



**Global grooves** Santa Lucia LFR fuses elements of Latin music with funk, rock and much more to create infectious grooves.  
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### Let the music guide you

Santa Lucia LFR shines some light on non-traditional Latin Funk Rock; heading for the stage in Squamish as part of the SERF indoor concert series

By Holly Fraughton Pique Magazine, Whistler, BC.

Santa Lucia LFR has been spicing up Vancouver's music scene since 2001 with its huge horns and bass, funky breaks, polyrhythmic beats and bilingual lyrical content. Their lineup has branched organically from the original four-piece crew, with a few new people (and their respective instruments) incorporated into the group over the years. Today, their seven-piece musical roster includes German Cantillo on vocals and guitar, Byron Russell on alto sax, Ryan Conroy on bass, Brad Muirhead on trombone, Chiko Misomali manning the drums, Colin Maskell on tenor sax, Juan Carlos "Chocolate" Gonzales on Latin percussion and Miguelito Valdes on trumpet.

"Normally, it's about seven or eight people, it depends. We normally play festivals, and I can bring the whole band, but on smaller gigs, we go down to six, which is still a large number, when it comes to a band."

"Usually, the drummers are the ones that come and go," Cantillo reflected, "But Chiko has been with us for quite a bit, too, so again, it's one of those things that you actually never know who you're going to meet and what they're going to be like with the band!"

"We have fun doing it and we all get along," he laughed, "That helps a lot, I tell you!"

With so many cooks in the kitchen, it's really no surprise that there is a range of flavour thrown into the musical mixture.

"It does play a part in it," he paused, "I have two Cuban guys, and myself - I'm Nicaraguan - so you have the Latin American side of the band. And then Byron, Brad, the brass guys are all Canadian guys, and Chico comes from Malawi via Scotland, actually."

Gee, their bio was pretty on-point when it described them as "a multi-ethnic gathering of friends." While their backgrounds may be diverse, they share a love for Latin funk.

"The guys like the Latin stuff, because some of the horn players, they play in other Latin bands; not on a regular basis, but they've been exposed to that. So when I presented the concept, saying, 'Okay, this is a non-traditional Latin band; traditional in a way that it's large,'" he laughed, "'but the music itself is not going to be!'"

Rather, Cantillo wanted to mix funk and rock fusion with the Latin influences, plus some Nuyorican Boogaloo, West Coast funk and Cuban grooves, of course.

"It kind of brings a unique blend," he said.

See, Cantillo had been playing on Vancouver's music scene, but most of the groups he was playing with were just doing Latin covers, and he wanted to be writing and performing original material.

"So I started meeting people, and I met Byron and I said, 'Hey, I've got this project, would you be interested?' and right off the bat, 'Absolutely, man!'"

And while Cantillo writes most of the music, once he brings it to the band members, the songs are often changed quite dramatically.

"Each of them, they have their own quality and originality as a player, so that kind of changes the dynamics of it."

And there's quite a history behind the name of the band, as well.

"Nicaragua in the late '70s experienced a revolution, with the communist party coming into power," Cantillo explained, "...The Russians actually came and settled, so everything was like Cuba, now! Actually, Nicaragua is only the second country in Latin America that has ever gone through a revolution."

As a small child, Cantillo fled the country with his parents, first landing in Venezuela, and eventually ending up in Mexico.

"It was only him and me before my mom came out, and we used to go to this church and I noticed this little statute of Santa Lucia, which is the patron saint of light, right? It was kind of odd that it was stuck in this dark corner, but I got a picture of that little statute that I took years ago, and I kept it with me, I don't know why."

They eventually moved to the United States before immigrating to Canada. Many years later, when Cantillo decided to start his own band, he drew inspiration from this powerful photograph from his childhood.

"It's kind of believing in something, so I thought, 'Let's call it Santa Lucia; maybe the music can guide us, and give us some light!'"

Their latest full-length album, "Suppressed Anthems," which was just released last October, is a project that is designed to do just that: shed light on some very important issues. As Cantillo explains it, it's a project that contains some powerful lyrical content.

"They are a bit more aggressive, in terms of social reach and social message," Cantillo admitted, "I guess it was thinking in a more social way, around the Olympics, that all this stuff was happening around homelessness and apathy."

"To me, coming from a poor country - I've seen it, right? We're kind of used to it! But here, you see the wealth and how Canada is looked upon abroad, and then you're here and you see all this stuff, and that inspired me to write social stuff."

While the subject matter may be more serious on this album, you can expect the same upbeat overall feel that was on their last album, "The Streets/Las Calles."

On top of their recordings, Santa Lucia LFR seems to be all about the live shows, with festival gigs being a specialty of theirs: they've graced the stage at the Vancouver International Jazz Festival, Vancouver Dragon Boat Festival, and loads of out of town festivals (including The Ness Creek Music Festival in Saskatchewan, Folk on the Rocks Festival in Yellowknife and the Victoria Ska Festival).

They've also spent a considerable amount of time on the road, touring with groups like Ozomatli, Yerba Buena, Los Mococos, The Skatalites and Maxi Priest.

Next up, Santa Lucia LFR is set to headline the second in a series of indoor concerts for SERF this Friday evening at the Ocean Port Hotel. Tickets are \$10 in advance, or \$12 at the door. For more information, visit [squamishmusicfestival.com](http://squamishmusicfestival.com).