



## **Full Biography**

Since their conception in April 2021, Florencia & the Feeling has been impressing crowds and getting folks on their feet. With their up-beat funky grooves, heartfelt songwriting, and all-around good vibes, this jazz-laden, pop-funk fusion band with Latin roots has hit the scene running with no plans of slowing down.

Florencia Rusiñol, lead singer/guitarist and primary songwriter, grew up in East Tennessee, with Argentine parents who instilled in her a love of Latin American music from an early age. The spectrum of Argentine folklore to Stevie Wonder to Manhattan Transfer flowing constantly in her home later translated to her songwriting, as evidenced by the catchy hooks, warm jazz chords, and unexpected harmonic movements in her songs. “With music sewn into the seams of our everyday life, it was nearly impossible not to want to pursue music as a profession,” Rusiñol recalls from her childhood. “I performed wherever I could and sang everything from choral music to jazz standards.”

Florencia always believed in her music as a tool for human connection, which led her to attain a degree in Music Therapy from Queens University of Charlotte. After graduating in 2015, she moved to Ecuador and rekindled her Latin roots. She taught in the prolific Ecuadorian liberal arts school, Colegio Menor, and while she was thrilled to be able to combine her passion for music and her desire to make a difference through therapy and teaching, she still never lost her love of composing and performing.

In Ecuador, she decided to release her first recorded music in the form of a self-titled EP with arranger and producer Sebastian Barniol, a graduate of Berklee School of Music from Guayaquil. The EP garnered her instant recognition both in Ecuador and in the United States, as many had previously fallen in love with her silken voice and groovy guitar playing. Florencia moved back to the US in 2019, and continued to seek out her primary love, music.

After a decade of living away from home, Rusiñol found herself back there in the throes of the pandemic and a shut-down world, but she was not about to let that halt her musical momentum. Between live-streaming solo performances and practicing remote music therapy, Florencia spent her quarantine launching into a period of self-reflection which led to an era of composition. At the beginning of 2021, the restrictions began to lift and Florencia wanted to perform again; however, she needed a band.

She reconnected with musician friends from her high school days: Austin Herron (drums) and Nick Castro (bass). The two had spent the previous decade dedicating themselves to music and touring with acts such as Doctor Ocular, Amythyst Kiah & Her Chest of Glass, and Mind Modes. It is no surprise that after having spent years holding down the rhythm sections for various iterations of musical projects, the connection between Herron and Castro is palpable in the tightness with which they execute every beat together. This pair also offers an electric energy to the band, incited by their background in progressive rock and jamtronica genres. In April 2021, Florencia, Austin, and Nick played their first of 55 shows together throughout the year across Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Throughout the year they expanded, allying with Isaac Ratliff (keys) of Sorrel & Vulture Bolt, and later Andrew Kramer of Donnie & the Dry Heavers. Ratliff and Wise are both adamant lovers of jazz and R&B, and they offer a harmonic vocabulary that helps elevate the band beyond the classic pop progressions.

The five members fuse together the many genres in all of their backgrounds – funk, jazz, Nu Soul, jam, pop, indie rock, and more – to create a unique blend that has caught the attention of many. This fusion has earned the group recognition and esteemed performances, such as the Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion in Tennessee/Virginia, Shakori Hills Grassroots Festival in North Carolina, Rooster Walk in Virginia, and led them to become the 2024 Merlefest Band Competition winners.

Immediately upon coming together, the band hit the road to start performing in front of crowds across the Southeast, playing the songs from Florencia's self-titled EP for the first year, along with a set of unrecorded songs she'd written since returning from Ecuador. Each time a new member was added to the band, a new flavor was introduced to the palette of each song, creating an undeniable need for a unique identity to be formed. Thus, "The Feeling" was born.

The only thing left to do was to make an album to encapsulate the new collective musical identity of the band. "I brought each song in its most basic form – guitar and voice – to the band, and we then would construct it from the ground up, with the influence of each member's genres and ideas interwoven," Florencia shares. "And it didn't feel like just my project anymore – it was something more magical because it was ours, and it was time to share it."

With their sights set on recording a studio album, they embarked on the task of planning a Kickstarter to crowdsource the album. Within just 10 days of launching the campaign in February 2022, the band had raised over \$10,000 to create their dream album. This, along with the funds raised from their packed fundraising show at the renowned Down Home in Johnson City, Tennessee, gave them what they needed to begin realizing their vision.

They set forth on this journey by first taking a microscope to review each composition to ensure that it would be the best version of itself. “Even though we’d been playing some of these songs as long as a year, we wanted to make sure that we took the time – sometimes hours – to make sure each note was in place for the studio recording of them,” Florencia reveals. “This painstaking work of placing each aspect of the arrangements under scrutiny paid off once we saw each song take life in a way we could have never anticipated.” This can be experienced in “Meant to Be,” the first single from the upcoming album, with the precision of its intricate stops and starts; in “What Can I Do,” with its Bossa Nova-inspired percussion breakdown; or in “You,” with its meticulously-orchestrated four-part vocal landscape.

Rusiñol does not consider this to be a break-up album, but there are aspects of that. “Many of these songs were written after going through a pretty rough break-up, but there’s just so much more than that,” she says. The album’s title track, “Birthday,” recalls some of the more painful parts of that situation, and is meant to serve as a powerful pop-punk anthem for those treated unfairly in love. “Que Sera” offers a similar message, but in the singer’s native Spanish. The catharsis involved with singing these words aloud roused a rebirth for Florencia, going on to inspire healing and the creation of this project. That, coupled with it being their debut, gave the album its title – Birthday.

“As much as there is heartbreak, though, there is hope,” Florencia states. The songs, “Meant to Be” and “Three Steps” were born of the months of self-reflection that came after that relationship’s end. Themes of self-forgiveness, acceptance, and loving oneself are strewn throughout lilting melodies and head-bobbing rhythms to convey the ever-growing optimism of healing.

Part of her comeback journey was also forming the band and following her dream of being a full-time musician. The second single from the album, “What Can I Do?,” tells the story of the members of The Feeling following other professions with music always calling them back, then finally joining forces to pursue music together, disguised as a love letter to music itself. “Ultimately, the album is about love lost and the process of growing and moving on to a brighter future with the support of those around you,” said Florencia. The juxtaposition of heartbreaking lyrics set to the tune of funky riffs and captivating harmonies throughout reflect hopefulness beyond despair.

Birthday, released March 24, 2023, was produced by Grammy award-winner Martin Walters. Walters, a University of North Texas graduate, is a top industry professional, and as a studio musician, recording engineer, and producer, he has worked with artists such as Spyro Gyra, Patti Labelle, Grover Washington Jr., Philip Bailey of Earth, Wind & Fire, Sly Stone, Melissa Etheridge, Emmylou Harris, Sarah McLachlan, and many others. A pioneer in the art of surround sound mixing, Martin has engineered numerous Billboard charting and Grammy winning albums, most recently receiving a Grammy for "Best Contemporary World Music Album" with Ladysmith Black Mambazo in 2008, and "Jazz Record of the Year" with Esperanza Spalding.

Their debut album has been widely well-received and acclaimed by a number of online music magazines, such as Skope Magazine, 100% Rock Magazine, Glide Magazine, Under the Radar and Amplify Music Magazine that said, "[Florecia & the Feeling] bring their A game, and the voices weave and slide, harmonizing together, while Rusiñol's lead vocals charm and invite repeat listens.

It's music to move to, to feel, to explore, and to exalt in." Vents Magazine wrote that the music Florecia & the Feeling makes is "...joyful... compelling and rich, a treat for the ears of the highest order. The musicianship is top-notch, and Rusiñol's vocals are smooth and fluid, while the harmonies with the rest of the band are glossy and gorgeous. Every note of the band's brand new album, 'Birthday,' is pure, unadulterated fun."

Florecia & the Feeling has made a name for itself everywhere they have performed, but the band knows that this is only the beginning. "We believe in this album and we feel the support of those who believed in us enough to make it happen with us," Florecia says. "We know that we're going to keep growing, sharing our music, and giving fans an unforgettable concert experience because we love what we do."

Check out Florecia & the Feeling's tour dates on their website. Their music is on Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube, and other music listening platforms.