

Chick It Out

Chick Singer Night, a wildly successful songfest in Los Angeles and other places too far to drive, is coming to our area Wednesday at The Canyon in Agoura Hills. All four chicks on the bill – Carla Hassett, Tiffany Bowen, Danielle LoPresti and country music star Lari White – possess some mighty fine voices.

The concert concept is the brainchild of Lori Maier, a swell singer in her own right, and a member of the faculty at Pepperdine. Her monthly Chick Singer Night at The Mint in Los Angeles has been going strong for a year, but will move to the Knitting Factory for the first Monday of the month beginning on June 3. There are other Chick Singer Nights across the country, but the new Canyon edition will be a homegame for Maier, who lives in Thousand Oaks.

"It's the same format as all the shows across the country," she said. "We'll have three local featured singers, but for this one Lari White is going to be our fourth. Each of the chicks will choose three songs to perform and they have a great band to back them up. The chosen performers show up early on the day of the show to rehearse with the band. It gives them an immediate showcase opportunity."

It's hard to be a musician, since rock and roll dreams don't pay the bills, which is probably why most musicians live in the past or the future but seldom in the present. Maier has been there and done that when it comes to the whole starving-artist scenario.

"It's hard enough for women to network, book a band, book a club and take care of all the hassles that go into pulling something like this together. Chick Singer Night takes care of that for them," she said. "I was finding it difficult to know how to pursue a career in music, and even more difficult to find time to remain creative while working at promoting myself, rehearsing with a band, booking a club and trying to expand my network contacts. I met many other singers who shared similar frustrations, so I put together this one-night-only event to have some fun, make some great music and create my own opportunities."

It's worked. Big time. Not only did the performers bring their own fans, but some industry types even showed up and actually listened to the music.

"The first Chick Singer Night was so successful that I decided to keep it going and set out to create a showcase that welcomed all female artists to share the same stage – an open forum free from competition and criticism," she said. "I know how important it is for women in my profession to be able to focus on the music they love and perform it in a room filled with people who are listening."

"Basically, I'm opening up Chick Singer Nights across the country for women to utilize as a national tour."

She's already started Chick Singer Nights in Chicago, Nashville, L.A. and Miami. Next up is Agoura Hills, then New York City.

"No, I don't go to all of them," she said. "I just launch them. This one is nice and close to home for me."

For this debut Chick Singer Night, Maier has enlisted the help of her country music star pal, Lari White.

"We were friends in college at the University of Miami," Maier said. "She lives in Nashville now. Lari has a new album coming out on her own label, and I'm helping her spread the word. She's going to play all the Chick Singer Nights across the country. She'll probably launch our New York series as well."

White already has fans, many of the pointy-shoe persuasion for whom the viable world view is something akin to "wahoo." The preacher's daughter with a degree in musical engineering from the University of Miami is both an actress (who works) and a Grammy Award-winning singer. She won a Grammy for her version of "Amazing Grace," but her signature tune is "Lead Me Not Into Temptation (I Can Find It All By Myself)."

After moving to Nashville, she scored a deal with RCA after blowing the suits' minds at one of those endless, mindless and senseless ASCAP showcases. An independent artist these days, White will soon release her sixth album, "Green Eyed Soul," on her own Skinny White Girl record label.

White is a big fan of the Chick Singer Night concept.

"In the music business, it's a man's, man's, man's world," White said.

"I don't think it's that girls need more help, but it's just more in women's nature than men's to nurture one another, to create relationships as part of our business plan. I don't really see this as some sort of underdog event but rather a bunch of really strong women supporting each other, celebrating each other, (enjoying) each other's music and really having a great time."

If you're a chick, and you sing, Maier wants to hear from you. Send a demo and a brief bio to Chick Singer Night Productions, Box 6173, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360.

Nothing fancy is required, Maier said.

"It can be a CD or a cassette tape — it doesn't really have to be production quality as that isn't really taken into consideration," she said. "We're not booked that far in advance because we're still waiting to see if this show goes well and how good of response we get out of it."

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