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Sarah Packiam's Sweet Sounds

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Sarah Packiam is an Irish-Indian siren with striking green eyes and an even more alerting and powerful voice. Raised south of Dublin near another Irish crooner Bono, she left her homeland at 18 and spent time in Holland and Spain. For the past three years, she's played mandolin, guitar, and piano and sung original and cover songs with additional instrumental backing by Andy Russell and Gary Thomas. Wednesday night at Le Cafe, though, Packiam took to the wobbly mic alone for Unplugged Sessions, hosted by [Open Media Miami](#) and [Black Key Group](#). The intimate, chilled out, and friendly night featured other local artists like Jesse Jackson and Jill Hartmann.

Packiam and her crew have a regular night at Balans on Brickell every other Thursday, the next up is Sept. 15. The pretty songstress spoke with Niteside about The Carpenters, Jon Secada, and her first song "Homeless Teenage Girl."

How'd you meet your band mates?

When I first came to Miami, I was working with Jon Secada and Tim Mitchell. We were in Emilio Estefan's studio then, doing demos. And he (Andy) came in with the tablas and he was blended already the Indian sense.

How did you get the gig with Jon Secada?

He was producing new artists. I was in Spain working with a producer at the time and he sent a demo and Jon really liked it and produced me.

They brought you over here and you stayed?

I haven't left. Should I? (Laughs)

Nah. What's the thing that's most kept you here in Miami?

I think the international aspect, having friends from everywhere.

When did you first pick up a guitar?

My dad plays blues and jazz so he taught me at 11 or 12, it was a bit early, my fingers are tiny and he had a big guitar. I tried and then I stopped. I think I officially took it up again when I was 13 and I right away started writing songs. The song I wrote at 13 represented my country.

What was it called?

It was really depressing. It was called “Homeless Teenage Girl.” It ended up representing Ireland in a European song contest for young people. People would come up to me and be like, oh, I cried. They knew all the lyrics. It was a super sad story of a homeless girl getting pregnant, dying, the baby dying, the whole drama.

That’s how you feel when you’re a teenager.

What it is?

The hormones, the zits? What was your favorite stuff to listen to when you were growing up?

I think my first memory is writing down lyrics of the Carpenters, the whole album, writing down the lyrics and trying to sing along. Then Weather Report.

Is there any one subject you’ve written about the most?

Apart from the homeless teenaged girls lying on the street? (Laughs) I used to try to save the world with my songs but now it’s kind of love and being in love. I admire my parents because they were in love, and they had no money and they brought us kids up and we kind of turned out OK. Looking back at that, I’m inspired by that. Positiveness even though everyone’s feeling a bit of a pinch in the pocket. It’s nice to have some happiness around to remind us that there’s good stuff out there. I did write that song about my brother (who got beat up by cops). That was really traumatic, and I guess writing is my way of getting over the trauma and getting it out. Sometimes beautiful things come out of it. It’s not necessarily super cheery but it’s something I remember and I keep with me for that moment.

Do you enjoy any books or movies in particular?

I like watching old TMC movies, the black and whites, and there’s some beautiful writing in those movies. “Careless” I wrote from some guy saying that we’re all in this world doing something whether we’re robbers or being robbed or sellers or buyers. I get inspired by old movies.

What’s your favorite thing to do in Miami?

Happy hour, I’m Irish!



LIZ TRACY