

RANI

Biography 2021

As the world emerges from a period of unprecedented turmoil comes an artist with just the right musical gifts and desire for authentic connection to help soundtrack us into an uncertain future.

At 21 years old, and from the small Dutch village of Heerhugowaard, RANI may not seem an obvious pathfinder for music fans around the world who are searching for comfort and upliftment in this historical moment. But this standout artist has spent the past three years preparing the ground for the release of her debut album, guided by a deeply-felt desire to use music to share stories that are genuine and relatable, and informed by the diverse heritage of her family.

“Now, more than ever, people are feeling overwhelmed with emotions and I want my songs to let them know that it is normal to feel like that because it is part of our shared human experience,” says RANI with a maturity that belies her youth.

This storytelling is at the heart of the set of songs currently being completed for RANI’s debut solo record. It’s served by a musical terrain that uses jazzy acoustic guitar riffs, timeless pop melodies and hip-hop orientated rhythms to create a signature sound that’s less reliant on the dance music that first earned RANI global attention than on her earlier musical influences like Destiny’s Child, H.E.R., Lauren Hill and Stevie Wonder.

“I’ve always loved soul and R&B, especially when it comes with a pop sensibility, but my first explorations in the music industry were in dance music,” she says of her journey to this moment.

RANI is referring to the featuring and songwriting credits she’s already had on multiple gold and platinum records in the US, Canada, UK and the Netherlands. Among these is “Post Malone”, a chart-topper with Dutch DJ Sam Feldt that showcased RANI’s pure and soulful voice, along with her ability to co-write songs that intuitively capture a moment – this time the don’t-let-it-stop feeling of a summer after-party. Earlier, she had teamed up with Faustix on “Crying In The Sun”, a club hit that showcased the sheer range and emotional scope of RANI’s voice, as well as her warm-hearted, sincere performing ability at events like the 2018 Club Awards.

It was a moment of boldness that set RANI on the path to being one of the most exciting new solo artists of 2020. Hooked on Olaf Blackwood’s voice on the Armin van Buuren & Garibay single “I Need You”, RANI impulsively sent the Jamaican-born, LA-based artist a message on Instagram. “I’d never done anything like that before, but I just loved his voice so much and I wanted to tell him how I felt.”

At the time, RANI was already recording herself singing covers and sharing them on her own Instagram. Blessed with acting, dancing and singing gifts while growing up in Heerhugowaard, RANI had finally made the choice to focus solely on music when she was

about 16. “I had been singing since I was six and spent my childhood exploring all aspects of creativity in local musicals and shows,” she recalls. “But, in the end, I knew that music had chosen me as much as I chose it and so I decided to focus all my energy on it.”

In pursuing a music career (while studying an undergraduate degree in Public Administration which she’s due to complete in 2022), RANI is a trailblazer in her family. “No-one in my family has been a professional musician – at least that I know about.” What she does see in her burgeoning artistry is the influence of a childhood steeped as much in the Dutch traditions of her father, Mikel, as the Hindu heritage of her Suriname mother, Mala. “Music is very important to my mom’s family and at parties there is always dancing and sometimes even a small band so in this way, we grew up surrounded by a culture that has music at its heart.”

Family – which includes her 14-year-old brother Suraj - is central to RANI’s life, giving her a steadying and supportive space from which to move into the music industry mainstream. It was her dad who accompanied RANI to LA when she was invited by Blackwood for a songwriting session. “In my message to Olaf on Instagram, I’d suggested that maybe one day we could sing together. I was just trying my luck and I didn’t expect him to take it further! But he invited me and my Dad to a show he was doing with Armin here in Holland – and after that he suggested we come to LA so that I could join him in a songwriting session.”

A short time away from turning seventeen, RANI found the 10-day experience exhilarating. It was also confirmation of her transition from being a performer and singer into a songwriter as well. The set of songs she wrote with Blackwood earned her a deal with Cloud 9 Publishing just as she turned eighteen - a significant vote of confidence in her songwriting ability. Before long, she was in sessions with other writers, gaining confidence in her skills, absorbing the way songs are constructed in a studio with multiple songwriters and stepping onto a public platform through her vocal features and co-songwriting on tracks like Möwe feat Conor Maynard & RANI’s “Talk to Me”.

But it was when she was introduced to the production and songwriting team of Lodewijk Martens, Matthijs de Ronden and Will Knox (Nielson, Duncan Laurence) that RANI’s own sound really started taking shape. “I can’t remember who said it but, on that first day, one of the guys asked me what I like, what my own sound is - and by the time we had finished that first song, we had found it.”

The 10 songs that are now ready to introduce RANI to the world range from disarmingly sincere and affecting ballads, like the acoustic-guitar led “Second Chances”, to the insistent grooves of “Deep” and the soul-baring R&B-infused “Love for Me”.

Underpinning all RANI’s material is a desire to provide music that is relatable and that reflects and supports the emotional journeys of her listeners, with open-arms. “I believe that music is a way for us to connect, and that it is more important than ever, given

everything that we are all going through in society. I want to create songs that help everyone feel heard, and be themselves,” she says.

In this desire to be a positive and accessible beacon, RANI is living up to her name which was given to her by her parents as her second name, in honour of her Surinamese grandmother, Sewrani. "Rani means queen in Hindi and having a name that carries this title and honours my grandmother is my motivation to create music that is heartfelt, that is genuine, and that inspires," she concludes.

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