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QUITAPENAS

PE LIVE: Quitapenas Interview

VANESSA FRANKO: “Hi, I’m Vanessa Franko. Welcome to another edition of PE Live. We’re here at Hangar 24 in Redlands and I’m joined by QUITAPENAS. Thank you guys so much for coming out, I’m really excited. Yeah, I love it! Well you guys are really doing something that’s a bit different for the Inland Empire as far as music goes. Can you talk a little bit about how the band formed and how the sound evolved?”

EDDIE: “I can speak to it. Most of us have been friends since we were in high school, and playing music one way or another, whether rock music, or whatever, so we were already musicians, and at some point, independently we were getting into different rhythms, every kind of music, different types of drumming, and my friend Jon brought an accordion to the group, and with our guitar player Danny he said ‘Hey, listen, I just want to learn how to play it’ and learned how to play it. They played for a while, we messed around, and at some point, he was discussing the sound, this rhythm, and we said ‘Oh, I think that you’re talking about *cumbia* music’ and it was like ‘Yeah, yeah, I want to get one of *those* accordions now,’ because he had a keyboard accordion. So we found one on Craigslist, somewhere in LA… went and picked it up real cheap, and that day we started playing and then just kept playing, and as the group goes on, he’s been learning the accordion, and we’ve been learning rhythms, so it’s just kind of been unfolding slowly.”

VANESSA: “Well you guys kinda have like a mission as a band, that it’s like, you know, when you come out to a QUITAPENAS show, what do you want the audience to feel?”

TOTA: “I like to see people dancing, just having a good time, just kind of forget about whatever might bon their mind that’s bugging them throughout the week or whatever. And it’s just nice to see smiling faces in the crowd, enjoying each other’s company and having a good time.”

VANESSA: “Let me ask, that’s even the name of the band, right?”

TOTA: “QUITAPENAS, yeah, remove worries, remove negative feelings to the best that we can by just playing music.”

EDDIE: “We do what musicians do in general, why musicians are hired for events. You gotta bring that vibe, and our vibe happens to be like dance-y kind of very rhythmic music.”

VANESSA: “So tell me a little bit about how the songwriting process works, especially because you guys have so many interesting rhythms.”

EDDIE: “Woo, yeah, there’s no like real one way. Sometimes, I don’t know, there’s like a beat, and then we start messing around with the beat, and then these just pick it up, pick up on it and the song forms, or Danny comes at us with a song, or Jon comes at us with a song on the accordion and is like ‘I kind of have an idea for a rhythm, this is the song,’ we kind of do it, and then it evolves into something else. Rarely ever is it written down ‘these are the parts,’ –there’s no real like, heavy composer for the band. Everybody kind of understands the music, likes it, and knows what the elements are. We kind of just have been playing long enough as a group…”

TOTA: “We kind of just arrange it, decide what sounds good or what doesn’t, and then play it a bunch of times until it feels right [laughs].”

VANESSA: “So, but, in the live setting, do the songs ever kind of like go in a totally different direction? Like have they changed at all like being in front of a crowd?”

EDDIE: “Some have, sometimes you touch a song in front of a crowd and you play it, and you realize nobody liked it, or nobody really danced, or it’s hard to dance, so you go back to rehearsal and then we’re thinking about how we could fix that, or not fix it, but how we’re gonna use that in a live setting, because most of the time, people come to see us to dance, so you want to provide some of that music. But at the same time, things do change. We’ve jammed on a song at practice, and we show up to play it live and it’s like ‘Whoa, that was way different.’ But you know, you gotta keep a smile on your face and like, let it be, stay relaxed, just let the energy flow, make sure the audience is having a good time, it doesn’t really matter at that moment if the song came out differently, you know?”

VANESSA: “And you’ve attracted like a really eclectic group of fans, right? Because I mean you’ll see some like young people, like that you’ve known, grown up with, people just getting into music, but because of the *cumbia* and a lot of the rhythms, you’ve also seen some older folks come to the shows, too, right?”

EDDIE: “Yeah, we see old people, older Latinos, or older people in general that come out, they… we’ve had people thank us, like thank us for doing this, you know, ‘We thought this was lost, this Latin music.’ But we understand what we’re doing, we totally understand what we’re doing playing *cumbia* or playing *merengue* or whatever, but at the same time, we like the idea of fusing it, or messing around, tossing it around, like seeing whatever happens, and the reaction’s still the same thing, but I think that because we’re from the Inland Empire, because we’re some of us second-generation, first-generation, whatever, we know that we have that opportunity to just kind of be able to mess around with the ‘tradition,’ to not keep traditions, and because of that, people really vibe with us.”

VANESSA: “Well you guys have been having a really busy year. You were at South by Southwest [SXSW], I mean what was that like? I mean it’s a huge music conference.”

TOTA: “[Laughs] It’s a lot of people. Those… honestly, we went into it not really knowing what to expect, but I think it came out alright. I mean, there was so much going on, we hustled it on the streets, we would play on those street corners, we had a couple spots where did play at, it was an actual venue, but for the most part we were just walking around Austin and…”

EDDIE: “Playing everywhere. We also like, we also fundraised on IndieGoGo, we got some cash for that, you know, we got ourselves there, got some grub for us, but we stayed… we camped in somebody’s backyard so we had tents set up, and we all just showed up, set up our tents on our sleeping spot, little shack house… Cody Manos is his name, shout out to him, my buddy from Mexico, he was a good man. Uh, little house, one restroom…”

VANESSA: “That’s a lot of people!”

EDDIE: “Ten people, plus five people in that house… and that experience was awesome coming back to, and like Tota has said, we would like just walk a half a mile down to the streets and then just play, every day, even… we had a gig every night, but every day we were playing.”

VANESSA: “So like, people are just walking around and kind of just kind of hearing your music. Like you get, like nobody gives you a second look, they’re like ‘Oh great, well it stopped.’”

EDDIE: “Yeah, well you can’t really be playing though, this is the weird thing about South by [Southwest]. You can’t just post up and play. They’ll come and be like ‘No, you need a permit,’ Oh, alright, so we would just like move somewhere else and play, and then we’d need a permit, so that was the adventure constantly, but we just kept going. I mean, we were in Texas, so we weren’t going to stop.”

VANESSA: “And you did a day-charter session here too…”

EDDIE: “Yeah, we did, when was that?”

TOTA: “In… April?”

EDDIE: “Yeah, I think it was April… it was in San Francisco at Paraíso Studio, and that was awesome. We were just… we just went up there for that, and that was like a little bonding trip. [We] rolled up, stayed with a good friend Eric, drummer, and went out to the studio the next day and just, you know, had a good time. Played some music, yeah it was cool, it was live, it was just like two hours and then we were out. It was like ‘what just happened?’ it was great, a good experience.”

VANESSA: “So what else is ahead for the rest of 2013?”

EDDIE: “We’re looking to cut an album, release an EP and then cut an album, put it on vinyl, put it on a CD, and then we’re looking to, in 2013, go back to South by Southwest, as a collective with some of the bands that we’re friends with, that we do a similar idea of fusing traditional music and making something.”

VANESSA: “That’s great. And where can people find you online and hear more of your amazing music?”

TOTA: “We have a website, quitapenasmusic.com”

EDDIE: “We can spell it, Q-U-I-T-A-P-E-N-A-S music”

VANESSA: “Well thank you so much for being here, thanks for being on the show”

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