

## Bolton singer took on Magna's Hoedown Showdown

By Brock Weir

Stepping onto the stage in front of the judges can be a little daunting for even the most hardened performers, but for Bolton's Amberley Cohen, all she had to do was be herself.

Cohen was one of the Top 40 contestants, whittled down from entries from all across Ontario, in the 2017 Hoedown Showdown, the annual contest hosted by Magna International searching for Canada's next country music superstar. She, alas, did not advance to the Top 20.

Held each year in conjunction with Magna's Wild, Wild West Hoedown, York Region's biggest fundraising party, the Hoedown Showdown attracts a wide variety of contestants ranging in age from 13 to 80-plus.

Amberley, a former Bolton Idol, was in good company when she took over the Theatre Aurora stage for the preliminary rounds, performing Shania Twain's I'm Gonna Getcha Good for judges Tom Cross of Metal Works Studios, Magna's Steve Hinder, country star Beverley Mahood, and media personality and philanthropist Joan Walker.

"Everyone is so unique and different from one another, which is going to make it tough because there is nothing to compare it to," Mahood said. "Each have their own thing and we're just sitting here impressed with the originality of each one of the contestants so far."

"Some of the contestants we have seen are back from previous years and the improvements have been incredible," Walker added. "It is really nice to see that growth and that is why we are doing this: to give people a stage, an opportunity, give them some feedback, and hopefully they learn and grow from it."

Although she later learned the song was a risky choice, as Cross said the lyric "you're a fine piece of real estate" is one of the worst he's ever heard, Cohen was praised for taking a Canadian classic and making it her own.

"You changed it up and it didn't seem like a Shania song to me," Cross said.

"I really liked the pace of it," Walker added. "You didn't sound like Shania, you sounded like you and that is what I heard. You are really comfortable with yourself and the song."



Bolton's Amberley Cohen recently performed in the Hoedown hoedown.Submitted photo