

# Blog San Diego

## Music, Art and Lifestyles



### CONCERTS

## NOURA MINT SEYMALI LIVE AT UCSD

MARCH 5, 2016 | ERIC NIELSEN | 1 COMMENT



Noura Mint Seymali and her band lifted worldly spirits Thursday night at the Price Center Ballroom East. The dark ballroom was filled with some 150 chairs and the high-ceilinged room. Noura's band entered first, tuned up and settled in.

Many of the songs were played in different modalities so the guitar player and Noura's husband, Jeiche Ould Chighaly, was constantly tuning between songs. For Californians, his guitar playing was out of this world. For Western references, think Sir Richard Bishop for scales and attack or Richard Thompson for tones and textures.



The audience could tell right away that the music for the evening would gather forces from another hemisphere and transit over oceans and deserts to create a magical and unique musical sensation. All the hammer-ons and runs Jeiche was doing in warm-ups only heightened the anticipation.

The couple herald from an historic musical lineage in Mauritania, where the Sahara and the Magreb meet and what blooms is an honest explosion of the West African Arabic world. A couple of the songs they played in their 60 minute set were written by Noura's father (himself a popular and famous Mauritanian musician).

The sounds of the guitar and Noura's 9 string harp were textured and filled with the gritty sand they have touched from years of playing desert locales. It felt authentic and raw. The combination of traditional songs mixed with modern pop styles of blues and psychedelia fused places and times.

When Noura came out and began singing with the guitar and the rest of the band, it all came together. The semi-formal room took a little bit of time to warm up. Noura's voice was full and loud, empty of the standard reverb that so many western pop acts employ. The long and lush vocal runs intertwined with the beautiful and unique guitar styling to set the foundation for the evening.

As the night gained momentum, the band, Noura's voice and the crowd all warmed up. The audience let go a little bit, Jeiche started smiling more and the voice began to transport the listener. Her long Arabic runs imagined far away places, where cultures intertwine and complexities spice meaning. Her spiritual nods to Mohamed settled over the mixed crowd and opened eyes into smiles and brought people together in ways that only great music can.

Every time I see an Art Power event, I am transformed and transported. The unique selection of the avante guard artists across the multiple mediums is tricky and can be very powerful when done right. Bringing Noura Mint Seymali to San Diego was a great move that collected many different groups together for a night at UCSD. The normal Art Power crowd was infused with young Muslims and African Americans celebrating the authentic spirit of an honest joyful expression.