

Natalie York kicks off Jonny Lang's blues with a bang

By: [Nancy Dunham](#) | Examiner Correspondent | 07/17/11 8:05 PM



Don't arrive late to the Jonny Lang show.

Not only do you not want to miss a note of Lang's blues, but you'll want to catch the opening set by local up-and-comer Natalie York. You may know the Vienna native from her various East Coast gigs and her recent debut album "Threads." As both a headliner and supporting act for Bruce Hornsby, Jim Lauderdale, Shawn Colvin and other much-lauded musicians, York's own alt-country sound has won her plenty of buzz.

"The songs have evolved," said Lang of the music that she wrote for her album, which she released at the end of last year. "We have a lot of these songs more electrified, we kick up the tempo a bit and they have gotten to become a different beast. ... [When I recorded the album], I tried to keep things as simple as possible and leave a lot of space. I'm glad I did that ... but it's taught me a lot about how songs are never really finished."

Onstage

Natalie York opening for Jonny Lang

When: 7:30 p.m. Monday and Tuesday

Where: Birchmere, 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria

Info: \$49.50; 202-397-SEAT; ticketmaster.com

It's correct to say that York learned from the best as a graduate of the University of Miami's Frost School of Music's Bruce Hornsby Creative American Music program. While in the program, York not only fine-tuned her songwriting and musical artistry but studied the sound of musical pioneers including the Carter Family and Bill Monroe.

Although something of a progeny, York's interests and efforts were more focused on jazz before she entered the music program. Although she had success in that arena, the music program allowed York to throw herself into other musical genres. Soon she developed a distinct musical sound of her home, something of a cross between Norah Jones and Bonnie Raitt that has won the alt-country label from some.

"I think a lot of people have trouble pinpointing what it is that I do," she said of her music's alt-country classification. "When I first heard that I thought 'That's interesting, and it's probably the best category for my music now.' But I'm still young and still learning so much. I want to do as many different things as possible to develop my [music]."

For now that means constantly seeking opportunities to play her music and looking toward her musical idols including Grace Potter, Tina Turner and James Brown, for ways to best develop her live performances.

"I just want to write and plays as much as possible," said York. "Those are really my main short-term goals."