

Interview Questions: Mango Blue English Version

Hi Alex! Our names are Meghan Cassidy and Lauren Carroccia. We have some interview questions for you in regards to our Spanish class at Assumption College. We hope to see you perform at Assumption during the spring semester, as we have listened to your fabulous music from a compact disc. Here are our questions about your music and life as an artist, as well as some questions regarding the issue of slavery:

1.) What made you want to write your songs in English and in Spanish?

Although I have not written many songs in English, I am considering writing more in English because I am concerned with improving communication about my work among the people who do not speak Spanish. Nevertheless, although I speak English quite well, I do not feel completely comfortable with writing in English, and writing in English would cost me a lot of my work. Also, it has always been more of a challenge for me to write letters because I consider myself to be more of a musician, rather than a poet. However, I continue to try.

2.) What are some of your favorite activities or pastimes that led to your interest in music?

I have always enjoyed music, and since I was a boy I had grown up listening to many different types of music. My parents had a very eclectic collection of classical music styles including jazz, rock, and funk. However, one of my favorite musicians is Elton John (the old Elton John, not the artist of today). He inspired me to try to learn how to play the piano. As I grew up, I came to know more and more styles and artists in the music industry. Although I began touching upon rock music, my musical flavor evolved and grew. I do not consider myself a specialist in any private music style, but I feel that I have a musical culture that has permitted me to appreciate the music of different places of the world, and at the same time this has influenced my development as an artist.

3.) What are some popular messages that you try to give your audience through your music? What are some important values for you with your popular music?

I think that music is an incredible way to join together with people, and to transmit ideas, feelings, and emotions. Above all, I believe that one must communicate a positive message, despite all of the bad things that pass by. Artists have the power to communicate, and their songs can help to create conscience, while also offering happiness and optimism. Pitifully, we live in a time period where the commercial music obliges many musicians to create music for the market, not for the people. Also, there are many negative messages that are affecting how the new generations interpret values and human essence. With Mango Blue I try to offer music that causes people to feel well, and at the same time causes them to think. I also try to speak of things that affect all of us as human beings. Nevertheless, I do not consider my work a clear social message. I believe firmly in the power of music like the “doctor” of the spirit.

4.) Why did you name your album “Immigrant Blues”?

The title of the album is the name of one of my songs but at the same time this is the title of the album because I am an immigrant. Also, a majority of the members of the band are immigrants as well.

5.) Do you prefer to play instruments, or do you prefer to sing? Why?

I like to do both; play and sing, but I enjoy composing and doing arrangements the most. I do not consider myself to be a great singer, neither a noticeable instrumentalist. The little things that I do, I do well and entertain a lot of people in these ways. I am very conscious of my limitations and my talents, which allow me to have my own sound and artistic identity. What I cannot achieve in my instrument, I try to compensate in my compositions.

6.) Do you have other interests besides your music? If there are other interests, what are they?

I really like the movies and to read Latin-American literature, but most of my free time I dedicate to the music. It is very difficult for me to be able to live off of only my music, which obliges me to work in another field. I am artistic programmer for The House of The Culture, since many years ago and it is a work that I like a lot since it is related to the art and has permitted me to produce concerts and cultural programs for the community. In spite of the fact that is an important job, ideally I would like to be able to dedicate myself 100% to music, perhaps some day.

7.) Some of your songs describe slavery. What is your opinion on this theme, and why do your songs speak about this idea?

The song "Past Present" mentions slavery, but it besides is a tribute to human spirit and to the inheritance of Africa in the music of the world. In spite of the fact that many people had to suffer unimaginable shortages, they managed to maintain their identity and at the same time to influence the development of world music. I believe that is important to always learn about the history, to not commit the errors of the past again. Nevertheless, at times when I see everything that is passing in the world, I feel that we repeat terrible errors again and that we fail to grow as species. Nevertheless, I think also that the hope should never disappear, and that always "there are fruits of the pain, in the mud a beautiful flower can grow".

8) What are your plans for the future with your famous music? Where do you go to sing and what is your favorite part of fame as an artist? What are your goals as an artist?

Wow, thanks for calling it famous, although I do not feel that my music is famous nor that my career has arrived at something close to fame. The fame for me is not important. If it comes and permits me to be able to do what I love, I would be very happy. But I do not make music seeking to be famous, more well I seek to be able to

create always and of feeling me happy and carried out in the process. The day that I stop enjoying music I will seek another channel for my execution as a person. For now, I want to be able to touch my music always and to be able to continue composing music that the spirit fills in me. If in the process I am famous, I welcome it! It wanted to be able to record another CD of the music of Mango Blue. I have a total of 28 original songs and wanted to be able to record them all and to share them with the world. Also I want to continue exploring my work of composition in the music of the Equator.

9.) Is your inheritance a large influence in your music?

For many years I have been playing music with influences from the music of Cuba and the Caribbean, as well as also of the Jazz and the Funk. In Mango Blue, I have a pair of themes that have a small Ecuadorian "flavor", but the majority of the themes have more influence of the Afro-American and Afro-Latin-American music. Nevertheless, I always had a parallel life of composition of Ecuadorian music. A few days ago, I managed to complete a dream of many years, that of recording a CD of my Ecuadorian original music. I believe that it is more important than I have been able to produce in my artistic career, since is something very close to my roots and to my people. I think I am able to continue in that direction.

10) If a person does not know a lot about the music of Mango Blue, how would you describe this type of music? What are some main ideas that a person should know on Mango Blue?

In spite of the fact that the music of Mango Blue has very strong influences of Afro-American and Afro-Latin-American music, in the end it responds to the search of an original voice. Mango Blue has a "little of everything". It is very difficult for me to give us a letterhead, as there are so many styles of music in the world. I consider that a "salad" of rhythms and flavors. It is not commercial music, but I consider that is very accessible, above all for the people with the mind and the open heart. It is music that if you want you can dance to it, or you can listen to it. I think also that it is music with a lot of energy and a positive message.