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La Santa Cecilia is Learning the Ropes of Independent Music

Written by Hilda Gabriela

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On any given day, we may come across endless EP's, burned CD's, swapped iTunes, numerous music leads, gig invites, etc etc. After all, this is L.A.-city in which you can find an eclectic array of gigs that have you gig-hopping from electro to soul to vallenato to indie to urbano to experimental to mariachi... all on one single strip. And if you're really L.A. savvy, you may even catch a "La de la mochila azul" blasting from an L.A. alley somewhere.

Every now and then, amongst that same pile of endless EP's or somewhere in a dimly lit venue, you hear or see something that strikes a chord. Perhaps it's the guitar riffs that send a chill down your spine, or the lyrics may hit close to home, or (as it often occurs to me) it may just be the way the lead singer wears his jeans that make you take note of this newfound music. In the case of La Santa Cecilia, however, it was neither in my endless pile of EP's nor in some L.A. venue that I came across something interestingly refreshing but, rather, it came to me in a sealed manila envelope. Encased in a fluorescent pink CD sleeve decorated with glitter, ribbon and cut offs of graffiti-art were, to my surprise, six tracks that would take me back to waking up on a Saturday morning to the sounds of Canciones de mi padre and the neighbor's rooster letting me know it's time to get crackin'. It was thus that I was introduced to La Santa Cecilia, a name that was taken in honor of the patron saint of all musicians. By the time this creatively packed EP arrived to me, the six-member folk-experiment group had just wound down from a summer concert series that allowed them to perform all over the city. I caught up with the band's percussionist, Miguel "Oso" Ramirez, who spoke to us about the essence of LSC, and who also gave us a brief rundown on what the band has learned from working as an independent band and what they hope to accomplish.

La Santa Cecilia

Throughout Latin America there is a local band named "La Santa Cecilia" in nearly every town! She's the patron saint for musicians. I proposed the name to everyone because I wanted a name that represented our belief in music not for religious purposes, but rather, for a strong representation of how much we love la musica. That inspired and connected us to the beauty that is Latin America. La Santa Cecilia is a natural expression of who we are as young Mexicans and Latinos raised in Los Angeles. That means we experiment with a fusion of sounds from all over the world with strong Latin and American roots. If La Santa Cecilia could be any ice cream flavor, it'd be all the flavors of the rainbow cause our drummer makes ice cream for a living at Fosselman's in Alhambra! Lol.

"La Santa Cecilia", the EP

Most of the songs on the EP vary in style, but that wasn't done purposely; that's just the way it occurred. But regardless of what style each song may be, each one is our own interpretation. The song "Klezmer", for example, is a cool song because it's a declaration of our hopes and desires to live all the beauty that life has to offer. It's a declaration of traveling with our music, of expressing all that life is about, it's about all of us taking a stand to live our dreams at this current moment in our life. In life,

~~each person tells their own story and La Santa Cecilia just so happens to tell stories through sound, colors and lyrics.~~

“Chicle” is about all the cliché things that friends or family members offer you as advice when you’re feeling down. It talks about that feeling of thinking that all of that advice is just another unclear generic way of them trying to calm your doubts and fears. Instead of naming the song a total “cliché” we turned it into “Chicle” because sometimes it’s better not to give advice and just chew “chicle” (gum)!

There are definitely some things that we would want to change from our EP. We sound so different now than when we recorded, that we wish we could have more money to make a great sounding record. We would like to take it a step further and produce an album sometime in the future. So long as there is cash to do it, we’re in!

The arts & crafts EP cover

Marisoul loves painting, arts & crafts and visual arts in general, so she wanted to take that and do something different for our album covers. It all started with a desire to make things homemade, so she “got creative” on a couple of blank covers. We then took those CD’s to our gigs and the more of them that we gave out, the more people started asking for them. It got to the point where we needed help making them, so with the help of our friends and family members we would get together in what are now our “painting parties” where each person makes as many CD covers as they can and, at the end of the night, we end up with covers that are unique and creative works of art. The interaction we have with our fans by doing the personalized CD covers plays into who we are as a band and shows the relationship that we have and continue to build with the people who follow our music. We hope that we can keep making things that connect people with our music and with one another.

Summer Concert Series

This summer has been a dream come true for us because as part of our summer concert series, we were invited to perform in different venues with musicians who play music from all over the world. We’ve been exposed to playing in all sorts of diverse settings such as at the Japanese American Museum, the African American Museum, the California Plaza, the Ford Amphitheater and various nightclubs. We’ve actually had a few people approach us saying that their moms got them into our music! I suppose that’s what we do; we bring people together from all age groups and walks of life. And it’s really beautiful to see such diversity in color, age, and lifestyle at every show we play. It’s a true reflection of our city of Nuestra Señora, La Reina de Los Angeles.

¡Viva la Independencia!

We’re an independent band. We are a self-sufficient band that does not wait around for people to hand us things. It’s either te avientas o te rajas (either you’re in or you’re out). It’s a lot of work mostly because we do everything ourselves, but we gain a lot of experience from working alone as well. This way, we get to see the fruits of our labor. We also get to learn more about the business side of the music industry. By eliminating “the middle man”, we learn to deal with venues, publishing, booking agents, permits... you’re basically running a small business. But all of that has to be balanced with the most important part, which is simply making good music. We’ve learned to have lots of patience and also, to never be content.

Our music is currently available on CD baby, iTunes and at our shows.

And as far as future plans well, we want to keep growing and learning. We just hope to keep making good music, to fulfill our desires, to share our accomplishments with everyone and to make new friends everywhere we go. Our next show is in September at BMI’s Noches Mexicanas event. We have a Fairy God Mother at BMI who hooked us up with the show, so you can expect a good old Mexican time for sure!

You can check out La Santa Cecilia and their repertoire on their MySpace page here and keep it logged to alborde.com for more LSC updates!

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Hilda Gabriela

About the author:

recently discovered mustard and onion

terrified of midgets

loves to dance with rich old men

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