

Inspiration, determination is Shane Vanderwall's prime attributes

By Ron Wynn

Few musicians in any style or idiom have a more intriguing background than Shane Vanderwall. He's overcome hardships and persevered in situations that might have convinced someone less confident in their ability to choose another path. But Vanderwall, who has been singing since childhood and playing since he was a teen, has had a most intriguing journey from Sri Lanka to his current residence, Germany.

Sometimes the term "street musician" is used loosely to describe anyone who opts to sing or play in any outdoor environment for money. But Vanderwall both worked and lived for a time in a train station, dependent on the good will of those who heard him for survival. His love of music and desire to pursue his craft and make a difference kept him going through hard times, as he continued honing his skills and developing a distinctive sound. Then he subsequently discovered another outlet, one not dependent on big money or some nameless recording executive's whims: YouTube.

Through the online world, Vanderwall became a viral hit. That push, coupled with the fact that street musicians enjoy a level of popularity in Europe far greater than that in America, eventually culminated in a project that's reached thousands of eager and receptive listeners without any extensive marketing campaign or high level media push.

Shane Vanderwall has plenty to say, and the ability to present it in a manner that sets him apart from the ranks of others. With an upcoming exciting new project on the way, here's a bigger portrait of his interests and views on various subjects from a recent interview.

What initially got you interested in music?

Who were the first people you initially heard?

What type of music did you first hear?

"At the age of six as a pupil of the Catholic grade school in Sri Lanka I used to sing in the choir, mostly religious songs. Later, when I turned 13, I even played the organ. Being part of a student program I met a black guy with the first tapes, at that time a really new technique and that was the first time I got in touch with Bob Marley's music. That was the moment when I fell in love with Reggae music and I knew, one day I will give a tribute concert to Bob Marley, a man, who truly inspires me."

4. How would you describe your sound?

"I would consider my style of music being very natural, back to the roots; an acoustic sound that lays its focus on emotion, passion and expression."

5. Do you also write songs as well?

6. Which comes first in the compositional process, the music or the lyrics?

7. Do you use an instrument in the writing process?

"I used to write my own songs 10 years ago and for that the lyrics followed the music. I always use my guitar for the harmonies."

8. Where do you get your inspiration for the material?

"My soul is inspired by life and everything, all the emotions that come with it. I care for the people in the world and want to encourage them to open up their minds and hearts for the beautiful side of life.

Materialism and greediness are enemies that hinder people to enjoy their lives."

9. Have you performed gospel or religious music?

"I have never sung gospel but love to listen to it."

10. How do you decide which songs to record?

"The songs should simply fit my outfit referring to my external appearance as people perceive me in terms of lifestyle, passion and me being one with my music as well as my internal life when it comes to my emotions that I express. People here in Germany call me their Bob Marley. Well, my heart sticks to black music even though I am also able to do Rock, my passion is black music, Reggae."

11. Do you have any preferences in terms of songs to record or cover?

"I got inspired by Bob Marley at a very young age and I always knew that my aim would be to create and record an album tribute to Bob Marley adding also undiscovered songs."

While Marley is his reference point and reggae a first love, Shane Vanderwall brings his own flavor, edge and sensibility to everything he performs. He's definitely someone to watch in terms of forthcoming stars, and his music will prove just as amazing, versatile and unpredictable as his life story and history have proven.