



News From U.S. & Latin America

By Hector Resendez

MEGA-MERENGUE STAR Juan Luis Guerra y su Grupo 440's latest

album *Fogaraté!* has done markedly well since its release this past July. Hitting top sales within the first month, over 200,000 units have sold in the United States alone. The album held first place for five consecutive weeks in Spain and captured a Platinum record there as well. It has taken first place in Holland, Belgium and Portugal.

The album's success in Central America has surpassed all projections set by the Miami-based label **Karen Records**, says **Alvaro Rizo**, label vice president. A key factor, says Rizo, is Guerra's meticulous care in attending to every detail. No expense was spared in creating and developing the 12 selections for this album. Even the packaging of the album was carefully thought out. The colorful and energetic cover was done by **Roy Lichtenstein**, a first for the Latin music industry.

The first single, "La Cosquillita," has already shot up through the charts worldwide. The second release, "Vivire," is a ballad written by African composer **Papa Wemba**. The video versions of these two singles were directed and produced by **Gustavo Garzon**.

Since 1984, Juan Luis Guerra has hit a distinctive note in the entire tropical music industry. In a short period, this group's new harmonic blend has grown into a Latin music phenomenon. The hugely successful album *Bachata Rosa* went on to win a Grammy Award in the category of Best Tropical Album of 1991. The album sold more than five million copies worldwide, and the Bachata Rosa World Tour, with tour stops throughout the Americas and Europe, drew over 350,000 fans.

MORE FROM KAREN: Karen continues with its aggressive marketing and promotions campaign with new releases by two Merengue artists. **Ramon Orlando's** single "El Bufon"

is a fine example of the versatility of this writer-composer. Another writer-performer is **Manuel Jimenez**, who has written hits for well-known artists as **Wilfrido Vargas**, **Miriam Cruz**, **Fernandito Villalona** and, more recently, for Spanish singer **Ana Belen** on her hit "Derroche." Jimenez' single "Dolores" is a smooth and melodic Merengue number. Finally, **Roy Tavare Y El Clan De La Furia's** second single is an interesting remake of the popular "Another Chacha." Tavare's album, *Do It*, has sold well in Central and Southern America.

BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY: New York-based indie **Tiffany Records'** promotions director **Candy Cintron** recently announced that Latin music legend **Joe Cuba** will be releasing a new album, *Stepping Out...Again!* It will combine Salsa and mambo rhythms with hip-hop. Cuba plans to recreate the excitement he first caused back in 1958.

The new label has also signed Salsa artist **Hiram Medina** with the album *De Puerto Rico Con Amor*. The group, based on the island itself, has released two singles: "Tu Y Yo" and "No Somos Dos." The album will be distributed in the U.S. by the **Ritmo Records** chain. Says prez **Rolando Ortiz**, "Our productions mark a new era. We will definitely keep the public up-to-date with the newest in Latin music out of New York and from outside of the United States."

SECADA ON THE ROAD: Grammy-winning singer-songwriter **Jon Secada** began his Central and South American tour last week in Mexico. Secada became an international pop phenomenon when his multi-Platinum self-titled debut album was released in 1992. This tour is named after his latest **SBK/EMI Records** album, *Heart, Soul & A Voice*. It includes the top-10 hit "If You Go" and the newly released "Whipped."



Jon Secada

THE LATIN LOWDOWN

REVIEWS By Hector Resendez

JUAN
GABRIEL



his signature love ballads. Gabriel, along with labelmates Caifanes, Jose Jose and Joaquin Sabina have been recently featured on Telemundo Network TV spots in the greater L.A. area and a Universal Amphitheatre concert in L.A. is slated for October 21-23.

■ JUAN GABRIEL: *Gracias Por Esperar* (BMG Ariola 74321) Producer: Juan Gabriel with Gustavo Farias

This is the long-awaited album by one of Mexico's most beloved and revered artists, Juan Gabriel. It's no small wonder that the product has been riding high on charts everywhere. Gabriel is indeed one of the most prolific and talented singer/songwriters of all time. His latest album takes the artist to several new heights. There's reggae mixed in with disco, R&B, and, of course,

■ EL GRAN COMBO: *La Ruta Del Sabor* (Combo Records 2104) Producer: Ralph Cartagena

The Puerto Rican Salsa superstar orchestra El Gran Combo launches its latest album, *La Ruta Del Sabor*. Since its inception in 1962 by founder and current director Rafael Ithier, the popular group has toured throughout the U.S. and Latin America. How have they been able to crank out hit albums for the past 20-odd years? All fingers point to Ithier, the group's musical director. A self-taught pianist, this man has been the focal point for what was once a spin-off of the late Rafael Cortijo band. The single release is "Buena O Mala."



■ ISSAC DELGADO: *Con Ganas* (QBADISC 9012) Producer: Gonzalo Rubalcaba with Giraldo Piloto & Issac Delgado

Released in Venezuela on EMI, Isaac Delgado's *Con Ganas* has already been selling strongly as an import in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. The N.Y.-based QBADISC is launching the authorized U.S./Puerto Rican edition with radio, club and press promotion, leading off with the single "Dos Mujeres." Delgado, former lead singer of NG La Banda, is a popular solo vocalist in Cuba. The import album version generated five #1 hits in Cuba, enabling him to win the EGREM Grand Prize for 1993 (the Cuban equivalent of the Grammy). QBADISC has also released two previous works by the classic Cuban rumba group Los Munequitos De Matanzas. The first is *Congo Yambumba* (QB 9014), a new digital transfer made from the album's original master including a previously unreleased track. The other is *Oyelos De Nuevo* (QB 9013), recorded at the EGREM studios in Havana in 1970. It has never been released in album form, even in Cuba. The album contains two groups of Matanzas' rumba movement on one album, recorded on the same day in the same studio.

PICK OF THE WEEK

■ JUAN LUIS GUERRA Y SU GRUPO 440: *Fogaraté!* (Karen 165/BMG 74321) Producer: Juan Luis Guerra

There are many noteworthy aspects to be found in this project. One of these is Guerra's use of the "Perico Ripiao," a very fast rhythm. Guerra has cleverly placed this "Bionic Merengue" within clear earshot of all. It has served in making his style as truly unique as the album's artwork. Guerra has taken his original Bachata style of music, incorporating such international popular music as Merengue, Salsa, Soukous and Cuban Son rhythms. With the assistance of musicians from around the world, rich lyrics and inspiring melodies, Grammy #2 may not be far away.

