THE ROCK 'N' ROLL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM:
FOUNDERS' CLUB DRIVE KICKS OFF

CHICAGO
RUBEN BLADES
HOWARD JONES
THE BEARS
THRASHING DOVES
MASON RUFFNER
Ruben Blades:

**American original**

by Marc Holan

Agua De Luna, Ruben Blades' latest album, marks a new plateau in the career of Blades, the distinguished Panamanian singer-songwriter-actor.

Translated as "Moon Water," the album consists of four stories inspired by the early short stories of the noted Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

"In the beginning of 1981," Blades told SCENE from his manager's office in Manhattan, "I was reading a short story by Gabriel Garcia Marquez called "Bitterness For Three Sleepwalkers," and when I finished reading it, I wrote a song. It kind of surprised me that I did it, and then I started to think, Well, maybe I can do this seven more times. It would be interesting to write an album based on a work of literature.

"So I called Marquez and said, 'What do you think? And he said, 'Go ahead. I think it's a wonderful idea.' But I'll never forget he told me, 'Do it yourself. Don't wait for me because I'm a writer, too, and you'll never finish.'"

"Then from 1981 on, I started reading and writing, and that's how I found the way to put Marquez' words to music. "I didn't want to just adapt them," he explained. "I wanted to write inspired by them.

And, of course, I was being affected by all of the political, economical and social occurrences in Latin America and the world, for that matter, in that period."

Eventually, however, Agua De Luna is an album of hope, and Blades who, two years ago, earned his master's degree in International Law from the Harvard Law School is considering running for public office in his native country. He remains optimistic about the future of Latin America.

"What this album is actually saying," Blades said, "is that we can re-invent ourselves. We can re-invent ourselves in spite of all the anger. We can re-invent ourselves in spite of all the pain. We can re-invent ourselves in spite of our disappointments, and by re-inventing ourselves, we can re-define our lives.

"And we can make the world better, and our roles by getting rid of the legacies of the spiritual vices which were given to us by our colonial background.

"America," Blades continued, "can re-invent itself and really go forward, push towards the consolidation of the idea, an idea that continues to be an idea which, in a way, was expressed in Buscando America (Blades' previous album, Search For America). We have the continent, but the idea itself has not materialized. If we re-invent ourselves, we can, in fact, do it."

Having just completed filming "The Milagro Beanfield War" with Robert Redford directing, Blades has just embarked on a national tour. "I'm glad I'm doing it now," he said, "because a lot of people will be watching us in this country and country to come.

"I think we need to show the world that America is a noble idea."

"I think the world needs to see America," he said, "in the light of the new world order, and this is why we need to make it clear that America is the world's great experiment."

**Reflections**

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writing, and then I would leave it alone for a while.
Then, later on, it all resulted in this record five years later.

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music. “I didn’t want to write adaptations,” he
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we must help
each other and
respect each
other.”

not a political form of
government, there will be
a heart beating. There will
be an American heartbeat,
one that will not only
move the interests of the
North but one that
will move the interests of
America.”

In addition to starring
opposite Whoopi Goldberg
in the film “Fatal
Beauty,” Blades has
another Spanish album
coming out in 1988 and his
first English album, a
project that he hopes to
start recording in July.

“I tell you,” Blades
enthused, “this album is
going to surprise many
people. I worked with Lou
Reed and Elvis Costello,
and we wrote some great
songs together. As a result
of the collaboration, I
realized that I could, in
fact, write in English and
not be afraid of coming
across as some Latin trying
to write in English and also
to compromise my
own views in terms of the
integrity and character of
my work. I wanted to
achieve the same degree
of truth that I achieve so
easily in Spanish.

“At the time,” Blades
concluded, I was really
concerned with people
mistaking it for some sort
of token contribution or
some sort of mad dash for
the big bucks. But, in time,
I realized why I was doing
it.

“This is really the first
time an Afro-Cuban
musician has collaborated
with rock musicians, but
the bottom line is that
we’re both playing street
music. It also would help
to show that talent really
has no nationality and no
boundaries. Art is art.”
THE REGGAE SUNSPLASH
Front Row
May 27

People often say, "All reggae music sounds the same." But the diversified audience that filled half the Front Row last Wednesday for the Reggae Sunsplash would disagree. Sounds of pop, rap, roots, rhythm and blues, jazz—it was all there, but it was all reggae. The five featured artists—Carnelle Davis, Peter Metro, Mutabaruka, Chalice and Freddie MacGregor with his Studio One Band—provided the lively crowd with a sense of reggae's culture, Jamaica's history and Rastafarian's mystical beliefs. They were celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Sunsplash tour, the 25th anniversary of Jamaica's independence and the 100th anniversary of the country's first national hero, Marcus Mosiah Garvey. And celebrate is just what they did, in the tradition of reggae maestros Bob Marley, whose influential memories is obviously still alive in the hearts of these rebel musicians.

Opening the show was the only female performer on the tour, Carlene Davis. They call her "Da Mover," known for her reggae music around the world since she left Jamaica in 1967. With her energetic voice, she sang a medley of her hit songs, which added today's pop sound to the reggae beat. "Oh Brother Bob," her latest single, showed her admiration for "the man who sang for freedom." The crowd cheered for the Sunsplash anti-apartheid stand when she sang a tribute to South African Winnie Mandela.

Peter Metro's variety of music showed his flexible talent, as the tall, skinny Jamaican moved about the stage in his red and black leather sneakers, bermuda shorts and matching shirt. The "D.J. (Jamaican for rapper) of the Year" got the attentive crowd going with his rap rencont, which was doing that contagious reggae dance, and if they weren't standing, they weren't sitting still.

As were all the Sunsplash performers, Freddie MacGregor was a winner of a JAMI (Jamaican Music Industry) award for 1986-87. "Out of many, One people" is the motto of Jamaica, which MacGregor brought to life. He sang "All In The Same Boat," emphasizing their philosophy of uniting all people. He had the least variance in the show, but the horn section of his Studio One Band added a touch of jazz to his performance.

Emcee Tommy Cowen did a professional job of keeping the Sunsplash flowing from one act to the next. Wearing a suit, swinging his dreadlocks and moving his hands rapidly, he provided an interesting history of the music, the musicians and the country. As the Studio One Band set up, Cowen spontaneously recited classic Marley lyrics, such as "Redemption Song" and the crowd voluntarily joined him in singing. When a white man ran up to the stage to shake his hand he proudly said, "Rastafari is for everyone."

It was disappointing that the two and a half hour show did not end with a song by all the performers together. But the crowd left "feeling irie."

Liz Manning

BUDDY HACKETT,
SANDY HACKETT
Front Row
May 28

When that unseen restaurant which announced the introduction of the acts (and intermissions) said "Ladies and gentlemen... please welcome Sandy Hackett," my mind, like everyone else's, drew a blank. "On no," I thought, "this guy is going to have his daughter come out and sing songs." But to a lukewarm response, Buddy Hackett's son, Sandy, bounded onto the stage and quickly broke into a cover version of Billy Joel's "Easy Money." His stylishly snappy appearance and his showbiz mannerisms created impressions of Frank Sinatra when he was young, which, at first, made the younger Hackett seem like one of those hokey lounge singers that comedians love to parody.

Without missing a beat he started into another song when suddenly down the aisle came his dad, comedian Buddy Hackett, dressed in only a pink bathrobe and blue socks, to interrupt the proceedings. Centerstage, the father/son duo exchanged a bit of banter with themselves, then the son played the man, the senior walked around greeting people shooting-off one about five minutes.

Appearing then was the senior Hackett to stage to let his son to his portion of the show. As it turned out, Hackett has a great act with his own monologues, comedy routines and some song medley impersonations. He mixed the medley of rain in which he sings his own voices and his show stopping rendition of Blues Brother's "On Top of the World," playing harmonium singing "Hey Baby, I'm truly delighted audience."

The gentle humor of the light that the stage in another side of Buddy Hackett's appropriate arrival has been an indication as to how the show would proceed. You have seen any "specials" on TV? You already know Buddy Hackett is an old pro at this.