

## The Mélange of Lola Morales

*A global explorer shares her world of melodies with Detroit.*

*Musical traveler Lola Morales leads us on melodic journeys from jazz to Latin dance and pop. Her music has taken her all over the world. For now, that wandering song has made her a fixture in the artistic landscape of Detroit.*

*Upcoming performances:  
Every Friday in September  
La Dolce Vita  
17546 Woodward Ave., Detroit  
8-11 p.m.  
Reservations at 313-865-0331  
LDVRestaurant.com*

*LolaMoralesMusic.com*



Lola Morales covers a lot of ground. Her life is one voyage after another, carrying the majestic Latina princess from the hills of San Francisco, to the clubs of Ecuador, to the pubs of London, and upscale lounges all over Asia, before landing in Detroit. Musically, Morales sails from infectious Latin pop to smoky jazz ballads. Her silken alto is the thread that ties it all together, as she floats from reggaeton to funk, from English to Spanish, with the ease and confidence of a seasoned traveler.

"I feel kind of like a chameleon," Morales reveals. "Depending on the venue, I'm shaping and molding myself to please their clientele." As a working musician, Morales is adept at impressing audiences the world over. Her passport bears the evidence of one-month and three-month residencies in locales as varied as Indonesia, Singapore, Japan and Turkey.

Born in San Francisco to Nicaraguan parents, Morales is fluent in English and Spanish, but it isn't always easy communicating with musicians who speak other tongues. "Every culture has a different spin on things, and that's true in music as well," she says. "There are different vocabularies, and different ways to say things. It's still music, but there's always a learning curve."

Because she may only have a couple of rehearsals with players after landing in a new region, Morales has to relate very quickly to the musicians to get what she wants. "It's made me a stronger musician and a much better

bandleader because I now speak many languages in music."

The mélange of cultures she has encountered in southeastern Michigan was something of a surprise to Morales when she moved to Detroit three years ago. In one blog post, she wrote, "This year I palled around with a most eclectic and colorful (and utterly outrageous) lot from all different regions of the world—Latinos, Armenians, Italians, Americans, Russians—you name it and they are all living in Detroit. Who knew?"

"You can't help but be affected by all these cultures," she marvels. Even the musicians she works with in Detroit bring a cross-cultural flair to her sound. Stalwart Armenian-American guitarist Sean Blackman and sensational Senegalese bassist Pathe Jassi are two of her favorite collaborators.

"I think all of us together are here mixing things up, like it's a big stew," she says.

Morales' stepfather, James Rozycki, is a Detroit native. After a stint in Indonesia, she came to Michigan in 2006 to spend a couple of months with the man who raised her, and to record

some of her original material. Recording took longer than she expected, and once her touring schedule resumed, the months flew by and turned into a couple of years.

Between tours, Morales recorded first an EP and in 2008, released her first full-length album, "Write My Story."

On "Write My Story," Morales blends contemporary R&B and funk with rock and Latin jazz flavors for an eclectic but acces-

sible record. She describes the project as the perfect marriage between her own Latin pop and the gritty Detroit rock of her producers Al Sutton and Eric Hoegemeyer.

This summer, Morales spent more time in Detroit, playing festivals and club dates around town. Her goal for the next year is to branch out more in the United States, hitting cities like Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles and Austin, where her style should go over well. She is also writing music for her next project, and is toying with the idea of recording an album entirely in Spanish.

And though wanderlust may eventually call her to resume her journeys, for now, Morales calls metro Detroit home. "I may move. I may not," confesses Morales, who lives in Hamtramck. "I'm not sure where I'll lay my hat and say, 'This is my home for the next 10 years.' I don't know about that. But for now, I'm here." **B**

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