

Ana Popovic - Belly Button Window (2009)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Belly Button Window*
02. *I Won't Let You Down*
03. *Sexiest Man Alive*
04. *LRBC 2006*
05. *Interview*
06. *Jam*
07. *Live At Cafe Wilhelmina*
08. *Crossroadz*
09. *Ana's Demonstration*
10. *House Burning Down*
11. *Blues Caravan*
12. *How'd You Learn To Shake It Like That*

Ana Popovic & Anthony Gomes (4) Ana Popovic & Debbie Davies (6) Ana Popovic, Candye Kane, Sue Foley & Eve Monsees (11)

If you're not a blues purist, you'll love the fiery, passionate playing and singing of Yugoslavian blues-rock guitarist, vocalist, and songwriter Ana Popovic. Thanks to her father, the Belgrade-raised Popovic was introduced to the blues at an early age, through his wide-ranging record collection and jam sessions hosted at the Popovic home. Born on May 13, 1976, Popovic took up guitar when she was a teenager and formed her first band, Hush, in 1995. Within a year, with the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, she was playing blues festivals in Greece and Hungary and working as an opening act for American blues masters, including Junior Wells.

Popovic recorded her debut album with Hush in 1999, when she also moved to the Netherlands to study jazz guitar and world and pop music at the Conservatory of Music. She had the chance to see blues guitarist Bernard Allison at a club in Germany. He asked her to come on-stage and

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jam at the end of the show. While Allison invited Popovic to join him on a tour, she had to get back to the Jazz Academy in Holland. Allison asked for a copy of Popovic's record with Hush, and he sent it on to executives at Ruf Records in Germany, who were impressed with Popovic's powerful guitar playing and singing. Ruf contacted her to be part of their Jimi Hendrix tribute compilation, and then signed her to a recording deal of her own.

Several months after this, she was on her way to Memphis to record Hush! The album was well received by blues radio programmers and the non-blues purist segments of the American, European, and Canadian blues festival circuits. In the spring of 2001, she performed at the Memphis in May Festival alongside Bob Dylan, the Black Crowes, and Ike Turner. Within five years of leaving Yugoslavia, Popovic, now in her late twenties, had the chance to perform at many of the major European blues festivals, including Peer, Bishopstock, and Notodden. Along the way she's sat in with the likes of Allison, Michael Hill, and Kenny Neal.

Popovic has two albums out on the New Jersey-based Ruf Records America label, Hush!, released in 2000, and Comfort to the Soul, her 2003 release. Jim Gaines and David Z., who have worked with other blues-rockers, including Stevie Ray Vaughan, Santana, and Jonny Lang, had roles in recording and mixing both albums. Five of Popovic's sparkling originals shine on Comfort to the Soul, including her homage to the tragic life of jazz bassist Jaco Pastorius, inspired by a book she read, as well as the album's opening track, "Don't Bear Down on Me (I'm Here to Steal the Show)." She also provides inspired, inventive covers of Howlin' Wolf's "Sitting on Top of the World" and Steely Dan's "Night by Night."

Popovic guests on Hill's 2003 two-disc Electric Storyland live album. In 2003, Popovic was nominated for a W.C. Handy Blues Award for Best New Artist of the Year and was the first European artist to perform at the Handy Awards. Two years later, Popovic released her first live effort, Ana! Live in Amsterdam. ---Richard Skelly, Rovi

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