

WHISTLER THIS WEEK

Olympic gigs for local musicians

Squamish's Dana-Marie Battaglia to play at torch events Feb. 4 and 5

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If you've heard Dana-Marie Battaglia's original music, you might be surprised to hear she's working on a version of Hank Snow's country hit *I've Been Everywhere* for a concert on Feb. 5 as part of Whistler's Torch Relay celebrations.

While the music she writes often comes out as passionate, introspective ballads, Battaglia is one of four Sea to Sky musicians who were selected to perform with Barney Bentall and his Grand Cariboo Opry for the Feb. 5 free show in Whistler's Village Square. The vibe of the Grand Cariboo Opry show is upbeat, country music, so Battaglia said she decided to draw from her large repertoire of cover tunes for her selection to play with the band.

The Squamish resident recently got together with the other local musicians (Greg Reamsbottom, Jon Shrier and Rachel Thom), Bentall and a couple of his band members to rehearse for the show. She said it was "really cool" to be playing with a group of "amazing musicians" who can pretty much pick up any song.

"In the end it sounded really funky and fun," she said. "It's a really fun song."

Like most people in the corridor, Battaglia is preparing for an extremely busy February. The 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games come with some exciting opportunities for the soulful musician.

In addition to the Bentall and Grand Cariboo Opry collaboration on Feb. 5, Battaglia is performing at the Squamish torch celebration on Feb. 4 with Juno winner Cam Salay. Plus, she's playing for spectators at Whistler Olympic Park on Feb. 18 and 19, she's doing a set in



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Dana-Marie Battaglia said she didn't realize how much playing music meant until she lived without it.

Whistler Village as part of Whistler Live programming on Feb. 25, and she's performing for the athletes in Whistler on Feb. 6 and 11.

"It's absolutely freaking fantastic," she said of having the chance to perform during the Games.

To be part of the world's joining together in peace to celebrate pride in personal achievement is "amazing," she said. And to have the chance to inspire Olympic athletes – people who inspire the world – with her original music is "such an honour," she said. Plus, it means world exposure right in her backyard.

"There's no other opportunity like it. It's incredible," Battaglia said.

Originally from Ontario, Battaglia moved to B.C. in 2002. Having grown up in a musical family and picked up the piano from a young age, she said she didn't realize how much music meant in her life until she was away from home and without a piano for the first time. After about two years in B.C. she had an "epiphany" that what was missing was music.

So she picked up the guitar, started

learning some musical theory and started writing music. Six months later she was getting on stage to perform.

After five years of doing her original and cover act for audiences in the Sea to Sky, she's currently working on an official debut CD with producer John Ellis. While there's no firm release date yet, Battaglia said she hopes the album will be ready "bloody soon."

Battaglia has dabbled in self-recording since she was a kid using her parents' video camera to record herself singing and then adding layers of music and singing over top of the video, she said. In fact, she already recorded many of the tracks for the new album in her home studio before starting work with Ellis.

Recording and producing her original music is her passion, she said.

Discover Dana-Marie Battaglia's natural talent and passionate, vulnerable performance style during February in the Sea to Sky corridor. Up first are the torch relay gigs in Squamish and Whistler Feb. 4 and 5. Visit www.danamarie.ca for a full list of shows.