Erene Mastrangeli: Finding Purpose Within the Chaos

Sara Krevoy (January 07, 2018)

Italian-born singer-songwriter Erene Mastrangeli–who currently resides in NYC–reflects on the journey that brought her to pursuing music in the US, her experience in the music industry, and her upcoming album Love, Shine.

Spontaneous, serene, authentic, purposeful–Erene Mastrangeli [2] is an Italian-born songstress whose very essence is embodied by her music.

Inspired by a blend of both Italian and American musicians, Mastrangeli creates a bilingual genre of sound that she labels “sophisticated pop.” Her music is rich with intricate harmonies, reflecting a complexity the singer is spiritually drawn to. But the songs are also intentionally melodic, so as to be easily remembered by audiencences over a long period of time.

Mastrangeli’s musical influences include artists such as Sting [3], Stevie Wonder [4], Joni Mitchell [5], Carole King [6], Pino Daniele [7] and Fabio Concato [8], who exist in the realm of pop, but at the

same time produce layered music which is steadily enjoyed even as decades pass.

“I would like my music to have more of that eternal quality to it, not trendy or fashionable, but something that stays,” she explained.

Now anticipating the release of her upcoming album Love, Shine, the singer-songwriter currently resides in New York City. It is here that her journey of self-discovery has led her, and where she persists to thrive as an artist and influencer.

Mastrangeli’s path to the US, and to NYC, was not always so clear cut. What brought the chanteuse-style songbird to pursuing a career in the music industry is a dynamic series of twists and turns, woven together by a central thread: her instinctual passion for music and desire to contribute to the experience of others. Ever changing still, her course into the music world is one that parallels the fluidity of human existence.

“Something took over, more than me deciding ‘this is what I want to do,’” Mastrangeli said of finding her way. “It was just something in me that came through. Only now, in the last few years, there has been a process of becoming more and more conscious of the purpose of my music– why I’m doing it and what my message is.”

From Torino to New York City:

Born in Torino [9], Mastrangeli has been surrounded by music from an early age. Her father is an amateur guitarist who pushed his two daughters to play instruments as kids. She started singing very young, and then at age seven began playing the guitar. From there, Mastrangeli experimented with the piano, the instrument with which she composed her first song when she was 12 or 13 years old.

“Music has always been part of my life, and I have to say I’m very grateful for that because it’s been my sort of companion,” said the artist.

Though gifted with a natural talent and attraction to the musical realm, Mastrangeli was not always interested in pursuing a career in the music industry. She first considered career paths in both real estate and psychotherapy while she continued to develop musically as a much more personal venture, eventually constructing complete songs out of her poems and instrumental music she had composed.

“I found myself into it, there wasn’t really a moment when I decided I want to sing for people,” the songwriter explained, “Actually, I didn’t want to sing for people. Until I was 19, I said I would never sing for anybody, I was doing it for me.”

In the end, Mastrangeli’s path led her right back to music. In her last year of high school, she came across some classmates who were looking to start a band. They wanted a male voice, but despite her aversion to performing as a career Mastrangeli found herself compelled to volunteer as a singer for the band. They started the group, performing rock music (Jimi Hendrix [10], Led Zeppelin [11] and Janis Joplin [12]). And Mastrangeli loved it.

A few years later, Mastrangeli was given the opportunity to work as an au pair in San Francisco for fellow musician Giuseppe D’Agostino [13], whose music she admired. And thus began the young artist’s journey to the US, a place where much of her musical identity and enthusiasm for her craft was nourished. During her stay, D'Agostino helped Mastrangeli record her first demo. The last song she wrote for the project is called “San Lorenzo [14],” a track which the songwriter still considers one of her best.

“I fell for San Francisco. [D’Agostino] gifted me a guitar and I would take it to the ocean and to Golden Gate Park and try to write,” Mastrangeli recalled. “There was something that gave me inspiration and freedom.”

After a few months, Mastrangeli returned to Europe, where she had a truly “wild” experience singing

in a Swiss traveling circus for eight months. Yet, at the same time, a desire developed inside her to return to the States. So she went back to Italy for a year and saved money working two jobs in order to pay her way across the Atlantic.

“The idea was always to come back to the US because I had this developing experience as an artist here,” Mastrangeli said. “This is where I was sort of born as an artist. My songwriting developed so much and there was something here that fed this gift. I found here a freedom that I couldn’t feel in Italy. I was given complete control to do whatever I wanted with my music.

Mastrangeli admits that her ending up in New York was random. It was a much closer destination than San Francisco, and therefore a more affordable voyage. The plan was to one day move back to the Gold Gate City. But the artist admits she fell in love with NYC and decided to stay.

Experiencing the Music Industry:

“I think that the beauty of being in New York is that you feel less of a foreigner because so many people here are foreigners,” Mastrangeli explained.

As both a creative pursing her craft outside her native country and as a female in the American music industry, Mastrangeli holds a unique, crucial perspective on what it means to be a musician in this country.

In terms of being a bilingual Italian artist in the US, Mastrangeli doesn’t feel it has disadvantaged her thus far. Although she has felt more like a foreigner in other parts of the country, in NYC the singer has felt a stunning acceptance and encouragement, especially in performing her Italian songs.

“In New York Italian culture is everywhere,” she said. “But in other parts of the country I feel different. Still, there is always curiosity, never hostility. I feel there is equal opportunity that way.”

As a woman however, Mastrangeli revealed, the difference in experience is much more obvious. Just as we have seen come to light in Hollywood recently, the music industry is no stranger to the institutionalized normalization of sexual harassment. Many female artists have been trained to internalize not only their own encounters with victimization, but also those of other women around them.

“You would think is an artistic industry so it is more open, but it’s not,” Mastrangeli explained. “It can be actually be more conservative than other industries. A lot of men are still in charge. I think what is mostly upsetting is I’ve had experiences of playing with male musicians, accomplished professionals–never in my band, thankfully–and there was a lot of objectifying women in my presence. As if I was a human being with no gender.”

Mastrangeli also expressed frustration at the inequality of standards faced by women in the music industry. She related that the issue is twofold: women are seen as generally less capable of reaching an expert aptitude in their craft, therefore those reaching success are automatically assumed to have sold themselves to get there.

“There is this assumption that if a woman is talented she “plays like a man,” the artist said. “What does that mean? It means that she’s really good at what she does, and it’s assumed that kind of familiarity with an instrument is more of a man’s world.”

The singer also highlighted another pressure that most of her male counterparts don’t seem to be stressed about: aging. Pointing to her lightly salted curls, Mastrangeli explained that she is not a “spring chicken” anymore, and that she sometimes worries that her changing image will take away from attention to her career. She also recognizes that any transformation of the situation must come from the strength and unity of female artists themselves.

“I think part of what I want to bring to the world is to inspire other women to keep doing what they’re doing and not care and just be who they are and do their thing,” Mastrangeli asserted. “Let’s actually bring a difference and not cover all these things up. I want to be an example that you can

keep doing what you love, and I want to give permission to other women to not care. We have a lot of work to undo and a lot to heal."

And Mastrangeli is up for the challenge. The singer-songwriter aspires to create a shift in human consciousness with her music, one what will impact the global community and give a voice to positivity and compassion despite chaos and destruction that seems overwhelmingly present today.

An Upcoming Album:

This intention is especially evident in Mastrangeli's latest project Love, Shine. The album's title track was written in response to the 2016 Orlando shooting [15] in a gay nightclub, the deadliest mass shooting in US history at the time it occured. With the LGBTQ community having been hit firsthand, the songwriter was propelled to express her reaction.

"I am a gay artist, so it's important for me to speak about this stuff and support my community," said Mastrangeli. "Because at this moment in time when women are speaking up, the LGBTQ community is very threatened by this administration, and I felt an urge to continue to speak about these issues of inequality and discrimination there too."

Mastrangeli has announced her collaboration with several LGBTQ organziations in a crowdfunding campaign for the launch and promotion of Love, Shine. She hopes to partner with nonviolence and anti-gun organizations as well. The album is a remembrance of Orlando, but also a momentum driven by ambition to touch as many people as possible with the project's messages.

"I was at this pivotal point where I thought humanity just lost it," "So I wrote this song 'Love, Shine.' It's an invocation for love to just come and shine because I don't seem to see it anywhere right now. The theme of the album was to bring this peace and this love to the world."

This mission, which Mastrangeli developed on her life's journey of self-discovery, is one that may have been determined since birth. Her name, "Erene," means peace in Greek. She has always been passionate about her name, but only recently did she discover its linguistic significance.

"Spirituality is part of my path. I just always sought something, and so music, for me, is a vehicle of connection," Mastrangeli began, "Because of the immediacy of music, I think that it is very powerful, it speaks to the soul so directly. For me now, I think it is very important to focus on messages of hope. My goal is to help people find beauty in humanity, and to really encourage people to focus on their gifts, especially at this moment in time."

To discover more on Erene Mastrangeli and her upcoming album Love, Shine, please visit: https://www.erenemusic.com/ [2]

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