

"La verdad es de los valientes."

Tanya Liana Kliefoth

Latin Connection!



Artistic inspiration rises out of situations in which people must draw upon inner strength. This was the case for Santa Lucia LFR's lead singer Germán Cantillo, originally from Nicaragua. During the early 80's in the midst of political strife, he and his father relocated to the town of Celaya in the state of Guanajuato, México. As they were settling into a new life, Germán remembers seeing a statue of Santa Lucia tucked away in a hidden, dusty corner of the church that he habitually visited, and found it strange that the queen of lights was hidden away in this dark corner.

The image stayed with him, and years later in 1999 when he relocated to Vancouver after living in San Francisco and Winnipeg, the opportunity to form a band with Mario Zetina and Byron Russell arose. He suggested the name Santa Lucia, drawing on the memory of difficult transition in his life and the strength he found in the traditions and ideologies of Latin America.

The name of the group, however, also reflects the group's present connection with the modern club scene in Vancouver as expressed through the appendage of LFR, (Latin Funk and Rock.) This acronym reflects the group's musical style while also poking fun at the over-usage of abbreviations in North America.

Santa Lucia LFR presently consists of six members; German Cantillo on guitar and vocals, Mario Zetina on percussion, Ryan Conroy on bass, Mike Zobac on drums, Byron Russell on sax and clarinet, and Brad Nuirhead on trombone. Because the interpretation of Cantillo's music in live performances as well as the songs on the future second album are being interpreted collectively, each member of the group has the opportunity to draw upon their own cultural background in the interpretation of the group's sound. The collision of styles can be heard in the group's version of the song "Lupita", which starts with a very pure Cuban sound played by the strong, blatty wind section, then halts abruptly and breaks into a crowd-jumping chorus, which is pushed aside by an assertive trombone solo, then combined with the chorus, and finally finished off in a cool, detached guitar solo.

Cantillo recounts that the sound of Santa Lucia LFR evolved from another group, "el Combito", made up of himself, four other members and lead by Zetina, who produced a smaller version of the 'gran combo' style sound. From the ashes of this group's disintegration came the idea of Santa Lucia LFR, this time lead by Cantillo himself.



German Cantillo, Mario Zetina, Ryan Conroy, Mike Zobac, Byron Russell, and Brad Nuirhead

The sound of the group is a result of a Latin core on vocals, guitar and percussion (Cantillo and Zetina) colliding with the funk-rock style that Zobac, Russell, Nuirhead and Conroy grew up with in North America.

The first CD of the group is called "The Streets/Las Calles", and was independently released by the group itself. The ideology behind the album is a conscious approach to social issues, as Cantillo explains. The title of one of the album cuts, "Las calles lloran libertad/ the streets cry freedom", expresses this sentiment. Nevertheless, Cantillo and the other members of the group always balance their songs of social commentary with songs that touch on issues of everyday life that are great for shaking out stress.

The group has been playing live in Vancouver since the end of 2003 in over 12 different clubs as well as Victoria, Kelowna, Penticton, Nelson, Vernon, and Winnipeg. In addition, Cantillo has reached out internationally in Australia where he traveled solo and played with local backup musicians and in Nicaragua, after 20 years of absence, where he was interviewed on television.

A little closer to home they have been invited to the Miami Latin Funk Festival in April and to the New York Latin Funk Festival in November.

Now that the group has established itself over the past two years, they hope that in five years they could play shows the size of the GM Place here in Vancouver or open for groups like Santana. For this year, their goal is to record their second CD by the end of the year. As Cantillo accomplishes his goals with the group, he draws upon the distant support of an old friend who once told him, "La verdad es de los valientes."



Upcoming concerts in 2006 include:

April 7th at Malone's

April 8th at Gibson's

May 5th at Malone's- (Cinco de mayo celebration)

May 13th at Gallery O in Kitsilano

May 26th at Malone's

June (date to be set) Sunshine Coast Egmont Community Event

June (end of June) Queen Charlotte Islands

July 2nd International Vancouver Jazz Festival free concert

Datelam Park in Yaletown

For more information about the band visit:

www.santalucimusic.com