

Ozomatli

Capturing a Global Musical Infusion

Ozomatli is a celebration waiting to happen—a fiery brew of jazz-funk, Latin salsa and urban hip hop. Basic tracks for the band's upcoming album, *Don't Mess With the Dragon*, were recorded in Ocean Way Recording's (Los Angeles) Studio B with engineer Robert Carranza and KC Porter, who wrote and co-produced with the band. Porter explains, "We tracked drums in the big room to have more space and flexibility, more options and to use different drum kits." The album was completed at Porter's private studio, Worldbeat Recording, in the Santa Monica Mountains, and then mixed by Serban Ghenea in Virginia. The Concord Records project is slated for release next month.



The band takes a break in Ocean Way Recording Studio B. L-R, rear: Sebastian Jacome, assistant producer; Ulises Bella, tenor sax, clarinet, vocals; Robert Carranza, engineer; Mario Calire, drums; KC Porter, producer; Justin Porée, percussion, MC, vocals; Scott Gutierrez, assistant engineer. Foreground, L-R: Scott Moore, assistant engineer; Wil-Dog Abers, bass, vocals; Jiro Yamaguchi, percussion; Asdrubal Sierra, trumpet, lead vocals.



From left: percussionist Jiro Yamaguchi, engineer Robert Carranza, bassist/vocalist Wil-Dog Abers and assistant producer Sebastian Jacome at Worldbeat Recording's Euphonix CS-2000



Producer KC Porter was named Latin Grammy Producer of the Year in 2001. His credits include projects with Ricky Martin, Selena, Carlos Santana, Bon Jovi and Chaka Khan, as well as Ozomatli.

"The first thing I did with Ozo was for Carlos Santana's Shaman album, the follow-up to *Supernatural*. The song was 'One of These Days,'" Porter says. "It wasn't a full-on Ozo production, but it was an Afro-pop sort of song that Carlos really dug, so we brought in Ozo to do the horns and vocals. It was a great introduction to their whole vibe. Since then, I've discovered that working on their albums is a real immersion into their lifestyle. And I believe that the more time you get to spend with artists, the better you can really understand what works best."



A multitalented engineer and mixer, Robert Carranza is widely known and respected for his work with such artists as Los Lobos, Ozomatli, Jack Johnson, Beck, Eels, Molotov and Supergrass. To record Jiro Yamaguchi's drum, Carranza adjusts a Neumann U47, which goes through a Chandler Limited TG Channel MkII preamp.



"When I am playing at my very best," says Ulises Bella, "I am in 'the zone,' which means a complete loss of reality, time, space and a sense of self."

"For most of the horns, I use a Neumann U47 going into a nice Neve preamp with no compression," remarks Carranza. "A lot of recordings made these days are compressed to the point where there just isn't any life left in the sound. With this band, we like to keep as much of the full dynamic range as possible. Because of the digital headroom we have today, I like to go straight from the instrument through the simplest signal path and then straight into Pro Tools."

KC Porter adds, "Where we are with Pro Tools now, it's definitely the way to go. We have a Pro Tools Accel HD3 with the ProControl surface."



"If I didn't play guitar with Ozo," says Raul Pacheco, "I would probably be in Chiapas, Mexico, wearing a ski mask fighting on the Zapatista side." Pacheco's Les Paul has a Shure SM7 on the guitar amp, straight into a Neve preamp.



"The message of Ozomatli," says lead singer and trumpeter Asdrubal Sierra, "is to show people an alternative to violence, cruelty and acts of ignorance...to show our listeners awareness to acts of inhumanities in this world, and to dance and celebrate the good in life at our shows."

Sierra sings into a Soundelux ELUX 251 microphone. "This mic has a nice extended top end," says Carranza. "Over time, the older vintage mics tend to lose some of that. The new ELUX gives you nice body, yet you also get the detail up on top. Asdrubal's voice really narrows down when he sings. His voice peaks out in the upper-mids, and every mic we tried exaggerated that. We tried about 10 mics on him, but this ELUX is the one that works for him."



Justin Porée's percussion playing is captured by one stereo AKG C-24. "Timbale is a weird instrument to record," explains Carranza, "because there is so much tone coming from both the bottom head and top head. Miking them both never sounds correct. For Justin, I just put a stereo mic in front of him and capture what is happening in the tone of the room. When I stand in front of him, that is what the timbale sounds like. That gives me the right picture."