

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

J. Scott Winn

Dominican trio Xtreme takes Bachata to the next level.

BY MERCEDES SANCHEZ

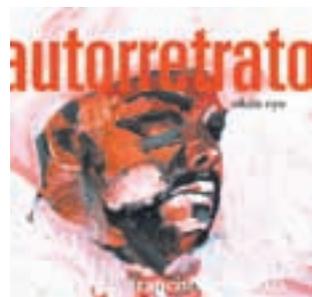
THE three baby-faced members of *bachata* group, Xtreme, are ready to give *Aventura* some stiff competition. This month, the group — comprised of City born-and-raised *dominicanos* Danny “D” Mejía, 20, Steven “Styles” Tejada, 19, and Elvis Rosario, 25 — is releasing its self-titled album of *bachata* grooves influenced by R&B, rock and pop.

“There are many groups out there,” says Mejía. “We’re just the first ones to give them competition. If we sound alike, it’s only because [of what] we’re doing [singing *bachata* in English].”

Recently signed by Sergio George’s SGZ Entertainment, their CD even includes a cameo from Tito Nieves on the track “Me Cambiaste La Vida.”

Look for Xtreme at the Dominican Parade on Sunday, Aug. 14th. “Xtreme” is in stores now.

ic, but his raspy voice makes up for it. Halfway through, he interjects a lush version of “Bésame Mucho” with female choruses, and the album reaches a climax of pure bolero bliss.

**SALSA**

SALSA Ubiquitous umbrella term that encompasses a variety of Afro-Cuban dance styles.

Ismael Miranda
Edición Especial
(Sony Discos)

★★★★☆

Armed with the priceless assistance of salsa royalty Gilberto Santa Rosa and his production skills, veteran singer Miranda leaves no stone unturned to show that his salsa career is still alive. There’s the expected attempt to modernize the tropical vibe with hip-hop (the Sergio George produced opener), but also touches of true salsa superstars. Witness “Eterno Niño Bonito,” written by Domingo Quiñones and sung by Ismael, Gilbertito and Tito Nieves. Miranda has nothing to worry about. As long as he keeps up the

swing, his stuff will never go out of style.

ELECTRONICA

ELECTRONICA Synth-heavy genre of dance music, encompassing different styles, such as techno, trance and house music.

Nortec Collective
Tijuana Sessions Vol. 3
(Nacional)

★★★★★

This is a great moment for Nortec because the Tijuana-based collective is finally demonstrating that the revolutionary success of its 2000 debut was no fluke. This second installment is just as exhilarating as its predecessor, taking the fusion of authentic *banda sinaloense* samples with trippy electronica a step further. The key? Trimmed down to only five members, the group has enriched its sound with the power of live Banda musicians, notable guest stars (alternative rock group Calexico lends its touch to “Esa Banda en Dub”) and a poppy tinge that transforms “Tijuana Makes Me Happy” into hit single material.

**TORO DE FORCE****BEHIND THE MUSIC OF THE CUATRO'S MAESTRO**

By JAVIER L. ORELLANA

MASTER guitarist Yomo Toro has been making sweet music for more than five decades. Thanks to the “King of Cuatro’s” infectious sounds, children in Ireland and Japan are playing Puerto Rico’s traditional guitar.

The Fania All-Stars member — considered a Puerto Rican national treasure — helped revolutionize salsa when he introduced the traditional ten string guitar to the hardcore sounds of Willie Colón and Héctor Lavoe. Now 72, Toro continues to make music history, having just recorded a reggaetón CD with lyricist Voltio.

When did you start playing the cuatro?

At the age of 6. I learned to play using my father’s *cuatro*. Everyday when he left for work, I’d climb the metal bed frame, take his *cuatro* from the wall, play it and put it back up before he got back home. One day he caught me. I was playing and I lost track of time. I rushed to put the *cuatro* back and fell on the bed. My father said, “Get back up there and do what you were doing before, but this time you have to do it better.”

The first melody I learned was “La Feria de las Flores.” When I finished, he said, “Okay, come down.” He went out to the patio and got some wood from a tree trunk. He said, “I’m going to make you a *cuatrito* so you can leave mine alone.”

When did you get your first real cuatro?

There was this man who delivered the bread in my town [Ensenada, Guanica]. One day he called me and said, “Come over because I have something for you.” I went to his house and he took out a *requinto* (a six-string nylon guitar), one of the most beautiful ones I have ever seen. He said, “I got this to inspire you to continue forward.” The day after he gave me the *requinto* he died in a car accident on one of his delivery routes. I decided that, in his honor, I was going to do something in my life with music.

Yomo is an odd name.

My full name is Victor



Seiji Yamaguchi

Yomo Toro jumps on the reggaetón bandwagon and keeps on rocking at age 72.

Guillermo Toro Vega Ramos Rodríguez Acosta. Yomo came from Guillermo. My uncle called me Llermo, and from a distance, everyone would hear Yomo.

When you first recorded with Fania, you were supposed to bring an electric guitar but, instead, you brought a cuatro.

I said, “If they’re going to do a record of Christmas music in Spanish, why are they going to use an electric guitar? We’re not *gringos!* We’re Puerto Ricans!” And for “Asalto Navideño,” [I felt] they had to use a *cuatro*. So I took my *cuatro*. If they hadn’t wanted it, I would have taken my *cuatro* and left, but they loved it. [The album] was a hit. That’s how I

became part of the Fania All-Stars.

Talk to me about the Fania concert at Yankee Stadium.

It was unbelievable to have 48,000 people there, when I was expecting 10,000. [I remember] people running onto the field, climbing the stage and dancing on the speakers. There were people running after us, and we ran and hid in the Yankees dugout, even though we knew they didn’t want to harm us. They were just excited.

You brought your cuatro to reggaetón.

Today’s music can never compare to the music of yesterday, because that was the most beauti-

ful music and was recorded using real instruments, not synthesizers like they use today. I play reggaetón because I never turn down an invitation to record. I’m an all-around musician.

You are very proud of not having any addictions.

Yes, I don’t drink or smoke cigarettes. I don’t use marijuana. All I do is eat my food and stay home. That’s why I’m so fat. I’ll admit I have one addiction and that’s for lobster. You put a lobster in front of me and I go crazy.

CATCH YOMO TORO SEPT 10TH AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, SEVENTH AVENUE AT 33RD STREET. (212) 307-7171. 8 P.M. \$39.50-\$99.50