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GREAT MUSIC THAT'S NOT TRENDY

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[Ana Popovic Burns Some Frets in Italy](#)

What's most striking about Serbian guitarist [Ana Popovic's](#) new DVD *An Evening at Trasimento Lake: Live from the Heart of Italy* is that by the time the concert is halfway done, she hasn't wasted any notes. That someone who plays as many of those notes, with as much abandon, would choose them so unpredictably and interestingly is pretty amazing.

From the brief interview included in the DVD's bonus material, Popovic doesn't like to be pinned down to one particular style. Here, it's mostly blues and funk, but there's also a jazzy piano ballad and a couple of catchy upbeat rock songs that sound like the early Police. She's a star on the European concert circuit, and her big youtube hit [U Complete Me](#) (included in a particularly epic, organ-fueled version here) has won her an American fan base as well. Culled from two nights at a blues festival in an old castle in Perugia, it's a studio-quality recording featuring her European touring band: [Ronald Jonker](#) on bass; [Michele Papadia](#) on keys; [Andrew Thomas](#) on drums; [Cristiano Arcelli](#) on tenor sax; [Riccardo Giulietti](#) on trumpet; Sandra LaVille on harmony vocals and [Stephane Avellaneda](#) on percussion. Stevie Ray Vaughan (in "on" mode, meaning the mature, drug-free SRV), is the obvious influence, guitarwise; vocally, Popovic goes for a sardonic/sarcastic style that reaches for a southern soul vibe: Jean Knight, maybe? But this is about the guitar, not the singing. All the way through the songs, there are gnats, or some kind of insect swarming the stage – an exasperated Jonker swats mightily at one at 19:50 into it – but the band don't let the swarm stop them.

The first song, *Wrong Woman* (as in, "you're messing with the wrong woman") is a funk song. Papadia pitches in with a wink and grin on the lower registers of the clavino, Sly Stone style, a feel that will recur again as Popovic snarls and burns through the passing tones, relentlessly yet judiciously. It's counterintuitive, to say the least, and it's breathtaking. Then she does the same with *Is This Everything There Is*, a rock song with more than a slight resemblance to *Message in a Bottle*.

Unlike a lot of other lead guitar stars, she's proves not afraid of the lower registers on a growling version of the

slide boogie blues How'd You Learn to Shake It Like That (lyrics are not usually her strong suit). The brisk soul shuffle Nothing Personal introduces the horns, with a tight, vicious guitar solo paired off against Papadia's gritty clavinoia again.

Shadow After Dark has Popovic blending Andy Summers spaciousness with David Gilmour rage, then they hit a plateau of sorts with another funk song and the most trad moment here, the bouncy blues Let Me Love You Babe. Popovic takes a break on the torchy piano ballad Doubt Everyone But Me, tosses off a pointless acoustic pop song but then regroups with a couple of strong, riff-driven numbers featuring swirling organ and more terse, incisive guitar fills. They bring it up all the way with a brisk, reworked version of The Fever, Popovic taking it to redline with casually vicious precision. The DVD ends with the night's one semi-political number, Hold On, another funk song. Taken as a whole, much of this is a rare treat for guitar fans. Unfortunately, whoever did the cinematography must not be a guitarist: all too frequently, the camera cuts away from Popovic right as she's about to do something exquisite. Did someone not tell him/her, it's the fingers on the fretboard, not the picking, that every player wants to see? And the bonus acoustic tracks are strangely pastiched together and don't add much of anything other than proving Popovic just effortlessly fast and impactful at open-tuned delta blues as she is with electric styles. It's out now on [Artist Exclusive](#).

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About

Our mission: to spread the word about great music that's not trendy. This is our "About" page, where you can scroll down for a brief history and explanation of what we do here. To help you get around this site, here are some links which will take you quickly to our most popular features:

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ABOUT LUCID CULTURE

Created in April, 2007 as the online presence for a somewhat notorious, now discontinued music and politics e-zine, Lucid Culture is as much a resource for adventurous fans of music and the arts as it is a necessary antidote to the reactionary, lockstep conformity that pervades much of the blogosphere. We celebrate the kind of edgy creativity that was for centuries part of the public consciousness, but which the entertainment-industrial complex and its evil twin, the corporate media, did their best to push to the fringes. Our goal is to lead the way in returning it to its rightful place in the public eye. If you're really interested, here's a [somewhat tongue-in-cheek interview](#) with one of Lucid Culture's founders.

One of our primary goals is to provide an accurate overview of what's available to audiences in New York, this multicultural city we call home, without stooping to political correctness. We also endeavor to give equal time to women artists without being obvious about it. In addition to live music, we also regularly review cds, art shows and the occasional book, film or DVD. We haven't yet used the blog to post recipes or cute cat pictures, but... you never know.

If you missed American Idol last night and are wondering who got the boot, you won't find the answer here. Nor is this the place to go for the latest news on Aimee Mann or Gogol Bordello, wonderful as they both are. Lucid Culture is where you might discover the next Aimee Mann or Gogol Bordello before they get really popular. Like the music, art and artists we cover here, we fly pretty much under the radar. It gives us a lot of freedom and a certain exclusivity – you might even call it cachet. We're happy to share it with you.

Lucid Culture offers four essential resources:

- A [NYC live music calendar](#), which when we post it extends several weeks ahead. We've been putting a new one up about once a month, with pretty much daily updates.
- Regular reviews of live shows and albums.
- A fairly comprehensive, detailed, constantly updated guide to [New York area live music venues](#).
- And a [myspace page](#), which we haven't paid much attention to lately, but still encourage you to use as your own personal online listening room. As we continue to discover good bands and artists, we'll add them to the page. No twitter, no facebook – sorry, we don't think the first one's necessary and the second one is just plain scary.

Why the focus on live music, as opposed to recordings? At this point in history, with the internet enabling independent artists to sell directly to the public, the major labels will soon be finished (at least as far as new product is concerned). Likewise, the majority of the indie labels will soon be toast (although there are a few specialty labels who seem certain to continue to thrive). For these reasons, live shows are where pretty much everything is happening right now. By all means, please continue to support your favorite independent bands and artists by buying their albums and merch, if you have the money, and going to their shows.

We also have access to an archive of over a thousand concert reviews dating from the early 1990s, most of which are previously unpublished, which we put up from time to time when we don't have anything new ready to go. If you're a musician, artist, filmmaker, writer, etc. and you think you have something that fans of edgy music

and the arts might enjoy, contact us at [lucidculture \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:lucidculture[at]gmail.com).

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