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### Chanteuses Show Their Chops



By —Amanda Farrell  
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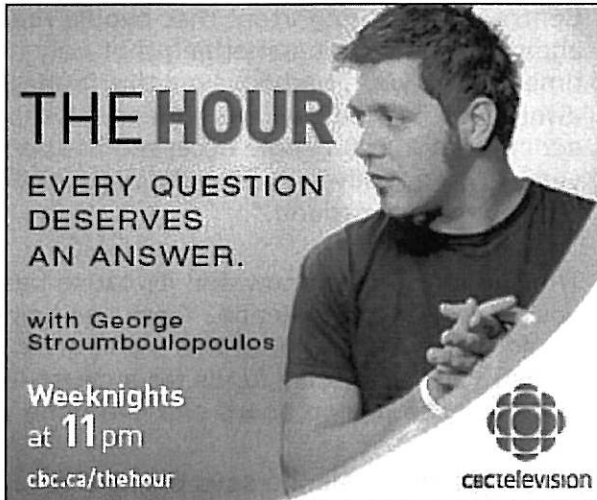
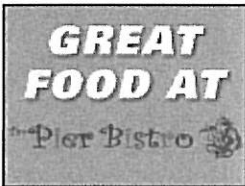


#### Victoria's premier jazz divas melt away the winter blues



When it comes to women in jazz, Victoria is definitely not in short supply. Just look at the lineup for Jazzy Divas, the second annual installment of five female crooners taking the stage at the Central this week, each showcasing their own unique take on jazz. With performances ranging from Sara Marreiros's jazzy Portuguese Fado to Barbara Blair's scatty style, there's something on the lineup to please even the pickiest enthusiast.

Maria Manna knows how to get into the swing of things



"All the performers are different in their presentation, and that's why I like it," says Maria Manna, the Jazzy Divas organizer and one of the performers. She's quick to sing praises for her fellow female chanteuses, (the lineup also includes Anne Schaefer and Miranda Sage), but doesn't hesitate when asked about her own performance style.

"I'm more of a showy, entertaining jazz singer. Mine's more about the show, and I involve the audience and play around

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a lot," she says.

Manna decided to start the Jazzy Divas show last year when she was lamenting the lack of local gigs, particularly for female jazz singers; a surprise when you look at the lineup and realise all five of the women are recording artists with solid followings, and Manna's recording of the Spider-Man theme song is being considered for use in the sure-to-be-blockbuster Spider-Man 3.

"The type of person I am is, if there isn't a gig, I'll create one," she says. "Plus, I love to play with excellent musicians and I like to sing with great singers."

But the evening is about more than celebrating women in jazz; it's also a fundraiser for the Women's Sexual Assault Centre. Manna changes the organization that benefits from the show each year—last year, Jazzy Divas raised funds for the Universal Jazz Advocates and Mentors Society—based on which group she feels needs it the most. "I see a cause, and I think, 'We've gotta shine more light on this'," she says. "I think especially for this cause, it just fits nicely."

Tracy Lubrick, the resource developer at the Sexual Assault Centre, says it's important that people realise violence against women isn't something that only happens at certain times of the year, and believes this fundraiser will help raise awareness. "There's always a need for support," she says, adding that 2,500 people accessed the centre's services last year. "There really is no specific pattern. Sexual assault happens all year round."

The support for the show and its cause has been very positive so far, says Manna. "Tom Lee has donated a baby grand piano. That's out of this world great," she exclaims. "When you try to raise funds for a cause like this, everybody comes on board and everyone wants to help."

As for the show, Manna says the audience can expect some duets, a grand finale and maybe even a surprise or two.

"Last time, we had Paul Horn join us. That was a surprise to everybody," she recalls. "I don't know if anything that grand will happen again, but you never know. Divas always work their magic."

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