

Natalie, 13, claims title of the best busker in London

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Hitting the gig time: Natalie Shay

By Kim Inam

A 13-YEAR-OLD busker who spent the summer performing across the capital as part of the London 2012 Festival has triumphed in the climactic competition on Saturday. Natalie Shay, from New Southgate, missed a family holiday in Majorca to take part in 12 gigs at venues including Hyde Park, Potters Hill, St Paul's Cathedral, outside the O2 and a car park in Balham, south London.

The Ashmole School student, who began playing classical guitar at the age of four and taught herself rhythm guitar last year, performed her own songs to the crowds which had often gathered to take part in Olympic festivities nearby. She said: "I was performing my own songs which is a mix of folk, country and pop, mainly about love and stuff – I get my inspiration from observing people, not from experience."

On Saturday Natalie and other performers took part in the Mayor of London's Gigs – Big Busk at Westfield Shopping Centre in White City, where through a mix of public votes and judges' decisions, she won the youth category and was awarded with performance equipment, including an amplifier and microphone system. "I kind of knew that at the end of all these gigs there was a final but hadn't really thought about it," said Natalie, who also plays the piano and ukulele. "I performed one song but I didn't expect to win. It's been great – it's given me a lot of exposure." Her father Rodney joined Natalie at all her gigs. He said: "I filmed most of her performances – it was great seeing her name in big letters behind her asking for people to vote for her."

Natalie now hopes to be able to perform at The Bedford, in Balham, and also plans to audition for The BRIT School. Mr Johnson added: "Over the past few weeks, the Big Buskers have delighted Londoners and visitors alike, and my hearty congratulations go to every single person who took part.

"As well as picking up some great prizes, this could be the stepping stone that these fresh, young acts are looking for towards musical stardom.

"Who knows – we may have just seen the next Adele, Jessie Ware or Dizzee Rascal."