Summit helps students work with professionals

Alexandria Waldron, Staff Writer | Posted: Monday, March 2, 2015 9:52 am

Cal Poly Pomona student songwriters received professional criticism and praise at the second Songwriting Summit held in the Music Recital Hall on Wednesday.

Students had a chance to perform an original song to a panel of songwriting and music industry professionals put together by the Department of Music. Music Professors Arthur Winer and Kelly Jones co-hosted the event. The panel of guest experts included Ken Stringfellow, a founding member of the power pop rock band The Posies; Chris Hillman, an original member of The Byrds; David Z, a music producer and writer who has worked with artists including Prince and Billy Idol; Joe Pernice, an indie rock musician and songwriter; and Shelly Peiken, a Grammy-nominated songwriter whose songs have been recorded by artists including Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera and Keith Urban.

“It was nerve-wracking,” said third-year music industry studies transfer student Danielle Neri, who participated in the summit. “I was performing for people who are actually in the business I want to go in to, and they are critiquing every detail.”

A majority of the guest experts on this year’s panel attended the first Songwriting Summit last year and have instructed CPP students in other master classes held on campus.

The students who performed at the Songwriting Summit were the same students who auditioned in January for the 12th Songwriter Showcase. Winer created the Songwriter Showcase concert series in 2007 as a way to promote creativity for CPP student songwriters.

“We were invited by our professors to join the summit if we could,” said Neri. “We start critiquing our songs now in order to prepare for the big showcase.”
During the Songwriter Showcase, students are able to work together with a producer, a band, and other songwriters to perform the best version of a student’s original song. The Songwriting Summit was created as another way for the students to prepare for the showcase.

“This will be my first Songwriter Showcase,” said fifth-year music industry studies student Michael Malvini. “It’s exciting, and it’s a chance to get to know my peers better on a music level by collaborating and exchanging ideas.”

The Songwriting Summit master class was free and open to the public, but only the students who had previously auditioned or signed up in advance were able to perform. Several of the student performers also had the opportunity to sit down and spend one-on-one time with a guest songwriting expert.

“The way I structured it was so half of the students were in separate rooms doing one-on-ones, while the other half were in the Recital Hall doing the master class,” said Winer. “The one-on-ones are twice as long as the performance critiques, so they can really dig deep into the songwriting.”

Malvini enjoyed the feedback experience.

“It was good to get objective feedback from professionals,” said Malvini. “With each person’s feedback it’s something different. It makes me think about my song in other ways.”

The pairings of students and guest experts based on the student’s previous audition and who their professors believed to be the best match with the student’s songwriting style.

“I meshed very well with my songwriter,” said Neri. “We talked about what I need to focus on. It was really fun and exciting. I took away a lot from the experience.”

Guest experts Stringfellow and Pernice held musical performances after the Songwriting Summit later that night in the Music Recital Hall. Tickets were required for the concert.

The 12th Songwriter Showcase concerts will be held on May 14 and 15 in the Music Recital Hall.