

¿QUE PASA?

Crystal Lewis sets concert stop in Laredo

Maybe the "best-kept secret" in Christian music isn't such a big secret after all.

It is just that after recording 14 albums, managing her own multi-artist record company and keeping up a touring schedule that's put her in front of millions of people, 26-year-old Crystal Lewis has had more important things to do than talk about her achievements.

Laredoans will have an opportunity to hear the music of Christian singer Crystal Lewis live on Saturday, July 22, 7:30 p.m. at the Laredo Civic Center Auditorium.

With "Beauty For Ashes," her Myrrh debut, that's not about to change. Though she's an extraordinary talented performer, a successful businesswoman, and the mother of two children, Lewis takes the notion of being a "best-kept secret" with a grain of salt.

"I've been doing this for 10 years," she says. "So whether someone recognizes my name or not doesn't really matter. What matters is the message — of God's unconditional love and mercy."

That's at the heart of "Beauty

For Ashes," the 14th in a line of recordings that has included the popular "Hymns (My Life)," on the California-based Metro One label founded by Lewis and her husband/producer/business partner, Brian Ray.

Southern Californians have long known about Lewis since her days as the teenage lead singer with the critically acclaimed roots-rock band Wild Blue Yonder.

As a child growing up in the hotbed of the Jesus Movement in Southern California, Lewis sang with her sisters in the Nazarene church, where her father was a pastor, and was influenced by California Christian music pioneers like Keith Green, 2nd Chapter of Acts and Andrea Crouch.

Lewis' extraordinary gifts as a performer led to a regular television stint on Nickelodeon's "Roundhouse" series, which exposed a new, young audience to her talents. After her marriage to Brian Ray, the two created their own label, Metro One, in 1992. Since then, Lewis has been a favorite part of several evangelistic teams, including the

Harvest Crusades with Greg Laurie, and the Franklin Graham Crusades, which alone will place Lewis before a combined audience of 1 million people this year.

Those million people — and the countless others who will discover this "best-kept secret" through her new association with Myrrh — will hear the message of her album "Beauty For Ashes," in a theme taken from Crystal's reading of Isaiah 61.

"I just loved the phrase, 'Beauty for Ashes,' for a title because it seemed to summarize several of the songs on the album," Lewis said. "The lyrics talk about being in one place because of our human condition, and then because of the free gift of God's grace, we're given a second chance. We're able to trade in our burden for beauty. And I loved that concept."

The title cut, recorded as a duet with Lewis' fellow Californian and popular worship leader Ron Kenoly, begins the theme, which weaves through the lyrics of songs like the Winans' "In Return," "Over Me," written by Maria McKee (of Lone Justice),

and "Seasons Change" — one of her favorites on the project — written by Lewis and Randy Goodrum.

"Seasons Change' is about being in a place where there's just not a lot of emotion, where you're just going through the motions. The first two verses are the ashes, so to speak, and the last verse is the beauty that we're given in return from where we were," she said.

"Beauty for Ashes" includes the work of veteran producer Dan Posthuma with Brian Ray on the production crew, along with engineer Dan Garcia. Having the same team throughout the entire project was a new approach for Lewis, and brought a welcome continuity to "Beauty for Ashes."

"I'd never worked with the same engineer for an entire project. He was like a breath of fresh air," she said.

Augmenting this team spirit was the fact that almost the entire album was unintentionally recorded in some unique settings.

"All but one of the recording sessions took place in houses," she said. "There's a certain vibe to being in a studio, which is great, but there was this comfortable feeling being in a house."

These days, in the middle of a busy life balancing career, business and family, Lewis seems to be comfortable anywhere God sees fit to place her, encouraging legions of listeners with her infectious, biblically inspired songs performed in her trademark high-energy style.

Tickets are being sold for



CRYSTAL LEWIS

\$10, \$15 and \$20, and are available in the following locations: Revelation Church, Living Water Bookstore, Rema Bookstore, Gospel Bookstore, Jerusalem Bookstore, Miracle Bookstore, and in Nuevo Laredo at the Jerusalem Bookstore. Sponsors for the event are Revelacion Church, Trade Brokerage and Paul Young Auto Mall.

LRA hosts Progressive Dinner

BY JAMES GUTIERREZ
Times staff writer

The Laredo Restaurant Association (LRA) will be hosting its fifth annual Progressive Dinner on Monday, July 17 — a popular restaurant-hopping event organized by the LRA to raise money for local college scholarships.

"Basically what we do is get about 150 people together in three buses and drive to different restaurants to eat some good food and have a few drinks," said Joe Muñoz, general manager for Tony Roma's restaurant and the president of the LRA.

The party begins at 5:30 p.m. at Lago Del Rio for drinks, then everyone piles into three well-appointed commercial buses (filled with ice chests of beverages) and drive to the first restaurant on the itinerary for appetizers.

Muñoz explained that after that, buses take participants to two other restaurants (different for every bus) — one for salads and one for dinner — before heading back to Lago Del Rio to finish off the night with more

drinks, music and dessert.

"This is an excellent event and a great opportunity to meet new people. It's going to be a lot of fun. If you go this year, I guarantee you'll want to do it again next year," Muñoz said.

There are 12 participating restaurants in all this year, including the Outback Steakhouse, Johnny Carino's, Chili's, Applebee's, the Executive Club, Coyote Creek and Tony Roma's.

All this is included in the \$30 cover price, most of which will go to a college scholarship fund.

"Last year we raised \$2,700 in scholarship money which we distributed to seven different high school seniors. Our goal this year is \$3,000," Muñoz said.

Tickets can be purchased at the Tony Roma's Restaurant at Mall Del Norte. Only 150 tickets are available, and Muñoz said there are 75 left.

"This is a very popular event," he said.

According to Muñoz, participants can expect the night to end at around 11 p.m.

For more information, call

LRA to appoint new officers

Times staff reports

The Laredo Restaurant Association will install the 2000-01 LRA officers at a dinner at Tony Roma's Restaurant at Mall Del Norte on Tuesday, July 11.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to hear an update on the new Laredo Arena from Blasita Lopez of Arena Ventures.

The program and dinner begins at 7 p.m. with a social beginning at 6:30 p.m. Dress is casual and entrance cost is \$15.

To RSVP, call Joe Muñoz at 722-7427, or John Hickie at 723-9274.

Muñoz at 722-7427.

(Staff writer James Gutierrez can be reached at 728-2566 or by e-mail at james@lmtonline.com)

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WCHF photography competition deadline is today

The Webb County Heritage Foundation (WCHF) is hosting a juried photography competition open to students, amateurs and professionals, residents and non-residents of the border area.

Entries should reflect a representation of border life at the

end of the second millennium.

Daily activities, reflections of industry and business, construction of future landmarks, residences, people, and ranching are some of the suggested topics for photographers.

The competition's objective is to

collect images of Laredo, Nuevo Laredo, and Webb County that will create a historical record of the border region at the turn of the 21st century.

Jim Keller, renowned professional photographer from Reno, Nevada will judge the entries.

A \$1,000 "Best of Show" prize will

be awarded as well as first, second and third place cash awards in the student, amateur and professional categories.

Deadline for submission of entries is July 7. For more information, call the Webb County Heritage Foundation at (956) 727-0977.

Entries sought for Christian music talent search

Embassy music of Nashville, Tenn. is conducting its new artist and song search.

Now, in its 6th year, the ultimate talent search will offer more than \$50,000 in prizes, which includes a recording contract for the

grand-prize winner in the artist's division. The grand-prize winning song will be recorded and distributed nationwide to Christian radio.

Entry forms are now available. All entries must be received no later than

Tuesday, Aug. 29.

This year's judges include Kent Coley, forefront records, where credits include DC Talk and Rebecca St. Sames; Michelle Burns, CCM Communications, the nation's leading publication

in the contemporary Christian Music Industry. Darwin Moody, Embassy Music, whose credits include the Cathedrals and the London Philharmonic Orchestra; and Rob Brooks, recording artist and previous ultimate talent search

winner, whose self-penned song "The Love of God" reached the top 20 on the national charts.

To receive entry information, visit www.embassymusic.com or call the ultimate hotline at 615-345-2500.

Laredo Philharmonic slates chamber music

Laredo Philharmonic summer series continues with a chamber music presentation on July 7.

The summer series will conclude in August with two concerts by the brother and sister team of Natalie and

Alejandro Valentin, who reside in Paris and perform in both the United States and Europe. Natalie Valentin will present a piano recital on Aug. 7, and together they will offer a concert of Baroque music on Aug. 21."

This is the first year the Laredo Philharmonic is sponsoring a summer series. The events will be held at various locations around the city, including the Laredo Civic Center, the Laredo Center for the Arts, and the

remodeled Casa Blanca Ballroom.

Laredo band, WolfTekit, reaps success

From the depths of a Texican society amongst the underground scene of the most unlikely of places, Laredo, is where WolfTekit creeps.

There are only three underground music genres in this sleepy town, Death Metal, Rap/Hip-Hop and Punk Rock. If you ain't playing in one of these you ain't playing in the underground.

WolfTekit combines all of these genres and adds a dash of their own flavor, working more closely with the Rap scene. WolfTekit has invited Rap/Hip-Hop artists of the area to do introductions for their shows (as well as hit licks) and feature them in demos.

Formed in the summer of 1999, WolfTekit, like all the bands, started in a backyard.

The band started off as an idea from Marc, Ed and ex-member Ian. Later included Arnold (guitar) and Erik as a second vocalist.

WolfTekit was on its way to becoming a real band. After a few practices it seemed apparent the music was heading in an odd yet titillating direction. The addition of Beto (Kid Ritz) completed the posse

and with five original songs it went out for the public.

As an instant success, WolfTekit was on its way to becoming a force. Creating a name for itself, the band went on playing gigs and ultimately won the "Laredo Battle of the Bands," scoring a recording contract with a local recording studio. In this studio the band met with DJ Kickback and added the missing ingredient.

WolfTekit is comprised of Marc, bass; Kid Ritz, guitar and vocals; Ed "The Golden Boy" drums; Arnold "The Southside Kid," guitar and vocals; Erik Eggnog, vocals and DJ Kickback, turntables, effects, and samples.

Together, the band formed a scene all to its own. This scene, which is appropriately called "Southcore," is the first of its kind and is a force to be reckoned with.

There is nothing more intense than the live persona of WolfTekit and its persuasive, sweaty, witty, perverse, moody and all too many times disoriented charisma, which is both assertive and catchy.