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Michael Gabriel

by Carrie Humphries
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He's talented, beautiful, soft-spoken, hilarious and ready to put a show on this weekend at Kitchener's Centre in the Square Studio. For a man who I learned would actually sing arias alongside his vocal coach, Michael Gabriel is simply an incredibly talented songwriter and one helluva vocalist. His show on Saturday night will include a cast of orchestra players to accompany the music we hear on his record, *The Discovery*, which dropped in December, 2010. Now focused on a tour he calls 'Strings Attached – An Orchestral Concert Series', you can hear Gabriel in an intimate setting of music.

"Songs for the 'Strings Attached' concert series have been selected from several previous releases, the latest full length LP, and new material," Gabriel explains about the show. "The concert arrangements for these songs are quite different from the original releases. We are planning to record the concert songs with the new arrangements before the end of this year."

Putting in a Michael Gabriel record is an escape into another dimension. It's calm, serene, and just plain good. Have I mentioned his voice? Gabriel has a way that relays the music directly to lighten your day – it's real, genuine and relatable. He's got a way of forcing the listener to believe that he really gets whatever it is that you're going through.

With a six record discography that interchanges between EPs and full lengths, Gabriel has a career that has taken him across the pond and all of North America both as a solo artist and in original bands. "My vocal training included Italian arias, folk songs, pop songs and musical theatre," Gabriel tells me. "I was very fortunate to have an incredible singing teacher who recognized and encouraged my drive to sing. I also spent several years of my career in rock bands. Everything I have done – contributes to what comes out of me and how it comes out of me on stage now. I have been referred to as a story-teller. I think the current ensemble and arrangements help layer the stories being presented. One of the constants has been performing live. I really do not think that there is a replacement or substitute for that. My steady live schedule also contributes to the concert performance."

And while we're on the topic of concert performances, Gabriel has an incredible show prepped and prepared for audiences on Saturday. "I am truly looking forward to picking that first chord because once that happens – I will know that we have done what we have set out to do. Also, I have thoroughly enjoyed the rehearsal process, the gifted players I am working with and the arrangements for these songs. Being able to perform these songs in a venue like The Studio Theatre is a bit of a dream come true. I believe in the direction my career is heading in. The opportunity to share the music on Saturday night adds to the momentum of this project," he explains going on to list the performers. "Sandy Sebastian: Piano, Trina Nadeau: Cello, Marie-Eve Lessard: Viola, Gulhan Boz, Violin Robert Reid: Steel-String Guitar, Laura Ashfield & Jenn Martin: Backing Vocals," Gabriel says adding, "They all play an integral part in bringing these songs to a new place. It is important to me that all the players have accented moments in the concert where their instrument is highlighted. What I am always pleasantly surprised by – is the magnitude of sound that emanates from this ensemble. The parts were designed to have a known presence with the overall sound and not just provide supportive backing. I definitely think we accomplished that."

But who would be the most surprising influence from a musician like Gabriel? How about a little Freddy Mercury. "I listened to a lot of Queen growing up. The audio intake went far past 'We Are The Champions' and 'Bohemian Rhapsody'. They wrote some incredibly air tight songs with beautiful harmonies in a catalogue with immense

Diversity," Gabriel says. "I could go on and on about that group – but let's get back to the concert this Saturday! I would be happy to do a weekly radio show with you that we could call 'Humphries, Gabriel & Only Queen – Every Week'. Yes? Okay – I'll work on it!" he jokes.

And I finished our interview with asking Michael Gabriel's advice to new musicians. I think it perfectly explains the musician with the edge of humour, the storyteller who keeps you interested, and the reason to get out to Centre in the Square this weekend: "Dear People Of Planet Earth, I will first say that I will not give advice but I can share my experience. It seems that we all have a purpose here. If we take a closer look - it also seems that all of our longings are quite unique. So – it can make pretty good sense to follow that longing and be true to it! That's it! If you follow your passion and stay true to that path – you will be carving out an adventure and a result that will be yours to share. It will be original. And – enjoy the wild journey. It might lead to places that are beyond your expectations."

MICHAEL GABRIEL

Centre in the Square Studio, Kitchener
Saturday, June 4th
michaeltgabrielmusic.com

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Michael is impossibly good!!! I saw him at a show in London. Great article - I didn't know he was playing in Kitchener!!! We'll be there this weekend! So excited. What time is the show??? THANKS!

Posted by **Rockwell** on June 02, 2011 at 7:16pm | [Report this comment](#)

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