

INSIDE RADIO®

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“Personalities INSIDE RADIO”

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SOUTH FLORIDA'S VERSION OF FERNANDO-MANIA

by Mike Kinosian, Special Features Editor

When Spanish Broadcasting System/Miami's "Romance 106.7" (WRMA) trumpeted the arrival of Fernando del Rincón as host of the Romantica outlet's "Hola Miami" wakeup program (6-10am), considerable attention was justifiably paid to his noteworthy television triumphs.

Some however incorrectly assumed the Yauatepec, Morelos (Mexico)-born/raised personality seen nightly on Mega Television's "Paparazzi TV Sensacional" was adding radio to his already imposing resume for the very first time.

Productive Chit-Chat

Longstanding experience in our medium clearly exists though for del Rincón who fronted XEW Radio México's "En Directo con *Fernando del Rincón*" and was the main host of a WFM Cuernavaca political satire show. "I started out 23 years ago in radio and have been doing it during my career but, ever since I left Mexico, I [haven't had] the chance to [work in the medium again until now]," he remarks. "SBS began talking about the possibility of doing radio with me [however] we didn't have [anything definite]."

Fully accustomed to handling morning drive radio chores del Rincón eagerly shared several "Hola Miami" ideas with SBS executives.

Parallels existed between his thoughts and what management hoped to derive from a morning drive broadcast. "It was a simple chit-chat and we found [common ground]," he recounts.

After listening to and researching other Hispanic stations del Rincón concluded there was a tendency toward shock radio as an attention-getting AM drive mechanism, although it's an approach he doesn't endorse. "We all want to have a little bit of information in the morning but most of all we want to have a good time," he opines. "We want to have a connection and reflection with those who are talking at us through the radio. We offer a nice, happy product that connects with people in their day-to-day lives."

Balancing Act

Social status of their listeners is completely immaterial to del Rincón and his co-hosts Nadia Rowinsky and Aljeandra Oraa.

"We share everyone's situation and want to find ways to make their lives easier," he asserts. "When they're rushed, we give little bits of information so they're aware of what's going on in the world. We want to be part of a community [and] don't portray ourselves as celebrities. The three of us represent a big part of the listening community. My goal is to reach 25-54s and to find a balance of men and women. I don't want to target just one sex. I do think that younger fellows [though] will be with us more than the older guys."

Data from Arbitron's latest Portable People Meter market (Miami) was released last Tuesday (7-14).

Among persons 6+ for the total week, "Romance 106.7" ranks 17th and its 2.7 for June represents a three-tenths increase from May; "Hola Miami" debuted May 4th.

By comparison, diary-based methodology results also placed the Romantica outlet 17th (1.8, 12+) in the winter 2009 book.

All Inclusive

Many Miami media members are familiar with their colleagues however del Rincón had no prior working history with either Rowinsky or Oraa. "The best thing is we have a really good vibe and are willing to work together and make it happen," he states. "Our goal is to make a connection [with our audience] and give a refreshing sense [to morning radio]."

Proliferation of Spanish-language radio in the United States doesn't surprise del Rincón who proclaims, "We're being more vocal. Minorities were very important in [electing] President Barack Obama. African-Americans have done a great job in creating [media outlets such as] BET. This is a multicultural country and has been that way since the day it was founded. Let's keep doing that and have tolerance [with one another because] there's space for everyone here."

Respecting Radio's Essence

One of del Rincón's teachers invited the then-16-year old to record some audio tracks for a project that was about to be presented to a client. "He asked me to do him a favor," del Rincón recalls. "People liked my voice on the commercials. I began

getting tips about how to be [a radio personality] and how to handle my voice. Twenty-three years ago, I was doing radio and television - 23 years later, I'm doing the same thing. It's pretty ironic that I'm at the same point as when I was 16 but at a different level."

Notwithstanding his gracious crediting of Tecnológico de Monterrey for some of his success and a sincere concession that studios were important, del Rincón nevertheless explains the bulk of what he learned about the business was acquired by working on the street. "Local stations had low budgets," he notes. "You had to do everything from taping, editing, writing and reporting. I know the entire radio and television process from being behind the camera to producing to editing to writing to being an anchor. I know the guts of both monsters."

Segments of "Hola Miami" are done in English when necessary, although del Rincón is adamant in explaining nothing will air in Span-glish. "You have to respect both English and Spanish," he stresses. "We can show many Americans who have misconceptions about Hispanics exactly who we are. I can do a phone interview in English with ['Desperate Housewives' co-star] Eva Longoria. The target is the youth - the young fellows in this country. We have to open our minds to the fact that these young people can speak Spanish and English. There's no barrier [so] we have to stop fighting against the language. We can educate people and create this necessity of studying English. We need to motivate people to do that."

Music has its place within the four-hour program although it generally serves to reinforce certain situations in a listener's mind. "It might be that we play a Bee Gees song and [find out] what our listeners were doing the first time they heard it," del Rincón suggests. "It's nice to have a talk show [but] music is a very important part of radio [and] you can't get rid of it. The actual objective of radio was to play music. That's the essence of radio and we have to respect it. It can create pretty nice situations and make you remember certain scenarios that you like."

Up at 4am and at WRMA approximately one hour later to organize the news and some programming segments, del Rincón participates in a production meeting before "Hola Miami" commences.

Some 30 minutes after the four-hour radio program ends, he's back in another production confab.

This one though is for the daily 7-8pm "Paparazzi TV Sensacional" which has been on the air for several months. "I write the show, plan the graphics and go live with the program," del Rincón states. "We have a post-mortem and then I try to get in some exercise. The days are busy and I have to be asleep by [about 8:45pm]."

Mood Painter

To provide a thoroughly accurate "Paparazzi TV Sensacional" summation can get a bit tricky.

Elements of "Real Time with Bill Maher," "Anderson Cooper 360" and a touch of "Entertainment Tonight" are evident in the 60-minute broadcast prompting del Rincón to boast, "No other show in the Hispanic market has this kind of format. I had the idea about two years ago and have made it very interactive. We talk about every single important topic of the day. It doesn't matter if it's sports, politics, entertainment or economics."

There's considerable information with analysis and del Rincón seamlessly navigates from one topic to another. "It's a complicated format but the good thing is you can't imagine what's going to happen the next day," he insists. "'Paparazzi' really means someone who is in the right place at the right time."

Young bilingual males living in the United States are the nightly television show's target. "They want to get involved in the Hispanic thing but don't like 'old-Hispanic,'" del Rincón explains. "We give them the two worlds. It's a marriage - a fusion. We're living in America, we should be able to speak English and at the same time we can understand Spanish. That's the reality with the youth here in the United States right now. Our ratings are great and we have [highly desirable] 25-54 demos. We're going to add ecological information, talk about gadgets and create a database so people can find jobs."

To those laboring under the misconception that working in any form of electronic media is precisely the same, del Rincón politely yet firmly comments, "Radio and television are two absolutely

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different worlds. If you work in radio, you have to be creative enough to [invoke] images in someone's mind. If I'm going to talk about an emotional moment, I have to give it to you through my voice. You have to put a lot of attention into details."

Audience interaction in radio is immediate and del Rincón believes the medium's listeners feel closer to the talent. "That's because we're more like they are," he maintains. "You don't have to be a genius to realize there isn't any visual support [in radio so] you have to approach things differently. Rather than keeping quiet, you have to create a mood and take people step-by-step. There are many times I don't say a word [on the television show] because the images say it all. You can keep quiet and have people watch the video. In radio, I have to create that video through my words. If you're good looking and can talk they'll put you on television [but] many television [personalities] should do radio. I love radio - my connection to television came because of [it]."

Painful History

Mexico was an upside down country when del Rincón became interested in becoming a satirist. "There are Democrats and Republicans in the United States [whereas in Mexico] there are four or five political parties," he points out. "The same one won for [more than 70 years]. I was 18 years old when I began discovering many things about my country. In the beginning I talked about things in a serious way and gave out information. Then I found if you talk about things in a sarcastic - but an intelligent - way people will understand what's going on. You can do satire while also [unveiling] secrets and things people can't see."

Remaining informed and connected to the outside world is the top priority for self-confessed "news junkie" del Rincón who feels genuinely lost if he doesn't know what's going on around him. "I'm constantly watching CNN, surfing the web and always checking my mobile phone for the latest news," he explains. "I love to read - especially about politics and social issues."

No laughing matter, especially in del Rincón's home country, was the recent hysteria surrounding the swine flu and as he reveals such panic existed in many different communities simply because, "They don't have the information. You can keep your sanity and move in the right direction when you are informed. I'm Mexican and it hurts when you see what's happening there but Mexico has been hurting me for a long time."

It however has nothing to do with the people. "I love them," del Rincón succinctly yet emotionally and emphatically declares. "It's impossible for [those in] such a rich country to live that way. It hurts me all the time. Someone will [eventually] develop a vaccine for this pandemic but who will develop a vaccine for [Mexico's] government and poverty? That's what worries me the most. I have

to inform people about what's going on with the virus but the worst sickness in my country isn't that but politics."

Recognition he receives from his fellow Mexicans is satisfying but del Rincón is even more flattered by response from the Hispanic community as a whole. "I was worried and concerned about being able to connect with the many different ways of thinking," he acknowledges. "Even though we're Hispanics we don't all think alike. We have different politics and points of view. Being able to communicate with all Hispanics is the biggest thing I've done. I'm blessed that I can talk to all of them. They've been showing me their support. That's magical and very amazing to me."

Cubans, Venezuelans, Puerto Ricans and Columbians are among those who've opened their doors to him. "That's why I have to work for all of them," del Rincón states. "I'm Mexican but I work for Hispanics. I have to be responsible and conscious of that. I owe them a lot - my whole career."

High Hopes

By perfecting the "Hola Miami" template he believes the morning drive show can at some point reach an even wider audience. "We're not doing this just for local listeners," del Rincón remarks. "We're thinking nationwide. Diversity here is huge. We can't think in a little universe. To connect with a Spanish audience, we have to think global. You have to do that coast-to-coast [so] we have a great opportunity to syndicate the show."

Further personal employment opportunities appear to be rosy for the energetic del Rincón who ponders, "At the end of the day, I'm a little crazy but I'd love to have a show in the [mainstream Anglo] market and another in the Hispanic market. It would be awesome to have a [Bill Maher-like show] for Hispanics and a CNN-like news show for Anglos. I think I'll find the right formula and will accomplish that."



WHO: Fernando del Rincón

WHAT: "Hola Miami"

WHERE: Spanish Broadcasting System's WRMA/Miami

WHEN: Monday-Friday, 6-10am

HOW LONG: Since May 4, 2009