

REVOLVER

SANTIAGO MAGAZINE

Music > Features and Profiles

Having a Beer with Nano Stern

Written by **Kevin Dorney** - 03/10/2013 - 05:00

Back in town for just one day before he jets off to Vancouver on his first Canadian tour, internationally acclaimed Chilean Folk musician Nano Stern takes time out to talk to Revolver about his city.



Nano Stern (photo by Kevin Dorney)

It's a relatively mild summer afternoon as I make my way to Plaza Italia in downtown Santiago to meet Nano, the 27 year old troubadour who is hailed as the new leading voice of Chilean music. He emerges from the Baquedano metro station with his trademark smile and flowing hair and takes us to one of his favorite Santiago haunts, Fuente Alemana, to chat over one of their many artesanal beers.

First of all, Nano, welcome home to Santiago. You spend a lot of time touring and on the road, roughly ten months of the year. What do you like to do when you come home?

"Usually I sleep, a lot. I like to spend time with my family, my friends of course, but I do try to go out and catch up with the local music scene here in Santiago. There are a couple of places that I like to go which are always interesting. For example, just down here along Merced you have the galería with all the music shops as well as the instrument shops. Usually after touring I have to take my gear, which has been destroyed, to the technicians down there. It's kind of like the doctor for me."

Last week marked the third anniversary of the earthquake which struck in Maule killing over 550 people, You wrote a poem in conjunction with Jorge Drexler called "Quien en Chile un Dia vibro, tiembla cuando Chile tiembla" in which you said "Curico collapsed, Concepcion destroyed and Juan Fernandez was erased."

“Yeah, it was not in direct collaboration with him, it happened that we both wrote at the same time in similar styles, in *décima* which is a very old poetic form, so it was a very beautiful coincidence.”

In your poem you wrote, “in these fatal times I just want to thank life for having many real friends.”

“Yeah you know when everything is shaken, structures are a perfect example, you know, where everything that is not really solid falls down and what you have left is real. I was also going through a time in my life where things were moving quickly and lots of things were falling apart and some things remained so I could very much see the parallels between real earthquakes and metaphorical earthquakes.”

On the anniversary you will be playing in Vancouver, Canada. Do you have anything special planned?

“No, I didn't think about it. Usually I don't think so far ahead, I'm just trying to remain as open as possible about the whole tour, I'd like to arrive with an open heart and open mind. I got in touch with a very interesting movement called Idle No More, which is basically the indigenous people in Canada looking to make a change. There are a lot of good things happening, a lot of manifestations, a lot of protests, but also a lot of initiatives that I'd like to somehow learn about and bring back here with me to Chile, considering that I'm also involved with people here who are socially and politically active.”

You seem to come across as an advocate for student rights as well as human rights. To me, it's a strong trait of Chilean people: that they show an active interest in those rights.

“Yes, especially in the past couple of years there has been a rebirth, a very strong renaissance of the social movement here. The way that it is now is that our history has enormous depth with justice. It is very much alive now, you can see here in Santiago. It's essential for our future that our past is healed.”

You're a big fan of Violeta Parra. Do you find that figures like her, Victor Jara, or Neruda influence you strongly?

“Yes, these are all the people I grew up with so I'm very lucky enough and privileged right now to be collaborating with people who worked with them. I get to have a real picture of what they were like as people.”

If you had the opportunity to meet Violeta, what would you ask her?

“I would sing! And listen, drink some wine... everything I get from people who met her, especially Angel (her son, who I'm good friends with), is that she was a doer: that she was completely aware of the importance of her figure as an artist in general - not only singing but she created poetry and she was a painter. She was aware that what she was doing was very important, she was frustrated that society was not putting her in a place that she deserved to be.”

You spend the majority of the year touring the world, do you feel as though you have a similar responsibility as a Chilean?

“Eh, it's a very touchy issue when you start comparing yourself to these prominent figures, but I feel that I have my responsibilities, that's enough you know. I am somehow blessed in life in being able to learn from people who were directly involved there in the sixties and the seventies, in a time that was very important in the history of our country, and in the generation which followed, when the whole dictatorship was defeated. And you know, twenty years down the road there is so much still to be said. I realized that when you become a prominent artist life puts you in a place in which you have exposure so that while it is a privilege it also comes with responsibilities and I take that very seriously. When you're being heard by hundreds of thousands of people you have to be very smart about what you're saying. Because either you become a puppet of the system or you become proactive in changing the system. So I know I make the choice at the very real risk of becoming a hypocrite and someone who says and doesn't do. Personally, for me that is the challenge, you know, to stand up with your every day life to the big things you are able to speak about.”

Do you have any advice for those people coming to live and stay in Santiago?

"For me the best thing to do is to get out of the city. Two hours away you can be in virgin wilderness which is very beautiful. An interesting experience is that you can travel from the mountains to the ocean in a day. You can be 6000 metres up in the Andes and drive to the Pacific in a few hours. That is something which is really full on if you decide to do it. Right here we have Plaza Italia, really it is the heart of Santiago. It's a very historical place. Whenever there is something to be either celebrated or protested against, this is where the people gather. I've just come back from spending ten days in Chiloé which is in the south of Chile, it's another very beautiful place."

A serious question Nano. Where can I get the best lomito in Santiago?

"Right here! Or there is another place called Fuente Suise which is in my neighborhood of Ñuñoa. But my favorite is a place called Lomito's which is just down Avenida Providencia, not far from here."

So what's next for Nano Stern?

"After Canada I have a bit of a break before I go on tour in Europe. We're doing Israel as well as Palestinian territories, then Slovenia, Italy, England and a few other countries before I take a holiday in Chefchaouen, Morocco."

And how do you plan on spending your last evening here in Santiago before you leave tomorrow?

"Absolutely at home with my girlfriend! There's nothing else that would make any sense."

I'll drink to that, Nano Stern, thank you very much!

"It was a pleasure."