

LATIN BEAT

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Salsa, Afro-Caribbean, Latin Jazz and More . . .

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Ricardo Betancourt: A 10-Year Photo Retrospective in Latin Music



**Emiliano Salvador • Chano Pozo (Conclusion)
The 14th Annual Havana Jazz Festival**

RICARDO BETANCOURT



A 10 YEAR PHOTO RETROSPECTIVE IN LATIN MUSIC

By Rudolph Mangual

Capturing multi-cultural images and translating these into commercially viable products is a talent Ricardo Betancourt has meticulously cultivated over the past decade. A prominent photographer specializing in people subjects, Mr. Betancourt's experience spans the range from album covers and music videos, to major advertising print campaigns for Hispanic markets in the U.S. and abroad.

His clients have included RJ Reynolds/Winston, Salem; Smirnoff/Heublein Inc.; Budweiser; Rums of Puerto Rico; CBS (Sony) Records; Polygram Records; Ruben Blades, Tito Puente, Luis (Perico) Ortiz, Eddie Palmieri, Carlos Santana, Celia Cruz, Astor Piazzola, Steve Gadd, LL Cool J, Raul Julia, and Giovanni Hidalgo, to name a few. He brings excellent music, film and entertainment contacts to his projects. Mr. Betancourt has photographed all subjects for *La Clave Latina: A 10-Year Photo Retrospective in Latin Music*, a book and exhibit that will travel to the most important cities.

Over the past 10 years, photographer Ricardo Betancourt has helped shape the image of the most famous names in Latin music, bringing these before a wide international audience through his photography and film work. Betancourt's 10-year photo retrospective provides a pictorial overview of where Latin music is today. It charts the progress of the all-time greats and the stars of tomorrow through a three-part program: a one-hour TV documentary, a photography exhibit, and a special compilation disk featuring the music of these artists.

LA CLAVE LATINA: A 10-YEAR PHOTO RETROSPECTIVE IN LATIN MUSIC

The ultimate aim of *La Clave Latina* is to acknowledge those individuals of Latin American and Hispanic heritage who have taken Latin music to a new level through noteworthy achievements in their respective fields. These individuals have not only enriched their own culture, but that of all people through their contributions to music as a whole. As a celebration to the new Latin music world, it is only fitting to recognize those who have strived to leave their mark upon it, and in the process provide a rich legacy for the next generation to learn from. These individuals provide the inspiration for all the young Latin musicians and other artists to grow and achieve. Through the thought-provoking eye of the camera lens, *La Clave Latina* will depict the most distinguished names that exemplify the progress made by the people of Spanish-speaking cultures in the music world. The exhibit and book features 50 photo portraits of Latin music artists representing the rhythms of Latin Jazz, Afro-Caribbean, Mambo, Rumba, Merengue, Balada, Salsa, Tango and others.

La Clave Latina will be produced by a New York-based team of experienced professionals with strong ties in the worlds of art, literature, fashion, music and business in the Hispanic community.

This creative team includes Ricardo Betancourt, photographer/film director; Sebastian Dominguez, writer/producer; David Fasano, film and television producer; Juan Eugene Ramos,

art curator, and Candice Carmel, writer and translator.

The TV Special will invite the audience to travel through the lens of Ricardo Betancourt, beginning with *Buscando America* - Ruben Blades, Elektra Records 1983, the images symbolic statements that provide a course in which a decade of sounds and images unfold.

The black and white images of Luis "Perico" Ortiz (1986), in front of a 1949 subway car depicts a classic Latin music force. In consequent photos scenes from the influences that formed the New York Latin music sound will be viewed. Willie Colón is the bandleader who catapulted Ruben Blades and Hector Lavoe into stardom, identifying his music with the streets during the '70s. José "Buyú" Mangual, Louie Ramirez, Giovanni Hidalgo, Tito Nieves, Celia Cruz and many others have been captured by the eye of the camera and will be depicted during this one-hour TV special in order to expose Latin music and its journey into the future.


The Cuban Jam Session - 1993 (Criteria Studios, Miami) for Messidor Musik, was an event also filmed and photographed by Betancourt. An eventful reunion (after forty years), it features the older generation of Cuban musicians (Cachao, Chocolate, and others), with the young and new talent from Cuba, and the collaboration of Andy Garcia. A new influence in Latin music is being reborn by Cuba's latest exports. As during the times of the Afro-Caribbean explosion of decades past, when rumba, mambo, and salsa emerged, today we are experiencing a new sound that travels out of Cuba into the mainstream of Jazz and popular music; a movement that transcends all the political, social, and cultural barriers of the times, a new "awakening."

Recently, Famed Cuban pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba performed in New York's Lincoln Center, a long-awaited performance that left everyone breathless. This young virtuoso, considered one of the most important pianists of Cuban descent, has been a featured artist at the Montreux Jazz Festival, and has performed acoustic piano duets with Chick Corea in Japan. The opportunity to photograph Rubalcaba in New York was a visual experience that Betancourt will share with the audience of *La Clave Latina*.

Seis del Solar, Larry Harlow, Santana, and Mark Anthony are but a small sampling of artists in this genre that Ricardo Betancourt has documented in his exceptional style over the last 10 years. Never before in the history of Latin music has a collection of this size and scope been brought before the public.

Reach out to the fastest-growing market segment in the country through the heart and soul of their music. We invite you to be a part of it.

Supporting Materials: 10 Year Photo Retrospective, (Photography)

One Hour TV Shows (Nuestra Moda-1992 Mambo Memories The Palladium years -1990) 



Beginning with *Buscando America* in 1983, Betancourt's powerful image captured Ruben Blades' message to his people of finding peace, liberty and justice amid the political struggles of Latin America at that time. *Amor y Control*, Blades' latest album, is a collage of peoples, events and symbols that have shaped our world, and most especially that of Latin culture.



1992 was a Latin music lover's dream come true. "Tito Puente's Golden Latin Jazz All-Stars" mesmerized audiences with its first time ever grouping of the best names in the business. Andy González on base; Dave Valentin on flute; Paquito D'Rivera, sax; Hilton Ruiz, piano; Claudio Roditi, trumpet; Giovanni Hidalgo, congas; Tito on timbales; Ignacio Berroa on drums; Mario Rivera and Mongo Santamaria.