

## Reviews: Nano Stern, Paper Kites, Diana May Clark, Orbiturtle

Nano Stern's natural charisma and the emotional power of his singing have the capacity to seduce non-Spanish speakers.

By Tony Hillier / September 12, 2015

An established star in Chile and a budding supernova in the US, where he's scheduled to tour extensively over the next couple of months, Nano Stern has garnered a solid following in Australia, where he has wowed festival-goers from Woodford to WOMADelaide. Natural charisma combined with the innate emotional power of his ultra-soulful singing and melodic songs and all-round musical acumen gives the Chilean, who chooses to sing exclusively in his native language even though he's fluent in English, the capacity to seduce non-Spanish speakers. More expansive and eclectic than any of his four previous studio albums, *Mil 500 Vueltas*, which has already struck gold in Chile, should consolidate Stern's standing around the world. Territory traversed ranges from intimate stripped-back acoustic canciones such as *Todo Canta* and *La Confianza* that are the 30-year-old's stock in trade to up-tempo layered numbers with Latin and South American overtones that rock out to electric guitar riffs, driving brass, pumping bass and drumbeats. The ghosts of Chilean folk heroes Victor Jara and Violeta Parra hover over *Arbol del Bosque*, an ode to nature (Patagonia in particular) that floats between an impressionistic Debussy-esque style and indigenous Mapuche rhythms. The influence of the country's best-known band, Inti-Illimani, is implicit in an uplifting carnival-esque celebration of migration, *Festejo de Color*, in which Colombian and Peruvian divas Marta Gomez and Susana Baca and Argentinian singer Pedro Aznar contribute a verse each, and also in the album's multi-instrumental arsenal that includes a horn section and a string quartet. Another distinguished guest, the legendary American folk singer Joan Baez, adds depth to the stirring acoustic guitar and accordion-flavoured *Las Venas*. Academy Award-winning Uruguayan musician Jorge Drexler enhances *Ser Pequeno*, a muted, horns-suffused piece that bursts into life on the back of an indigenous candombe rhythm. Afro-Peruvian music gives *Ley de Vida* an infectious lilt. *Dando Vueltas* is carried along on a funky bed of bowed bass and torrid trombone as Stern cranks up vocal intensity. *Vapor* features a combination of a cappella singing, palmas-style percussion, thumping drumbeats and soaring saxophone. *Pasa el Tiempo* is more gently pulsed by acoustic guitar and violin. Boldly arranged with exemplary utilisation of dynamics, the album's latent musical treasures are revealed with each spin. The fact that the songs are in Spanish is no impediment to listener enjoyment, although those who understand the lingo will have full appreciation of the artist's poetic lyrics and well-honed sociopolitical sentiments. With his myriad influences and mastery of folk, pop, rock, classical and jazz, Stern has created a musical language that's very much his own. It's hard not to be moved by the passion, grace and fire of this young man's heartfelt songs.

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