

THE SQUEEZE ON SOUTH AFRICA

Newsweek®

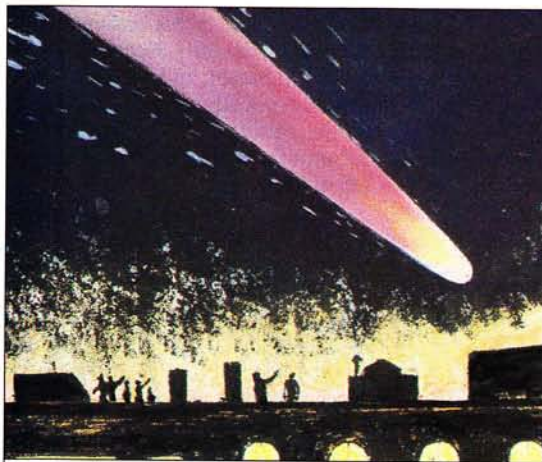
September 9, 1985 / \$1.95

THE COMET IS COMING

Halley's Marvel Gives
Scientists and Stargazers
A Once-in-a-Lifetime Thrill

*****S-DIGIT 92065
RID 7210 MIN *J O DEBS N7-E
MR JEREMIAH F REID
1721 MAIN ST
APT 104
RAMONA CA 92065





The Show of a Lifetime Reopens

Three-quarters of a century after its 1910 spectacular (above), the best known of comets is returning. Through history, Halley's has been seen as a forerunner of disaster and defeat. But it was also the first celestial body to prove Isaac Newton's theory of gravitational pull. On this swing around the sun, the comet may provide the key that unlocks some secrets about the origin of life on Earth. *Page 74*

Reagan and Regan
The president returns to Washington this week to face a contentious Congress and a grueling fall agenda. A NEWSWEEK Poll found that while his popularity remains high, many Americans disagree with him on key issues. The coming weeks will also test Donald T. Regan, who is fast becoming the most powerful chief of staff since Sherman Adams. *Page 18*



Pretoria on the Ropes

As the violence in South Africa continued, the white government won every street battle but seemed to be losing the war. Financial confidence was shaken as the flight of capital overseas forced Pretoria to close currency and stock markets temporarily. Forces inside and outside the country pressured the regime to negotiate a political settlement with black leaders such as Nelson Mandela. *Page 28*



Salsa With Spin

His tough, politically pointed salsa music has made him a star with Latin audiences. Now Rubén Blades (left) stands poised for mainstream success in the United States. *Page 97*

Boris the Great

Boris Becker leads a pack of new European tennis stars. They have invaded the U.S. Open intent on putting an end to the seven-year winning streak of American men. *Page 85*



CONTENTS

NATIONAL AFFAIRS 18	BUSINESS 66	BOOKS 91	OTHER DEPARTMENTS
A stormy fall forecast	Tremors of a trade war	"Horse's Neck," by Pete Townshend	Letters 4
The deputy president	The superconsumer slows down	"The Accidental Tourist," by Anne Tyler	Periscope 17
Regan on Regan	A taxpayer's dream come true	"Lake Wobegon Days," by Garrison Keillor	Newsmakers 65
Sergeant York musters out	J.R. takes on Hollywood		Transition 99
Poverty: the war isn't over	Gannett buys The Detroit News		
Mercy killing—or murder?	TV, sex and prevention		
Cocaine: flying Eastern	Brazil's politics of debt		
INTERNATIONAL 28	SCIENCE 74	FAMILY 93	THE COLUMNISTS
South Africa: "Running out of time"	Hail, Halley's! (the cover)	Kids: the deadliest game?	My Turn:
The economic squeeze	A comet's tale of the cosmos		Isadore Barmash 12
Mandela: the invisible leader	How to catch the show		Robert J. Samuelson 73
France: Tricot's whitewash			Pete Axthelm 86
Espionage: spy in a clown suit	SPORTS 85	NEWS MEDIA 95	Meg Greenfield 100
Nigeria replays a coup	Boris the Great	Phyllis George goes home	
Nicaragua: comeback of the contras	MOVIES 89	ARCHITECTURE 96	Cover: Photo by Lick Observatory, University of California at Santa Cruz (1910), color-enhanced to appear as the comet would in outer space.
Afghanistan: a new Soviet offensive	"Agnes of God": children of a lesser god	The jewel of the Antilles	
	Oliver Stone's ugly war	MUSIC 97	
	"Compromising Positions"	Salsa with a political spin	
	"American Flyers": a death race	EDUCATION 99	
		Help wanted: teachers	

Letters to the Editor should be sent to NEWSWEEK, 444 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022, and subscription inquiries to NEWSWEEK, The NEWSWEEK Building, Livingston, N.J. 07039. NEWSWEEK (ISSN 0028-9604), September 9, 1985, Volume CVI, No. 11, is published weekly, \$39.00 a year, by NEWSWEEK, Inc., 10100 Santa Monica Boulevard, Los Angeles, Calif. 90067. Second Class postage paid at Los Angeles, Calif., and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTERS: Send address changes to NEWSWEEK, The NEWSWEEK Building, Livingston, N.J. 07039.

Salsa With a Political Spin

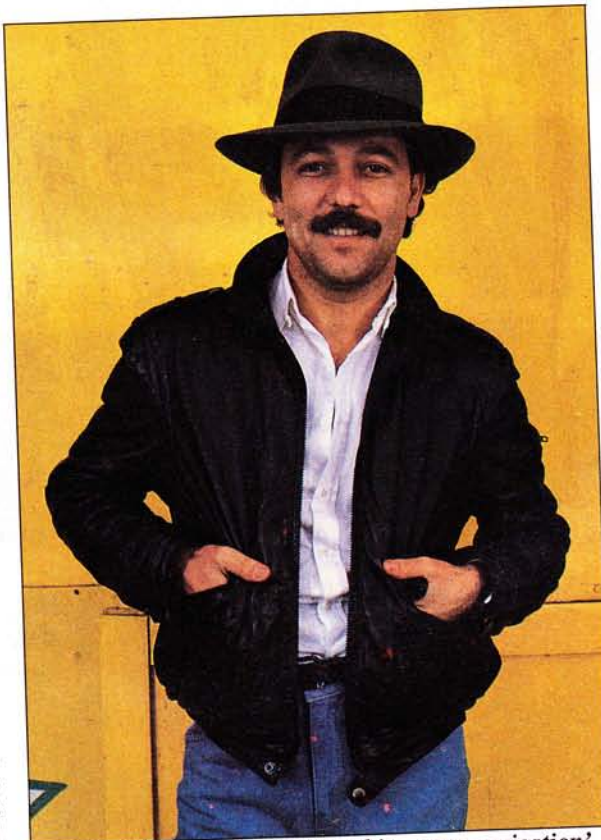
Ask Rubén Blades why salsa music has never caught on among Anglos and you get an answer that spans 50 years of hemispheric history and includes the following: the Depression, the Fred Astaire movie "Flying Down to Rio," Nazism, "I Love Lucy," Carmen Miranda, Ronald Reagan, the national debt, the *desaparecidos* of Argentina and the barrios of America. It's a complicated theory . . . but then Blades is a complicated man. At 37, he's a global star in the world of salsa, the tricky polyrhythmic pop music of Latin America, and now seems poised on the edge of the mainstream U.S. market. He is also a lawyer and a writer. And with the recent opening in New York of the slight but appealing movie "Crossover Dreams," starring Blades as a small-time salsa singer who longs for mass success, he's an actor as well.

Talking to Blades, who cowrote the screenplay, it's hard not to see the movie as a cautionary fable. His character is Rudy Veloz, who is undone by his dreams of "crossing over" to the mainstream record market. Seduced by the prospect, Rudy leaves old friends and old ways behind in the barrio—and when things go sour he has nothing left. "Crossover implies an assault," says Blades in a soft voice redolent of his native Panama. "Come on, let's go, burn the bridges! We're going over there."

Kept Faith: Blades himself has never had much interest in making that perilous one-way crossing. Last year, after he left the small Latin label Fania to sign with mainstream giant Elektra, he kept faith with his following: "Buscando América" ("Searching for America"), his first Elektra release, carried on the kind of smart, politically tough Latin pop music he has been making for years. "You don't have to leave your background behind in order to see what's on the other side," he says. "The proposition is simple: let's talk. Let's meet in the middle someplace, and then we'll walk together." In a happy affirmation of Blades's sentiments, "Buscando América" has sold more than 300,000 copies worldwide to date—respectable for any release, remarkable for a Latin record—and set the stage for a new LP, "Escenas," coming this fall. The success of "Buscando América" is all the more surprising because it is serious, complicated music—more so than most salsa. The songs (they are sung in Spanish with an English translation provided) talk about a priest murdered at the altar, a state policeman on assignment to arrest a citizen, the people who have simply vanished in

the whirlwind of Latin American political struggle. Blades's lyrics are quick, richly detailed and affecting even in translation. From "Desapariciones": *Somebody tell me if you've seen my husband . . . / His name is Ernesto X; he is 40 years old . . . / He left the night before yesterday and is not back yet; / I don't know what to think. / This has never happened to me before.* * Traces of jazz and rock and roll dot the music. The record opens with an airy blast of doo-wop harmonies and closes with a piano-and-strings coda that recalls Bruce Springsteen's "Jungleland."

Such flourishes are less a nod to the mainstream than a true reflection of Blades's wide musical background. Raised in Panama City, he grew up listening to both Latin



Blades: "I keep coming back to this—communication"

music and American pop, as well as calypso from the West Indies. Through the late '60s he juggled music and education—performing with local Latin bands and eventually earning a law degree at the University of Panama. When Panamanian authorities closed the university after a 1969 confrontation with students, Blades took off for New York and made music full time for a year. He returned to school in Panama and in 1974 came back to New York City to make his home. That's when his musical career

*© Rubén Blades Mus. Ent.

took off, largely through a series of records with bandleader Willie Colón. But Blades wasn't quite finished with academia. Last year he moved to Cambridge, Mass., for the school year to take a Master of Law degree at Harvard.

It's all part of the plan. Popular music, Blades feels, can be a powerful instrument of communication, and artists have not only the right but the responsibility to wield that power. And for Latin artists in North America, he thinks, the problem is double-edged: there is a need both to confront the terrible political situation in the south and to educate the Anglo population about Latins in this country. "We have to be more responsible in how we use this means of communication," he says. "If society's going to survive it's going to take all of us. Otherwise there's not going to be any time for songs. Period." His political seriousness extends beyond music. There are rumors about plans to run for office in Panama someday, and Blades confirms them—sort of—in the tones of a practiced politician. "Eventually I'll return to Panama and the odds are good I'll run for office," he says. "I'll participate in some way. There's a need there for figures people can trust. And the fact that I have a professional background enables me to dismiss those who would deny my capacity, arguing that I'm merely a musician."

Imaginary Guitar: Records, movies, politics—to Blades, it's all part of the same process. "I keep coming back to this," he says. "Communication. People understand the issues if they are explained to them. I really believe that." But until the time comes to move back home and run for office, how best to reach the Anglo heart and mind—and avoid the trap that claimed Rudy Veloz? An admirer of August Darnell, who sank himself deeply into the funk/cabaret creation Kid Creole, Blades has an idea. Early next year he will split his performing self down the middle. Part of the time he will be *Rubén Blades*, singing salsa in Spanish for mostly Latin audiences; and part of the time he will be *Panama Blades*, singing in English the calypso music he heard and loved as a boy.

"I'm not going to become a Boy George," Blades says, "and I'm not going to become a rock and roller." He strums an imaginary guitar in the air. "As a kid I heard a lot of calypso: Lord Cobra, Lord Delicious, Mighty Sparrow. Well, there it was: calypso, in English, with an Afro-Cuban background. Still a commentary, because calypso is mainly social comment. This is what's gonna make the whole thing understandable." He smiles. Passion and premeditation combined. The idea is pure Rubén Blades.

BILL BAROL