. Thai contacted the Terwiel's son Justin through a friend on couchsurfing.org and the show was on. Not knowing what to expect from Thai as a musician, you could sense the anticipation of the friends and family

on hand while the wine flowed and dinner was served prior to the show.

Once Thai began singing her heartfelt songs about life, love and laughter the Terwiel's living room erupted with applause.

"It was amazing and something totally unique," said Justin. "I think the intimate set-

ting really set the stage for both the crowd and Jenie, and you really feel connected to the people and of course the music was absolutely unreal. I would do it again in a heartbeat."

Thai sells her debut EP *Lady Flower* at her couch concert shows (it's also available on iTunes) and accepts donations from her enthusiastic audiences as a form of payment. While obviously the food, wine and a place to crash are great additional perks of the job, it's the new fans she connects with that truly make her unique journey rewarding.

"The people have been amazingly generous and warm," said Thai. "The home settings have been really concert-like with

people really appreciating the music. The hosts of the seven home shows I've done so far have really done a great job in getting people out to watch and hopefully now that I've pushed the snowball down the hill this thing can grow. The goal is to take this nationally, so we'll see where it goes."

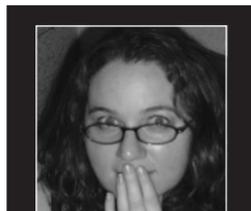
To say Thai is a groundbreaker in the troubled waters of the music world would be an understatement and once you hear her play and sing you soon realize even at the young age of 23 this girl is truly an old bluesy soul with a style all her own and a drive to succeed that will undoubtedly lead to a life of music, fame and fortune.



For more information visit:
www.jeniethai.ca

The Hunger for Good entertainment

I was perusing the pages of my second favourite publication, Vanity Fair, recently and came across an interesting article regarding the rise of television and the fall of film. The writer proclaimed that in the past, film went where the money was—adult audiences with disposable income. Today, however, with big screen TVs and PVRs, adults are staying home in droves and movie theatres have become the domain of youth. And what's on screen reflects that change. I began thinking about my own preferences and realized that, more and more, I enjoy the low, long-



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term simmer of a good televised drama over the quick boil of a two-hour action movie. I decided to compare my most recently watched blockbuster, *The Hunger Games*, with a favourite TV show, *The Good*

Wife, to see who came out on top.

I held off on watching *The Hunger Games* until I had a chance to read the novel on which the film's based. It didn't take me long—a five hour airline flight was just enough time to devour the 300 pages of teen-lit. I was very excited to see how director Gary Ross (*Pleasantville*, *Seabiscuit*) would bring the story and characters to life on screen. Would we see how torn Katniss, the story's heroine, felt about her role in the *Hunger Games* story? Would her hesitation about her romance with Peeta come across to

the audience? When the credits finally rolled, I felt a bit cheated. Even though the film clocked in at two hours and 22 minutes, and was very true to the book, the character development that made the novel so meaty was missing from the on-screen story. Like other book-turned-movies where the bulk of the story is told through the main character's inner monologue (consider *The DaVinci Code*), this film version couldn't portray the character's silent musings and personal debates. And because the whole story has to evolve in under three hours, I walked away

feeling less than satisfied, like I had shown up for a roast beef buffet only to be fed a few slices of bread.

Now, contrast that with my latest TV obsession (closely followed by *GCB*, *Game of Thrones* and *Downtown Abbey*, among others) *The Good Wife*. This show has everything: a knockout cast—Juliana Margulies, Archie Panjabi, Josh Charles, Christine Baranski, Chris Noth, and Alan Cumming to name just a few of my favourites, a twisty, deep, delicious plot with multiple storylines that weave together seamlessly, fabulous dialogue,

meaningful silences, intrigue, office sex . . . It may be cliché, but what is there not to love? And unlike those 1950s TV shows aimed at youthful audiences, today's television takes the long view when it comes to story arc. Plots play out in weeks, months and even over multiple seasons, rather than in the designated 42 minutes of an episode. In three seasons, Margulies' Alicia Florrick has developed immensely as a character, evolving from her uncertain beginnings into a powerhouse lawyer in charge of her own future. Unlike the whirlwind evolution you witness in

film (if you're lucky, that is), the slow development of TV characters seems more organic, giving audiences more time to buy in. It's no wonder that television is the new frontier for adult audiences.

So, does this mean I'm going to stop going to movies? Not a chance. Even though the blockbuster market is saturated with big screen adaptations of teen novels and much loved comic books, there are still plenty of great performances happening on the silver screen. Besides, when I make popcorn at home, I can't get that theatre smell quite right.

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