



Features ⊕ ⊕ ⊕

APRIL 2011 ISSUE

FROM THE EDITOR

Volume 21, Number 3, April 2011 issue of Latin Beat Magazine Online features the up and coming young boricua singer Vanelis who's enjoying the release of her debut CD production *Esa Soy Yo*. Our Puerto Rico collaborators Elmer Gonzalez (writer) and Julio Costoso (photographer) covered this year's annual Puerto Rico "Dia Nacional de la Salsa". As always, Latin Beat Magazine Online also brings you exciting monthly columns from New York (by Vicki Sola), Los Angeles (this writer), Puerto Rico (por Elmer Gonzalez en Español), and the popular Latin Beat Music Update column by Nelson Rodriguez (covering the latest Latin music scene from all over the world). Music news, national and international independent hit parades, concerts and CD reviews, calendar of events, streaming music tracks and music videos complete the Latin Beat Magazine Online experience. Musically yours, *Rudy Mangual*

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VANELIS: NOW IS THE TIME

By Rudy Mangual



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A native of Puerto Rico, the Tampa-based vocalist Vanelis Vázquez is a fresh female voice in the current salsa and Latin pop fields, bringing a pleasant soprano timbre and youthful attitude to the temporary salsa sound and to the often predictable Latin pop scene. When not making music, this songstress pays the bills by working with children at Tampa's YMCA branch, coordinating activities for the children and coaching beach volleyball. At the end of 2010, Vanelis released her first promotional single, *Cómo Lo Extraño* (from her debut CD *Esa Soy Yo*, officially released on January 2011). It's currently available in digital format on iTunes, Amazon.com and CDBaby.



INTERVIEW WITH VANELIS:

Rudy Mangual: Is Vanelis an artistic name or your proper name?

Vanelis Vázquez: My birth name is Vanelis Vázquez. I was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico. By the age of nine, my family and I relocated to the state of Ohio, and by my 15th birthday, we were living in the state of Florida.

RM: When did music come into your life?

VV: As a child, my mother has videos in which I was imitating Latin pop stars in Puerto Rico while singing and dancing. But in reality, it was after relocating to the States that I seriously started enjoying more of the singing, dancing and performing, perhaps due in part to the artistic component found in the U.S. mainland's school systems. I was able to partake in vocal choruses and music programs, which led to performances in school productions.



RM: Did you have any formal music and/or vocal training?

VV: My early training consisted of the experience in middle school and high school choral productions, vocal groups, bands, and other activities. While in college I started taking private vocal classes, which I have continued to attend almost weekly after graduating to keep my voice trained because it's very easy to overwork the vocal chords if one is not careful.



RM: Who are some of your musical influences?

VV: My influences are many, due to my dual cultural upbringing. On the Latin side, I was initially influenced by Ednita Nazario's pop and rock style, as well as others like Gloria Trevi and Yolandita Monge. On the tropical/salsa side, my influences include superstars Olga Tañón, La India, and Melena León, female performers that possess strong and powerful stage personas. I'm also a big fan of Marc Anthony. On the English-language mainstream music side, my influences begin with timeless vocalists and performers such as Mariah Carey, Celine Dion, Whitney Houston, Christina Aguilera and Kelly Clarkson.

RM: Who is Vanelis Vázquez? A Latin pop singer, a salsa singer or a female bilingual singer?

VV: I consider myself a female vocalist capable of singing just about anything in English and Spanish. The Latin material I interpret is very personal and dear to me because those are my roots; it's where my family and friends come from, it's where I come from. I truly love and enjoy tropical dance music (salsa, merengue, bolero), and Latin pop is fresh, powerful and exciting as well. Performing in Spanish is indeed very special to me. But singing in English also moves me as well. I really enjoy both worlds. That's why I consider myself just a female vocalist.



RM: Please tell the readers about your recently released debut CD production *Esa Soy Yo*.

VV: This is my debut, self-produced under my own label, Nelis Music Productions. It's an all Spanish-language album celebrating my Puerto Rican heritage and my passion for all forms of Latin music. The production includes a mixed repertoire of salsa and Latin ballads, as well as Latin pop compositions. Most of the arrangements and musical direction credits belong to Gino Picart and Héctor Javier Cruz. The CD was recorded in Florida, and mastered in Los Angeles, California, by Lamat Music Group.

RM: Are the tracks original compositions?

VV: Most of the selections are original scores from local Florida composers, and there are three covers, as well as two tracks with dual versions of arrangements in salsa and Latin pop. All the selections, regardless of style, have a young romantic feel to them.



RM: How long did it take?

VV: Approximately two years. I'm currently working with Los Soneros de Tampa, directed by percussionist Roberto Germain. This is the band that will back me up as I promote the current CD, and this is also the same group that is working on my next production. Los Soneros de Tampa is an orchestra organized by Roberto Germain (a Puerto Rican percussionist from Brooklyn, New York) primarily to fill a notable void in Central Florida, which was in great need of a high-caliber salsa band for the area's growing community of salsa lovers. The band is modeled after the classic high-energy New York City bands of the 1970s, featuring an extended percussion section (with the addition of a trap drummer), along with the normal Latin percussion section of timbal, conga and bongo. Another special ingredient in the band is a string player featured on electric and acoustic guitars, as well as the Puerto Rican cuatro. Completing the band is a five-piece horn section that allows Los Soneros de Tampa to deliver a powerful big band sound.

RM: Do you enjoy working with Los Soneros de Tampa?

VV: ¡Muchísimo! (A whole lot!) We make a great team together. So far this year, we had the pleasure of opening for the legendary Gran Combo de Puerto Rico in Miami. We also shared the stage with the merengue superstars of Limit 21 and the salsa icon Tito Nieves in Orlando. Recently, I also completed a promotional tour across Puerto Rico, filming a pair of music videos, conducting television appearances, and participating in several radio and newspaper interviews.

RM: What can you tell us about your video of the song *Cómo Lo Extraño*?

VV: It was filmed in Puerto Rico and revealed my romantic side via beautiful shots of the island taken from Ponce to San Juan, including Old San Juan's El Morro Fortress and the island's breathtaking beaches.

RM: What's next for Vanelis?

VV: We are rehearsing extensively, in preparation to tour extensively throughout Florida and the neighboring states this upcoming summer season. The world-renowned salsa arranger, composer and producer Pablo "Chino" Núñez will be directing my next production, which will showcase material in both English and Spanish.



RM: How does it feel to work as part of a “male-dominated music scene” such as salsa?

VV: It’s challenging, but I love it, as long as the rhythm is there for me on stage. I think that female performers of tropical music sound and look better on stage. In the pop scene, females have always ruled. Besides, it’s about time that more female performers tell their stories and sing their songs in the salsa scene, and in all styles and genres of music. There are a few other new female vocalists trying to break into the current salsa scene, and I think that’s great. It’s our time, ladies!

For more information on Vanelis & Los Soneros de Tampa, visit www.vanelis.net





Gilberto Santa Rosa and Ruben Blades Concert

February 13, 2011

Lehman Center for the Performing Arts

Bronx, New York

Photos © by Allen Spatz

Festival promoters and organizers are gearing up for one of the jazz world's premier annual events: The line-up of the 33rd Annual Playboy Jazz Festival, to be presented in conjunction with the L. A. Philharmonic Association, was announced on February 10, 2011, during a press conference conducted at the East Lawn of the Playboy Mansion.

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