

Quetzal Heats Up Cleveland!

On a cold Wednesday night at an area in Cleveland entitled “Coventry” lies a jazzy high-end, but low-key joint called Night Town. In this club you will suddenly transform into a classy though musically tasteful being; that is if you are not one already. Walking in is like visiting a vintage art museum while having your nostrils captivated by the smell of various gourmet dishes. This is not all mi jente!

From afar I heard a musical kaleidoscope of eclectic sounds; lit by 4 stage lights and on a somewhat intimate stage setting with tables surrounding them. I looked closer and saw all brown faces! “QUE?” I said to myself turning around back to the other side of the wall, “These guys are no Mariachis.” They are a group from East L.A. called, “Quetzal”.

Named after the national bird of Guatemala, this six member band (predominantly Mexican) carried a wide variety of sounds that defeats the original stereotype of a round about everyday Latino/a band.

Quetzal has been around for 11 years, founded by guitarist/jarana/bajo sexto player Quetzal Flores, the band’s grassroots approach to fusing the folk styles of Mexico and Cuba in *son* and *bolero*, alongside tasteful elements of rock and blues, carves an inspiring path in the tiresome music industry. After the successful release of their second album, *Sing the Real* (and subsequent shows alongside the likes of Los Lobos, Aerosmith, Ozomatli, Taj Mahal and Michelle Shocked) Quetzal proved beyond doubt their ability to play intimate clubs and large arenas alike without a hitch, gaining fans at every stop.

While performing you can tell their hearts are into the music as if they are recreating the whole premise of the song. The two lead singers, Gabriel & Marta Gonzalez, are a one, two brother and sister combination. Gabriel is the “stomper” pounding the ground with so much authority, as if he were telling the snow to beware of his hot Latino rhythms.

Marta was captivating; as she was performing for two...she is six months pregnant! She stomped as well, while playing the congas and a wooden instrument with beads around it called (I hope I spell it right) the Chekere. Marta’s singing voice was hard to describe. We always have a habit in comparing great people with other great people. At first, I thought she sounded like a intensified Gloria Estefan, then her voice changed mellow, as if she sounded like Roberta Flack, to say that she sound somewhere in between would be doing her no justice. Let’s just say she sounds like herself and I will let you Mijas decide who she sounds like.

Their sound is so indescribable that their own record company (Vanguard Records) doesn’t know what category to put them in. “Our album gets placed under different sections in the music store. In one store it is under “Latino”, the other under “World”, another under “Latin Rock”.” said Marta.

Quetzal’s lyrics range from all English to all Spanish to Spanglish in some songs. No matter what musical preference you “dig”, Quetzal is guaranteed to keep your feet tapping, bobbing your head conservatively or dancing with your hips moving from side to side. Whether it be folk, salsa, jazz, norteno, tejano, rock, I even heard some calypso; After a Quetzal show you will be introduced to a cultural awakening musically and spiritually. For more information on Quetzal and to listen to snippets of their albums “Sing the Real” & “Worksongs” please visit www.quetzalmusic.org or www.vanguardrecords.com believe me this group is worth your while and them some!

Plus, if you want a place to take your papi chulo or mami chula, like jazz, in the Cleveland, Ohio area, and want a nice romantic dinner at the same place, please visit Night Town

www.nighttowncleveland.com or check out Jim Wadsworth Productions at www.jwpjazz.com .

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