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# A TASTY SAMPLE OF MIAMI'S NEW FLAVOR

## MSM - The "New" Miami Sound Machine

By Lindzi Scharf

They are Miami's answer to Menudo. Miami Sound Machine, a group that reinvented and represented Miami's vibe in the early 1980's, is back with a new sound and new line-up. The group, now called MSM, features Sohanny Gross, Lorena Pinot, and Carla Ramirez. Don't fret - Emilio Estefan has no qualms about the new trio sans Gloria. In fact, he handpicked each of the girls and produced their debut album. The product? A saucy first single, "I'm The Only One," which features the perfect blend of Latin and pop flavors.

Each bears their own anecdote as to how they became part of MSM. Jersey-girl Lorena says, "I came to Miami with a purpose. I wanted to work with Emilio -- of course, everyone does. I happened to join a gym and I saw him there. We became friends." "Through a mutual friend he discovered that I was a singer. I didn't want him to know that because I didn't want him to think that that's why I wanted to be his friend." Ultimately, Emilio took a listen to Lorena's sound and decided she'd be perfect for his project. Her dream became a reality.

It's not every day that you befriend Emilio Estefan and suddenly turn into a music icon. Things happened a little differently for Sohanny. A chance encounter with a furniture deliverer lead to what she calls her "miracle story," the delivery of a lifetime - her destiny! "I'd only been in Florida for about a year. My mom and I were the first ones to come here," she says. "We had been sleeping on the floor. My mom finally decided to get furniture. The guy who was delivering it was really friendly and she was telling him that I sang." As the story goes, the man had a connection to The Estefans and urged her to call. Sohanny was not convinced, "I was like, 'Ma! Come on. Haven't you noticed that everyone seems to have some story connecting them to the Estefans? You're talking about the guy who delivered your furniture! I decided to call, but they weren't accepting demos at the time. Four months later, I got a call and they were looking for another girl."

Fate was certainly in her favor, as it was for the group's Miami native, Carla. She remembers, "I took a vacation to Italy. My mother always told me when I go into a church to make a wish. So, I went into each church and wished that I'd get to work with Emilio. Two months later, when I returned, my wish came true. I was working with some of his producers and they kept pushing for me. They were trying so hard that when Emilio finally met me, he jokingly asked, 'Are you giving them 10% or something?' After listening to my demos, he welcomed me into the group."

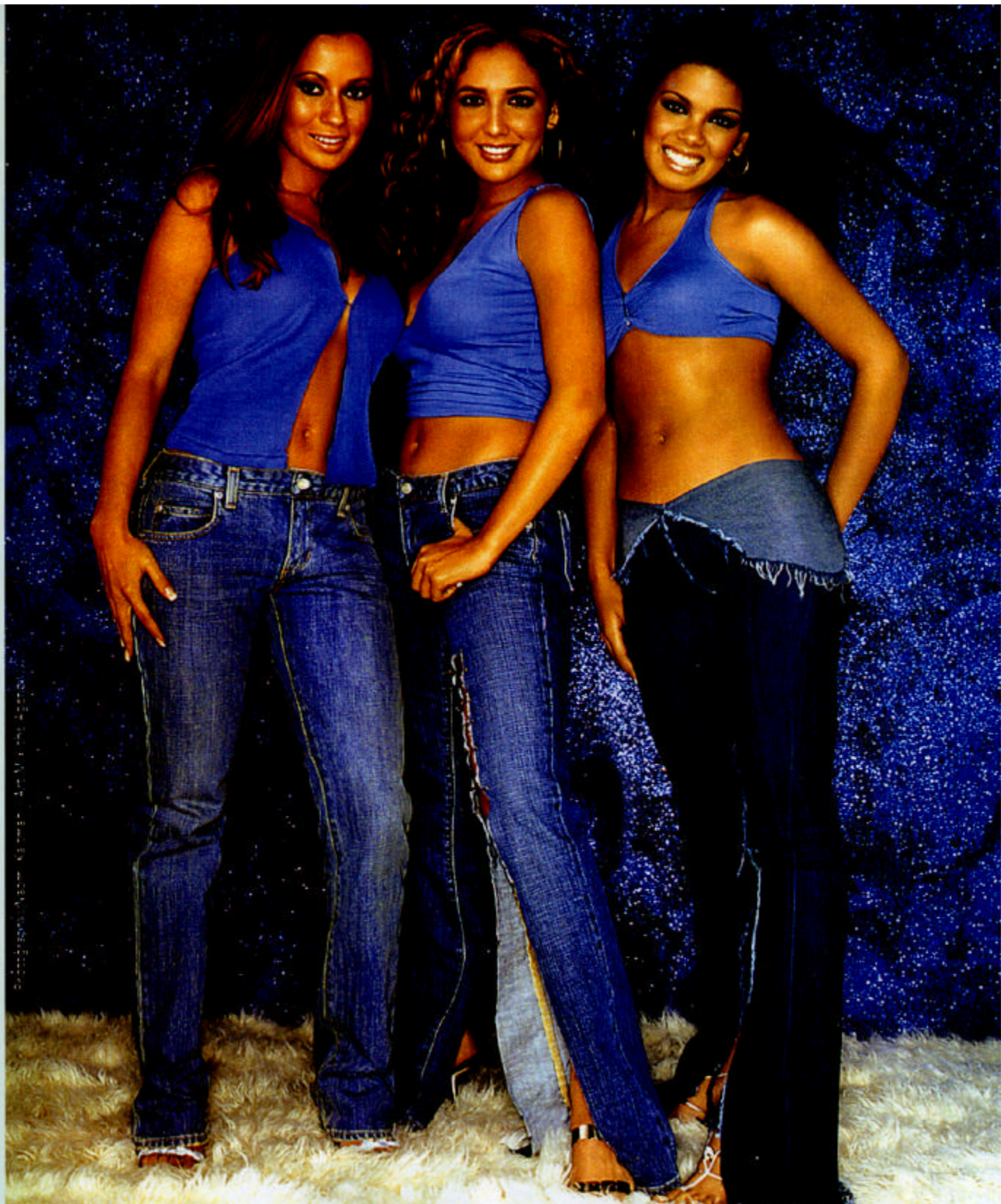
Okay, so they each wanted to work with Emilio, but did they want to work with each other? Carla laughs, "You put three girls together and they don't always click, but we do." Lorena quickly adds, "We were brought together by Emilio, but he picked us based on similar characteristics."

The girls' stories play out like fairy tales: Three girls with a dream make their way to Miami to make it happen. But how many others followed this same path? "I'm not ignorant. I realized there's a lot of competition out there, but there was no way anybody could tell me that I couldn't do it," says Sohanny. "It's important not to give up on your dreams. Jon Secada told me that he cut five demos before working with Emilio. That says something. We all worked hard to get where we are."

While they share a common love for music, they each grew up in different environments. Ironically, it's those differences that allow them to grow as musicians and artists. Sohanny explains, "It's not just Miami's sound. I feel so blessed to represent so many different cultures in our music. It's Miami's energy with the roots of so many different cultures." Lorena agrees, "I grew up listening to hip-hop on the radio and, at home, I had Merengue and Salsa. Now, we get to be part of a project that incorporates our roots. We're American, but we're also Latin."

When we first spoke with MSM, they were preparing for the future - uncertain of what to expect. Lorena said of their schedule, "Lately it's a mess. We're going through a transition because we're not in the studio anymore, but we're not doing concerts just yet. We've been doing a lot of press." Since that time, MSM released their debut album in Spain and received a tremendous response. According to Lorena, "People are holding signs for us already!" She hopes their impact will be reminiscent of what Gloria brought to the streets of Miami in the 80's. She says, "We represent the new sound. We have a fusion of hip hop, R & B, Latin... mixed in with pop undertones."

Since their grueling tour schedule began, the girls have opened for the likes of 'N Sync, Celine Dion, and Aerosmith's Steven Tyler. Prior to one trip, the girls ran into a bit of trouble. "We were leaving for Spain. We had two shows already and another the next day. And this girl can't leave because her visa wasn't taken care of," Lorena laughs pointing to Sohanny. "We had to leave by ourselves and do two shows by ourselves." Sohanny quickly defends herself, "I'm like, 'Come on -- am I the only alien here?' I had luggage in the airport and everything and suddenly they told me I couldn't go." Luckily, that issue has since been resolved.



The girls each realize how fortunate they are to be part of MSM. While their schedules keep them busy, they've been waiting for this their entire lives. "In life, if you love something you have to prepare yourself for when that opportunity presents itself," Carla says. "When the door opens, thank God that you have the ability to go

for it." It's clear that MSM is going for it at full speed. With a hectic touring schedule and an eclectic album ready for its American release, expect to hear a lot more from Sohanny, Lorena and Carla, the young women of The New Miami Sound Machine.