

Case study

Sarah Head

Details

What:

Emerging musician Sarah Head travelled to Nashville, USA to base herself in the heart of the country music industry for nine weeks of professional development. Sarah worked with some of the world's leading songwriters, musicians and production teams to write, develop and record an industry-quality six track EP.

This opportunity provided a very 'hands on' learning experience for the skills Sarah will need for the next steps in her career. For the first five weeks, Sarah attended a series of co-writing sessions with writers from different genres and styles to develop her songwriting skills. During the three weeks of recording, Sarah worked closely with her producer B. James Lowry to strengthen her vocal and recording skills.

Sarah also took the opportunity to promote her work in Nashville by arranging performances at open mic nights during her stay, including the famous Bluebird Café and Commodore Grill songwriter showcases. In addition to this, she worked to increase her online fan base by tracking her experiences on Facebook and YouTube.

Sarah took every opportunity to develop her professional networks while in Nashville, through meeting and building relationships with artists and industry professionals. These relationships assisted with increasing her industry knowledge and have provided ideas for future showcase opportunities both in Australia and the USA. Sarah officially launched her new EP at the 2014 Tamworth Country Music Festival with follow up gigs to promote her music.



Sarah Head recording in Nashville, USA 2013.

When:

August to November 2013

Where:

Nashville, USA

Arts Queensland contribution:

\$10 000 – Individuals Fund

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Outcomes

- Sarah felt the development of her songwriting skills was the strongest outcome of this opportunity. Participating in co-writing sessions with experienced writers from different styles and genres enabled Sarah to receive feedback on her ideas, contributions and skills, understand song development in a new way and increase her confidence as a writer.
- By working through each phase of the recording process, Sarah learnt about the different skills needed at each stage, while developing her vocal and recording skills.
- This opportunity allowed Sarah to complete the production of an industry-quality EP ready for national and international distribution and label pitching. This will be invaluable for the next stages of Sarah's professional career.

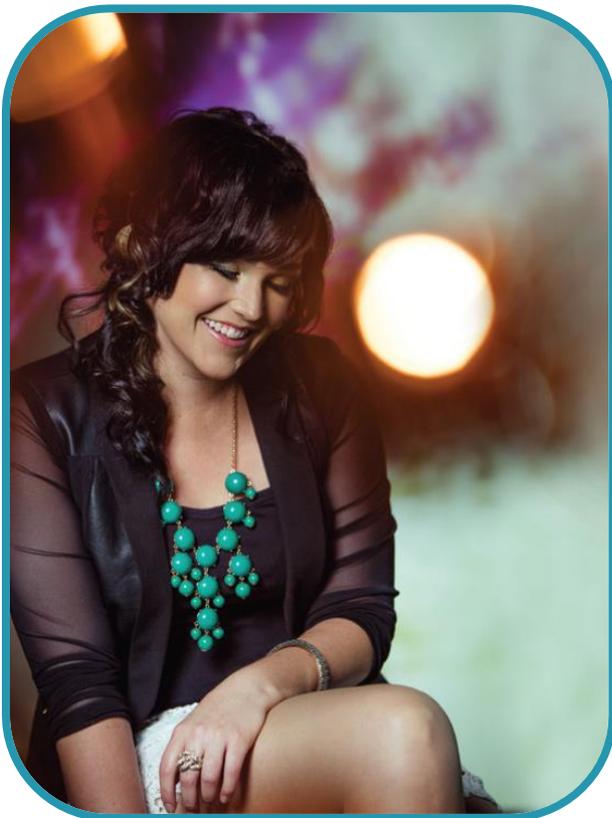


Image from Sarah Head's EP (Inside cover), *Nothin But Love*

Learnings and reflections

Through this project Sarah was able to learn about each different stage of producing an industry-quality EP. Sarah found the most rewarding part was collaborating with other songwriters in the co-writing sessions she attended:

'I can't describe the emotion felt when a writer of that calibre takes on your ideas and song 'hooks' with such spirited passion and confidence in you as an equal. It's a feeling I'll never get over.'

But getting to the final recording stage wasn't all easy; Sarah found the organisation workload larger than expected:

'The only real challenge I faced was with the timeline. Scheduling all the songwriters, musicians and production team for their set days and hours involved a lot of phone and email coordination.'

Working with such seasoned professionals gave Sarah the opportunity to quickly develop practical and useful skills for recording her music:

'The second phase, pre-production, taught me a lot about the importance of being prepared before you even step foot into the recording studio. This required planning out the feel of the song and where to place the emphasis and learning new songs in an extremely short timeframe!

The third phase was recording, and I can honestly say, the day spent with the session musicians at SoundStage Studios was the best of my life – the sound was amazing, and the calibre of musicians working on my songs was extraordinary. I recorded vocals and backing vocals and when I first heard all the elements of the songs together, the tracks sounded so 'completed', it took my songs to a whole new level.'

Sarah then handed over the tracks to be mixed and mastered in the final production phase, which was another learning experience that emphasised the importance of getting every single note in every song perfect.