

Jorge Casas - Biography

Over twenty-three years of collaboration and production with Gloria and Emilio Estefan has brought Bassist Jorge Casas much success and recognition. From his Grammy Awards and Grammy nominations to the multiple Platinum and Gold albums and CDs he has produced he can look back on an ongoing career that sparkles with achievements and accomplishments.

After enrolling in the renowned music school at the University of Miami and upon graduating in 1983 with a music degree in Studio Music & Jazz, Jorge continued to develop his career in Miami, performing locally with his band "The Company" from 1981 to 1986. The band included Clay Ostwald (keyboards), Jon Secada (vocals), Joy Francis (vocals), Ed Calle (saxophones), John DeFaria (guitar), Robert Rodriguez (drums), Jack Ciano (replacing Robert on drums) and John Lovell (trumpet & cabassa). Jorge, Clay, Ed, John, Robert and Jon Secada eventually became The Miami Sound Machine, the band behind Gloria Estefan. John Lovell went to become Musical Director for Jimmy Buffet and John DeFaria eventually moved to Los Angeles where he joined Kenny Loggins as guitarist and vocalist.

In October of 1986, Emilio and Gloria Estefan came to see The Company perform at Rick's Café, a South Miami club. Jorge along with Clay, Ed Calle and John DeFaria were hired to, in essence, become the Miami Sound Machine. Jorge soon afterward became the Musical Director and leader of the band. Later, Robert Rodriguez replaced Sound Machine drummer Kiki Garcia and Jon Secada was added as background vocalist.

A few months later, Jorge was asked by Emilio to do a different arrangement of Gloria's song 'Anything For You'. The song had already been recorded and was on the very soon to be released 'Let It Loose' album. By 'very soon' meant four days before going to mastering. Jorge immediately summoned Clay after a rehearsal for

the upcoming world tour and began arranging 'Anything For You' from scratch, only with Gloria's vocal on tape. They went to Clay's house and worked with only the vocal on 'time code' throughout that Friday night and into Saturday morning. Upon completion of sequencing all the tracks, Gloria and Emilio came to hear the new version and were very impressed by what they heard. They proceeded to go in the studio on the very next day and record the live instruments, guitar, bass, percussion, and horns. The song was replaced by the old version and sent along to Epic Records, a subsidiary of CBS at the time. 'Anything For You' went on to become Gloria's first #1 song on the Billboard charts and remained there for two weeks in May of 1988. Jorge and Clay were then asked to rearrange and record '1-2-3' for release and rose to #5 on the pop charts with the help of a very successful video. The 'Let It Loose' album was then re-packaged and re-released in Europe as 'Anything For You' and, along with the 'Homecoming Concert' video release, brought the band's first widespread popularity in Europe. Jorge and Clay were then hired to produce the 'Cuts Both Ways' album which became Gloria's best selling album to date and had Gloria's second #1 single, 'Don't Wanna Lose You', along with 'Get On Your Feet' at #10 and 'Oye Mi Canto', both of which were co-written by Jorge & Clay.

'Cuts Both Ways' not only established Casas and Ostwald as a solid production and songwriting team, but it also marked the beginning of Jon Secada's work with the group as a background vocalist. During the final stages of recording the 'Cuts Both Ways' album, legendary producer Phil Ramone worked with Jorge and Clay on the title track and was a great influence and inspiration to both.

In September of 1989, the Get On Your Feet tour was cut short when a semi truck on the Pennsylvania turnpike demolished Gloria's tour bus in the early morning hours. The bus was on its way to Syracuse, New York for a concert the next day. Gloria suffered fractured vertebrae in the accident and there was doubt she would ever walk again. She was flown to New York and underwent surgery as they installed two titanium rods

on each side of her lower spine. Although her recuperation would take a full year, writing and arranging for a new album had begun by June of 1990. As early as August, Gloria was able to return to the studio and her first album as a solo artist began to take shape. Jorge once again co-produced the album and co-wrote two songs. The first single, 'Coming Out Of The Dark', released in January of 1991, rose to Gloria's third #1 single on the Billboard charts. The Into The Light world tour with Miami Sound Machine kicked off in March with a hometown concert.

As a result of the 'Into The Light' tour, Jon Secada was signed to SBK Records, a subdivision of EMI. Jon was featured in the show singing 'Always Something', written by Jorge, Clay and Jon and the A&R staff from SBK were brought in to see him perform at London's Wembley arena. Jon's debut album was released in 1992 and produced by Emilio Estefan, Jorge Casas and Clay Ostwald and the first single 'Just Another Day' rose to #5 on the Billboard charts. The album went on to sell 7 million copies worldwide and the Spanish version release earned Secada his first Grammy Award nomination in February of 1993 for 'Best Spanish Album' and a nomination for 'Best New Artist'.

In the summer of 1992, Gloria Estefan's Greatest Hits album was released featuring four new tracks. Also in 1992, Jorge worked with the New World Symphony Orchestra directed by Michael Tilson Thomas and together with the Miami Sound Machine performed a concert at the Miami Arena featuring Gloria. In that same year, after hurricane Andrew ravaged the South Florida area, Jorge led the Miami Sound Machine in accompanying Gloria, Paul Simon and Whoopi Goldberg as part of a Hurricane Relief concert in Miami's Joe Robbie Stadium (later to be known as Dolphin Stadium). Jorge's house was totally destroyed by hurricane Andrew, forcing him to salvage what he could and move in with his parents in Miami for a year and a half.

It was earlier that year (1992) that Jorge was involved in one of his most notable accomplishments. After returning from the long 'Into The Light' world tour, Jorge was asked to play Bass

for a rock project in its final stages at Criteria Recording Studios. He almost turned it down from being exhausted as a result of touring but when he was told that it was for Jimmy Page of 'Led Zeppelin' and 'Witesnake' lead singer David Coverdale, Jorge almost fell off his chair. Apparently the 'Coverdale/Page' album was 2 songs away from completion and they needed a local bassist to replace the sequenced bass tracks that were laid down on 2 last minute songs. Knowing that this was a once in a lifetime opportunity, Jorge accepted the offer. After Coverdale heard Jorge's playing, he easily convinced Jimmy to let Jorge play on all the tracks already finished, thus replacing the original bass tracks by Ricky Phillips of 'Bad English'. Together with 'Heart' drummer Deny Carmassi, David Coverdale and Jimmy Page, Jorge became the bass player for the soon to be million seller 'Coverdale/Page' CD. Playing alongside and taking direction from one of rock's most renowned and influential guitarists was one of the most incredible and rewarding experiences in Jorge's illustrious career thus far. He went to England to officially audition for the upcoming live appearances and after playing songs like 'Whole Lot Of Love', 'Black Dog' and a few of the 'Whitesnake' hits in a London rehearsal space, Jorge was asked to join the band. Unfortunately, the 'Coverdale/Page' band never quite got off the ground as Jimmy Page soon aborted the project as he ventured into the 'Un-Leded' project with long time 'Led Zeppelin' singer and friend, Robert Plant. There was a funny anecdote as to how Jorge was told that he was selected for the band. After the 3rd day of auditions, Jorge was sitting in the bar of the Mayfair Hotel where they were staying in London. It was around 11PM and Jorge along with drummer Carmassi and Coverdale's personal manager Mike McIntyre were conversing and wondering who was going to get the bass player job. With a feeling of anxiety and apprehension from the long wait, Jorge looked over his shoulder and saw David Coverdale approaching them from the lobby. After what seemed like hours, although only a couple of minutes later, Coverdale turned to Jorge with his arm on Jorge's shoulder and replied in his most exaggerated English accent, "About that blonde wig, mate". You have to realize that Jorge's look was somewhat Latin,

with a moustache and curly dark hair. (Coverdale was obviously implying a Rock 'n' Roll image).

1993 brought Gloria's first Grammy Award winning album, 'Mi Tierra', again produced by Emilio Estefan, Jorge Casas and Clay Ostwald. 'Mi Tierra' featured original music done in the spirit of authentic Afro-Cuban tradition. The album also featured Latin music greats Israel 'Cachao' Lopez, the most influential bassist and one of the most well known composers of this genre in Afro-Cuban history, and renowned composer/arranger/guitarist Juan Marquez from Cuba. It also gave birth to a young Colombian composer/singer Estefano, who was to become a very successful songwriter/producer writing songs for many Latin stars. Other luminaries featured on the album are; Tito Puente and Sheila E. on timbales, Nestor Torrez, flute, The Correa Brothers trio from Mexico, vocals and guitar, Arturo Sandoval, trumpet, Paquito D'Rivera, alto sax, Jon Secada, vocals and Nelson Gonzalez from Puerto Rico on 'tres'. The international appeal and critical acclaim that 'Mi Tierra' achieved in an industry of labels and stereotypes was unparalleled.

Two more albums with Gloria Estefan were to follow. The first was 'Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me' which was a collection of 1960's and early 1970's #1 songs followed by 'Destiny' a year and a half later which launched the 'Destiny' world tour in 1996. This was to become Gloria's last world tour, although she was to do a short two-month tour of the United States in mid to late 2004. Gloria and Miami Sound Machine also performed for 8 days in Celine Dion's Coliseum room at Caesar's Palace hotel in Las Vegas in 2003.

Jorge and Clay also arranged the song 'Let's Hang On' for 'The Manhattan Transfer', on an album produced by the acclaimed Arif Mardin. Jorge also produced Jon Secada's 'Amor' album, which was their second success together.

Other accomplishments include the co-producing of three songs for the motion picture 'Evita' starring Madonna and Jonathan Price. Jorge also played bass on the soundtrack and met composer Andrew Lloyd Weber in London, England.

Wrote, arranged and produced, along with Lawrence Dermer, 2 songs for the motion picture 'The Specialist' starring Sylvester Stallone and Sharon Stone. He also play bass on 6 songs for the motion picture soundtrack of 'There's Something About Mary' starring Ben Stiller, Cameron Diaz and Matt Dillon and 3 songs for the motion picture soundtrack of 'Random Hearts' starring Harrison Ford.

Starting in 1999 through 2003, Jorge was the Musical Director for the Hispanic Heritage Awards television shows recorded and taped in Washington D.C. at the Kennedy Center. Working closely with award winning director Ron DeMoraes the show was highly acclaimed and gained in popularity each year of broadcast. The show featured the Miami Sound Machine as the evening's 'house band'.

Beginning in 2001, Julio Iglesias hired Jorge as bassist for his upcoming world tour. Between Julio and Gloria's tours interweaving almost without conflicting, Jorge once again traveled the world. In 2003, Gloria and the Miami Sound Machine performed for 8 nights at Celine Dion's Coliseum Room at Caesar's Palace. Later in 2004, Gloria embarked on her 'farewell' tour in the United States from July through October.

From March 2003 through July 2006, Jorge became involved along with fellow Miami Sound Machine members Clay Ostwald and Tommy Anthony (also guitarist and vocalist with Santana) in a long project to rewrite and arrange most of Japan's Disneyland themes and parades.

In August of 2006 Jorge moved with his family to Greenville where he was hired by the music department as an adjunct professor in the fall. Jorge was then asked to join Greenville College as a full time instructor and Artist in residence to which he has accepted and is now a member of the music department staff beginning in the fall of 2007.

"I am grateful and thank God for his blessings in this once in a lifetime opportunity to be able to pass on to young music students all that I have learned in my years in the music business".