

ALEJANDRO SANZ “Paraíso Express”

Alejandro Sanz released his new recording on November 11th, three years after “El tren de los momentos,” his seventh studio album. Light comes always after dark, and, after that tumultuous time that marked the writing process of his last album, we now meet a more optimistic Alejandro Sanz, one who has reached full maturity and, as always, bursting with talent. He has that unique style when it comes to writing poignant songs, those songs that touch you deep inside, in your profound self, those who captivate you little by little and are able to immerse us completely in their stormy stories.

“Paraíso Express” is the title of this new album and without a doubt his best in a long time: “When I write a song, somehow I look for paradise. I am always looking for it. I’d like to deepen into music and never come back.”

The album’s launch has been preceded by a series of communications via his official Website, www.alejandrosanz.es, sharing daily messages and uploading personal pictures and videos. Also, some of his friends, artists and sportsmen from Shakira to Iker Casillas, Juanes, Rafa Nadal, Eva Longoria, Alicia Keys and Paulina Rubio have all posted video messages sharing what is their true idea of paradise.

“Feeding my site on a daily basis has been nourishing me. I love to get immediate reactions from my fans, to hear back and being able to communicate directly with them. It is quite different to feed the news by myself than having others doing so. I feel as if I was talking to a friend. And I am really happy with all the videos sent by my colleagues, because they have invested a great deal of affection in them. The good news here is that you can truly be just who you are.”

This is all relevant to “Looking for paradise” the album’s spectacular first single, and guaranteed hit that Alejandro wrote and sang together with New York singer Alicia Keys: “We met long ago in Lisbon, Portugal, in a Rock in Rio show. We connected immediately. Then we met again on a boat in New York and we started to improvise, singing and playing. It was magic, impressive. Soon later we got together in Miami and recorded the song. Everything worked perfectly. Alicia is a very pure, spiritual woman, when she does this kind of things; she is genuine when making music.”

Besides this surprising, perfect pop track, sung both in English and Spanish, which will surely turn an international number one hit, “Paraíso Express” includes nine more songs. “It is more of a rock album than the others. It is elegant and includes more positive lyrics; it has a happier, more

rhythmical spirit.” The album was produced by young Puerto Rican producer Tommy Torres: “Working with him has been very easy; he studied at Berkley and has a very solid music education. I told him that I was after a very British, very American pop, with that touch of rock that the songs themselves want. The way I write and sing impacted to a great extent the kind of production we came up with, and he was completely aware of that. We ruled out everything related to *flamenco* or Latin arrangements, but I didn’t lose my *flamenco* ways when singing -I will never lose that. Everything ran in a very natural way. I had worked with most of the musicians, including Dan Warner (guitar) or Vinnie Colaiuta (drums), or I just knew who they were, like bassist Nathan East, someone I have always liked, or pianist Matt Rollings, who always fascinated me.”

Tommy Torres has made three solo albums and has written and produced songs for the likes of Paulina Rubio or Ricardo Arjona; his song “Tu recuerdo,” performed by Ricky Martin and Chambao, recently reached number one internationally. “Paraíso Express” was mixed by Bob Clearmountain, the world famous engineer, who made some of the best albums by Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen or Paul McCartney, among others. “Take any fifteen albums you like, and you’ll see that he mixed ten of them,” explains Alejandro Sanz himself.

This new work represents his return to the greatest songs of his career, much in the way of his unforgettable album “Más.” Once again, Sanz displays the brilliant energy of that moment; he went back to his roots but did not forget everything he learned on the way. Lyrics are pleasantly positive: “First I composed the tune and then I wrote the lyrics. In my last recording, it was the other way around as I improvised lyrics over melody. This time I wrote some lyrics to fit the tune, and then I started moving words up and down following the sense of nonsense.”

His big ballads, “Desde cuando” and “Tú no tienes la culpa,” still echo those of great Italian composers, together with some tracks like “Peter Punk” or “Lola Soledad”, that have a pop rock touch, but still reflect his strong personality. It seems like Alejandro found his true composer’s paradise in this record with his most rounded and compact songs in the latest years. Once again he shows why he is still the most important Spanish musician in decades.

Javier Lorbada

“PARAÍSO EXPRESS” TRACK BY TRACK:

“Peter Punk”: Alejandro Sanz opens the album with a full declaration of principles, supported by all his band, with lyrics full of puns, perfectly reflecting what he is living now that he has turned 40. “This song explains that time passes in a different way for different people. Time goes by, but this doesn’t mean that we have to abandon our goals and dreams, that we have to stop being rebel or even naughty. If you grow up but you don’t want to, you can become Peter Punk.”

“Desde cuando”: “This is my romantic side. This song’s leitmotiv is the following: I have spent my whole life looking for you and now that I have found you are unable to even tell me your name. This is one of the songs with a bigger influence of my album “Más.” In songs like this I revisit much of the essence of that recording; maybe it is something unconscious, or maybe conscience overwhelms me, because the kind of experiences I am living now are very similar to those I lived then. This is the most “Italian” of the songs, the great ballad to sing live”.

“Looking for Paradise”: “It was written between Tommy Torres (the producer of “Paraíso Express”), Alicia Keys, Swizz Beatz and me. I think it is going to surprise many people, because it is a duet made with an artist that does not usually sing duets, and also because it is a song made in Spanish and English, but you don’t need to speak English nor Spanish to understand it. It is a very positive song both musically and lyrically. We speak directly to the listeners, inviting them to search for their paradise within, when we have a tendency to look for it outside ourselves.”

“Yo hice llorar hasta los ángeles”: “It is a *bulería* where I ask for forgiveness, above all, to myself. Composing is a like undressing yourself in a way, and like showing your weaknesses. As I said some time, songs are not only to take revenge, but also to reconsider things. As I did in many other previous songs, I talk of God. I’ve always said that I am a believer, and I have a relationship with him. Inside me I have a space for users and an administrator, and it’s God who has the *password* and he drops by because that space in my head and in my heart belongs to him.”

“Sin que se note”: “It is very important not to be noticed when you look at someone. Because, as soon as you feel that someone’s looking at you, you change your position, you make faces. Musically, this is what I call an elegant rock. It reminds me somehow of the arrangements made by Elton John for his album with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. It has

something of symphonic rock, a song with a great production which sounds gigantic: I love it!”

“Lola Soledad”: “A female friend asked me if this song was dedicated to Lola Flores. It might have been. The world is full of people like “Lola Soledad.” They are women full of nerve, accustomed to life, women who have gone through difficult times, women who are always interesting. I wanted to talk about that cheeky and brave sort of woman and pay her tribute. It is a unique song, with lots of character and a style of its own.”

“Pero esta tarde no te vas”: “I like these lyrics specially, because it lists the virtues of someone that you know that will never be yours, because she is free and doesn’t want to get tied to your life, and doesn’t want you to get tied to hers. During the whole song, he knows it, he knows that she’s about to leave, but the last line: ‘yo sé que eres fugaz / pero esta tarde no te vas’ (‘I know you are fleeting/ but you won’t leave me this evening’) he shows his strength, he shows that he is sure that, after giving her so much, she owns him at least one evening. The song is full of pain, it grows up, and takes you until you embark in it and let yourself go.”

“Mala”: “I should say this is a *copla* reggae of sorts. In the end, the narrator tells us that we men like to be ill-treated, and he recognises: ‘I can’t leave you / I want you to be even more mean’. The song ends being almost a psychedelic rock. It is also a very peculiar song, different from everything I have done to date. I look forward to know it better.”

“Tú no tienes la culpa”: “This is the album’s ballad. I think the piano is played beautifully. The song tries not to blame anybody, not even oneself. That’s why it says: ‘you are not to blame.../ me neither’. I am this way, this is my life, these are my circumstances. I know that when you are by me, the rest of your life disappears. When I say ‘You turn coming back into a beautiful thing’ I always remember something I heard from Manuel Molina: ‘we artists are people who leave... and later come back.’”

“Nuestro amor será leyenda”: “This song tells the story of a distant love, but such a strong one that not even distance can kill it, although they say that distance means oblivion. It is a midtempo, happy and emotional at the same time, as the rest of the album. The title is very exaggerated because I am exaggerated when I love, and I wanted to add that kind of seasoning of distance. Both the tune and the construction somehow reminds me of “Quisiera ser”.

ALEJANDRO SANZ: “Looking for Paradise”

On September Alejandro Sanz released in his official website, www.alejandrosanz.com his song “Looking for paradise”, the first single of his eighth studio album, “Paraíso Express”. This track was written and sung together with New York singer Alicia Keys: “We met long ago in Lisbon, Portugal, in a Rock in Rio show. We connected immediately, it was love at first sight. Then we met again on a friends’ boat in New York and we started to improvise, singing and playing. It was magic, impressive. Soon later we made an appointment in Miami and we recorded the song. Everything worked perfectly. Alicia is a very pure, spiritual woman, when she does this kind of things, she is genuine when making music. In the end the song was written by Tommy Torres (who produces “Paraíso Express), Alicia Keys, Swizz Beatz and myself. I think that “Looking for paradise” is going to surprise many people, because it is a duet made with an artist that does not usually sing duets, and also because it is a song made in Spanish and English, but you don’t need to speak English to understand it, and you don’t have to speak Spanish to understand it. Both musically and lyrically, it is a very positive song. We speak directly to the listeners, inviting them to look for their own paradise, that paradise that very often is inside us, although we insist in looking for it in the outside.”

His new album is, no doubt, his best work in many years. It was released on November 11th, has been preceded by a series of actions on Alejandro’s official website www.alejandrosanz.com . He has been involved in these actions himself, sending messages daily, and even uploading his own photos and videos. Some of his best friends, artists and sportmen, from Shakira to Iker Casillas, together with Juanes, Rafa Nadal, Eva Longoria, Alicia Keys or Paulina Rubio have also sent him videos explaining what means paradise for them: “Feeding this web daily has been like feeding myself. I love to get immediately my fans’ responses, I like to be able to communicate with them and help them communicate with me. It is better to tell something myself than have it told by somebody else. I feel as if I were talking to a friend. And I am really happy with all the videos sent by my colleagues, because they have invested a great deal of affection in them. The good thing of this action is that everybody present themselves the way they really are”.

Javier Lorbada