



Cover Story - Issue 94

THE KING OF SALSA, A FIVE-TIME GRAMMY AWARD WINNING SINGER-SONGWRITER-PRODUCER, WHO SOLD MORE THAN 10 MILLION ALBUMS WORLDWIDE, IS AT THE PINNACLE OF HIS CAREER. BY NO MEANS IS MARC ANTHONY READY TO SLOW DOWN.

By Jorge Cano-Moreno and Joshua Del Rio

The atmosphere in the main ballroom at Conrad Condado Plaza Casino in Puerto Rico during the 2010 Billboard Latin Music Conference and Awards was full of excitement and anticipation. The large room was at capacity with music industry veterans, talent managers, booking agents, label marketing big wigs, international press and of course the new faces of artists that hoped to have careers like the man that was about to take the stage for an intimate one-on-one interview with Leila Cobo, the Executive Director of Content & Programming for Latin Music & Entertainment for Billboard. The photographers, camera crew and anyone with a camera phone ran up to the front of the stage to see the singer known as the top selling salsa artist of all time — according to the Guinness Book of World Records. The five-time Grammy Award winner, who has sold over 10 million albums worldwide, and the first solo salsa act to ever sell out Madison Square Garden. As he took the podium, anyone sitting behind the small army of the media could barely see the entertainer, the man the world has come to adore, Marc Anthony.

Marco Antonio Muñoz was born September 16, 1968 to Guillermina and Felipe Muñoz, a housewife and musician/ hospital Lunchroom worker, respectively. Both parents, being of Puerto Rican descent, named him after Mexican Singer Marco Antonio Muñoz. The youngest child of seven, Marco later changed his name to avoid confusion with his namesake. Anthony grew up in East Harlem and as early as age 12, he would sing for family, friends and in after-school programs. The upstart got his first gigs as a background singer, after being discovered by producer David Harris. In the late 1980's Marc Anthony worked as a songwriter and backing vocalist for pop acts like Menudo and The Latin Rascals. His talent was evident from the start but it would be years later before he embraced Salsa and really became a household name.

His first album was a freestyle album, *Rebel* on Bluedog Records which came out in 1988. That year he also kicked off his acting career with an appearance in the musical comedy *East Side Story*. Then in 1989, he sang backup vocals for Ann-Marie, on the freestyle club hit "With or Without You", produced by Little Louie Vega and Todd Terry; two of dance music legends. In 1990 Marc collaborated once again with Little Louie Vega and Todd Terry on "You Should Know by Now" sung by Chrissy I-eece. A year later in 1991 he sang backing vocals for Edmond titled "Come Back to Me". Marc Anthony's turning point from Freestyle music to Salsa happened in November 22, 1991 at a show at Madison Square Garden for the 100th album release of the Late Latin Legend Tito Puente in which Marc Anthony and Little Louie were the opening act that night. For some reason that night he made the decision to switch from Freestyle/Dance music to the tropical sounds of the Salsa.



Marc Anthony teamed up with an upcoming producer and hit maker Sergio George for his first Spanish-language album *Otra Nota* (1993) on RMM records, the label that was home to the already established artist La India and legends like Tito Puente, Celia Cruz. It was founded by the late music impresario Ralph Mercado. Anthony's first time at bat he hit it out of the ballpark with "Hasta Que Te Conoci" a song made famous by Juan Gabriel. Anthony followed the release of the song with a performance at the Radio Y Musica Convention and an appearance on the international TV program *Carnival Internacional* which created a huge buzz and bookings around the planet. His debut had hits like "Si Tu No Te Fueras", "EL Ultimo Beso", "Palabras Del Alma" and the one over looked English song "Make It With You". Constantly being on tour throughout the Americas as the opening act for legends like Ruben Blades, established him as the future of Salsa and created a new generation of salsa fans.

In 1994 Marc Anthony and girlfriend at the time, Police Officer Debbie Rosado, had a daughter Arianna Muniz. Unlike his other very public relationships there is very little written or mentioned about Debbie Rosado or his eldest daughter. Even so, Arianna did appear in Jennifer Lopez's (JLO) video "Get Right". Anthony also teamed up with La India in a duet called "Vivir Lo Nuestro" which appeared on La India album *Dicen Que Soy*. The sophomore album, *Todo A Su Tiempo* (1995) on RMM went on to sell 800,000 copies and was certified gold in the US and Puerto Rico. The album also received a Grammy nomination and produced hits like "Te Conozco Bien", "Hasta Ayer", "Nadie Como Ella", "Se Me Sigue Olvidando", "Te Amare" and "Llegaste A Mi". Billboard awarded the Hot Tropical Artist of the Year to Mr. Anthony. In three short years Marc Anthony took the Latin Music industry by storm and after two hugely successful albums established himself as the leader of the new school of salsa.

Marc's third album *Contra La Corriente* (1997) was a more traditional-sounding project and was followed up with a sold-out concert at Madison Square Garden. "Y Hubo Alguien" became his first #1 single on the Billboard Hot Latin Track Chart. Other hits included "Contra La Corriente", "Me Voy a Regalar", "No Sabes Como Duele" and "No Me Conoces", which featured his then-friend Jennifer Lopez. This album was the first salsa album in history to enter the Billboard 200 chart. In 1998 Anthony started as Salvador Agron in Paul Simon's musical production of *THE CAPEMAN* based on the real life 1950's New York City murder case. This production also starred Ruben Blades, Renoly Santiago and Latin Pop singer Ednita Nazario. When asked about his experience performing in *THE CAPEMAN*, Marc was quoted in *Urban Latino #19* (1999) confessing that he "learned tons-musically, as a human being, as a friend, as an actor". "But I don't think I learned anything about singing, except that you have to pace yourself when you're doing a live musical." *THE CAPEMAN* also brought Marc closer to his idol Ruben Blades which he considered a mentor, brother and father figure. *THE CAPEMAN* never found an audience and closed after only 68 regular performances. It was considered a critical and financial flop.

By 1999 Marc Anthony was considered the future of Salsa, a time that also marked the end of his relationship with the genre's most successful Record Label owner the late Ralph Mercado. Mercado was known as the man who took salsa music around the world and built RMM into the Motown of tropical music. After three albums and ongoing battle over business practices Anthony left RMM. He worked on a couple of collaborations one with Aussie singer Tina Arena called "I Want to Spend My Lifetime Loving You" for the feature movie *THE MARK OF ZORRO*. The song won an ALMA AWARD for Outstanding Performance of a Song for a Feature Film. He also recorded the duet "No Me Ames" with Jennifer Lopez for her album *ON THE 6*. He also got his first Grammy for BEST TROPICAL LATIN PERFORMANCE for *Contra La Corriente*. Anthony was ready for a change and a new home to continue his evolving career.

Legendary music executive, Tommy Mottola signed Marc Anthony to SONY/BMG hoping to capitalize on "The Latin Explosion" that took over the music industry with Ricky Martin and JLO. Mottola lined up all the hit makers of the time: Corey Rooney, Rodney Jenkins and Walter Afanasieff to create the next big male pop vocal star. The album was entitled *Marc Anthony* (1999) and produced hits like "I Need to Know" and the Spanish version "Dimelo". Other hits also include "When I Dream at Night". His song "You Sang to Me" was featured in the feature film *RUNAWAY BRIDE*. The project also won a Latin Grammy for Song of the year for "I Need to know". The album introduced Anthony to a larger audience but was not the huge success expected by SONY/BMG and it alienated his Salsa fanbase.

