



Walid Nahas

With the launch of his album 'Immersion', Lebanese composer **Walid Nahas** is back in his home city. He speaks to **Natalie Shooter** following his first ever performance in Lebanon.

Walid Nahas is a man emotionally connected to his piano. Playing with his head bowed down close to the keys, he plays classical new-romantic style melodies, charged with emotion, that could easily be the soundtrack to some 1920s black and white romance. His piano has a family history that gives him a particular attachment to it. 'It was the wedding gift from my great grandfather to his wife in Lebanon, in 1925. She used to play the piano very well and it was passed down from generation to generation. There's a lot of history on the piano and I really feel it when I play.'

Walid first sat down at the piano at the tender age of eight. Surrounded by musicians in the family, he was drawn to the ivories, and had classical training until the age of 18. It was his time as a piano bar player

in Montreal that really developed his playing, as he started experimenting with improvisation and composing. Nahas tells us 'I learnt how to master my instrument, because I was alone with the piano. It was nice to mix a bit of classical, a bit of Chopin with some blues and jazz tunes.'

At 15 he rebelled against his classical training and lead his first rock band, playing piano, keyboard and organ. 'I used to play distortion pedals on the keyboards to try to be cool! I played in a classical way with very rock tunes.'

Now moving away from the rock of his teenage years, he plays classical new-romantic style pieces, but with a contemporary

slant on his live performances.

A Walid Nahas live piano recital is an unusual experience, as with his Monot Theatre performance at the end of March. He adds a folksy-blues edge to what is otherwise a fairly straight-laced classical piano solo. Fourth piece in, out comes the harmonica, a bluesy deep-south wheezy melody to accompany his playing. Nahas

sings through the harmonica, leading the piano with its soulful solo. 'I don't have a very nice voice, to tell you the truth. I composed a lot of songs for singers, so I used the harmonica

as if I was singing.'

His new album 'Immersion', a collection of 12 original piano solos, takes its influence from the romantic era, inspired by

composers such as Chopin, Erik Satie and Vangelis. The melodies move along at a contemplative pace, but the moments Nahas really hammers on the keys of his great grandfathers piano are jaw-dropping. Like the soundtrack to some sentimentally romantic film, the songs evoke images of separated lovers, wartime farewells and long, illicit gazes of affection. Nahas tells us, 'I wanted people to travel with me. It's a musical journey, travelling is something that inspires me a lot.'

Currently based in Canada, Nahas takes his inspiration from his native city of Beirut. With more live concerts planned for the future, and a new solo album under way, we can expect to hear much more from the man whose fingers caress the keys of his 90 year old piano with heartfelt emotion.



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'Immersion' by Walid Nahas
out now

timeoutbeirut.com/music