

GRACIA GOMEZ and BRAZIL TROPICANA

By Linda Pride

If Remy Martin VSOP could sing, it would sound something like the dynamic Gracia Gomez of Brazil Tropicana.

Gracia and her band enrich the Latin American music scene in Europe.

Based in Amsterdam, born in Paramaribo, Surinam, daughter of a violinist and actress, Gracia proved at an early age to possess a musical genius too large for any one country to hold.

At the age of eight Gracia won a national talent contest, at the age of 15 she was spotted walking down the street by Rock Hudson and Burl Ives who were on location for a film in which they immediately offered Gracia a role. Soon after Gracia went to New York to

attend a school for the Performing Arts. 15 years ago she came to Holland and settled in Amsterdam, where making a name for herself has been a long, hard climb to the top, aided by **Brazil Tropicana guitarist Roberto Gomez**, her brother and occasional manager whose modesty is equalled only by his ability to conjure intricate salsa riffs from his guitar which make standing still an impossibility.

Gracia is well known from TV, radio and concert appearances in The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Latin America and has Britain next on her list of lands to conquer.

THE PAPER: 'What advice could you give to musicians starting out in the business?'

Gracia: 'Well, be prepared to work long,

hard hours, don't let your enthusiasm and love of music blind you to the fact that a professional needs proper representation and good managers. The right one, and they aren't all that easy to find, can promote your career, the wrong one ...'

Gracia flips open a book of press clipping and points to a hit parade chart. number 1 on the list is *O, Roberta*, artist **Gracia Gomez**.

'I made this song as a demo in a recording studio here in The Netherlands, in Loenen aan de Vecht. While my back was turned the cassette was fished out of my purse before I left the studio. Weeks later I discovered exactly what had happened when a Buenos Aires TV station phones with an invitation to Argentina. *O, Roberta*, by **Gracia Gomez** had sold over 600,000 in South America alone.'

THE PAPER: 'What percentage of the royalties did you get?'

Gracia: Nothing, a big zero, the man who engineered it had the demo copyrighted in his name.'

THE PAPER: 'And legal action wouldn't have helped?'

Rudy Vries, vocals, guitar and devastating percussionist, electrical engineer and Gracia's husband: 'Do you know how long they can stall a case in civil court? Four years – and then even if you win, most of the money goes on lawyers fees.'

Gracia: 'Crime doesn't always pay, the man has gone bankrupt, for all his trouble.'

Gracia regularly gives concerts with her band Brazil Tropicana and stages South American, Brazilian, Antillian and Carribean extravaganzas with an ensemble of up to 20 dancers and musicians, including her sister Monique and daughter Judy, both creative and talented ladies in their own right.

As for Gracia, well her talent doesn't stop at singing in a voice whose sheer power and range control would put Gabriel's trumpet to shame – she is also the choreographer, set designer and composer of her shows.

Gracia Gomez, performer extraordinaire
(photo by Dave Nicol)

