Students display talents at Songwriter Showcase

Alicia Balderrama, Staff Writer | Posted: Tuesday, May 24, 2016 7:00 am

Cal Poly Pomona students showed off their musical talents at the 13th annual Songwriter Showcase with original, student-produced songs.

The students performed their 21 assorted works on Thursday and Friday at 8 p.m. in the Music Recital Hall. Student producers split the students into four different bands that were each directed and mentored. A wide variety of musical genres were represented at the performance, from rock to jazz and from pop to hip-hop.

The majority of the students were multi-talented, often switching between various instruments and providing vocals at the same time. Some more exotic instruments were also present during a few songs, including a vibraphone, a mandolin, a melodica and a glockenspiel.

“The music was really spectacular,” said Nathan Mushrush, a student from Citrus College who attended the performance with his girlfriend. “The fact that [the performers] actually came up with the lyrics and the instrumentals all on their own and that it sounded so professional is really cool.”

Showcase director and CPP music professor Arthur Winer founded the Songwriter Showcase almost by accident. He was hosting a master class in 2007 with an acclaimed songwriter, but the special guest was running late, so he asked students to perform to pass the time. From there, he got the idea for a concert to showcase original work from talented students. The proceeds from all ticket sales fund scholarships for the Department of Music.

The students created each song from scratch. They wrote their own lyrics, composed their own music and created their own arrangements. In order to participate in the showcase, they had to audition. They received instruction and guidance in class on how to perfect their songs from the student producers, their fellow band members and from Winer and other faculty members. Rehearsals started two months in advance of the show.

Chris Angenent, a fifth-year music student, performed his song “Glue,” which he wrote about his ex-girlfriends. The song had an upbeat punk-pop vibe reminiscent of the band Blink 182.

“I’ve been writing songs for years, so I figured why not try out?” he said. “I think the best part was...
meeting new people. We all just jelled so well and it was really fun.”

Relationships were a common theme in many of the songs, but “Free,” by Jessica Bustamante, was about feeling different from everyone else and “Angel in the Clouds,” by Kevin Guardado, was written to pay homage to loved ones who have passed. “Jasmine Flower,” the final song of the night, was inspired by “a very beautiful flower,” according to the writer, Brent Samson.

Samson is a junior transfer student majoring in music industry studies. He decided to come to CPP because he was able to audition with an original song, which was the same song he played at the showcase.

“It was cool having Winer and some of the other instructors come in and give advice on the songs,” said Samson. “We have producers in every band, but it was cool having the teacher oversight.”

He has been a part of two bands, his current project being The Moon Police in Orange County. Since transferring to CPP, he has been working on a solo project. “Jasmine Flower” has just come out on iTunes and Spotify, and he has an album coming out in the beginning of June.

“This whole project is awesome. … People have a hard time listening to original, unheard songs. You want to listen to the pop, the top 40, and so it’s kind of hard to find a balance. I know half of [the participants] play gigs all around. They’ll be sitting in a bar and singing their heart out and nobody’s paying attention. It takes something crazy [to be noticed]. … It’s entertainment not just music.”