

# First Night

Sunshine state shows it can produce more than just beer, surfing and footy

## MUSIC

### Women in Voice

Star City Showroom, March 31  
Reviewed by John Shand

Queensland: beautiful one day and an arts mecca the next? Hardly. Were the states ranked according to their cultural exports, most people would give Queensland the wooden spoon.

Yet appearances can deceive. Annie Peterson's wonderful *Women in Voice* has enriched Queensland culture for 14 years, bringing together diverse female singers and giving them 20 minutes free rein.

While the singers need not be home-grown, the show is very much a Queensland entity, with the band and production team imported for this Sydney season.

Former *Women in Voice* cast member Leah Cotterell made an affable MC, introducing Barbara Fordham, who resembled the model for some Renaissance masterpiece and who sang with an otherworldly quality somewhere between new-age ethereality and genuinely enigmatic mystique. The young Kate Miller-Heidke raised the bar with a witty rendition of David

Byrne's *Psycho Killer*, part Peter Sellers and part mock-opera. There were entertaining originals and a cover of Nick Cave's haunting, excruciating *Little Water Song*.

Queenie van de Zandt created a comic character: a chakra-emancipating nazi of a singing teacher who, in a pretend-you're-a-bell exercise, exhorts her class to "move your donger freely and

share your bong". Van de Zandt is both a fine actress and a powerful singer.

Jenny Morris, the biggest name in this line-up, interspersed snippets of her private life throughout her very public pop without achieving the endearing sense of singularity that had gone before. Zulya Kamalova restored this with her gorgeous voice and exotic, anguished songs informed

by her Tartar and Russian background. Finally Alison St Ledger gave us a tour of the Beatles' repertoire, which despite seeming an odd choice, was done exceedingly well, showing off the band's exemplary versatility.

Settings and lighting were also of the highest calibre, making one wonder what else Queensland is hiding.

Until April 14