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# Latinos In The US: Jon Secada, Acclaimed International Singer-Songwriter, Opens Up About Living The 'American Dream' [PROFILE INTERVIEW]

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By **Maria G. Valdez** | Jul 04 2013, 02:34PM EDT



Image Michael Buckner/Getty Images

When we want to listen to music that truly comes from the heart, there's one name that comes to mind: **Jon Secada**. The sound of his voice it's as if rose petals were caressing your skin as you listen to it, and the lyrics speak to you in the deepest ways. To play one of his songs is to open yourself to a world of magic, love, joy and happiness.

All those elements come from a place of many life experiences, a mix of cultures, leaving a city that didn't provide him with the opportunities he needed to go forward, and once settled in a different town, taking advantage of all the doors that opened thanks to his talent.

Jon Secada has worked hard his whole life to be where he's at now. A renown singer-songwriter, Grammy Award winner, one of the first crossover Latino artists to make it in both markets and a hit-maker, having sold over 20 million albums worldwide.

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It all started when he and his family left Cuba when Jon was only nine years old. They moved to Miami and Secada discovered his gift of music. A few years later, he completed a Bachelor's degree in Music and then earned a Master's degree in Jazz Vocal Performance.

But his career didn't launch until a meeting with Gloria and Emilio Estefan took place in the late 1980's, and Jon was immediately hired as one of Gloria's background singers, exposing him later in one of her concerts, when he performed a solo that captivated the audience.

Shortly after, he began working on his first self-titled debut album which sold over six million copies worldwide and was certified triple platinum in the U.S.

He also composed music for Estefan, including some of her best-known ballads. Secada co-wrote and sang background on "Coming Out Of The Dark," Gloria's number one hit from her 1991 album Into The Light, worked with Ricky Martin in the Spanish version of "She's All I Ever Had," collaborated with Enrique Iglesias, and composed songs for Jennifer Lopez and Mandy Moore, among many others.

He performed with Luciano Pavarotti, recorded with Frank Sinatra, and been on Broadway a couple of times.

All those accomplishments started with a little boy with a dream, who left his country searching for a new life and different opportunities. A little boy that didn't waste a minute, and became one of the greatest and influential artists in Latin Music.

**1) How did you feel moving from one country to another at such a young age?**

"Change wasn't that bad for me, and although I was raised very close to my culture and traditions, Miami was the city that had a strong connection with Latino immigrants, especially Cubans. The transition between one city to another was smooth, and my parents made sure I experienced America and also had strong values and a link to my Latino heritage. Everything that we went through going out of Cuba became a blessing once we came to the States. We really started living the "American Dream," but proud of our Latino roots."

**2) You've been in the U.S. for a long time. Do you think you've lost any of your Latin flavor?**

"No, I don't think so. I think this is the greatest value that I've been able to preserve, and would love to give something of it to my kids, Mikaela, 14, and Jon Henri, 11. To teach them all the traditions, what they mean, so they keep that in their hearts and souls, their lives, and integrate it with being an American citizen. I think that one of the greatest thing about the United States is that it's a country of immigrants and they respect our essence."

**3) What has been the biggest challenge raising your kids?**

"Right now it's all about communication, familiarity, spending time together. There are so many distractions that can separate a family, and it's all about dedicating time, time to teach them, to show them we love them, to create a stronger spiritual bond, to talk about the family history and explain why it's so important to know where we came from and where we're going. Everything starts with communication."

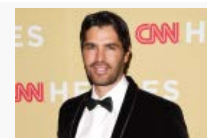
**4) Would you ever live outside of the U.S.?**

"I don't think so. I love this country very much. I'm an American citizen and I think that everything I've been blessed to have, it's been because of the opportunities this country has given me and the way it's opened its doors and given me the whole world."

**5) If you had to bring anything from Cuba, what would it be?**



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"I left Cuba when I was very little, and I remember a few things about it. What I want, I already got. My heart, my culture, my traditions, the love to my family. What I do remember is that it was very traumatic leaving the island, and that's always been in my heart."

**6) What's the most important thing you've taught to your kids?**

"Discipline, sacrifice and work. Those are the things that, at the end of the day, help you become whatever you want to be, and not necessarily looking at it from the financial aspect, but the outcome of your work, watching your dreams come true after all the sacrifice, faith and love."

**7) Would you say you're a "green" family?**

"Yes, we're a "green" family and we're learning to be greener. This is a teaching and learning experience for all of us. Creating an ecological conscience, and apply it to the way we live. That's why I accepted an important project with Toyota, and I'm proud of the sensibility that they're promoting and the effort we're all putting into it."

**8) The Toyota campaign you're referring to is helping increase environmental awareness in the Hispanic community across the United States, since they are becoming more environmentally aware. You were chosen as one of the faces to represent the brand, what would you say is your commitment to the consumers?**

"This whole project is about connecting with the consumer. I love it because anytime I can use my image for something positive, I do it. I feel responsible for anything that matters to me, and Toyota's commitment to the environment echoes my own personal beliefs. Bringing the Hispanic community new tools to a healthy and greener living is something that I love taking a part of."

**9) Where will we see you next?**

"I'm working on a new record with a great friend Rudy Pérez, and we're still in the whole pre-production process. I'm also working on a book, that God willing, will be released by the end of 2014. A lot of traveling, and always some concerts, recordings and a few T.V. shows in Latin America. Keeping myself busy."

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#### Maria G. Valdez

Born and raised Dominican living in New York (do not confuse with Dominican-York), who claims to be Sofia Vergara's long lost daughter and who has an unhealthy obsession with JLo. Associate Editor of Latin Times, overseeing the editorial operation and content strategy of the website. Trained journalist and musical theater performer with solid entertainment instincts. Experience covering human interest stories and social and large scale events with focus on Latino entertainment. Maria began her career in journalism in her native Dominican Republic where she worked for Ritmo Social, one of the country's most prestigious magazines, and as on-air co-host of a radio variety show.

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