

The musical highs of Cooper Lower

COOPER LOWER



Acoustic Singer/ Songwriter

By

Carol Altmann

It was late November last year when a teenage singer-songwriter named **Cooper Lower** took to the stage at [Blarney Books & Art, Port Fairy](#), knowing that most of the crowd had not come specifically to hear him – he was a support act to Irish folk artist Gallie.

Those – like me – who had not heard Cooper perform before perhaps expected what I did: a few cover songs belted out with the enthusiasm of a 17-year-old clutching a guitar.

What followed, however, was magical.



Cooper has a voice that is both powerful and gentle, lilting and strong and the intimate Blarney venue combined with Cooper's songwriting talent, musical ability and stage presence was mesmerising.

[box]**Subscribers:** We have a copy of Cooper's EP, 'Just a Thought' to give away. Email us at editor@bluestonemagazine.com.au with COOPER in the subject line by Friday Feb 19 at 5pm to be in the draw.[/box]

"Blarney Books put up a Facebook photo that night saying 'Cooper Lower pouring his heart out on stage' and that was the coolest thing to read because that is exactly what I try to do every time I perform, and to see that acknowledged really meant a lot to me," he tells me later.



Cooper on stage at Blarney Books & Art, Port Fairy, in November last year where he mesmerised the audience with this talent. Image: Blarney Books & Art.

We are chatting at the dining room table in his family home in north Warrnambool, where he also writes and practices his material in his bedroom that houses a string of acoustic guitars – his favourite instrument.

“I got a guitar for my 8th birthday but I only picked it up and started playing it when I was 13,” Cooper, who is completely self-taught, says.

“I would play and sing along to songs and I started to think, ‘actually, I am okay at this.’”

While initially inspired by the likes of rapper Eminem (“I have moved on since then,” he laughs), Cooper began to listen

to singer-songwriters such as Jack Johnson, John Butler, Ed Sherrin and Xavier Rudd and found “they really had something to say with their songs”.

He wrote his first song – Utopian Nightmare ([listen here](#)) – in 2014, at the age of 15 after being inspired by an English school assignment on dystopian fiction.

“I had thought a lot about the theme for the assignment, so that song just fell out of me in two days....but they are not all like that! Deluded Eyes ([listen here](#)) took three months to write. Three months of thinking and working that is compacted into four minutes,” Cooper says.



In the zone: Cooper Lower on stage, where the greatest joy, he says, comes from seeing an audience connect with his music. Image credit: Nicholas Frampton.

As he talks about his work, it is easy to forget that Cooper is just 17, starting VCE (he studies at Mortlake College and is also enrolled in the [Emmanuel College Cert 3 Music program](#)), with a young girlfriend, and the loping, big-legged stride of a teenager.

On so many other levels Cooper is a wise head on young shoulders. A quietly spoken, polite and measured old soul in a young body, who thinks and writes very deeply about the world.

"I have very high expectations of my song writing. I will never settle for a word or a line unless I can explain why it is there," he says.

For Cooper, the challenge is to find the right balance between the music and the meaning and to "reach" an audience by striking that balance.

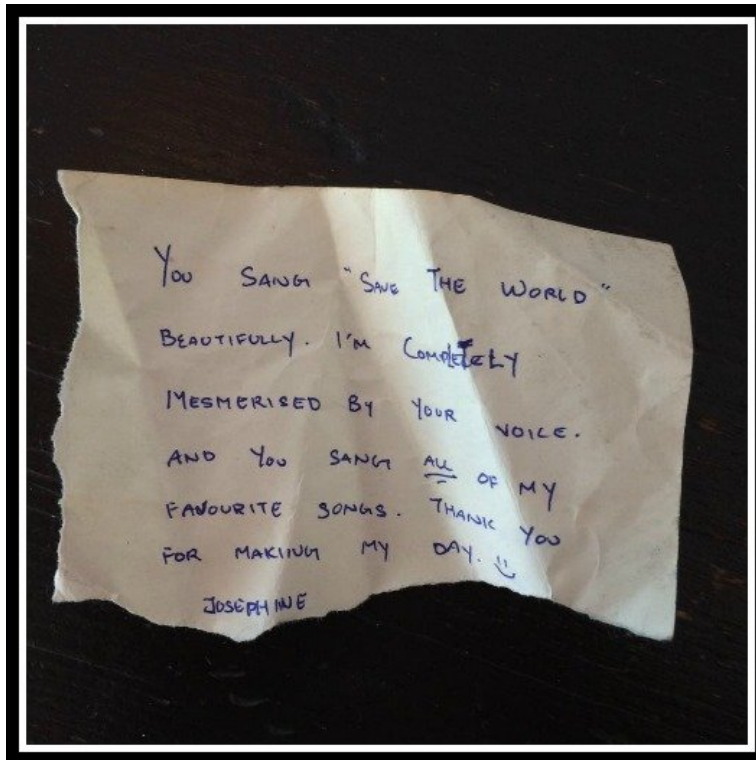
"If you try to tell people how to think, they won't want to listen, but if through my music I can tell them what *I am thinking*, then maybe it offers them a new perspective."

Cooper's five-track EP, *Just a Thought*, tackles such issues as depression, mental illness, hope, loss and love – some of it drawn from his own experience, but most from his own reflections. He is now writing more songs for a full album and taking his music to the people wherever he can, from busking in Warrnambool and Melbourne, to a string of gigs around the south-west.

People like **Lynny Mast**, who is passionate about promoting local musicians and has started a pop-up shop for local music, and fellow musicians **Brady James** and **Tom Richardson** have all inspired Cooper to keep following his dream, together with his mum, Michelle, who helps "carry in all the gear" to the gigs.

"Tom (Richardson) once said to me, 'I know why we play music – you know why you do it – and you just have to keep doing it.'"

At the end of our engrossing conversation, Cooper realises he has missed the bus for a meeting at Flying Horse Inn. As I offer him a ride, I am reminded, again, that one of the most exciting young talents in Warrnambool right now is still not old enough to drive – but he is a certainly a person going places.



What it's all about: a note left by an appreciative listener after a busking session. Image courtesy Cooper Lower.

[box]You can keep up to date with Cooper Lower's gigs via [his Facebook page](#). He is also scheduled to perform at [Blarney Books & Art](#) during the Port Fairy Folk Festival. Film maker Colleen Hughson has created a series of beautiful clips of Cooper performing [that you can watch here](#). We also have a copy of Cooper's EP, *Just A Thought*, to give away to one lucky Bluestone subscriber: email us with the subject line Cooper at editor@bluestonemagazine.com.au by Friday Feb 19 to be in the draw. [/box]



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