

Spotlighting the ladies:

Hawaii debut of "Chick Singer Night"

Where:

Wave Waikiki

1877 Kalakaua Ave.

When: 8 to 10 p.m. today, repeating on the first Monday of every month

Admission: \$10, 21 and over

Call: 941-0424 (for interviews and auditions call 440-4664)

Chicks on stage: Ginai Johnston helps bring a showcase for female singers to the local nightclub scene

By Gary C.W. Chun

gchun@starbulletin.com

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It's about time to give the ladies some. Longtime local singer Ginai Johnston was hit by a bolt of inspiration when she was in Las Vegas in November. She had a night off from a working gig, and decided to take in a CD release party for "The Sound of Women's Dreams" put on by Chick Singer Night.

Founded by Chicagoan Lori Maier more than 14 years ago, Chick Singer Night is touted as the country's longest-running songfest for female singer-songwriters in all genres. Since its inception, it has spread across the mainland as a monthly event to Los Angeles, Miami, Nashville, New York City and Las Vegas.

Johnston was so taken by the event's positive energy that she approached Maier and asked if she could start a spinoff showcase in Honolulu.

Now Johnston's hoping that Hawaii will get behind the showcase, which gives each participating singer the opportunity to tour other showcases across the country.

For the debut event, Johnston will be singing a couple of songs with the night's house band -- guitarist/arranger Robert Shinoda, bassist Todd Smith and drummer Scott Shafer.

It's Johnston's intention to showcase "all styles and colors, baby. We're starting off with four singers, two who will be already familiar to local audiences and two who are brand new.

"Rea Fox (who just played the Great Hawaiian Jazz Blowout) is a jazz-blues artist and a seasoned pro.

"And we also have the lovely Marlene Baldueza of Forté, who has been under my wing for the last six months.

"The brand new singers are Kristian Lei, who played the role of Kim in the German production of 'Miss Saigon' for almost two years right out of high school here. She's planning to sing 'I Dreamed a Dream' from 'Les Miserables.' And moving toward a jazz-R&B sound, Lisa-Maria, formerly of eightOeight, the local funk band she sang with for two years."

WHILE THE EMPHASIS of Chick Singer Night is usually on singers performing original material (like those spotlighted on the CD), Johnston said "this month, we'll be concentrating on covers. Next month, we'll emphasize originals. I've been getting calls from both University of Hawaii students and the tried-and-trues. All my girlfriends are asking to be part of the show!

"It's always been my intention to extend the hand of friendship to other female singers here," she said. "I've lent music, even dresses on occasion, to other singers, also helping them get gigs around town. It's all about networking."

And now with Chick Singer Night, that network has extended to Hawaii, opening additional opportunities for the rest of the country to enjoy what the islands have to offer.