





04

MEMORIES OF ENGINEERING THE RECORDING

SIEMBRA

BY JON FAUSTY

I recorded most of Fania Records productions at La Tierra Recording Studios (previously known as Good Vibrations Studios) located on the 25th floor of 1440 Broadway at 40th street in New York City. The technology of the day was 24 track analog utilizing 2 inch tape and mixing down to 1/4 inch 2 track stereo analog. Unlike today, there was no digital technology so editing was done with a razor blade. There was no console mix automation so our mixes were all manual. If I made an error during a pass on a mix of a song, I would just back-up the 24 track tape and re-do that part and then edit all the 1/4 inch pieces together. I called this process "Mix Edits."

I started working as Willie Colón's engineer in 1972. We recorded many great albums together including *Lo Mato*, *The Good The Bad and the Ugly* and *Asalto Navideño Vol. 2* and most of Hector Lavoe's solo albums. I found Willie to be a great innovator and experimenter with production techniques. I found myself having to interpret Willie's musical concepts and develop technological methods to record his ideas. For example, no one had thought to or even tried to take a classically based string section and make musical arrangements that would fuse over a hard core salsa track. Well Willie, in my view, was very successful with many of Hector's recordings including "Periodico De Ayer."

Along came Rubén Blades and we recorded "Metiendo Mano." It was big hit but bigger was our next production "Siembra." Here is kind of a list of parts of this production that I remember to be very interesting.

PLÁSTICO - The introduction to this song has a very strong *disco* backbeat with a classical string section doing their riffs. Without warning, we transform into a strong *guaracha*. Something I remember doing sonically was at the end of each verse there is a little turnaround that has bass harmonic riff that I doused in reverb. Just a little effect to be more interesting.

BUSCANDO GUAYABA - At the beginning of the *montuno*, who could mistake the growling fat sound of Willie's great trombone solo. Then, what a surprise when the *tres* player didn't show up and Rubén adlibbed the *tres* solo by mouth.

PEDRO NAVAJA - Willie wanted to incorporate sounds of the street in this song. I dropped a pair of microphones out of the window of the 25th floor at the end of their cables to record several fire trucks barreling down Broadway. Also, if you listen very carefully, in the second verse you hear a car passing on the street and playing on that car radio is a section of "Pedro Navaja" that has yet to come.

MARÍA LIONZA - The intro, mambo and coda replicate the drums and chants of the Indians of Venezuela. Also Willie devised a rhythm that is like a *mapeye* that he calls the WAC (William Anthony Colón) rhythm. This is used during the verses, mambo and coda. The voicing of the harmonies in the *coros* has a terrific crossing motion to them.

OJOS - Nice conga solo by Eddie Montalvo

DIME - Another example of use of the WAC rhythm.

SIEMBRA - The density of this arrangement created by use of the classical string section is most memorable. Combined with the Fender Rhodes block chords, I needed to keep the hardcore salsa trombones in the right perspective. This piece was not easy for me to mix.

05

SIEMBRA

POR JON FAUSTY

Grabé la mayor parte de las producciones de Fania Records en los estudios de grabación La Tierra Recording Studios (anteriormente conocido como Good Vibrations Studios) ubicado en el piso 25 de 1440 Broadway en la calle 40 de la ciudad de Nueva York. La tecnología en aquel entonces era de pistas análogas utilizando una cinta de 2 pulgadas y mezclándolas a una pista análoga estéreo doble de 1/4 de pulgada. A diferencia de hoy, la tecnología digital no existía, por lo cual la edición se hacía con una navaja. No había consola de mezcla automatizada y por consecuencia nuestras mezclas se hacían a mano. Si cometía un error durante un pase de una canción en la mezcla, simplemente hacía una copia de seguridad de las 24 pistas y volvía a editar esa parte y luego editaba todos los pedazos de 1/4 de pulgada juntas. Yo le llamaba a este proceso, "Mezcla de ediciones" o "mix edits".

Comencé a trabajar como el ingeniero de Willie Colón en 1972. Grabamos muchos grandes álbumes juntos incluyendo "Lo Mato", "The Good The Bad and the Ugly", "Asalto Navideño Vol. 2" y la mayoría de los álbumes solos de Héctor Lavoe. Descubrí que Willie era un gran innovador y experimentador con las técnicas de producción. Me encontré interpretando los conceptos musicales de Willie y creando métodos técnicos para grabar sus ideas. Por ejemplo, nadie había pensado o incluso tratado de agarrar una sección de cuerdas clásicas y hacer un arreglo musical que fusionara sobre la pista de una salsa genuina. Willie, en mi opinión, fue muy exitoso con muchas de las grabaciones de Héctor, incluyendo "Periódico de ayer".

Entonces vino Rubén Blades y grabamos "Metiendo Mano". Fue un éxito pero más exitosa fue nuestra próxima producción "Siembra". Aquí les muestro una lista de partes de esta producción que recuerdo que fueron interesantes.

PLÁSTICO - La introducción de este tema tiene en el fondo un fuerte ritmo de *disco* con una sección clásica de cuerdas con acordes improvisados que se repiten. Sin aviso alguno lo transformamos en una fuerte guaracha. Algo que recuerdo haber hecho con el sonido fue que al final de cada verso hay un poquito de música que tiene unos acordes armónicos bajos que se repiten, y los llené de reverberación.

BUSCANDO GUAYABA - Al principio del montuno, el grave sonido ardiente del gran trombón de Willie es inconfundible. Entonces, qué sorpresa cuando el músico del tres no se presentó para tocar y Rubén improvisa el sonido del tres vocalmente.

PEDRO NAVAJA - Willie quería incorporar los sonidos de la calle en este tema. Saqué unos micrófonos por la ventana del piso 25 agarrados por los cables para grabar las sirenas de varios camiones de bomberos que pasaban a toda velocidad por Broadway. También, si escuchas con atención, en el segundo verso se oye pasar un carro por la calle donde se escucha en el radio del carro una sección de "Pedro Navaja" que está por venir.

MARÍA LIONZA - En la introducción, el mambo y la coda repiten los tambores y los cantos de los indios de Venezuela. Willie también se inventó un ritmo que es como un mapeye que él le llama el ritmo WAC (William Anthony Colón). Éste se usa durante los versos, el mambo y la coda. Las armonías vocales en los coros les da un maravilloso movimiento cruzado.

OJOS - Un estupendo solo de conga por Eddie Montalvo

DIME - Otro ejemplo del uso del ritmo WAC.

SIEMBRA - La densidad de este arreglo creado con el uso la sección clásica de cuerdas es el más memorable. Combinado con los acordes block chords del Fender Rhodes, tuve que mantener los trombones de la salsa genuina en las perspectiva apropiada. Esta pieza no me fue fácil mezclar.



Since the release of the LP *SIEMBRA*, by Ruben Blades and Willie Colón, the album has received constant commentary in the world of Salsa. Although we have already reviewed the album in "LP Pick", we feel it merits more attention. So did former *BILLBOARD* magazine columnist Agustín Gurza, who is now residing on the West Coast and serving as *Pitchfork* (formerly *Rolling Stone*) national Latin music coordinator. Mr. Gurza is one of the foremost writers on Latin music, and we welcome his inspired commentary on *SIEMBRA*.

SIEMBRA

A New Era for Salsa



"At a time when too many Latinos have been swept up by the nonsense of disco glitter, Colón and Blades are tackling serious social issues, deflating social pretense, and asking for social commitment." —Agustín Gurza

BY AGUSTÍN GURZA

More than any of their colleagues, Willie Colón and Ruben Blades have succeeded in revivifying Salsa without robbing it of its fire. A small measure of its exceptional quality is the excitement it began stirring in Salsa circles even before completion. The true courage of its greatness, however, is the depth of its creative courage and conviction. In this mounting period of disco dominance

word "Salsa" seems an inadequate description. *Siembra*, in short, has redefined its genre so conclusively that it begs to be renamed.

One goal: against overstatement as a crime. But *Siembra*, indeed, leaps ahead of anything in its field. A small measure of its exceptional quality is the excitement it began stirring in Salsa circles even before completion. The true courage of its greatness, however, is the depth of its creative courage and conviction. In this mounting period of disco dominance

with Colón and Blades again lacking the fashion and proving that the Latin Renaissance is in full flower.

In *Siembra*, Colón and Blades have placed a song's substance at least on a par with its form. Content is now the primary element, and the music is designed to support the message. Salsa has already been moving progressively in this direction, placing a greater emphasis on lyrics. *Meriendo Mame* itself was a landmark in that course. *Siembra* is now the culmination of that trend, the full in-

terpretation of lyrics and music within Salsa. That the Colón/Blades collaboration yielded this accomplishment follows naturally from their division of labor. Blades, who penned six of the album's seven tunes, offers the message. Colón, in producing the album and contributing the LP's most unusual arrangement, creates the musical vehicle for the effective delivery of that message.

Pablo "Yereba" Guzmán wrote in the December issue that Colón, as a "seventeen-year-old system," devoted to back prevailing fashion during the so-called "Latin Renaissance" of the late sixties by a couple of years. Now, in the late seventies, history repeats itself

and pop puffery, here is an album that challenges and provokes, probes and penetrates. At a time when too many Latinos have been swept up by the nonsense of disco glitter, Colón and Blades are tackling serious social issues, deflating social pretense, and asking for social commitment.

As for as content is concerned, *Siembra* has taken us a step beyond where we stood with *Meriendo Mame*. We have moved from social observation to social exhortation. While *Meriendo Mame* posed social questions, it allowed listeners to provide their own answers or remain indifferent if they chose. *Siembra*, on the other hand, demands attention. It does not allow the listener to avoid making a choice. It is full of imperatives. So after stiching that haunting portrait of "Pablo Puello" in the previous LP, Colón and Blades are now asking to do something about it. And the urgency of these petitions is best reflected in the commanding chorus which shouts "Siembra" in the title song.

As with "Siembra," the theme of the opening tune, "Plástico," is intended to apply universally, although anyone familiar with the comfortable social chaos in any Latin nation will recognize Blades' plastic characters as somehow uniquely Latin. "Plástico" is a rejection of superficial social values in general, but its conclusion can be made specific and applied to anyone's life. When Blades asks us to abandon "moditos importantes" he could (and does) mean

political models, or fashion models, or cultural models. The song's lesson, then, could be well taken by those Salsa artists who still subscribe to musical compromises for commercialism's sake. Thus, in a satirical musical line as ringing as the lyrics themselves, the tune opens with a few bars of true disco music.

"Plástico" confronts us with the album's call to action at its most direct. In the call of Latin nations that chooses the more-appropriately punctuated by a march-like arrangement—Colón and Blades are drawing the line and asking us all to

precisely the point of the work as a whole: you reap what you sow. In this sense, then, even of violence lived in the shadows lead to violent death, which nobody notices. The Latin American brings a dramatic tension to the tune which exists in time as the verses progress to the bloody climax.

The strains of irony and the harsh new sound which close Side One give way to the spiritual tranquility and haunting beauty of "Marta Lucena," which opens Side Two. One of the most extraordinary tunes on any Salsa album ever, this is such a rich musical blend of Latin American rhythms and melodies that the



arrangement could only have come from Willie Colón's continual inspiration. One hears primitive indigenous chants, Andean dances, folkloric festivity, all combining to imbue the tune with an effective sense of mystery and ceremonial grace.

Blades' melody is pure and placid, making the song an oasis of rest on the album. Its power is inspired by Blades' confidence in a benevolent force that guides the dreams of mortals. Latin LP, it becomes a parable whose lesson is

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

... (La vida te da sorpresas,
sorpresas te da la vida. Ay Dios!



MARIA LIONZA, *with*
 Simon & Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10020.

[illegible]

CUOS
 Jeremy Osis, Tanta Publishing, Art, Los Angeles
 Hay otra de esas historias,
 historias que observas al mundo pasar
 Osis, que amanece, fortuna, miseria, a la luna
 y a tu, responder.
 Hay otra que amanece torcida, y hay otra de amoroso dolor.
 Hay otra que en noches oscuras,
 viene de siempre a desahogar,
 Pero hay otra que habita en
 Hay otra de siempre tu,
 otra que vive en las torres de multiplicación la Gracia de Dios
 Osis, ¿Osis?

[illegible]

SIEMBRAS (s/n)
Ruben Torres / Wark Publishing Art, Carlos Franco

Siembras, si algo quieres recoger,
siembras, si presencias cosechar.
Pero no olvides que de sembrar a la semilla
así serán los frutos que recogerás.

Siembras, pero hablo con amor,
siembras, y el futuro te dará,
pero no olvides que de sembrar a la semilla
así serán los frutos que recogerás.

Coro: Siembras
Con: Siembras con fe, con humildad,
y a la larga, te vendrá.

WILLIE COLÓN Solo Trombone
LEOPOLDO PINEDA Trombone
JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ Trombone
ANGEL "PAPO" VÁSQUEZ Trombone
SAM BURTIS Trombone
JOSÉ TORRES "PROFESOR" Piano Fender Rhodes
SALVADOR CUEVAS Bass
EDDIE RIVERA Bass
JOSE MANGUAL JR. Bongo Maracas
EDDIE MONTALVO Tumbadora
JIMMY DELGADO Timbal
BRYAN BRAKE Batería ("Plástico")
A. SANTIAGO Maracas
 Lead vocal – Rubén Blades
 Chorus – Willie Colón, Rubén Blades, José Mangual Jr., Adalberto Santiago

Executive Producer – Jerry Masucci
 Producer – Willie Colón
 Recorded at – La Tierra Sound Studios – NYC
 Engineer – Jon Fausty
 Musical Director – Willie Colón
 Original Album Inside Photo – Fabian Ross
 Original Album Cover Photo – J.P. Posse
 Original Album Art and Illustration – Irene Perlicz

30th Anniversary Edition produced by Dean Rudland

Photo credits:

Pages 2, 3, 7, 13, 17 & 27: Fania's archives. Page 4: Izzy Sanabria's archives. Pages: 8, 9, 21, 22, 23, 24, & 25: From Izzy Sanabria's Latin NY Magazine (April, 1979) Illustration by Richie Vasquez. Article by Agustín Gurza

WILLIE COLÓN Solo Trombón
LEOPOLDO PINEDA Trombón
JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ Trombón
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 Director Musical – Willie Colón
 Fotografía De Adentro del Album Original – Fabian Ross
 Fotografía De La Portada del Album Original – J.P. Posse
 Arte e Ilustración Del Album Original – Irene Perlicz

Edición 30 Aniversario producida por Dean Rudland

Creditos de fotografia:

Páginas 2, 3, 7, 13, 17 & 27: Archivos de Fania. Página 4: Archivos de Izzy Sanabria. Páginas 8, 9, 21, 22, 23, 24, & 25: De la revista de Izzy Sanabria Latin NY Magazine (Abril, 1979). Ilustración por Richie Vasquez. Artículo por Agustín Gurza.

PEDRO NAVAJA

A COMIC STRIP NOVELA



PEDRO NAVAJA

Por la esquina del viejo barrio lo vi pasar,
con el sombrero que llevan los que se casaron.
Las manos siempre en los bolsillos no me gustan,
por que no sepan en cual de ellos lleva el puñal.
Llévate un sombrero de ala ancha y de mano ancha,
y espérame por mí allá donde sea, saliré.
Llévate el sombrero, por que no sepan que estás mirando,
y un día de esos que cuando no se ve brillando.

From a corner of the old barrio, I watched him pass,
With the careful ring of the sugar cat, out alone, his light
into the pockets of a suede leather jacket. His two hands fade,
So suddenly knows which of the pockets carries the blade.
At night he sports a wide brimmed hat tilted at the tip.
And Pro Kar sneakers as if there's a problem, he can't quit.
Toward shades an indubitably knows just where he's looking.
And a golden tooth, shining as he laughs, that lights up Brooklyn.



Lucha NY / April 1979 22

LYRICS: RUBEN BLADES (translation: Adela Lopez) ART: RICHIE VASQUEZ

Como a tres cuartos de la noche espera una mujer
la recuerdo la cara oscura, por quinta vez.
Y en un segundo entra y se va un trazo, para olvidar.
Que si ella está fría y no hay calor por olvidar.
Un cierto peso, muy pequeño, por la avenida,
no tiene marca pero la he visto que la he visto.
Pedro Navaja, las manos siempre dentro del bolsillo,
mira y mira y al día de hoy vuelve a brillar.

Three blocks or so from the old corner a working girl,
Staring the sidewalk for the fifth time in search of a hit,
Any second a storefront and down a street to ease this day,
When not one single instant, saying for nothing, come her way.
Down from the pavement, a bar shoe past going twenty four,
Has no marks, but the people know it's just the coat.
And Pedro Navaja, his hands still deep in the pockets of his coat—how long?
He looks and laughs and the golden tooth gives an upturn shine.



Lucha NY / April 1979 23



Mientras camina pasa la vista de esquina a esquina.
No se ve un animal, nada descarta toda la escena.
Cuando, de pronto, una mujer sale del lugar.
Y Pedro Ráez agarra un puñal que está guardado.
Mira pa' un lado, mira pa' el otro y no ve a nadie.
Y a la cámara, para ser justo, él cree la vida.
Y mientras tanto, en la otra escena, una mujer
señalando pues no hay pases con que comer.

And as he walks his eyes take in every corner of the block.
But there isn't a soul. It's completely deserted, every door is locked.
When all of a sudden, a woman leaves that storefront place.
And Pedro Ráez closes his fist and perhaps his palm.
From side to side, he looks and searches, not a soul in the street.
Then he nervously glances across the block at his weakened feet.
When after awhile, across the way, walks that lady of the night.
Short on money, her stomach empty—a sorry sight.



Mientras camina así ella siempre saca un revolver, esa mujer
parqueando en su cartera pa' que no se pierda.
un .38 Smith and Wesson, del Espinal
que carga siempre pa' que la vida de todos sea.
Y Pedro Ráez, puñal en mano, le fue pa' encima.
El Ráez no pudo, los alrededores toda la escena.
Mientras veía, el puñal humeaba, con compasión.
cuando el sonido, como un disparo como un cañón.

And as she walks, from her shoulder bag, she pulls a gun.
And slips it into a holster, her nerves undone.
A Smith and Wesson, policeman's spare—a forty eight.
Though she comes on her to even the odds when she's working late.
And Pedro Ráez, knife in hand, jumped her from behind.
The whole street glowing with the shimmer of his gold tooth shine.
And as he began the deed took in confidence and quick.
When all of a sudden, in the peace of the night, a revolver whirled.



Let's NY/April 1995 42

Y Pedro Ráez cayó en la escena mientras veía, a la mujer.
que revolver en mano y de repente barrió a él la vida.
"No hay problemas, hoy no es mi día, estoy solo."
pero Pedro Ráez, túmbase por no estar en la 7."

And Pedro Ráez fell to the ground while watching this street side dame.
Murdered wounded, but holding the gun, call out his name.
"Pedro Ráez! I truly thought this wasn't my day—not one fuck,
But hey! you're worse, cause Pedro Ráez, you just ain't right!"



Y creíame gente, que aunque hubo ruido, nadie salió.
No hubo curiosos, ni hubo preguntas, y nadie habló.
solo un barbacho con un día nuevo se fue, y
cogió el revolver, el puñal y los pases y se marchó.
y finalmente, los fue cantando desahogado el coro que
aquí los trajo.
dando, el mensaje de mi canción.

And believe me people, though there was noise, nobody dared
Ask a question, or shed a tear, or show they cared.
Just the neighborhood crowd, who snatched upon that grisly sight.
Picked up the gun, the blade, and the bits and tipped into the night.
And stumbling along, he sang it long, his heart content,
The chorus which here I bring you, carrying my message and its intent.

Coro: La vida es de sorpresas,
sorpresas te da la vida, ¡Ay Dios!

CHORUS: In life there are surprises,
There are surprises in life, Oh Lord!



Let's NY/April 1995 43