

# Songbirds take flight behind bars



TV preview  
**Sarah  
Lang**

**M**USICAL THERAPY in prisons has been a hit overseas, so why not try it here in Godzone, where we boast one of the world's highest imprisonment rates? And better yet, why not film it? With the Department of Corrections' go-ahead, that's exactly what Maori Television has done in *Songs From The Inside*, and it has done it rather brilliantly.

Using a step-by-step programme piloted in the Waikato, musicians Anika Moa and Maisey Rika teach songwriting to six female prisoners at Wellington's Arohata Prison, and Warren Maxwell and Ruia Aperahama teach four men at Rimutaka.

By the seventh weekly visit, which airs tonight, things are going well. Students have bonded with their teachers, mastered the basics and written their own lyrics. This week, they're recording their songs — and there's some serious talent in this bunch.



**BRAVO:** Unlike so many reality TV series, *Songs From The Inside* actually has an ethical purpose.

*Songs* is shot beautifully and realistically. It has no retakes and no reconstructions, but I really like its gentle, restrained approach. The musicians are encouraging and supportive without laying it on too thick or trying to be best buddies with their charges.

The show also takes a welcome fly-on-the-wall approach, giving the prisoners space to tell their own stories, rather than forcing an obtrusive voiceover on us. It doesn't tell us what to think, just reminds us that these are people not just criminals. The interviewer asks the

questions we're wondering — what did they do to get inside — but without pushing too hard for details such as reasons and/or regrets. That comes out along the way, thanks to the music.

Here, music acts as a sort of universal language that helps break down barriers and helps the prisoners express what they usually keep bottled up. Going deep to write and perform such personal lyrics, they open up at their own pace and in their own way. Plus since making music is a success in itself, and anything more — self-esteem, insights, change — is a

bonus, there's less pressure on the students than, say, a show that sent in the shrinks. And much less chance of a "bugger this" response.

The best thing about *Songs*? Its softly-softly approach doesn't just make for good material — it makes a difference. "It's an awesome feeling, like winning Lotto," says Tama, after recording an extraordinary song. "I didn't use drugs, didn't use a gun, didn't do crime, I done it honestly."

You can see the corrections officer look at Tama differently. And when Tama admits this is the first time he's ever been praised, we're way past looking at him just as a criminal — yes, even when he talks about the scuffle over a gun that killed a man.

You get the feeling Tama wouldn't tell that story to any old film crew, nor his regrets about inflicting family violence. "It's not okay to hit kids, hit your woman. They are treasures of your heart and soul," he says. "I don't want to repeat the cycle, I've got to break it."

There are many other moments of self-reflection and insight from the students, thanks to this programme and to the work they've put into it. This is reality TV that doesn't exploit its participants, but actually does some good. TV as it should be. Bravo.

Episode 8 of *Songs From The Inside* screens tonight at 8pm, on Maori Television. View past episodes at [www.maoritelevision.com](http://www.maoritelevision.com)

## On TV

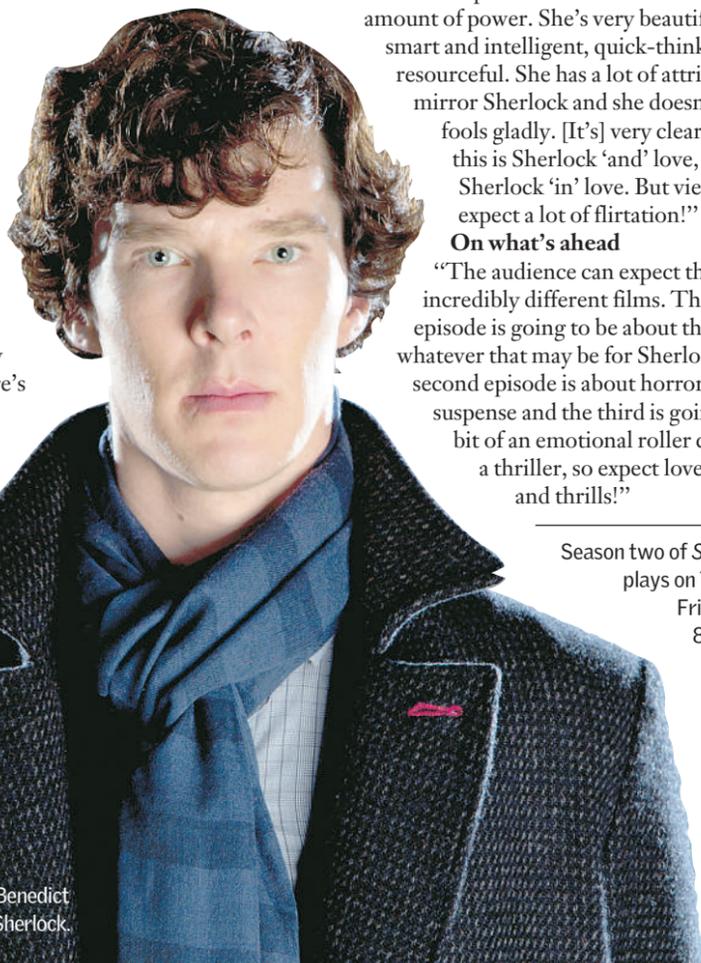
# A fine bromance

It's elementary — *Sherlock* is back on screen next week.

**C**ONTEMPORARY mystery series *Sherlock* returns to TV One this Friday as the great detective (Benedict Cumberbatch) and buddy John Watson (Martin Freeman) tackle three more feature-length episodes. Here, Cumberbatch clues us in.

### On *Sherlock* as style icon

"The coat was Ray Holman's, the costume designer's idea. Sherlock's suits have a clean, linear, perfunctory beauty about them. There's nothing showy or flamboyant. They're very well cut, functional but still very stylish and



**WELL SUITED:** Benedict Cumberbatch is Sherlock.

I think that sums up *Sherlock* perfectly."

### On bromance . . . and romance

"Yes, the last series played on that quite a few times, with two men living together, and so many people getting it wrong. But episode one presents a very definite female presence in the form of Irene Adler (played by *Robin Hood*'s Lara Pulver), and she is more than a match for Sherlock. It's really nice to have a

female counterpart. Irene Adler has an incredible amount of power. She's very beautiful, very smart and intelligent, quick-thinking and resourceful. She has a lot of attributes that mirror Sherlock and she doesn't suffer fools gladly. [It's] very clear though, this is Sherlock 'and' love, not Sherlock 'in' love. But viewers can expect a lot of flirtation!"

### On what's ahead

"The audience can expect three incredibly different films. The first episode is going to be about the heart, whatever that may be for Sherlock. The second episode is about horror and suspense and the third is going to be a bit of an emotional roller coaster and a thriller, so expect love, horror and thrills!"

Season two of *Sherlock* plays on TV One this Friday at 8.30pm.



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