

Zanda - a body and soul of music

 By [Ilva Pieterse](#)

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Twenty-six year old Zanda Traut played her heart out to fans last week Thursday, 12 November 2009, at Cafe Barcelona in Pretoria. It's been a while since Zanda did a live show - between playing lead guitar for Robbie Wessels and working as a producer at Manley Studios, it looks like little time should be left for her own creative projects.



But you'd never say so. Zanda brought out her first album in 2008, called 'Droom Verlore' - an Afrikaans album that has been praised for its originality and depth of message.

"Droom Verlore is selling well at Robbie Wessels gigs at the moment - he gives me the opportunity to promote myself during his set breaks," she says.

Last week, Zanda played with her band, which consisted of Zanda playing acoustic guitar and singing lead vocals; Sean Manley, who played electric guitar; Corne Roodt, who played bass guitar; Riaan Diedericks on drums and percussion; and Siobhan Lloyd-Jones, the violinist. Zanda also played trumpet in a few of the songs.

Starting off with a cover of the popular "These Boots Were Made for Walkin'", Zanda immediately got the entire crowd involved with singing along.

For the rest of the night, she sang popular tunes from her album as well as new songs - in both English and Afrikaans.

When doing a cover of Alanis Morissette's Head Over Feet she humbly started off by saying she hopes she can do the song justice. From an audience member's point of view, I could surely say that she did.

Barefoot, passionate, haunting, and powerful Zanda put on a spectacular show. Her band members were just as impressive and inspiring.

Music has chosen my life

Following the gig, I interviewed the songstress about her chosen path in life, how she got there, and where her road is taking her.

What is your background?

Zanda: *I was born in the Free State in a town called Welkom. After I matriculated, I left for the big city to study Psychology.*

When did you start playing music?

Zanda: *I can remember as a little girl listening to and watching my father playing the piano. Whenever he was done, I'd go take his place and try to work out the melodies. My mother started me dancing at the age of four, and music became part of my body and soul.*

I started playing guitar and piano at 13 with a group of friends. I was also the first trumpet player at our local orchestra and my father and I sang together at our church choir.

So music has always been part of my life...

When did you start writing songs?

Zanda: *I've always been amazed at the way lyrics and music compliment each other and how they made me feel. One day, a song just started coming out of me. I was in front of the piano at the time, and the words and melody just came.*

I was 17 and the inspiration probably came from a broken heart and state of mind. But I played it to others and they were amazed. I haven't stopped writing songs since then.

What are some of the key messages that run through your music?

Zanda: *I sing about things that "move" me, such as relationships, love, politics, poverty, and religion. Basically, I write about things of the heart. I want people to relate to the messages and find their own meaning in the songs. The music is not all about me, but about everyone else as well.*

Who are your inspirations (musically), and why?

Zanda: *Internationally I listen to female vocalists like KT Tunstall, Sara Bareilles, Tracy Chapman, and Alanis Morissette. They all have really good vocals and are singer-songwriters with their own moving messages.*

Locally, I respect the way Jan Blohm writes his music.

What is your advice for others just starting out in the profession?

Zanda: *You need to be thick-skinned because it's not easy. Find what you need to work on, and don't just focus on what your strengths are. You need to become a marketable product to put yourself out there. Get advice from reliable and established people in the industry to gauge whether you have the potential. Lastly, and most importantly, believe in yourself.*

Do you enjoy producing? Would you ever want to choose between music and producing, or would you want to carry on with both?

Zanda: *I love different aspects about both and believe they go together. Producing is a creativity in a controlled environment - you can try different things and build a song from a basic guitar and vocal base, for example. It's like building a house. There is a tremendous feeling of satisfaction when the project is coming together and the artist is happy.*

On the other hand, I enjoy the social aspect of having a gig in between. I learn things in the studio everyday and by gigging I can try them out.

You went overseas recently - what were some of the things you learned about yourself, your music, your country?

Zanda: *I felt like a rock star at the London gigs because the crowd went wild. South Africans abroad really miss home, their language and Afrikaans music. I always thought the "grass is greener on the other side" but realised soon enough how lucky we are with the way we grew up.*

The space, the nature, our food, our culture - its just great.

Why did you chose to follow a musical career?

Zanda: *I always say, music has chosen my life and I just happened to play along.*

How important do you think supporters have been in getting you where you are?

Zanda: *They are so important, especially on the days that I feel like giving up and fear I will never get anywhere.*

When are you planning on releasing your next album?

Zanda: *I am planning on releasing an English album next year.*

ABOUT ILVA PIETERSE

Ilva Pieterse has been involved in the media industry for over 13 years. During this time, she has written for and been involved in many online and print publications across a wide variety of industries, but mainly focusing on the IT sector. Examples of her creative work can be found at www.consciencefiction.com

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