

Ariella & Nicolaas have performed as part of a 5-piece, jazz, funk and soul band, known as Ari and the Alibis, as simply Ariella, and most recently as Ariella & Nicolaas. But whatever they call themselves, they are consistently known for their ability to traverse genres—blues, jazz, classic rock, flamenco, soul, and international music—and for captivating audiences with a blend of improvisation, musical spontaneity, technical prowess, and emotionally charged performances.

The contrast between their stage personas is striking. Ariella McManus is a vivacious presence—her radiant voice, infectious energy, and genuine connection with the audience are undeniable. While she may resemble a Palm Beach swan turned sultry chanteuse, her sunny disposition, authentic spontaneity, and uproarious laugh tell a different story. Her spellbinding presence is further enhanced as she dances barefoot on stage. She cites legends like Patsy Cline, Etta James, Otis Redding, Marvin Gaye, Bob Marley, and Nina Simone as inspirations. Nicolaas Kraster, a virtuoso guitarist with a George Clooney-esque cool, draws influence from Spanish guitarist Paco de Lucía and American blues icon Roy Buchanan. His reserved demeanor, paired with his powerhouse guitar work, is a masterstroke of subtlety, offering a compelling counterpoint to Ariella's expressive presence. Despite their contrasting personalities, their on-stage chemistry is palpable. Together, their music tells a story—sometimes loud and bold, other times intimate and vulnerable. Their seamless interaction speaks to years of shared experiences and mutual respect, creating a dynamic that captivates audiences. They are a seemingly perfect match, both in talent and passion, which is fitting given that the relationship between Ariella & Nicolaas is both musical and romantic—two musicians, deeply in love with each other and their craft, creating something uniquely personal yet universal in its emotional resonance.

They have noted that the shift from the full band to a more stripped-down sound, as a duo, means there's no tricks to hide behind. The absence of a backing band allows them to explore the emotional depth of their music without distraction, creating a space where each lyric, each chord, and each gesture tells a more personal story. This is

showcased in their soulful interpretations of fan favorites like the moody "These Arms of Mine" and the heartfelt "Tennessee Whiskey," filtered through their distinctive musical lens.

"It's raw and vulnerable," McManus explains. "Every note is exposed like a nerve."

Their ability to seamlessly blend genres, influences, and eras—through a mix of beloved classics and infectious original compositions—has earned them recognition from peers and fans alike. Five-time Grammy winner and acclaimed bassist Victor Wooten, who they've performed with, calls them, "One of my all-time favorite bands. I love their music. There's no way to not enjoy them."

"Ariella & Nicolaas have the very rare ability to deliver pure emotion every time," asserts award-winning record producer and mixing engineer Fabrice Dupont, better known as 'Fabulous' Fab, who has worked with Jennifer Lopez, Shakira, and Mark Ronson. "She's a classic voice for our modern times."

Such endorsements reflect the authenticity and artistry they bring to their music—a quality that continues to resonate with listeners worldwide. They've toured extensively throughout North America, Canada, and Europe, performing at venues ranging from New York City's Blue Note to more intimate spaces like the Voodoo Rooms in Edinburgh. Their performances often elicit enthusiastic standing ovations and even move some audience members to tears.

Whether you're a longtime fan or discovering them for the first time, this duo is sure to touch your heart and stir your soul with their deeply affecting performances.

By Nick Steele