

# Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2019 – Lisa Kowalski – Free Spirits

Like trying to fit a guitar shaped peg into a round hole, 19-year-old Paisley singer song writer Lisa Kowalski has been on quite a journey throughout her teenage years, trying to find her place and her people.

Since she was just 14, her guitar has been her prop, shield and fashion accessory and the lyrics of her songs have expressed an emotional mix of rejection and yearning, all the time mixed with hope, defiance and a celebration of individuality.

When she released her Free Spirits EP in 2017, Lisa rode the wave of the Paisley UK City of Culture bid, was named as a “woman of influence” by the town’s Provost and appeared on TV and radio to represent a positive image of the town’s future.

Her name was discussed in the press alongside other Paisley greats such as Paolo Nutini and David Tennant and she was invited by the American Scottish Foundation to represent Scottish youth music at New York Tartan Week 2018. Lisa sang about her love of Paisley and its “Hearts of Gold” and the town loved her back, she had found her place.

Now her songs directly reflect her personal journey. EP title

track Free Spirits was written at age 16 after a not uncommon conversation with her parents about her struggles to gel with a friend group at high school. Not coming from a completely happy place, the song reflects her determination to disregard the difficulties of being different and retain hope for the future.

**Lisa Kowalski – Free Spirits Acoustic Music Centre, venue 138  
23 August, 16.00**

A series of awards and accolades for Lisa's song writing followed throughout 2017 and 2018 as her music was submitted to judging panels that included Feargal Sharkey, Imelda May, Tom Odell and Guy Chambers. One of these was a Salute Music UK award, a UK wide song writing contest in which over 2000 entries battled it out for the top six in a public vote. Lisa's prize included a headline gig at King Tuts on the night of her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, an event which both terrified and delighted her.

While the music was doing incredibly well, Lisa was beginning to struggle personally. She struggled with her confidence at the end of a toxic relationship. An inability to get support only made the situation worse and, at the end of 2018, she was forced to take a break from her music to work on her mental health. She suffered from anxiety and depression – sadly far from unusual amongst young creatives. Lisa had to walk away from the persona portrayed in her Hearts of Gold video, smiling, warm, happy Lisa, laughing and dancing with children and mascots.

After support and counselling and a big dose of self-healing, Lisa emerged from her break in Spring 2019, travelled to England to compete for a chance to perform at Glastonbury Festival's Pilton Party and received an invitation to go back to New York Tartan Week next year.

The journey and the adventures have begun again.

Lisa's Free Spirits show is her first self-curated solo musical performance. She has put on a show in the capital before, a 2017 multi-artist Taylor Swift tribute, designed purely to celebrate music and entertain. Free Spirits is purely about Lisa's own story, using her songs both to entertain and to communicate what she has experienced and learned so far and where she aims to go next. At 19, she may no longer represent "youth music" but will continue, locally and internationally, to represent Paisley and Scotland, the dreamers, those with mental health issues, young women and, of course, all her fellow free spirits.

