

# TheMusicScene

## Featured Musician: *Randy Granger* Harmony and Healing

Multi-instrumentalist Randy Granger delivers a triumphant tribute to loss and recovery with 'Strong Medicine'

By **David Salcido**  
 For the Las Cruces Bulletin

It's been a long two years for musician Randy Granger.

In the first year, he watched as his partner of 10 years, poet Wayne Crawford, slowly returned to the spirit world, leaving him with responsibilities of estate closure and a grueling return to the stage.

In the second year, he gathered together all of the elements of that experience and processed it through his music. The result, "Strong Medicine," is both a tribute to the poet who shared his life and a universal gift to any who have ever sought understanding in the face of tragedy.

Granger remembers the day, back in October 2010, when the diagnosis was delivered in a cold examining room of a research hospital in Houston.

"We were shocked. You could feel the room swirling and closing in," he said. "That was a difficult night, as you can imagine, back at the hotel. We both were very emotional and just didn't know quite how to process the information."

Five months later, Crawford was gone. The ordeal, however, wasn't without its moments of clarity.

"When we were in chemotherapy was when I first heard the sound of the pumps," he said. "I was mesmerized by the sound and thought it was worth documenting, so the next time we went I took a little handheld digital recorder and recorded the sound. Wayne saw what I was doing and said, 'You're going to get some really great music out of this.'"

The words proved prophetic.

"What I was doing was what songwriters tend to do," Granger said. "We take emotional snapshots. I was hyper aware of everything that was going on. Somehow I knew I had to put all my grief on hold. I had to store it for later use. I didn't start to write any of the songs until he had passed away."

In fact, it was a full year before Granger began writing the songs that would become "Strong Medicine." A year in which he hit the road and reconnected with his fan base, while also dealing with the problems of settling Crawford's estate, selling their rambling home and downsizing for his new life as a single man. When the muse finally called, he was more than ready to meet the challenge.

The title track, "Strong Medicine," opens with the sound of the chemotherapy pump, playing in counterpoint to Native American drum and traditional flute, then flows into the poignant play by play of painful discovery and hopeful regeneration. As in most of the songs on this album, the lyricism of each powerful word resonates with a poet's heartfelt precision. The plaintive vocals wring emotion from every line and it is here that the storyteller truly comes of age. Artifice is burned away and all that remains is pure, raw emotion.

Another standout is the gorgeously simple "Where Did You Go?" A single acoustic guitar is joined by a mournful flute, but it is the gentle overdubs of the artist singing harmonies with himself that give the song resonance. Once again, it is the words, however, that provide the power behind the emotions. "Are you the bird who sings outside my window? The gooseflesh on my neck?" Who hasn't asked these questions when a memory moves us to remember those who are no longer with us, except in spirit?

Even the instrumentals that have been Granger's stock-in-trade for the better part of the last decade have taken on an edge that is anything but emotionless. "Awaken Dreamer," "Hawk Medicine On I-10" and "Marfa Lights" are haunting glimpses into a cultural pain that is only beginning to surface.

National promotion and marketing of "Strong Medicine" will begin in January 2013. Will it have the impact and acceptance of his 2008 award-winning release "A Place Called Peace"? All signs point to yes.

"The response when I play it live has been almost overwhelming," Granger said. "I don't think people are responding because of sentimentality, I think they're responding to the authenticity of the emotions."

"That's very rewarding."

Granger said he believes that this incident has brought him to a better understanding of himself and his process.

"Before I came to Native American flute music, I had been a songwriter and performer for decades," he said. "This is like coming back around to myself, but with an entire new quiver full of tools and instruments. This album is my return. I did the relaxing ambient stuff and I'm really glad, but I now have something to say and this album definitely communicates that."



Randy Granger

### Details

#### "Strong Medicine" by Randy Granger

##### Available locally

- Hubbard's Music & More
- Quillen Studios

##### Online

- iTunes
- www.CDBaby.com
- www.Amazon.com

##### Contact

RandyGranger.net



Randy Granger smiles during a performance. Granger has recently released his sixth full-length album, "Strong Medicine."



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