

by Hal B. Selzer

local noise

"I'd like to call it 'freedom pop' because while it has a pop sensibility, I do it my way and don't feel limited by the traditional ways to make music," says Clara Lofaro, about the eclectic mix of pop, folk, and rock on her new CD, *Perfekt World*. "Also lyrically, it's all-embracing and all-empowering. But you can call it what you want to, I would just listen to it."

Clara brings a wide spectrum of influences to her writing, which seems to know no limitations as far as style or genre. "It is very instinctive," she explains. "If I had my way, I'd sit in my room and write a new song every day. I get inspired very quickly and easily to write songs. Then, I either sit at my writing book to start the melody and lyrics, or I start at the keys, jotting things down as I go. Sometimes I know what I'm going for when I begin, but mostly I listen to the sounds, rhythm and words in my head, letting it all flow and edit later."

Her influences reflect the confluence of musical styles, including Gaudi, Ojos De Brujo, Patty Griffin, John Lennon, John Legend, Meshell Ndegeocello, Cassandra Wilson, Bill Withers, old Italian folk music, old Balkan folk music, Annie Lennox, Joni Mitchell, and Sting, among others.

Clara has a stable of musicians that serve as her backing band, both live and in the studio. "I have an American band for my shows in the states and a Canadian band for my shows in Canada," she relates. "The American band consists of Jeremy Goldsmith, a busy New York City-based guitarist who has appeared on albums with John Legend, Josh Dion, Lenny Pickett, and Ryan Adams, and Ryan Krewer for the quirky sound effects, back-up vocals, and flugel horn who played in the late '90s ska explosion phenomenon The Derringers. Jamie Alegre is my New York City-based drummer and backbone. Forever modest and Canadian by descent, he says he 'plays for the music.' On acoustic and electric bass is Jordan Scarella, who has played bass on my last two albums. He raps too, but not on this one."

Although New York-based, for Canadian shows she has another set of musicians. "In North Country the band consists of Benjamin Rollo on drums, who beats skins with rigor, heart and feel. You can catch him in the act with Brian Macmillan, Matt York Band, Nine Mile, Shawn Kellerman and Dawn Langstroth. Tyson Kipfer, bass, has played with jazz trios on cruise ships, with Celtic bands on the east coast, and sports some natty dreads! Finally, producer, writer, musician and band aid, Darryl Romph is the backbone for the Canadian band, and formerly of the Mike Erb Band, dabbling in the dark arts of country to metal and all things in between."

The large group of musicians she works with keeps things fresh for Clara. "I've played with what feels like a brothel of musicians," she laughs. "It has been very important to me with the release of my new album to get diverse musicians with a pop sensibility, who were open to mastering a new approach and sound, and who could sing. I tested a few guys out until I came up with this amazing line-up. I have to give my first-class New York drummer, Jamie, credit for recommending about half of the band. The rest were musicians I've played with before."

The Cutting Room in New York recently hosted the release party for the new album, which also featured a preview of the video for *Perfekt World*. The show was hosted by Robert Funaro from the Sopranos, who is a fan of Clara and her music.

The new album was produced by Mark Turrigiano, who has risen to fame recently with the success of his work with Ingrid Michaelson. "I had self-produced my previous album, *Black + Blue Pearl*, and knew what I wanted for this one and that I needed to find the right producer to make it as powerful as I knew it could be. Between budget constraints and high

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expectations while being an independent artist, I was near gonna give up when I came across Mark's info from Ingrid Michaelson's page on MySpace. I contacted him, went to his studio and saw the 'trash kit' he had assembled from garbage cans and stuff and I was sold. He listened to a demo I had of 'Bitch Go Off' and 'Fall' and he was sold too."

As far as the future, Clara just hopes to continue

gaining exposure. "I hope to tour the world playing music, write songs for other established artists garnering a name as a respected songwriter and artist, and using my talent and hard work to help ACF (Action Against Hunger) eliminate poverty around the globe," she gushes. "Twenty percent of the *Perfekt World* album sales go to the organization."