

CLAUDIA GOMEZ- BIOGRAPHY

I was born in Medellín, Colombia, and I'm descendent of a musical family (my mother, Angela recorded 7 LP's of boleros, all my brothers are musicians and my grandfather, Enrique was the co-founder of the first Jazz Band in Medellín in 1935). I began playing guitar at age 12, and at 18, was traveling Colombia, with an all-female Quartet "Ellas". But my professional life really began in London, where, with my oldest brother Luciano, we began to search for a way to make a living through music. I must admit that it was my brother's skills and convincing talent that made us - two Colombians-, sing in English in England! Our repertoire was made up of songs from The Beatles, James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan and many others. In London I had also fallen in love with flamenco and met Joaquin Sabina, a Spanish singer songwriter who shared many music nights with me singing at Costa del Sol. It was a truly beautiful experience.

I returned to Colombia in 1976 and soon started to discover my Latin musical background. Those were the days of world cultural revolution, but in Colombia things were still very conventional, and a girl singing at night in bars and clubs was not well seen. I moved to Bogotá where I found some people who, like me, were willing to risk society finger pointing, and we made our own family of musicians. I sang in English and in Portuguese. I felt I wasn't ready to sing in Spanish yet. I needed to find my own sound, my own vocal style. Playing Brazilian and Cuban music made me think of my own roots. If Colombia had the same cultural mix as Brazil or Cuba, why did our music feel obsolete, and theirs felt fresh and evolved?

Then I started to travel to small and forgotten places, looking for the roots of Colombian folk music (and for my own), and found great people who gave me that Colombian identity I had been looking for. However, that music needed a little shaking, a little blend from somewhere. I wasn't prepared to do it just yet, and I knew I had to look for it somewhere else, away from home. My inner soul was looking for a change.

In 1983, invited by my brother Luciano, I visited the San Francisco Bay Area and experienced the music scene there. I knew immediately that this was my place. I found a vibrant, professional, and creative - day and night music life - that opened up horizons in my mind, and musically awakened me. I lived in the bay area from 1983 till 1998 (15 years). I played with the best jazz musicians there. I also mingled with outstanding Brazilian musicians, learning all the subtleties, beauty, evolution and creativity of Brazilian music. It was a fountain of harmony for my guitar playing, a guide for my vocal development and a marvelous experience in band leading.

In 1989 I documented this Brazilian phase of my life in a recording called Claudia Canta Brasil. That recording opened the doors to pursue my own sound. I went back to my Colombian roots and started writing music that contained Colombian rhythmic elements, covered with jazzy Brazilian harmonies; I entwined melodic patterns from both cultures. The result was documented in my 3rd album **Tierradentro**, published by Green Linnet Records (recorded in 1992 but released in 1996).

In 1992 I recorded **Salamandra** with Clarity Recordings. **Tierradentro** and **Salamandra** albums gave me stability as a musician in the privileged San Francisco

Bay Area. In the bay area I truly became a musician, helped by all the generosity and support of friends, musicians. I also finished my school degree, a Bachelor of Arts in Music, with an emphasis in World Music, and had the privilege of studying with African master drummers, Indian vocal teachers, as well as experiencing a year of teaching Afro-Colombian songs at the same university.

I kept well connected to Colombia, my homeland, through periodic trips to inlands and the coast, where I continued the search for my music ancestors. During 1994 I spent the whole year in Colombia, traveling, performing, showing my music and developing a repertoire of original arrangements and compositions based in Colombian traditional music, with a modern approach to it. I performed that repertoire for the next 9 years.

In 1998 I was ready to move on away from the bay area and ready to look for new horizons again, and decided to go to Spain. I landed in Madrid in July 1998. If I had been an exotic musician in California, in Spain I was totally unknown, something that I enjoyed for a while because it allowed me to reflect on my life and over my commitment to music. I loved Madrid's intense nightlife, I loved starting all over again (well.... almost!), and it brought back memories of my early music life struggle.

Spain has a way of bringing everyone down to earth, there's little time to be an arrogant artist; everyone is in the same pot. I met wonderful and outstanding musicians: Jerry Gonzalez (Fort Apache), Pavel Urkiza, Gladston Galliza, Caramelo, the San Martin brothers, Rosalia, all of them marvelous friends and artists with whom I shared the stage many times and who I keep in my heart. There I recorded my bolero-jazz album **Vivir Cantando**. Even though there's a definite melancholy feeling in it, it is still one of my best-recorded albums.

I traveled, at my delight, throughout Europe and played the most important places in Madrid and Spain but soon I needed to touch base with my own roots again. I came back to Colombia in September 2002.

I have been fortunate enough in life to have always done just what I wanted. I've moved through places and people in life with the certainty that they will always be in my heart and in my mind, but also, with the certainty that I can move away whenever my music or my life needs it. I now live between Bogotá and my hometown, Medellín. In two years I've built a house, made a new album MAJAGUA, worked with the government in the development of music projects for needed people in all regions of Colombia; I have taught guitar, offered vocal workshops, and take care of my mother, and I'm very happy doing all that. MAJAGUA has been my highest accomplishment so far, because it was made up of a mature repertoire that was weaved day by day, note by note, with the help and inspiration of all musicians from all over the world and it was a gift I gave to Colombia and its musicians. They received it so well that it made me feel at home again. And here I am. I work with very young and also very old people, helping them direct their careers with the confidence and certainty that, choosing music, like me, they have chosen the right path. I'm very happy that I'm getting to see with my own eyes the evolution I always envisioned for Colombian music. I'm just thankful I have had the privilege to travel, to share this life experience with so many different people and cultures. I'm a happy woman.