

ART & CULTURE

THE VOICE OF BERGET LEWIS

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When we received an invitation from the Netherlands Embassy to watch a special session with Berget Lewis, we were immediately intrigued because she is touted as one of the greatest singers to come out of Holland. And as we watched her live performance at the residence of Ambassador Rob Swartbol, we understood why Berget is so admired. With her crystal-clear voice and energetic performance, it's no wonder that she is thought of as a 'Diva,' in the most positive sense of the word, by her admirers.



Earlier last month, Berget held her first Indonesian concert at Erasmus Huis Cultural Centre. Besides her show in Jakarta, the Amsterdam-born singer also took the opportunity to visit a music school in the Capital and spread some musical inspiration to the local students. Luckily, NOW! Jakarta had the chance to get to know this soul singer better as she shared stories from her musical journey and spoke about her biggest inspirations in life.

Tell us about your concert in Jakarta.

This is my first visit to Jakarta and I couldn't be more excited! I know lots about your city, especially for the many big music festivals that are held here, like Jakarta International Java Jazz, which I would love to perform at one day! So I was very happy when I received an invitation from the embassy here and since it takes quite long flight from Amsterdam to Jakarta, I decided to make the most of my trip by giving a workshop at a local music school here.

What encouraged you to teach here?

I have a music school in Amsterdam, so teaching has become an important part of my life. Yesterday, I gave a workshop at the Faculty of Performing Arts, Jakarta Institute of Arts where I taught some vocal techniques to the students. Nevertheless, the most important



thing that I taught was about how to build confidence and to conquer the stage so that they can give a great performance that will touch audience's hearts. I think this is essential, because most of these students are very shy despite their great talents. So I tried to encourage them to overcome their shyness and dare to shine like a star.

Did you ever experience the same problem in your career?

Of course, I was extremely shy! I had my first international show when I was 16 years old in the US and I was very scared and nervous during the trip. My shyness haunted me everywhere I went which made me feel more comfortable singing as a backing vocalist in my early career although deep down I knew I wanted to be under the spotlight. At some point I realised that something had to change. Slowly but surely, I learned to enjoy the stage, live the songs and interact with the audience. It wasn't an easy process, but I convinced myself that I shouldn't let my shyness hold me back or let any criticism affect my confidence.

Tell us more about your last album.

My last self-titled album was released in 2013. This album is about struggle, heartbreak, and the ups and downs in life that everyone can relate to. One of the best hits, *Aviator*, tells the story of a person who refuses to give up no matter how hard her life is. So this album is about setting yourself free and exploring life to the fullest.

How would you describe your signature style on stage?

I am very energetic and powerful on stage because I like to interact with my audience, share the story behind every song and I hope I can inspire people through my songs. I want everyone to get involved and have fun during my performance.

Who is your biggest musical influence?

Chaka Khan. She's really important for me, I grew up listening to her songs and she helped me to get through difficult moments. She's my role model and my biggest dream is to perform with her on the same stage. I also have a group called 'Ladies of Soul' with my four best friends and we've been doing tours for almost three years which earned big success in Holland. We are planning to invite Chaka Khan to our next big concert. If she comes, it will be a dream come true for us so we're keeping our fingers crossed for that.

I hope it happens! So tell us about your other big plans this year.

There are many shows awaiting in Holland next year which is very exciting for me. Several major solo concerts are currently being prepared and will take place in February and November while the Ladies of Soul Concert (which will hopefully feature Chaka Khan) is expected to be held in March 2017. I also hope I can come back for more gigs in Indonesia later!

