



Alisa Turner

Marketing executives generously throw around insider terms like "target audience" and "demographic." Their livelihood thrives upon narrowcasting with strict tunnel vision. In contrast, Alisa Turner is a talented singer/songwriter, who is by no means a market-minded artist. "I really just want to sing for everybody!" she exclaims. "I don't care if I'm in a church or I'm in a bar or I'm in a Wal-Mart parking lot. I've played a polka festival, and it was definitely the oddest experience."

Turner enthusiastically embraces an all-things-to-all-people ethic (even though it's hard to imagine her uniquely personalized style going over particularly well at, say, an accordion-saturated polka festival). And Turner began her musical journey by focusing on an extremely critical audience of one - herself.

"When I started writing, I only wrote because I was in a lot of pain," she confesses. "I never even had these big dreams of being on a stage or pursuing a career. I really just wrote because I couldn't get out what I was feeling in any other way." Amazingly, Turner evolved into a skillful songwriter at a tender age. When asked to recall the first song that convinced her that she had true talent, she mentions "Remembering," which appears on her self-titled CD, "I wrote that when I think I was 12. I think I was in the 7th grade."

No doubt about it, this young lady has already experienced more than her share of deep loss. "The worst thing was losing my father, because I was a real daddy's girl," she says. "He was a pastor for 25 years. Also, my mother was real sick when I was a child, and we didn't know if she was going to make it at one point. I went through a lot, and I think that's why God gave me this outlet, because He knew that I was going to need it." Turner's two independent releases, not surprisingly, are loaded with songs that speak openly about her tough times. "My manager's always trying to get me to write happy songs," Turner kids. "So I say, 'Well, take me to Disneyworld.'"

A reality check will tell you that life's no amusement park. And you need not look far to find artists similar to Turner: soulful women who are turning personal pain into big artistic gain. Audiences tell Turner she reminds them of Sarah McLachlan, Regina Spektor, Fiona Apple, and other girls who - for lack of another common thread - all sit down and sing at a piano. But Turner goes old school when asked to name her personal influences. "My favorite, favorite, favorite is Karen Carpenter (of the Carpenters)," she says. "She's my all-time favorite. I just love her music." But Turner is by no means stuck in the past, influence-wise. "I must say that one of my favorite albums now is My Chemical Romance's *The Black Parade*," she says. "I love the writing on it, and every part on it has its place and purpose. I was blown away by that record!"

Madison Avenue loves selling formulaic products to broad audiences. The bigger the crowd, the more familiar the product, the larger the profit. But Turner takes a much more personal approach. "One of my songs is called "Breathing," and I've had a real long struggle with anxiety and depression. And I talk about that in my shows. And with the intro to it, I stop and start it three or four different times. And the people who have never experienced depression/anxiety, they understand exactly why I do it. And the people who have never experienced that stuff come up to me after the show and ask me, 'Why did you do that?' They thought that I'd forgotten how to play the song, or something like that. People get certain songs, and if they've been through what I'm singing about, they know."

Music is medicine for the soul, not mere marketing fodder. It's something ad execs will never understand. But for those with ears to hear and senses to feel with, Alisa Turner is marking intimate heart-to-heart connections wherever she goes. And it's all as natural as breathing.