

MUSIC - local artist makes it doubly good sound



Singer-songwriter LEILA has not only released a new album, it's a double album. And a concept album. And a multi-genre, multi-cultural album. The Waterbury-based performer has put 21 songs, ranging in style from smooth jazz to rhythm-and-blues, into a two-disc collection titled "Soul Ascension", released in late February.

Her first CD since 2007's "Of Life", "Soul Ascension" follows an introspective songwriting journey that not only crosses cultures, but offers spiritually healing words and positive messages to listeners, while encompassing a melting pot of musical styles.

The first single "Sexy Saxophone", featuring Eric Darius and Funkee Boy, was released to smooth jazz radio stations with raved reviews. Darius is a top Billboard Smooth Jazz artist, and Funkee Boy is Bobbi Tammaro, the notable Waterbury-based producer, songwriter, and recording artist.

"The song was one of the last ones written, and out of a creative session we ended up with a beautiful ballad", Leila said. Funkee Boy said that although it is unusual for musicians to release a two-disc album, it was the right fit for Leila.



"She felt there was a lot to say." Funkee Boy said, adding that the double-disc is separated into a disc titled "Healing" and another titled "Ascension", which Leila said are like the "ying and yang" to each other. Leila added, "It's just a journey I went on musically. And I went on until I felt it was complete".

The compact disc also features appearances by other notable performers, including world-renowned flamenco guitarist Romero and rap artist Ernesto, among others. Another track, titled "Change", is produced by grammy award winning producer KC Porter, who has worked with Santana, Janet Jackson, and Rick Martin among others.

Leila and Funkee Boy have not planned a local CD release party yet, because they are deciding whether to put together a tour or just a local show, since it often contains dozens of musicians and dancers and costumes. "We prefer not to scale down her show to often, and to do that we need the right venue", Funkee Boy said.

One of Leila's last large scale live concert performances was, oddly enough, at Michael Jackson's Neverland ranch during a benefit for the ONENESS Organization. Jackson was at the show, and Funkee Boy said it was a fantastic event. Landing a gig at Neverland Ranch is just one example of how both Funkee Boy and Leila have found great success in heading up their own careers without the help of record company giants. "When you stay independent you own all the copyrights and merchandising rights". Funkee Boy said. "You might have a lot less budget, but you also have less expenses and debt".

Merchandising is also a part of Leila's artistic bent. The singer is also an artist, and designed many illustrations that she now uses on different pieces of merchandise from, tile boxes and mugs to shoes and T-shirts which Leila considers just part of getting her message across, with snippets of poetry that never were used in a song lyric, or positive affirmations that she uses in all her music. "It's just another aspect of myself", she said, adding that she takes on inspirations from various cultures for not only her songs, but her art as well.

Music fans can visit Leila's website, find her on Facebook, and purchase her music from the links below.

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