

# 'Do not deny who you truly are' - musician following her dreams

By Emma Meldrum  
Sunday, July 9, 2017 2:36:13 EDT PM



Ria Reece belted out soul and rock songs during her Saturday performance at the Porquis Rock and Blues Festival. The Montreal-based singer said she's finally pursuing her dream.

**PORQUIS JUNCTION** - It took several jobs before a Montreal artist performing at this weekend's Porquis Rock and Blues Festival decided to pursue her passion: music.

Ria Reece has been singing with her band since 2012.

"I've had many, many, many jobs. The most notable one is I was a flight attendant for almost five years. I traveled the world, but this was always in the back of my mind. As a child, I wanted to do the arts. I was in ballet and dance and I danced for 17 years in ballet," she said after her Saturday afternoon set.

"I walked away because this isn't the easiest of ventures. You have to have nerves of steel and determination and you have to be really willing to pursue it for the rest of your life if you really want to have any satisfaction in what you do.

"I walked away and then came back, because when it's with you, it's with you. Do not deny who you truly are. I've finally found who I truly am."

Reece, who travelled over 11 hours to get to Porquis Junction, said this was her first time in Northern Ontario. She'd like to perform even further west.

"We haven't gone past Ontario yet, and this is the furthest North we've been. I'm hopeful. We're constantly working on it. We hope to get to see some more.

"I'd like to make it to Victoria, B.C. by 2018. I'm going to pray real hard for that."

Reece, whose powerful voice leads a soul-rock band, said she enjoyed the set at the festival.

"I got so much love. I gave it and I'm so happy to receive it in return. I feed off of that."

Marcel Brouillette was one of several campers enjoying the music from his trailer.

"I always come here, every year," said Brouillette, who's from Kapuskasing.

"It's a weekend out with music," he said. "It's nice that you don't have to travel all the way down south or to Quebec."

Brouillette said this is probably his tenth year at the festival.

Ken Buhr is also a regular. He has volunteered at the festival for six years.

"Why not," said Buhr. "It's easy, comfortable, people are great. You get to listen to the music. I always go home with a half dozen CDs. It's just glorious. And, in my community, Iroquois Falls, I feel that if somebody needs some help, all they have to do is ask."

Buhr said he usually leaves with a half dozen CDs.

"I could break the bank by the time I get through these next three (sets)," he joked.

The volunteer's favourite band as of Saturday afternoon was local Estelle Deschamps.

"Good sound, good rhythm, good lyrics – good, good, good – and somewhat local, which is the other element. When you have great bands and you put something local nearby and they measure up, it just makes them special."

Buhr said he didn't always realize the role music played in his life.

"I'm a music fan. I grew up with music, not realizing until recently - when you get old, it happens – that this has always been a part or a theme in what I have around me and what I enjoy. When you hear a professional singing professionally, it doesn't matter what the theme is, they're doing a fine job."

Colin Kennedy, artistic director for the festival, said that Friday night has turned into a local artists' showcase, something he'd like to see continue.

"It's important for the local people to be able to come and enjoy themselves, and spend a weekend at a reasonable rate, but it's also so important for the local talent to be showcased in Northeastern Ontario. We have such a tremendous wealth of talent up here that's being incubated and people don't even realize it," said Kennedy.

The organizer has been involved with the festival for 12 years and wants to see it grow.

"I'd love to be able to offer someone like Keith Urban or Johnny Reid like Timmins did, sometime in the very near future.

"At this point, every year, your goal is to certainly make a profit, but if you end up breaking even at the end of the year, next year is another year."

Kennedy said he'd like to see bigger crowds.

"I'd certainly like to see higher numbers, but I could see 1,000 people on the festival grounds and I'd still want 1,500."