

Soraya's first CD worth the listen

Self-taught musician offers excellent debut album

BY JAN WILLIAMS
A & E EDITOR

Singer/songwriter Soraya has known almost all her life what she wanted to be when she grew up.

"I remember being five-years-old and hearing my uncle play a traditional Colombian song," she said. "I knew from that moment I was going to sing and play the guitar."

From the soft, soothing sounds of "Suddenly," to the last chords of "Pueblito Viejo," on the Latin-born singer's debut album, *On Nights Like This*, it is evident this natural talent was born to do just that.

Spending the early years of life between her native Colombia and the United States, Soraya soaked in a wide range of cultural and musical influences.

While classical violin was her aspiration, taking her all the way to Carnegie Hall, it was the contemporary realm she chose to explore and eventually create her music in.

Recorded at the Red House Studio and Abbey Road Studio in England, the CD shows some hints of an autobiography. The first single release on the CD, "Suddenly," was written for her husband.

Its rich and melodic qualities and the lyrics speak of a love that was meant to be: "A thousand eyes looking at me/ But yours is the look that goes right/ Through me and I/ Cannot hide from your stare."

"Every time I sing this song," Soraya said, "it rekindles the emotions I felt when I realized he was the one."

In addition to lead and background vocals, Soraya contributes her talents on the mandolin and acoustic guitar. Although pop-oriented, her production team of Peter Van Hook and Rod Argent chose not to use the traditional electric music sound. They felt utilizing acoustic instruments



Colombian-born singer/songwriter Soraya scores a hit with her debut album, *On Nights Like This*.

would reveal the true nature of the songs.

Soraya's musical styles progress in several different directions. The influences of both Joni Mitchell and Ricky Lee Jones can be heard in the more up-beat selections, like "Stay Awhile," "Avalanche" and "Need to Know."

Her subtle story-telling ability is twofold: "I was an English major in college, so I know the value of a good story," she said. "Sometimes I'm inspired by others lives or by imagined situations. I become that reality, then write the song."

Two perfect examples of this are "Ruins in my Mind" and "On Nights Like This," the title cut from the CD. In "Ruins," Soraya weaves the colors of her Latin heritage into a metaphor, likening a broken relationship to earthquake ruins she saw on a trip to Guatemala: "Saw the ruins of a civilization fallen/ Amidst the rubble I stood haunted/ How you and I once built a fortress... and as I walk through I see remnants of you/ All these/ Ruins in my mind."

"Nights" is especially dear to Soraya, as it and the CD are dedicated to her mother's memory: "And I remember the night when I held you in my arms/ Trying to give you the strength, the will to/ Hold on/ And you looked in my eyes and said, 'Baby be strong/ I don't want to leave you but it's time for me to go.'"

Her use of different acoustic instruments, including pan-flute, guitar and bass emphasizes the great love and inspiration that existed between both mother and daughter.

"Pueblito Viejo," sung in Soraya's native tongue, is the only song she didn't write on the CD. This last cut, which embodies her Latin heritage, utilizes both major and minor key modes. It also holds several ironies.

First, it was this Spanish-sung cut that peaked Polygram Latino and Island Records' interest in her. It is also the same song Soraya's uncle played for her all those years ago that inspired her to become a singer/songwriter.

"Strange," she observed, "how life can come full circle."

Calendar of Events

Thursday

Comedy Cafe, featuring R-rated hypnotist Frank Santos, 6-9 p.m., MSU Alcove. Admission: free. For info, call 895-3477.

Mission to Planet Earth, NASA astronaut Thomas Jones, sponsored by the Nevada Wildlife Federation, 7:30 p.m., Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall. Admission: free. Tickets are available at the box office 10 a.m.-6 p.m. weekdays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday or one hour prior to the lecture. For info, call NWF board member Jeff van Ee at 733-2021.

No, No, Nanette, 8 p.m. through Saturday, and 2 p.m. on Sunday, Nicholas J. Horn Theatre, Community College of Southern Nevada, Cheyenne campus. Admission: \$15 adults, \$10 students and seniors 62 and over. For info, call 651-LIVE.

Friday

Collaborations, Department of Dance Arts, 8 p.m., and 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, Judy Bayley Theatre. Admission: \$8 general, \$5 students and seniors. For info, call 895-3801.

Nevada Tales, Tall and True, The Rainbow Company, 7 p.m. through Saturday and Feb. 23-24, and 2 p.m. on Sun-

day and Feb. 24-25, Reed Whipple Cultural Center, 821 Las Vegas Blvd. North. Admission: \$5 adults, \$3 students, seniors and disabled, \$2 children 12 & under. For info, call 229-6211.

Saturday

Ambrosia in concert, 8 p.m., Whiskey Pete's Hotel & Casino. Admission: \$15.95. For info, call 382-1212.

Ballroom Dancing, U.S. Amateur Ballroom Dancer's Association, 7-10 p.m., MSU Ballroom. Admission: \$5 for non-members, \$3 for students. For info, call 645-0706.

Monday

The Hobbit, Theatre Sans Fil, 7:30 p.m., Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall. Admission: \$11.75 to \$29. For info, call 895-3801.

Tuesday

Juried Student Exhibit, Department of Art, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. through March 1, Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery. Reception for the artists, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Admission: free. For info, call 895-3893.

Wednesday

Pirates of Penzance, Opera A La Carte, Charles Vanda Masters Series, 8 p.m., Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall. Admission: \$20 to \$50. For info, call 895-3801.

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