

ABQ LIVE

The Magazine



Posh Nightclub

Inside look at Downtown
ABQ's newest hotspot

NOSOTROS
The Music, the Myth,
and the
Men Behind it

ERNEST DOTY
Paints the World
and Back

JIM GUTHRIE
Albuquerque's own
"Cinderella Story"

FREE!

MUSIC



BY DANIEL CRUZ

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KORI KOBAYASHI

STYLING BY KIMI AMOR

NOSOTROS

20 years strong

Seldom would you hear of a 20 year relationship that still stands strong. Any band with nine members and a genre defined by multiple styles finds it hard to create such strong chemistry. However, Latin music fans in Albuquerque need not search far to find Nosotros, a group that gels so well together that they “make you dance regardless of how well of a dancer you are,” according to bassist, Gilbert Uribe. After 20 years, the band shows no signs of slowing down, and recent performances on the road prove that the bands’ popularity continues to grow. ABQ-Live sat down with the group for an interview and found the secret to the bands’ success, as well as what defines their latin sound.



The Music, the Myth, and the men behind it.

Formed in 1993 by Randy Sanchez in Las Cruces, New Mexico, the group started with only three members. In 2000, Nosotros joined together with Quantum Blue, forming the core of the band with drummer Dennis Jasso. Sanchez has since kept the group together as performers have come and gone, and the current lineup consists of nine members. Sanchez says, "We have evolved throughout the years. We were a smaller group, and we have added instrumentation through friendships and networking." All current members of the group have strong musical backgrounds and have been in the music scene for a long time. Jasso says, "We all study, practice and understand music in some way, shape or form. As a group we communicate and connect with our sound."

Manny Ramirez, the saxophonist, studied his instrument by taking classes in jazz and classical music; he auditioned then tied in with the band in 2008. Ricky Carrido, the conga player, joined the group after moving to Albuquerque. He teaches classes on conga technique and played with Baracutanga, a local Brazilian music group. Gilbert Uribe, bassist, linked in the lineup after being a sound engineer for the group. Shane Derk, guitarist, joined after being featured on the band's second album, and after the tragic passing of former guitar player Jeff Watkins. David Weeks plays trumpet and first started sitting in with the group in 2012. Carlos Fontana, a Costa Rican native, provides the Spanish vocals alongside Felipe Ruibal.

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The sound of Nosotros is in the elements of salsa, cumbia, flamenco, rock and jazz. But with such multiple sounds, it is best to describe the emotion when the group performs and their connection with the audience. Sanchez explains, "We have a strong feeling of where we are and what we need to do in a moment; we all share the extrasensory perception (ESP), and it is felt in the pit of the soul." Nonetheless, the power of Latin music has such a strong appeal, and the band has proven that the genre will never die. When asked how the band keeps salsa and latin music timeless, Jasso says, "It's the rhythm, the groove and the energy that brings people together. Latin music is accessible, making it contagious and that adds to our appeal."

After 20 years, Nosotros are still playing for large audiences. Their longevity is best described by their ability to evolve and still play with great energy and excitement. Ramirez says their success comes from having "great patience and dedication to the band and loving what they do." Recently, they played at the burning of the Zozobra, the San Jose Jazz Festival and the Telluride Jazz Festival, which the band says was their most memorable show. Sanchez says, "Jazz festivals are the best— the range of sound is open and welcoming. Different styles are represented, which is what jazz is all about." These large festivals have been associated with many big names in music, such as the Wailers, Roy Hargrove and Victor Wooten. This adds to the excitement of performing live, and the band members enjoy the company. Uribe says, "To be honored with opportunities to cross paths with those that have inspired us is a blessing and it makes you feel good."

While most shows on the road go well, some come with turbulence. Carrido recalls a riot at a gig in Austin. "It was during a break in our set, and I remember Randy running with his guitar on his back, and I saw terror in his eyes! He ran into a club with a whole bunch of people running behind him with tear gas everywhere and cops running around." Such madness on the road is better complemented by a positive crowd and a successful crew. Derk says, "The crowd brings a lot to the table, but for me, what really helps is a great staff and good sound technicians that make for a great show." Good support is also key to the success of any band when life on the road becomes exhausting. Jasso says, "We support each other through thick and thin. We are a dedicated bunch, even though there are times in which we roll on a spare tire, but we always push through."

Nosotros have released five studio albums, including a new compilation CD featuring their best tracks and a new single titled "Aquí y Allá." Sanchez describes the single as "a new step in the evolution of Nosotros." The band is currently working on their sixth studio album, and they are looking to extend their fan base beyond the state of New Mexico. Carrido says, "Hopefully, with this new album we are working on we can win a Grammy. This band has been working for 20 years and we can push towards that." The band also shares the dream of touring the world, but before this venture begins, Derk says, "I would love to sell out the Pan American Center in Las Cruces in our hometown. I have seen many great acts play there since I was a kid." When asked about groups that Nosotros would like to play with, Sanchez says, "A collaboration with Los Lobos would be a trip." Other names mentioned include groups like Mana, Grupo Fantasma, Marc Anthony, and Los Pericos. Such big aspirations are promising for a group that has already been together for 20 years, but they show no signs of slowing down.

The band's secret to such great teamwork and cohesiveness can be best described in their advice for young musicians. Jasso suggests, "Have fun and be humble; the easier you are to work with the longer you will last." And Sanchez advises, "Do not take criticisms to heart and keep practicing your instrument. You have to think like a team in which everyone's different tasks and parts must be done well." Carrido, being a music instructor, says it best by stating, "The more you know, the less you know, and that keeps you humble."

Nosotros is set to perform their 20 year anniversary show in Las Cruces at the Rio Grande Theatre. They can be seen every Friday in November at the Thunder Road Steak House and Cantina inside the Route 66 Casino.

For more information on the band, tours, albums and more visit:

www.nosotrosmusic.net



From left to right: Felipe Ruibal, Shane Derk, Carlos Fontana, David Weeks, Dennis Jasso, Gilbert Uribe, Randy Sanchez, Ricky Carrido, Manny Ramirez