

Song Exploder
Natalia Lafourcade - Hasta la Raíz
Episode 57

Hrishikesh: You're listening to Song Exploder, where musicians take apart their songs and piece by piece tell the story of how they were made. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway.

Natalia: My name is Natalia Lafourcade.

("Hasta la Raíz" by NATALIA LAFOURCADE)

Natalia: I am a singer-songwriter from Mexico.

Hrishikesh: A few days ago, Natalia Lafourcade won four Latin Grammys, including the 2015 Song of the Year and Record of the Year for this track, "Hasta la Raíz," which translates to "To the Root"

(Music stops)

Hrishikesh: maybe, or "To the Core."

Natalia: "Deep Down To The Core." Yeah, that is a good way of saying it.

("Hasta la Raíz" by NATALIA LAFOURCADE)

Hrishikesh: In this episode, Natalia breaks down the writing and recording process behind the song, which borrows from a traditional Mexican folk music called huapango, but still also includes a Juno synthesizer and a pop sensibility.

("Hasta la Raíz" by NATALIA LAFOURCADE)

(Music fades)

(Keyboard)

Natalia: I went to my friend's house. His name is Leonel Garcia, he's a great composer from Mexico as well. I really wanted to share the songwriting process with others, and I know him since long ago. We get to see how the other was growing up. That was one of the persons I really wanted to try to see if we could make something together. And especially because the love we have to each

other. We were talking about the importance of keeping your roots, and keeping all the things that build you as a person, the things that you are, even though you may go very far away from home, the importance of keeping all the things that build you: your home, your friends, your family, your experiences. I wanted to sing about something that will remind

(Keyboard fades)

Natalia: me of Mexico and home. So I was telling him, like, “Why don't we try to look like a very traditional riff from Mexico, this huapango thing on the guitar?” And he picked that up, so he started, like, playing that huapango.

(Guitar)

Natalia: There is huapango in many areas in Mexico, but I never tried to put any music like that into my music, and mix it with this pop sensation of a song.

(Guitar fades)

Natalia: It was like a very, how do you say? Like very inspiring moment because the song was coming, like, fast, super fast. I started like trying to put the words together, and to make the phrases of the song. So he went into the studio, he started recording the guitar, and then he asked me to go into the studio and sing the song. So I went into the studio, so I had the paper, and I started singing the song, and when he was recording, and I was discovering the words by singing them. So I was getting these goosebumps and all that magic feelings that comes to you whenever you're singing a song that you're just discovering. The voice that is in the album is the same voice that I did that day.

(Vocals: “Sigo cruzando ríos, andando selvas, amando el sol / Cada día sigo sacando espinas de lo profundo del corazón / En la noche sigo encendiendo sueños para limpiar con el humo sagrado cada recuerdo”)

Natalia: We didn't change it because I wanted to keep that feeling in the album. And when the producer came and listened to our demo,

(Demo)

Natalia: almost all the things that are in the track are the things that we put that afternoon. So I called my friend Mariana Ruiz, and she's super talented. So she

came to my house, and we sat down for a couple of days, and we worked on the arrangement.

(Strings)

Natalia: I think that the strings give you the feeling of an epic feeling, and that that's how you feel when you're flying away from something. And you're, yeah, going through so many things that make you stronger. I wanted to have that emotion and that sensation in the arrangement.

(Strings)

(Strings end)

Natalia: There is many, many electrical sound hidden in the other tracks.

(Juno)

Natalia: That is a Juno. We did record a bass, but we took it out because we wanted the song to have this sensation of a tribal thing.

(Juno ends)

Natalia: If we keep the bassline, it will take you away from that feeling. So we prefer to keep that line,

(Juno)

Natalia: so it gives you the ground, but it isn't a real bass.

(Juno ends)

(Electric guitars)

Natalia: Those electric guitars were recorded by Gustavo Guerrero, which is my guitar player. We were first doing that melody [sings electric guitar melody] with a xylophone and with the steel drum. Then he put that melody into the guitar. It has the Whammy, do you know that pedal? He will put the octave on top and under? So it has three on the same note and also the pedal.

(Electric guitars)

(Electric guitars end)

Natalia: There is this line.

(Vocals with guitar: "Así te protejo, aquí sigues dentro")

Natalia: "Así te protejo, aquí sigues dentro," you're still inside of me. It's, I am keeping you. I am not forgetting. I keep you inside of me. I mean many different things. It is love, but it is also all the things that built me and that helped me to be who I am now. So I keep all that. I keep my home, I keep the place I come from, I keep my mother, my father, I keep my lovers, and I keep my experiences, the good and the bad moments, I keep all that. It is important not to forget your roots. Keep that, and you can grow up, and you can fly far away, and you can be a big artist or whatever you want to be, but it is important, I think, to keep all that.

(Music ends)

Hrishikesh: Now, here's "Hasta la Raíz" by Natalia Lafourcade, in its entirety.

("Hasta la Raíz" by NATALIA LAFOURCADE)

Hrishikesh: Visit songexploder.net to learn more about Natalia Lafourcade. You can also watch the music video for this song, which is how I first fell in love with it. You can find all the past and future episodes of Song Exploder at songexploder.net or on iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever you download podcasts. Find the show on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram @SongExploder. Song Exploder is a proud member of Radiotopia, from PRX, a curated network of extraordinary story-driven shows. Learn more at radiotopia.fm. Next time on Song Exploder, Wilco.

("Magnetized" by WILCO)

Hrishikesh: My name is Hrishikesh Hirway, thanks for listening.

("Magnetized" by WILCO)

(Music fades)

