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Feature

By Stephen Centanni

With members shuffling in and out and various obstacles with Curb Records, the life of deSol was in a state of limbo. After their successful self-titled debut, this Latin Rock outfit was inches away from calling it quits until fate and a tour through the Middle East revitalized their musical work ethic.

Speaking with guitarist/vocalist Albie Monterrosa the day after the release of their latest album "On My Way" (Two22 Records), I realized that quitting was not an option to deSol. Instead, they found committed members, piled into the studio and created an album that is already shooting up the Triple A Charts.

SC: How was the CD release party last night?

AM : It was great, man! We've been having a good time. It's been such a long time in the works. We started the record in November and didn't know if we were going to have distribution or a label. We didn't really know where to go or how to go about it.

We just knew we had to do a record and keep going. We worked hard, and we made it happen for ourselves. Thank God! It's just a big blessing, and we're all positive and feeling good about it.

SC: I know that you've had a lot of past frustrations with your former label. How has Two22 Music been treating you guys?

AM : It's great. The past label thing was, you know, a shot in the heart, but you live and learn. When we started the band, we said that we were going to do this with or without a label. That was our mantra. This was something important to us and something we wanted to do. We wanted to make a living playing music. None of us wanted to go back to the daily grind from nine to five. It took awhile for us to become full-time musicians on the road. You get signed and you start realizing, "Wow! We can really make this happen," and everything was meant to be. So, we put the word out, and the Two22 music guys came on board. It's an indie thing, and it's being promoted that way and pushed that way.

There is a certain amount of major label energy going into it and some money going behind it, of course. So, it's really panning out. If you look at the charts this week, we're number 20 on the Triple A Charts, and we're the only indie act on the charts, which makes me real happy.

SC: How would you compare "On My Way" to your debut?

AM : I would say that it's definitely a maturing and a coming of age. I matured as a songwriter, I believe. I kinda didn't want to settle on just a Latin rock record. That's what we were sold for as we traveled. My producer Jon Leidersdorff said, "Albie, just write songs. Write whatever you want. Don't be critical; don't squash the ideas before they come out. Continue your search as a songwriter, and we'll see where it fits at the end of the day."

So, with that encouragement, I didn't have to worry about sounding a certain way. I didn't have to worry about the foundation or formula. With that said, there are songs that just feel great and songs that are close to my heart.

That's all we can really wish for in the band is songs that are close to our hearts and still have interesting arrangements and that feeling that after you listen to it that something good went on tape. I've been getting e-mails from people who already got the record, and they feel a positive energy from it. That's real encouraging to us. We always want to push that side of ourselves. We really want to tap into the positive.

SC: Along with your frustrations with your label, you also had quite a few line-up changes over the past year. How are the new guys working out?

AM : Everything's working again. That's the hand of fate. You go out on the road for two years, and a couple of guys you figured you'd be doing it with and in the trenches with don't want to do it anymore, or they don't like the road. So, our guitar player Soto was with us for five years. It was a blow when he told us that he wanted to leave and pursue his own things. For like an hour after we had that initial conversation, I was thinking, 'Should we keep going?' Then, I said, 'What am I stupid? Am I going to let one guy or a few people take me away from the dream and what I've always want to do and what people like?'

We see the response of the audience and how we touch our fans. I'm like I want to keep growing. There's not one guy that going to do this. The music is so much bigger than each individual member. So, we kept going. The hand of fate comes and hands you what you need at that moment. Thankfully, we were at home recording at Asbury Park, and there was a hometown guy there, Kevin Ansell. He actually had been signed to Epic with a band called Highway 9, and he was looking for his next move.

Because we were at home and Jon Leidersdorff knew him, he was like, "Why don't you go and hang out with deSol and see if anything clicks." It clicked so well that he never went back and ended playing on the entire record. It's working out great. Our new drummer Ronnie (Shields) is actually our first drummer from years ago, but when we went out on the road, he couldn't come for some certain reasons.

Then, he we are! We always look at deSol as an entity that will keep going, and we always want it to keep going. People come out to the shows, and they dance and have a good time. They laugh; there's a big celebration. We put our careers into the hands of our Creator, and that is first and foremost. Whatever God wants us to do, we'll do. We're a band that lives together, eats together, prays together, and we know that we'll be taken care of as long as we keep looking at the big picture and humbling ourselves. The music comes through us and doesn't belong to us. That's a good question, though. At the time, I didn't think it was going to pan out, but thank God it all makes some sense now.

SC: Last year, deSol did a tour of the Middle East in support of the troops. What was that experience like?

AM: It was life changing for all of us, and it was what we came back to right before we started the record. We all got back from the Middle East after hearing the stories, seeing the war, being thrown into it, living like our brothers and sisters in the armed forces, living on bases with them, eating with them, sharing stories with them, hearing their stories about their struggles and missing their families and realizing the sorrow that's on the planet right now, not only on our side but also the side of the people of Iraq.

To us, we realized with our heavy hearts that it was so sad to see the other side as well. We came back with a broader perception of the world. We were there at Ramadan. It was beautiful hearing the chanting over the speakers in Kuwait and also Iraq. It was mind blowing to connect.

You hear about it on the TV and you see it on the TV, and you don't know it until you're there. We came back with our foundations turned upside down. Some of us went into hiding, and some of us went into the studio. Little by little, we all ended up in the studio realizing that was where we needed to be.

"On My Way" is the representation of that. The record speaks about healing, speaks about transcending, speaks about getting closer to your roots. With that foundation, we realized that we were on our way to a better way.

SC: With the new album out and the tour, how will deSol spend the next year?

AM : We want to spend it traveling and building. We always say we just want to build, and we've been building since we've started. Even when we're 60, we'll still be building new audiences. We want to tour. We're doing deSol TV, which we want to evolve into a network. Eventually through the Internet, we could do shows or conscious segments.

Andy is doing something about being more green and environmental. I have an idea for segment called 'Mi Casa, Tu Casa.' It would be a show where I could sit down with different people in the business, different spiritual leaders, writers, just whoever I'm interested in. We just want to get closer to our fans. It's just a time in history where healing should be at the forefront, and we want to give and give and not take.

Contact Stephen Centanni at scantanni@lagniappemobile.com.
