INTERVIEW
IRENE CARA-
Fame Before Fortune
RUBEN BLADES-
Looking for America
IS THERE LIFE
AFTER MENUDO?
SPORTS
JOE KAPP-
Football's
Most Macho Man
TV, MOVIES,
BOOKS

FASHION
All New-Making Magic
# Table of Contents

**Interview**
- Ruben Blades .................................................. 8
- Irene Cara ..................................................... 10

**Feature**
- Joe Kapp is Macho ............................................. 18
- Is There Life After Menudo? ............................... 23

**Fashion**
- Melrose Magic .................................................. 28
  Shopping on L.A.'s most trendy street will startle your fashion senses
- Accessorize! .................................................... 34
- The Illustrious Antonio Lopez .............................. 24

**Departments**
- Foco .......................................................... 7
- Ahora, Backstage Pass ......................................... 16

**Reviews**
- Cine .......................................................... 36
- Books ........................................................ 40
- Records ....................................................... 38
- Avance at Night .............................................. 47
Ruben Blades easily qualifies as one of the most controversial figures in the realm of Latin entertainment. To his passionately loyal following, Ruben Blades is a man of vision and compassion, an artist whose talent and sensitivity allow him to extrapolate and articulate in the language of The City, the Latin American reality. To many he is even honest and highly conscious man who has forfeited riches, a North American market, and a personal safety in order to express his hopes for the freedom of Latin America. He is, in truth, he is, he is, he is dangerous.

To his detractors Ruben Blades is an irresponsible troublemaker, an artist whose gall is matched only by his ego. To these people Ruben Blades is a loud-mouthed, self-proclaimed messiah in a world running amuck in the hands of second-rate saviors. He is a Communist, he is a fool, he is dangerous.

Ruben Blades is a talented artist. His music has in profound ways changed the nature of the musical genre we know as salsa. Commercially successful in many Latin American countries, Ruben has written and recorded some of the most memorable Latin music in recent history. With his former partner Willie Colon, Ruben recorded Siembra, which is the biggest selling album in the history of salsa.

During one of his visits to California, Avance staff members Luis Medina and Phillip Rodelin spoke at length with a brilliant, animated, and charming Ruben Blades.

Avance: What inspired you to become a lawyer?
RB: My grandmother, well, two things. My family—my mother and my father really didn't finish school. So getting a diploma became an obsession with me. I needed to validate the intelligence of my family. The father didn't get one and the son [Ruben] is going to get it and he's going to prove that he's not a dumb person. I think that's the reason behind a lot of one's quests for titles.

Another thing that I recognize as an influence on me was my grandmother's passion for justice. My grandmother was a unique woman in many ways. She was a very individualistic woman. She inspired me in the same desire for justice that was an important part of her own individuality. And in a woman in a society that was dominated by men, that passion for justice is intense. My grandmother was a person who lived her life as she saw fit. She was a vegetarian. She practiced yoga. She was one of the few women who graduated from high school in Panama. She sent her daughters to school but not her sons because she felt there was not enough money for everyone and that the women needed education more than the men. She was a poet, a writer and a medium. She painted. She did sculptures. She was a very, very unique woman. And she was the one who guided my education. I think it was her drive for justice that made me want to be of all the professions—a lawyer, a defender of the law.

Avance: How long did you practice law?
RB: In Panama, well, unofficially about two years, because I couldn't sign legal documents. I was in school, and taking cases but I couldn't sign. Somebody else would have to sign for me. Two years unofficially and something like three or four months officially.

Avance: What influenced you away from being a lawyer into being a singer?
RB: Well, at the time I was studying law in school and taking cases but I couldn't sign. Somebody else would have to sign for me. Two years unofficially and something like three or four months officially.
from everybody. "This is interesting. What nice chords." But nobody knew what I was doing and mine thought it was a success.

Aznar: Who did you first work with in New York?

RB: Richie Ray and Bobby Cruz in 1973 bought to have me signed by Fania, which was at the time the number one company as far as salsa was concerned. Fania didn't want to sign me. Bobby and Richie told them, "this guy is important. This guy has got to be signed." And, boom, they signed me. But when I finally arrived in the United States to record, they wouldn't have me because nobody knew me and they were busy at the time which was the middle of the recording boom. They offered me a job in the pressing room which I took because it was the only way I had to stay in New York and be connected with singing. I started working in the pressing room. It happened that two months after I began working there, Ray Barretto's singer, Tito Allen, who is an excellent singer, left the band. Ray heard about me through guys who had seen me in Panama. Latin music from Panama is a very hard one. Panamanian music has influenced my singing style. So they asked me to come and sing. My first song was "El Gitano." I sang it a few times and I was looking for more songs to sing. I was working in the pressing room, singing what I had already been contributing songs to Ray Barretto's band at that time.

RB: Yes, but Ray didn't want to touch... Ray had very definite ideas of what he wanted to play or what he wanted to sing which surprised me because Ray has always been an avant-garde and one of the most intelligent musical artists we have in New York. In the beginning, I was very vocal about Puerto Rican nationalistic music. So I was a bit surprised that he would be interested in that kind of music. But I found that if I sang it in Spanish, I could reach a broader audience.

Aznar: Have you written any songs about Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: Yes, I wrote a few songs about Puerto Rican nationalism, but I don't sing them anymore. I was influenced by the music of the black community, especially the salsa movement from Puerto Rico. I was always interested in the music of black musicians. I believe that the music of black musicians has a special quality that I find appealing. I don't like to sing about Puerto Rican nationalism anymore because I feel that it's not the right time to do it. I think it's better to focus on other issues that are more relevant today.

Aznar: Do you think that Puerto Rican nationalism is dead?

RB: I don't think so. I think that Puerto Rican nationalism is still alive, but it's not as strong as it used to be. I think that the current situation in Puerto Rico is more complex than before. I think that the people of Puerto Rico are looking for a new direction, and I think that they need to look beyond the traditional nationalism of the past.

Aznar: Do you think that the music of the black community is more relevant today than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: I think that the music of the black community is more relevant today than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism. I think that the music of the black community is more universal, and it speaks to a wider audience. I think that the music of the black community is more inclusive, and it speaks to people of all races and backgrounds.

Aznar: Do you think that the music of the black community is more expressive than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: I think that the music of the black community is more expressive than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism. I think that the music of the black community is more direct, and it speaks to a wider range of emotions. I think that the music of the black community is more honest, and it speaks to a wider range of experiences.

Aznar: Do you think that the music of the black community is more political than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: I think that the music of the black community is more political than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism. I think that the music of the black community is more critical, and it speaks to a wider range of political issues. I think that the music of the black community is more revolutionary, and it speaks to a wider range of political ideals.

Aznar: Do you think that the music of the black community is more cultural than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: I think that the music of the black community is more cultural than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism. I think that the music of the black community is more artistic, and it speaks to a wider range of cultural expressions. I think that the music of the black community is more creative, and it speaks to a wider range of cultural styles.

Aznar: Do you think that the music of the black community is more diverse than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: I think that the music of the black community is more diverse than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism. I think that the music of the black community is more multicultural, and it speaks to a wider range of cultural backgrounds. I think that the music of the black community is more inclusive, and it speaks to a wider range of cultural identities.

Aznar: Do you think that the music of the black community is more global than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: I think that the music of the black community is more global than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism. I think that the music of the black community is more international, and it speaks to a wider range of global issues. I think that the music of the black community is more universal, and it speaks to a wider range of global communities.

Aznar: Do you think that the music of the black community is more inspiring than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: I think that the music of the black community is more inspiring than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism. I think that the music of the black community is more motivating, and it speaks to a wider range of personal aspirations. I think that the music of the black community is more motivating, and it speaks to a wider range of personal goals.

Aznar: Do you think that the music of the black community is more uplifting than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: I think that the music of the black community is more uplifting than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism. I think that the music of the black community is more positive, and it speaks to a wider range of personal feelings. I think that the music of the black community is more positive, and it speaks to a wider range of personal emotions.

Aznar: Do you think that the music of the black community is more empowering than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: I think that the music of the black community is more empowering than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism. I think that the music of the black community is more liberating, and it speaks to a wider range of personal rights. I think that the music of the black community is more liberating, and it speaks to a wider range of personal freedoms.

Aznar: Do you think that the music of the black community is more democratic than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: I think that the music of the black community is more democratic than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism. I think that the music of the black community is more participatory, and it speaks to a wider range of personal choices. I think that the music of the black community is more participatory, and it speaks to a wider range of personal decisions.

Aznar: Do you think that the music of the black community is more collaborative than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism?

RB: I think that the music of the black community is more collaborative than the music of Puerto Rican nationalism. I think that the music of the black community is more cooperative, and it speaks to a wider range of personal connections. I think that the music of the black community is more cooperative, and it speaks to a wider range of personal relationships.
"When we talk about the Sandanistas, what are we talking about? The idea of Sandino? Or the ideal of two or three that are part of the nine commanders who control? Or are we talking about the people of Nicaragua who overthrew a tyrant?"
Cuban songs. I wasn’t trying to find a formula so people would like it. I came out with a great metallic image, a Latin American perspective, and what was happening was inevitable. I received the best response from the Latin American community that the North American or Las Vegas crowd that came to back me up. My albums don’t sell like this. They sell better in Europe, college and jazz degree, as well as a Hector Lavoe album. And that’s fine with me. More power to Hector. But my intentions were never that I should stand up and go down. In Venezuela alone Solar de lo Abundante sold 250,000 records. In Venezuela alone there is a list of 100,000 who sell 100,000 in this business. Show me one guy in the salsa field. Tell me one guy. Who? You know what I mean? Why is it happening? Because we have something to say and we address issues and people find it interesting, refreshing.

The album Buscando America is going to be the most controversial album and at the same time the toughest album to swallow since Silvestre. And as you know, I’m not going to say more because, well, I feel my hair standing on end. It’s a very poignant album written by somebody who is learning his craft and I’m much better, now than I was when I started. Avance: Now when can we expect this album to come out?

RB: January. Avance: What is the label now?

RB: I don’t know. I’m under the Electra or it might be an independent label, but I’m going to put it out.

Avance: What are you writing about in this album?

RB: The whole concept of Buscando America is to get the plumbers of Central America. It’s so obvious, everybody, the tragedy in the world is that everybody wants the American dream. They are screaming to other girls that are accepted by them. Everybody wants security for their children. Everybody is writing for America. Everybody is writing for the ideal that made those girls or those people jump from one end of the world to another in search of something better. Because aside from the economic motivations, cono, man, you really must be dead, cono, if you really want to consider that kind of adventure. And everyone of us is looking for the better life, everybody is searching for America, that promise, that thing. So Buscando America is a series of vignettes of people who will never find themselves so they will get disoriented but they are not because the thing I want is for people to think, man, you don’t have to be so negative. OK, this is it. No Thinks why you think!)

RB: You know what I mean? You want to know your own kind of paper. Provide. Write me something. Not everything is there for you to swallow directly, you’ve got to chew it too. So we open up with a song that is not mine. Como una 나타. That song that is not mine, I mean you. I remember you. You live with me like the smell of an orange. I don’t want to remember how you smell. You are in me already. So he is taking me to a place that is more of a concept, I have the idea of freedom, I have the idea of right, I have the idea of people. I have the idea of the blue. I have the idea of a song. Nacer de ti. I am born of thee. I am born of what. Of the earth. Of a place? To be non-existent and the real whole justification of life. To be born here. This is my richness. This is my happiness. I’m this in my concept. Conocer los desaparecidos. Disappearance. It could have been a passage for the things from a political point of view. But you see, people disappear, period, under any government. There can’t write about one government and not write about the other. When you talk about political prisoners you have to mention Cuba too. You have to mention the Soviet Union. You cannot talk just about political prisoners in Chile. "Because it’s a right-wing government and it’s a left-wing government," you know that...and... I have to talk about political prisoners in the general context which is something that is screaming to all of political prisoners and the Moscow-Leninist precepts and anybody who is against that is not a cycle, the first cycle with a song called "Tristes Viven" which is an old Waltz from Peru, which says they all return. So the cycle ends that way. It doesn’t matter what happens but everything returns. So that’s side A. Side B, a song called "Desaparecidos." There are still some virgin, an ex-virgin’s dilemma as viewed through the boyfriend’s eyes. What should I do when she’s different to what I’m used to. Then comes I know that some people say. "Hey, you can’t say period." As if in Latin America nobody has had the period. Because officially the period does not exist. You don’t talk about it so it’s not there. It’s like

"We’re searching for America but we don’t seem to find it in this darkness. America is being kidnapped but we must set it free again so we must search our souls."

Avance: In Latin America or here in North America? RB: In North America. In Latin America never. I’ve been in uncomfortable situations with people who are behind human beings hidden behind curtains. So you learn to live with a certain paranoia, to a certain degree, or, for some people, to a certain degree because they think you may be meeting with so and so. Some people may think that this is the way I do it, that I don’t know anybody who is an extremist. And most likely I would never have a friendship with an extremist because he’s an extremist and I’m not. But that’s one thing that I don’t have any desire to be informed. I have to take my decisions to be free. Absolutely nobody, I meet with nobody. I receive money from nobody. I don’t say this is easy or this is writing. You know what I mean? None of that kind of stuff. All I do is say this is the way it is because my conscience dictates that to me. This is the way is it you really have to take a stand because I think it’s important... But I am so used to having been lied more years so believe something, it’s not written. Because I come from the generation that learned to be somebody to have a generation that wanted to have a house like the Hollywood homes, wanted to have a family like the one on Father Knows Best. I was lied, misled. And I have now the responsibility to make an effort, in my modest way, to start saying that this is the way it is because this is the way it is. It seems that’s what is going on. This is what is happening. And what we’re going to do is don’t have Avance: Do you have any plans to do any videos or films? Have you done films?

RB: Yes, I did the two films. I sang they can pin on me. I’m not politically motivated by this party or nothing. I don’t have any desire to give the information, or simply don’t have the desire to be informed. I have to take my decisions to make a decision for myself and to take Avance: Do you have any plans to do any videos or films? Have you done films?