

Canadians discover Latin star Wil Veloz

## From Macarena to Mundo Latino

by Rod Gudino

Strange how one song has the power to sum up an entire musical movement in the eyes of the general public. The movement in Latin dance, the tune, Macarena; and on the crest of its incredibly lucrative wave is one Wil Veloz, who became the voice and the face of Macarena once Quality Music had bought the rights to the song in Canada.

To be sure, Veloz' initial encounter with that song came with Los Del Mar, a group signed on Lime Inc. whose opportune rendition of the track made the single gold in Canada, and sold another 50,000 units once the album was released. Veloz' subsequent departure from the group and from Lime led him to Quality, who shared Veloz' vision that he pursue a solo career.

The decision was an artistic one for Veloz, though Manager Manfredo Torres believed that the decision also gave the singer an advantage in the format.

"I think with a solo artist there is more of a chance," says Torres. "It's very hard for a Latin group to become big. I think that Latin audiences are very picky and critical of performers. With a group it's harder to say ok, they're all great or they all perform great, but when it's a solo artist, you can showcase, you are able to show everyone what you can do."

Though Torres believes that the Latin music

phenomenon is still very green in the country, he admits that Canada's acceptance of Veloz, without prior acceptance in the US, is indicative of a booming national trend.

"In Canada, Canadians are beginning to see now that [Latin dance music] is something that is big. The thing about Wil is that he's one of the first ones to make it so big as a Latin artist in Canada."

Born in Cuba and raised in New York, Wil Veloz grew up among diverse races and cultures, speaking a variegated form of his two languages (variously referred to as Spanglish or Espangles). Despite the clash of cultures, Veloz' musical sensibilities remained steadfastly in Cuba, where his uncle Ramon Veloz and cousin Ramoncito Veloz had already achieved success.

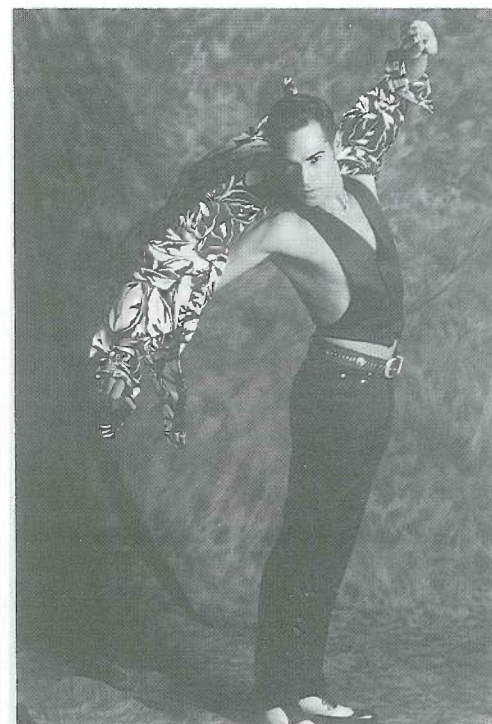
Being naturally inclined to a sense of full bodied entertainment, Veloz pursued equally the careers of dance, acting and singing, gaining admittance into the prestigious Dance Theatre of Harlem, Harlem School of the Arts and Havana University, the latter under the tutelage of Hilda Ruiz Casteñada, whose former pupils included Jon Secada.

That particular stint was, according to Veloz, the moment when everything started. Not long thereafter, a roving talent scout from Lime Inc. in Canada spotted Veloz in a bar, singing without a microphone and dancing at the same time. He was

thoroughly impressed.

Despite the monetary differences which would later sour their relationship, Lime's Los Del Mar with Wil Veloz produced what was easily one of the greatest Latin dance fads to hit the country and the crossover hit that put Latin music on the map. Reaching and maintaining #1 status in industry charts with strong sales to back it kept Macarena and Los Del Mar at the top of CAR and dance playlists across the nation.

Veloz has re-released that track on his debut solo effort titled *Mundo Latino* (Latin World). With it, the artist has expanded his repertoire to include a host of Latin pieces in contemporary dance



flavours. Currently he is packing concert dates in North America to promote the album. RPM spoke to Wil Veloz on Monday, August 16, 1996.

**RG: It Lime's idea in the first place to get you out as a Latinartist to do this song called the Macarena, is that right?**

**WV:** Right. They presented me the song, and I said I've heard this song before, I want to do original material. I thought it was going to be a compilation, kind of album with other artists on the album, so at first I wasn't too interested in that. Then they said we'll set you up with an album and I said well, that's what I want to go into, but I didn't want to be under Los Del Mar, I wanted to be Wil Veloz. Then one thing led to another and I said well, I'll give it a shot and do the Los Del Mar thing. But things didn't go too well with the company and myself. Not only did I want to pursue my career as a solo artist but there was also some other involvement that I wasn't too happy with.

**Can you be specific?**

I've never seen a penny from the Los Del Mar albums. Not only as a mechanical royalty but also for writing music and lyrics which is a separate identity completely. If they spent money on promotions, fine, but this is something completely different and I should have been receiving some monies.

### LUIS MIGUEL Nada Es Igual WEA-15947-P

If Jon Secada could sing in Spanish... (no wait, he does sing some tunes in Spanish) ...well, if he sang everything in Spanish, then he might sound a lot like Luis Miguel. Miguel is the definition of latino heartthrob, and the music is what one might expect, plenty of lush keyboards, soft percussion, all providing ample AC-type support for Miguel's often impassioned vocals. Should be a strong seller in the latin community. If Miguel ever decided to do a couple tunes in English, he might have some crossover success as well.



### CARLOS VIVES La Tierra Del Olvido Mercury 314 528 531-Q

-Native

Rural Latin American music propelled by accordion and stomping feet and strong vocal work from Carlos Vives. Appeal is reserved for lovers of folkly original music who approve of occasional lapses into modern variations. Select tracks like Rosa, Diosa Coronada and the title track seamlessly consolidate influences and innovation without losing the crucial campfire feel.

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