**Sofía Valdés Official Bio - 2023**

With her 2021 debut EP *Ventura*, Sofía Valdés emerged as an entirely self-possessed artist, sharing a spellbinding batch of songs that felt like escaping into her own elaborate dreamworld. When it came time to create her latest body of work, however, the Panama-born singer/songwriter found herself paralyzed with insecurity—a self-doubt so all-consuming she sometimes couldn’t gather the courage to sing out loud. Partly triggered by the pressure to achieve an inordinate level of success (and, in turn, prove herself worthy of a U.S. work visa), that sense of overwhelm was magnified by a series of setbacks in the immigration process that left the 23-year-old without a home for months on end. But after spending limitless time in the studio with producer Michael Uzowuru (known for his work on groundbreaking albums like Rosalía’s *Motomami* and SZA’s *Ctrl*), Valdés slowly reconnected with her intuition and ultimately arrived at her most exquisitely realized work to date.

“I wrote a note for myself while I was working on this project: ‘Make everything with purpose and intention—say what you mean, mean what you say, and have conviction while you do it,’” says Valdés, a self-driven musician who learned to play guitar at age eight and later studied at Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (or LIPA, a world-renowned university founded by Paul McCartney). “In the past there were times when I got stuck worrying about what other people wanted to hear, but now I just want to make music that’s me at my core, even down to the smallest decisions. I think that attention to detail is what makes an artist, because without it you’re just like everyone else.”

The first installment of her forthcoming full-length debut, Valdés’ new EP *Silvia* takes its title from the name of her great-grandmother Silvia De Grasse—a famed Panamanian singer who performed with Louis Armstrong, and who served as a guiding light for Valdés as she worked through her creative crisis. “I learned from my dad that my great-grandmother was very rebellious for her time—she always spoke her mind, and had the strength to do whatever she wanted,” says Valdés. “Even though I’m not that religious, I do pray to my ancestors when I feel lost. Silvia was someone I kept asking for help over the past couple of years, so it felt right to name my EP for her.”

Mainly co-produced by Uzowuru and Valdés, *Silvia* marks a dramatic departure from the understated indie-pop of her 2022 EP *In Bloom*, unfolding in a transportive and thrillingly original sound informed by her eclectic inspirations: ’60s Motown records and mid-century Brazilian music, baroque pop and Impressionist-era classical. In bringing the five-song EP to life, Valdés also worked extensively with co-producers Tyler Johnson (Harry Styles, Miley Cyrus), Carter Lang (SZA, Lykke Li), and John Hill (Florence + the Machine, Tinashe), and with in-demand musicians like Local Natives guitarist Ryan Hahn. With her debut album’s upcoming second installment featuring acclaimed Brazilian composer Arthur Verocai, Valdés deliberately sought out collaborators who would unequivocally trust her singular vision. “I was so tired of being questioned about what I wanted to do with my music,” she says. “I just wanted to work with people who weren’t trying to follow what’s cool, and who wouldn’t try to tell me who I was supposed to be.” A forward-thinking producer who first reached out to Valdés after hearing *Ventura*, Uzowuru proved to be an ideal creative partner. “I’ve loved the music Michael’s produced for years, so when he first said he wanted to produce my album I couldn’t even believe it was real,” she recalls. “He spent months just helping me find my confidence again, and it rewired my brain and allowed me to come back to myself.”

The first song Valdés wrote after reclaiming her voice, the hypnotic lead single “Midnight Freak-Out” came together as she wrestled with the intense culture shock and isolation she experienced upon moving to Los Angeles. “I felt so anxious and lonely, and the fear of being alone would always be worst at night,” she says. “I’d miss my family and everyone from back home—like how my little sister was my best friend growing up, and sometimes on school nights I’d sneak into her bed and we’d laugh for so long. But I ended up so far away from all that, because of chasing this dream of being a musician.” Centered on her ever-mesmerizing vocal work, “Midnight Freak-Out” sets that outpouring to a gently psychedelic backdrop of gauzy guitar riffs, swooning synth lines, and languid yet visceral rhythms, immediately revealing her tremendous growth as an artist.

On “Easy,” *Silvia* slips into a spikier mood as Valdés channels the raw frustration she felt during the period when she struggled to find a home. “I was turned down from so many places because I’m not from here—I’d show my papers, but people would question whether they were real and refuse to rent to me,” she says. Backed by potent breakbeats and spectral guitar tones, Valdés once again demonstrates her extraordinary vocal command, her tone cycling from sardonic to soulful to breathtakingly fragile with absolute grace. “I wrote that song at a time when I was asking so many people for help, but there was no help to be had,” she says. “It felt like one of the worst betrayals of my life, and had a severe effect on my mental health. People would tell me things like, ‘Oh, just go sleep it off,’ which was a weird thing to say when I didn’t have a house to sleep in. I kept telling them, ‘That’s easy for you to say,’ and that’s how the song came to me.”

The most ecstatic moment on *Silvia*, the EP’s title track hits like a glorious head rush, fueled by shimmering horns and a sublimely unhinged beat that feels beamed in from another dimension. In creating the gorgeously frenetic track (which also features a sample from Brazilian percussionist Pedro Santos’ 1968 psychedelic masterpiece *Krishnanda*), Valdés joined forces with Uzowuru and co-producer Alex Goose (Brockhampton, Weezer), as well as co-writer Diana Gordon (an artist/songwriter who earned a Grammy nomination for her work on Beyoncé’s *Lemonade*). “Diana and I wrote that song around the fantasy of my great-grandmother as this mystical creature who’s very powerful but also very nurturing,” says Valdés, who shifts between English and her native Spanish all throughout “Silvia.” “I wanted to make something that celebrates the Latin woman, and I love how it turned to this song that’s so strange and all over the place, like its own little monster.”

As Valdés explains, following in her great-grandmother’s footsteps means continuing her family’s musical legacy while boldly defying their wishes. “My great-grandparents knew how rough and traumatizing it could be to make your life in music, so they forbid their children from doing the same,” says Valdés, whose great-grandfather was legendary Cuban musician Miguelito Valdés. But despite her family’s deep-rooted reservations, Valdés started writing songs of her own soon after learning to play guitar, and by age 13 began staying up all hours to work on her music. After secretly applying to Interlochen Arts Academy (a boarding school in Northern Michigan) and winning a scholarship, she left home and fully immersed herself in refining her songcraft, composing her songs in English while still learning the language. For her next step, Valdés journeyed to Liverpool and began her studies at LIPA, fighting through debilitating loneliness her freshman year and eventually linking up with a number of likeminded musicians who helped place her in co-writing sessions in London. Not long after she started posting her music online, Valdés landed her deal with Warner Records and set to work on the making of *Ventura* in the throes of the pandemic.

As she assembled the tracklist for her new EP, Valdés included a soul-baring song called “Wild”: a sweetly ethereal yet strong-willed piece of dream-pop about refusing to deny her truth for the sake of pleasing others. “It’s about feeling that temptation to try to be wilder or cooler or crazier to make someone happy, and then realizing I’m just going to resent them forever if I’m anything but myself,” she says. And although “Wild” took shape as she ruminated on an ill-fated romance, its message closely reflects the underlying philosophy behind her artistry. “This whole project came from me wanting to get back to being completely true to myself, which is always harder than you’d think,” says Valdés. “I put so much work and time and care into all these songs, and it brought me to a place where I love making music again. Even if I tried to stop now, I don’t think I ever could.”