

WOMEN IN MUSIC

Flor de Toloache

push the spirit of mariachi into the future

DAVID SALCIDO
For the Bulletin

Think you know everything there is to know about mariachi? Chances are, you've only scratched the surface.

For many of us living in New Mexico, mariachi is exemplified by roaming musicians singing traditional Spanish songs in crowded Mexican restaurants, or the rare spectacle of the International Mariachi Convention. Even rarer still are the occasional touring female mariachi groups, a blasphemy of sorts to those purists who continue to embrace the old-world traditions of music and machismo.

One all-female group in particular is bucking those tradi-

tions and breaking down barriers for future generations. Taking their name from a sacred flower that blooms along the riverbanks in Mexico – known for its mystical properties in love potions, as well as its use as a poison in larger doses – Flor de Toloache has been making waves in the mariachi and Latin pop scenes for 16 years and have the Grammy awards to prove it.

Core members Mireya Ramos and Shae Fiol have been exploring the roots of both their musical directions and their familial connections ever



COURTESY PHOTOS BY FLOR DE TOLOACHE
Mireya Ramos and Shae Fiol form the core of the all-female mariachi group Flor de Toloache.

since their early days playing in the subways of New York City. Over the years, their sound has grown stronger, even as they push the boundaries of tradition with new arrangements and original songs.

One minute they're belting out a traditional ranchera like "Pero tú no lo ves," the next they're rocking a sassy No Doubt cover ("No sigas (don't talk)"), followed by an original crooner like "Let down." Throughout them all, what captures the ear is the expressive harmonies coaxing passion from the words, the soul of the music laid

bare.

"We did mostly mariachi songs in the beginning but were always adding new things to it," says Mireya. "We tried using different rhythms, which people really loved, and that led to us recording the first album, which was basically some of my songs and some of Shae's songs, and some traditional songs, too."

For Mireya, who grew up with a mariachi father, the music was always a part of her life. For Shae, however, it was initially uncharted waters. "Musically, it touched on what I really wanted to do vocally," she says. "I wanted to be able to belt, and to really emote, so when I started listening to the music I was

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TOLOACHE

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like, 'Oh, yeah, this is really awesome.' The music itself was really different for me, but I was ready for something new."

Spicing things up are a rotating roster of accomplished female musicians, many of whom had never played Mariachi before, joining them in the recording studio and on the road. Assisting them on this leg of their current tour, in support of their fifth album, Motherflower, are trumpeter and vocalist Ruth Nichols, and bassist Stephanie Rio, both from Los Angeles.

"The people we work with are all professionals," says Shae. "I don't know if they truly love the music, but they all give one hundred percent. When we're all on stage it's like a family, a sisterhood. That's where a lot of the energy comes from. It's empowering for those of us playing the music, but also to the people who are there when we rock the stage."

"I think mostly Shae and I are on an adventure, but we really didn't know how far it would go,"

Mireya adds. "We learned as we went, and each brought our strengths to the band. It takes time, especially when you're dealing with people from different cultures. We definitely learned a lot from everybody who has been part of the band."

Still, there are issues to contend with, but the duo takes it all in stride.

"I don't know if we'll ever overcome the prejudices that are inherent in the genre, because it is still a very male-dominated industry," Shae says, "I do think that we are moving through it. Of course we aren't the originators of women in mariachi, but we have enjoyed this platform where we're writing songs and encouraging other women to do the same. Flor de Toloache has grown our own branch on the mariachi tree. It may not be the traditional mariachi that everybody knows, but it's the music that we play, and people seem to like it."

Flor de Toloache will play the Rio Grande Theatre on Wednesday, April 3, 2024. For more information, or to purchase tickets, visit the website at RioGrandeTheatre.org.

Missing teenager located

BULLETIN REPORT

A 13-year-old girl reported missing Tuesday was located in good condition, according to Las Cruces police.

The LCPD sought the public's help when the minor, identified as Emma Marie Robertson, was reported as missing by her family, last seen in

the east mesa area of the city. The call for help was issued across social media platforms.

"The Las Cruces Police Department thanks those who helped disseminate information on this missing person case," the department stated in a news release Wednesday morning.

LCIFF*

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HONORED GUEST

RON PERLMAN

Will receive the LCIFF "Outstanding Achievement in Entertainment" award.

Perlman will accept the award in person and host a screening of one of his best-known movies, "Hellboy", with a question-and-answer session at the Medoff Theater at the NMSU Center for the Arts Thursday April 4th @ 2pm. Free and Open to the Public.

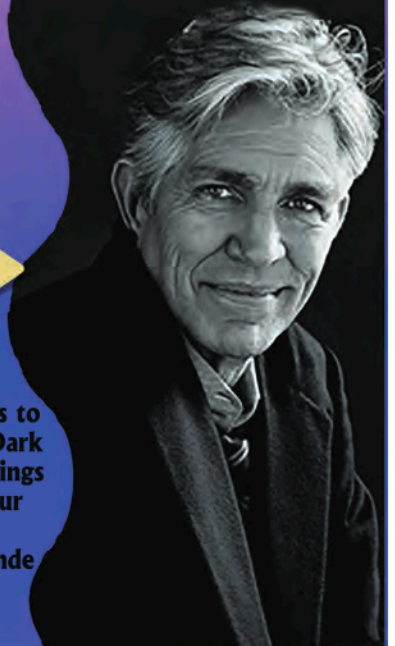


SPECIAL GUEST.....

ERIC ROBERTS

With over 500 film and television credits to his name, including iconic roles in 'The Dark Knight' and 'Runaway Train', Roberts brings unparalleled experience and talent to our celebration of cinema.

Roberts will be speaking at the Rio Grande Theater Saturday April 6th @ 2pm. Free and Open to the Public.



Commemorative 2024 LCI Film Festival poster, painted by Vicki L. Crouse

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