

IN BLUES, A HEART- BROKEN WOMAN ISN'T WEAK

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She will be performing as one of the headliners in the “BLUES Concert & Kitchen” series. We visited Ina Forsman in her hometown of Helsinki.

The Finnish nature doesn't hold on to empty promises of eternity. In Finland, change is so constant, we never get to experience what it would be like to stand still without the need to plan ahead. Up here, time never stops, and flowers shed their petals way too soon. What once was a brave sprout breaking through the frosty ground of spring turns into a snow-covered ice statue as nature loses its prime in a matter of weeks. The never-ending light of summer is slowly dimming as we move further towards the extreme darkness of the Finnish winter.

But today, the trees are covered with beautiful autumn leaves in shades of orange, yellow and pink. Basking in the afternoon sun softened by a frosty haze rising from the sea, I meet Ina Forsman in a shopping mall coffee shop in east Helsinki. The blues singer returned to Finland just two days ago after touring in Germany and Spain. “I arrived in Helsinki late at night and noticed my breath turning into mist. This is always a sure reminder that the cold winter will be upon us soon. But today is beautiful! Ideal for a long walk with a dog – if only I had one!”, she says with a laugh.

“In Finland it feels like everything happens during the short summer – and winter is the time to stay home and cuddle up. I feel part of my creativity is asleep as well. Usually, my inspiration arises when things are shaken up a bit. If the status quo is too stable there are no stories to tell, I need a little disruption in my life. Something needs to happen, whether it's an actual physical movement in space, or an inner emotional interference. For instance, when I go to a new city, I feel inspired by how different ordinary things seem to be. This gives me a chance to get a different perspective on things. New places bring me ideas I've never thought of before.”

Ina's career got off to a slow start with the “Idols” singing competition on Finnish television. This is where she experienced the challenges of a young talented blues singer in a pop-music scene. Since then she has consistently built her career with a little help from a supportive record label specializing in blues and soul releases. “I started as a girl who only wanted to sing on stage. Now I'm a woman who wants to compose, produce and make a business out of it. I want to learn about all the different aspects and one day be in charge of my own artistic career. Luckily I have people around me who support my dream and encourage me to do my own thing.”

In blues, women have claimed a space for an open expression of powerful emotions – without the need to sweeten things up. A blues lady doesn't need to survive to be strong, she needs to slow it down. In blues, a heartbroken woman isn't weak. She's raging and rattling the imaginary cages of idealized love. In blues, a woman is a real living being, breathing all the aspects of life with courage.

Ina uses the platform of a soul messenger to tell true stories of her life; of relationships lost and found. Her songs are artefacts that let us experience the nuances of entanglement, unyielding memories of past lovers, and the familiar feeling of letting go. "I write stories about my life and things I've been through." These accounts of peculiar moments linger in her music as she expresses complex emotions conveyed without a mask. "I don't need to hide my emotions and talk about flying eagles as a symbol of love, or to cover my heartache in cotton candy. I want to shake things up by being brutally honest. People can interpret this however they want and apply it to their own lives. I want to transfer the feeling to someone else. As an artist, I feel I have the power and the responsibility to move people emotionally – we tend to remember song lyrics better than political speeches."

Ina is currently working full time on handling her own promotion, marketing, performances and lyric writing. She is also studying at the Helsinki Pop & Jazz Conservatory and making progress as a composer. In addition to releasing her new album "Been Meaning To Tell You" in January 2019, Ina's future plans include a record produced and composed on her own. "I want to know what my own creation will sound like. It might be a mistake, but it would be my own mistake and there would be no one else to blame. This is how we learn. And the possibility of experiencing failure is something I am willing to accept in order to develop further. When you're at the bottom, you can only rise to the top. It's important for me stay out of my comfort zone. I want my career to develop, so I need to develop as a person as well."

Forsman is taking a different direction for her upcoming album. "On my last album released in 2016, I was mainly inspired by the older blues – and I took a deep dive into that world. The new record is an intentional step

towards soul and hip-hop. I feel that I've finally found the golden line between these genres and I'm comfortable there. Sometimes I feel like singing a blues song and sometimes I feel like rapping."

On the new album she is expanding her understanding of the concept of love. She also touches on the reality of being a woman in this day and age. "I'm developing as an artist and becoming more conscious of life and the topics I am writing about. Two of the songs are about the same incident of harassment. One is written from the woman's perspective, and the other from the man's side. It's like a dialogue between two sides about the same incident. I try to create an understanding with multiple perspectives of these situations."

This winter, Ina won't have time to cuddle up in the comfort of her home: she will be performing outside of Finland, away from the cold. She recently announced a new concert tour with Blues Caravan in the USA. Before that she will be touring in Europe and this includes her appearance at BLUES Concert & Kitchen in the Autostadt.

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