

I'm Natasha Alexandra And There's Porn On My Website And With Ableton Live On Her Laptop, She's About To Get NLX-Rated!

"Hello Pete ... It's me, Natasha Alexandra. We met @ the Rockwood ..." began the email back in June. I'd just missed her set the night before and she was reminding me of her next date. I made that one, and many more since. Now a self-confessed groupie, I'm eager to witness the next phase of the Natasha ... or should I say, NLX, experience!

Indie Sounds: When did you start playing music seriously? What made you choose the piano? Did you take lessons?

Natasha Alexandra: I never had a piano growing up, but when I was a kid, I took ballet lessons and spent most of my time watching the pianist rather than focusing on my turn out. I don't remember a time when I didn't want a piano. I was drawn to its tone.

I finally got my own keyboard when I was 19 ... I was late to learn but eager to do it ... everyone thought I was nuts to want to pursue music except me and a guy I was dating. We paid for it on several credit cards and I've never looked back since. It was the best thing I ever did ... well except for moving to NYC.

I never took lessons. I think by not taking them, I've been able to do my thing without thinking too much about it. It's been interesting to see other people's reaction when I tell them I'm self taught. They think I'm lying.

IS: So what were your early influences?

Natasha: I grew up in an Eastern European family where heavy sad music was always played at church and I always felt somehow

connected to the minor chords. Another big musical influence, I believe, were my older brother's Police and Who albums. I remember when I was 11, I would listen to the Police song *I Burn For You* over and over again, with my head glued to the speaker. My mom was convinced I was crazy. I think Sting taught me how to sing. I

Natasha: Bloody eh? I've always been obsessed with NYC. As a kid, I would watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on TV. I was hooked. I loved growing up in Hamilton. It's a steel town near Toronto and it's in my blood. I love everything it taught me. But I've always felt at home in NYC. When you are on the outside looking in -



Photo: Jim Kirby

told him that once, but he didn't believe me. Then, I heard Nine Inch Nails' *Something I Can Never Have* and it was game over, or come to think of it, it was game on!

IS: You're yet another bloody Canadian in NYC. How did you end up here?

Canada looking in on the USA - you see NYC with different eyes. Brighter eyes.

I started to get my songs together and I wanted to bring them here. Once a month, I would take the midnight bus from Toronto, sleep on the Greyhound and when I got to



NYC, I'd try to hustle my stuff as best as I knew before catching the midnight bus back after a full day of pounding the pavement.

During that time, I put together a mini tour called the 'Meat Inspection Tour', which managed to get some attention. People didn't know if I was the meat or if they were! It freaked people out. Which is always good times. People were critical and it gave me confidence to just follow my gut.

I played gigs at places like The Living Room and The Bitter End. Things slowly started to happen, like getting on compilation CDs from The Songwriters Hall of Fame, *Jane Magazine* and *Rockgrl Magazine*. So this year, I decided to make a permanent move. No regrets!

IS: And now you are close to releasing two CDs at once. Why two?

Natasha: Why not two? My musical influences have always been deeply emotional singers with great production ... both low-fi and hi-fi ... the connecting thread was the music, which was aggressive and heart wrenching in some way or another. I made a record a couple of months ago with producer Byron Wong in Toronto. The CD has a lot of aggressive production ... 'gigga wigga' sounds and noises. But since moving to NYC, my gigs have been mostly solo. Many people have been requesting a solo CD, so to quench the thirst of the masses, I decided to record a low-fi CD, with Chris Brown and Lurch at their Brooklyn studio.

In January, I will be releasing both CDs: *NLX: IN YOUR FACE* (aggressive) and *NLX: BEHIND YOUR BACK* (low-fi). I'm really excited for people to hear them both. They will both be full of equally heavy-handed piano, minor in sound, emotionally driven songs. The song will always come through. The emotional intention still resonates regardless of the production ... it's all in the song and the vocals!

IS: The CDs will be released under the name



Photo: Helena Christensen

NLX. What's that all about?

NLX: I am NLX ... pleased to meet you! It's the evolution of Natasha Alexandra. It's just become the alternate. I got tired of people misspelling Alexandra as Alexander, because they just assume. I'm tired of assumptions. NLX could be anything to anybody. Not specifically a girl at a piano and a laptop ... it could be anything. I am a big believer in mystery and a bigger picture. I'm a big fan of Wilco and NIN ... they've created their own world within their music. The front men are evident ... but they mask it compellingly.

IS: Byron Wong is a bit of a name. How did you get to work with him?

NLX: Byron is a renaissance man. He is known for his work with the Chemical Brothers, hosting *The New Music* on MuchMusic TV and as the collector of fucking amazing gear, among so many other things. He is a fearless musician and

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Editor and Publisher: Pete Harris
pete@indiesoundsny.com

Designer/Cover banner photos: Ananda Bates, ananda@acousticroot.com

Indie Sounds NY is the only publication serving the New York independent music scene. Each month, Indie Sounds NY seeks out the singer/songwriters, the bands, the places and the people who make up a unique and vibrant artistic community.

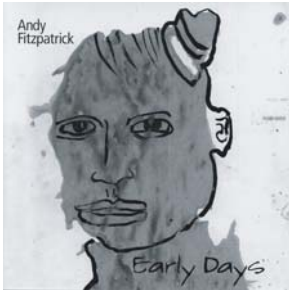
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WHAT'S NEW ON CD



Andy Fitzpatrick
Early Days
www.andyfitzpatrick.com



Clara Lofaro
Black + Blue Pearl
www.claralofaro.com



Danielia Cotton
Small White Town
www.danielia.com



Kelly Buchanan
Bastard Daughter
www.kellybuchanan.com



Lowry
Awful Joy
www.lowrymusic.com



Shanna Zell
Hurricane Season
www.shannazell.com

SCENE AND HEARD

* **All Change on 26th Street:** Big changes are afoot for the venues Kavehaz and Satalla. Apparently, both venues have been sold to the owners of Funkadelic Studios, who run rehearsal studios above the music venues.

Satalla has already ceased to operate as a world/folk music venue and is expected to reopen under a new name as a rock venue. Kavehaz - which is still open - will undergo

some interior changes, and also a name change, to re-emerge as an acoustic venue. Stay tuned for more information.

* **Some Change on Avenue C:** The Alphabet Lounge is also under new ownership. Word is that it will continue to operate as a live music venue in a similar style as now.

* **No Change on Bowery, For Now:** Press

reports suggest that CBGB's will continue to operate out of its Bowery location for some months. Eventually, a relocation is planned, although it is unclear whether it will remain in Manhattan.

* **New Outlets:** Indie Sounds can now be found at Piano's in the LES, and at Bar 4 and Matchless in Brooklyn. Happy reading.



**Applause, Applause ...****Indie Sounds: Top 10 of 2005**

In the spirit of those desperate features from the mainstream comics, like "The 50 Best Album Barcodes of All Time," Indie Sounds decided to compile its own chart of things - new things - that have impressed and entertained in 2005. Of course, there is much that I discovered in previous years that I still love to embrace. But this chart is restricted to people and places that have been new to me in some way this year.

Also, the geek in me - plus the number of new additions to my musical education - required my "Top 10" be extended a little. Fortunately, I am fluent in hexadecimal, so here goes ...

10. Myspace: I can't believe that I am extolling the virtues of a website owned (as of recently) by Rupert Murdoch. I mean, what a git he is. On the other hand, it's certainly changed the way that musicians (and Internet radio stations) can get their word out, and it's free! www.myspace.com.



Sarah Sharp

F. Sarah Sharp: If only she would move to NYC. But alas, this Austin singer - and I mean 'real' singer - and songwriter is mostly too busy touring across the country, and continents, that even if she lived in the Big Apple, we probably wouldn't realize it. Fortunately, she passes through regularly, and our lives are enriched when she does. www.sarahsharp.com.



E. Girlyman: True, I've been listening to Girlyman (pictured above) for a couple of years now, but it was only this year that I got to see them live. And while their CDs are excellent, this is very much a live band experience. Let's hope this Brooklyn trio get back home more often. www.girlyman.com.

D. Dred Scott: Jazz. Not a big fan, except when it's live, alternative and alcohol-inspired. Dred's trio hits the mark, captivating listeners, especially during those late night Tuesdays at the Rockwood. www.dredscott.com.

C. R.Star: The new Neil Diamond rocker. Ryan's gigs are all miniature stadium performances, with emo screamo songs and a passion that converts even hard rock fans to the cause. Who needs a label when people get laid at your gigs? Allegedly. www.rstar.net.

B. Gelsey Bell: "My name is Gelsey Bell and I'm a dot com." Her clever use of words is just as evident in her quirky, cabaret-like, songs, which she sings with power and poise.

This recent import from San Francisco is just getting known on the NYC scene. More to come in 2006! www.gelseybell.com.

A. Sunday Open Mic @ Micky's Blue Room: Kudos to Sean Smith and Jeremiah Birnbaum for their support of real grass roots music. Many a new face on the scene - or out of town visitor - has made some great friends at this East Village bar. www.mickysblueroom.com.

9. Marwood: Rock 'n' roll the way it should be from this hard working combo with the great guitar licks and full forward vocals. Having conquered all the best venues in NYC, they're now pushing out nationally with radio play and gigs. Good luck guys! www.marwoodband.com.

8. Nell Bryden: Whenever Nell (below) performs, whether she's embracing the blues, folk or country, she lights up the room.

With her next CD - recorded in New Orleans - due out soon, it should be a great start to 2006 for her. www.nellbryden.com.



6=. Tessa Perry and Susan Enan: I couldn't decide which of these two Brit singer/songwriters was the coolest person on the planet. So I'll give them equal ranking. They've both been out of the country a lot of this year ... recording and otherwise. Hopefully, we'll see a lot more of them in NYC in 2006. Expect awesome CDs from both. www.tessaperry.com and www.susanenan.com.

5. Spooky Ghost: When he's not working with Bowie, Avril, Rufus, or a host of others, Gerry Leonard likes to rock out his guitars and loop-box with solo shows at the Living Room. What he creates is a mesmerizing



texture of ambient sounds, that draw on celtic, Indian and rock. A busy man, his solo gigs are rare, and not to be missed. www.spookyghost.com.

4. Caffe Vivaldi: Ishrat Ansari's charming room on Jones Street has been hosting live music for a couple of years now, though it was only a few months ago that I 'discovered' it, and its superb piano.

Perhaps best known for giving Kristin Hoffmann a big push, Vivaldi is a regular hangout for the likes of Natasha Alexandra and Jason Darling. And me. Now, all it needs is for Nicole to be back serving white sangria. www.caffevivaldi.com.

3. Guyora Kats: A Guyora gig is a bit like watching a kid in a candy store, as he excitedly introduces his songs and the sometimes disjointed stories behind them. It's always entertaining, as is his intricate piano playing. A regular contributor to CDs from others, Guyora (handsome photo below) is currently recording his original music. www.guyora.com.



Guyora Kats and Natasha Alexandra play Rockwood Music Hall on New Year's Eve.

2. Natasha Alexandra/NLX: What's not to love about this gal, who you can learn all about from this month's cover article? I am not sure whether it's her dark, edgy music, or her guts in putting herself out there more than any I know, that makes me turn up whenever, wherever, she performs. Maybe it's the whole NLX experience, comedy show included. Or maybe it's just her grace and humanity, like the time she emptied her entire tip bucket into the collection box for Katrina victims. I've always liked deeds over words, and that one made me shed a tear. She even has the best birthday. NLX in 2006: You want it IN YOUR FACE or BEHIND YOUR BACK? www.natashaalexandra.com.



1. Rockwood Music Hall: January 26, 2005 @ 6pm. And then there was light. Since the demise of the old Living Room a couple of years back, I'd been searching for a new venue I could feel really comfortable in, with that elusive mix of great music, sound, ambiance and community. Then, Ken Rockwood (action pose above) took a "fuck me" gamble, quitting his nice safe job at Merrill Lynch and opening his room on Allen Street, a stone's throw from the location of my old hangout. By all accounts, it's paying off, and so it should. Every musician in NYC should send Ken a present for the holidays. They don't come any better than this place and we all know it. www.rockwoodmusic hall.com.



Comeback Tours For 2006

Indie Sounds extends holiday greetings to a couple of great musicians, who are recovering from some medical issues. Hope to see them both back on stage and rocking before too long!

Michael DiLalla

Best known as lead vocalist/guitarist for the band Keygrip, as well as his patronage of the Morningside Group collective, Mike is now at home recovering from injuries he sustained recently as the innocent victim of a "hit and run" ... by a police car, no less! Despite the fact that his arm is in a cast, he is already back strumming.



Jason Crigler

Best wishes also to Jason Crigler, who many in the NYC scene will know as longtime sideman to Rachel Loshak, as well as for his appearances with Marshall Crenshaw, Linda Thompson and John Cale, among others. Jason's been out of action since he experienced a brain hemorrhage on August 4, 2004. But, according to his wife, Monica, he has been making a "miraculous" recovery. Apparently, he is talking about music daily, and will hopefully start to play his guitar again soon. In the meantime, he's spending time with his daughter, Ellie, who was born in March.



Picture This

**Tony Scherr Rocks Out
@ The Living Room**

Fresh from producing *The Agoraphobic Cowboy* for Rick Moranis, Tony performed with his band at a packed Living Room show. On drums: Kenny Wolleson. Not pictured: Rob Jost (bass), Chris Brown (organ).

Check out Tony online @
www.myspace.com/tonyscherr.

Photo: Dina Regine



Julia Brown with Kiku Collins @
Rockwood Music Hall.
www.juliabrown.com.
Photo: Pierre Jelenc



Ishrat Ansari with Nicole at Caffè
Vivaldi. www.caffevivaldi.com.
Photo: Pete Harris

**NLX/Natasha ...**

Continued from page 2

producer. I met him through a friend in Toronto. He heard my cover of Depeche Mode's *Walking In My Shoes* and agreed to 'fuck' with it. I then asked him to help produce my CD. I had to beg and convince him that I was worth his time ... he was a tough ass! But I wore him down and he brought me up. He's a brilliant creative mind and a valued friend. Without him, there might not have been the evolution to NLX.

IS: Your songs tend to be dark lyrically, deep, aggressive. Angry even. How do you come to write those kinds of songs? Lots of bad breakups with boys?

NLX: I crush boys who have a crush on me ... is that what you wanna hear? No ... I think that dark and honest is great! That's what I vibe off of. I like to people watch and I take it all in, probably things that I shouldn't, and I just write from a stream of consciousness. Some things are personal and some are not. People relate to the material though, probably because it is honest and they've been through their own shit. I like to be moved when I hear music and I want to do the same for people. It doesn't make it any less pop. It's just that much more.

IS: Your live sound is set to change with the advent of NLX. What's the deal?

NLX: I want to be able to produce live what is on both CDs. Right now, my live show is just vocals and keyboard, or piano, which is fine for the sound of *NLX: BEHIND YOUR BACK*. To create the hi-fi style of *NLX: IN YOUR FACE* means using software called Ableton Live. It's great! Me and a laptop and a drummer. That's it! It will be madness and I can't wait!

IS: Where are you playing in NYC? What are your favorite venues?

NLX: I love playing all over and everywhere. But my favorites are Rockwood Music Hall and Caffè Vivaldi. Both have unique sounding pianos and both places have been kind to me and my music and embrace many musicians in NYC. Mad respect to them both!

Joe's Pub is also really cool. I like the space and I like wandering the halls behind the stage. Looking forward to my next gig there on December 19.

IS: You just got back from your first real tour, of the West coast. How was that?

NLX: Fucking brilliant! The shows were amazing. The Sun was wicked! And the surfers ... beautiful! Also, I had an opportunity to catch one of my musical mentors, Jon Brion, playing live at Largo in Los Angeles. It was amazing and inspiring. I also learned that LA traffic is insane ... so to leave plenty of time to get to gigs.

IS: What's next for NLX?

NLX: Apart from the release of the two CDs - watch this space - I'll be heading back out to LA in January to play as part of the NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) Show, to perform for Tannoy. Byron set that up for me, and it will allow me to do some more California gigs too.

I also hope to launch a concert series that I'm calling "Keys Please." It's a play on words ... the gigs will feature keyboard players of different styles, and they will benefit people in need of low cost housing, who will hopefully be getting keys to their front door as a result. I bumped into Alicia Keys a while back and pitched the idea to her. She seemed interested, so maybe she'll come play one. Hey, Alicia and NLX on the same bill ... wicked!

Weblink: www.natashaalexandra.com

**In Town, On Tour - Sirsy!**

From Albany, NY, Sirsy are regular performers in NYC. Check them out @ The Bitter End on Saturday, December 17, 10.30pm. www.sirsy.com



BACKLINE

Five Vital Questions For ...
Mahogany

Indie Sounds: If you had a tape worm, what would you name it?

Mahogany: Poochie and I'd put a pink boa on her.



IS: Favorite method of relaxation?

Mahogany: Downward Dog.

IS: In a movie of your life, who would you like to play you?

Mahogany: David Bowie or, better yet, Snoopy.

IS: Who would you choose to be the next President of the USA?

Mahogany: Margaret Brent. First woman to voice the right to vote. Hell Yeah!

IS: Top or bottom?

Mahogany: I make a great top, mmm ... but love it when the bottom position is open.

Check out Mahogany's gig dates at www.mahoganylive.com. And watch for her debut full-length album *Christopher* in the new year.

Questions: Mistress Tessa Perry, www.tessaperry.com

LIVE IN NYC
From www.gigapple.com

Who: Jeremiah Birnbaum

Where and When: Rockwood Music Hall, Friday, December 20, 8pm.

Weblink: www.jeremiahbirnbaum.com



WHERE TO FIND INDIE SOUNDS NY

Ace of Clubs
www.aceofclubsnyc.com

Galapagos Art Space
www.galapagosartspace.com

Micky's Blue Room
www.mickysblueroom.com

Southpaw
www.spsounds.com

Alphabet Lounge
104 Avenue C @ 7th Street

Kavehaz
www.kavehaz.com

Parkside Lounge
www.parksidelounge.com

The Bitter End
www.bitterend.com

Arlene's Grocery
www.arlenesgrocery.net

Kenny's Castaways
www.kennycastaways.net

Pete's Candy Store
www.petescandystore.com

The C-Note
www.thecnote.com

Bar 4
www.myspace.com/bar4

Laila Lounge
www.lailalounge.com

Piano's
www.pianosnyc.com

The Living Room
www.livingroomny.com

Caffe Vivaldi
www.caffevivaldi.com

Matchless
www.myspace.com/barmatchless

Rockwood Music Hall
www.rockwoodmusichall.com

The Sidewalk Cafe
www.antifolk.net

Venue owners: To distribute Indie Sounds NY at your club and get listed above, contact Pete Harris @ pete@indiesoundsny.com.