

Raising The Musical Ghosts Of The Prairie

Jami Lynn Finds Inspiration For Album By Looking Toward The Past

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While preparing for her future, Jami Lynn Buttke had no idea she would become so fascinated by the past.

When she was attaining her music degree in vocal performance at the University of South Dakota several years ago, Buttke realized she needed a thesis topic. Ultimately, she decided to focus upon the early American folk music of the Upper Midwest.

"It's opened so many doors for me," Buttke said. "I had just thought I'd write a quick thesis, but it turned into an extended project and I ended up really loving it. I recorded an album that is a piece of my thesis. It really allowed my writing to take direction. When I was doing all that research, it was really inspiring."

The album in question, "Sodbusters," was

self-released earlier this year under Buttke's "Jami Lynn" moniker. After doing some touring to support the release, Buttke has been working on an organic vegetable farm outside of Rapid City this summer. However, she will make time to perform this weekend at the Clay County Fair in Vermillion and the Hay Country Jamboree in Gayville.

"I really like getting back to Vermillion," Buttke said. "I was there for five years of college and the year afterward. After your college friends move away, you really start to appreciate the community and the relationships there."

She graduated in the spring of 2010, and is currently working on a new album as time allows.

"Next year, I'll be transitioning back into full-time music, so I'm looking forward to that," Buttke said. "In October and the spring, I'll be doing a tour. I'm also on the South Dakota Arts Council's Artists in Schools and

Communities roster for the first time. Early next year, I'll have a few residencies around the state."

Her first record, 2008's "Dreamer," which was recorded with the Aquila Band, "rocked" in comparison to "Sodbusters" and was the result of a collaborative process with other artists, Buttke said. "Sodbusters" was recorded with Josh Rieck and is more reflective of Buttke's individual tastes. It is very much a folk Americana album, she said.

Six tunes on "Sodbusters" are originals, while the remaining five are folk songs Buttke came across while doing research for her thesis.

"The Colorado Trail," for example, was collected from a dying Montana cowboy in a Duluth, Minn., hospital. Buttke came across it in a 1934 book on American folk songs. "The Falling of the Pine" is a ballad found in a 1926 publication and is about the days when square timber logging was popular in northern Minnesota.

The title track of "Sodbusters" is an original song based upon Buttke's family history.

Buttke said her interest in music came before her interest in history. As a child growing up in Corona, she would accompany her grandfather when he went to music events.

"I think the first time I got on a stage and sang was when I was 12 or 13," she stated. "A lot of small communities in South Dakota have the once a month old-time country music jamborees. It's a pretty forgiving crowd, so it was kind of a perfect way for me to start. The first songs I performed on stage I still perform."

Buttke studied classical voice music for a while at the University of South Dakota.

"More or less, it was just to be in music," she said. "I'm not that much into singing opera, but I enjoyed it a lot. It was a great experience for me, but it wasn't exactly what I wanted to do. I hadn't established a genre. I didn't realize how much I loved folk music until my junior year of college."

Among the influences Buttke cites are Hank Williams Sr., Ramblin' Jack Elliott and the duo of Gillian Welch and David Rawlings. Jazz and blues also influence her music, she said.

Buttke said there is no time line for releasing a new album.

"I'm not sure where my next album is

going, if it will be along the same lines as 'Sodbusters' or go in a different direction," she stated.

Buttke will perform at the Clay County Fair in Vermillion Friday during intermissions of the Fair Princess Contest from 2-4 p.m. She will also play at 6 p.m. during the free ice cream social. Additionally, Buttke will perform along with her recording partner Rieck at the Hay Country Jamboree in Gayville's Gayville Hall at 8 p.m. Saturday.

To learn more about Jami Lynn, visit www.jamilynnmusic.com.

Folk music singer Jami Lynn will perform in the Yankton area again this weekend. Pictured Left, Jami performed last Tuesday at the final Yankton Area Arts Summer Concert. (Shauna Marlette/P&D)



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