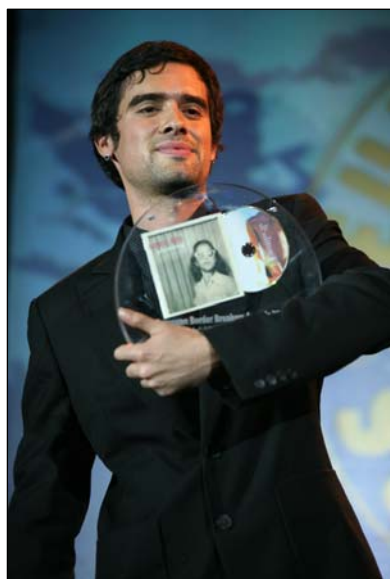


An interview with Border Breakers winner Gabriel Rios



Abigail Acton talks to Puerto Rican born artist Gabriel Rios whose music blends West Indian rhythms with contemporary electronic sounds putting Europe in a trance. Having moved to Ghent in the mid-1990s, Gabriel joined creative forces with Jo Bogaert, of Technotronic fame. This led to the production of Gabriel's first solo album 'Ghostboy' in 2004 - an experimental, irresistible combination of Latino, folk, hip hop and salsa. His single "Broad Daylight" was used as the opening track of the late Theo van Gogh's 2004 film "06/05". Urban Rumba at its best – awesome!

A.A. 'Your album Ghostboy just won a 'Border Breakers' award. We are used to saying that music has no borders. Is that true for Europe? What difficulties do artists face when trying to be successful in another European market?'

G.R. 'Well, I feel that although the European market is more open for different kinds of music than the U.S. there's still difficulties in breaking into other countries because countries want to protect their own markets. That's not a bad thing because it poses a challenge for whoever wants to try and make universal music that can be played everywhere.'

A.A. 'How do you find the audiences around Europe, when on tour for example? Are they the same or different?'

G.R. 'They are different everywhere. That's what's great about playing outside of your own country. Some people are very talkative and interact a lot and others are shy. The best audiences give you all they got if you do the same.'

A.A. 'What are your favourite places in Europe?'

G.R. 'I love the south of Spain and Paris but I recently came back from a small tour in Germany and I have to say that I loved the German people and their response to our music was cool. I really enjoyed Köln and Hamburg and of course Berlin.'

A.A. 'Do you think music contributes to the development of a European identity?'

G.R. 'Very much so. Even though it crosses over to the realm of mass culture and pop it still is art and it makes people put themselves out there with all that they are, representing something very individual yet colloquial. This is specially true in Europe where such different countries exist in close proximity.'

A.A. 'Which other young European artists on the scene at the moment would you recommend? Which European bands or artists are your favourite?'

G.R. 'There are so many! The Streets, Dize Rascal, Camille, Manu Chao, Bjork, Kings of Convenience, Mew, Arctic Monkeys, Balaji, Millionaire, Deus, Anne Pierle, The Knife, to name a few.'

A.A. 'Do you think the EU could do more to help European musicians and culture in general?'

G.R. 'I think more can always be done. It's in the interest of every country culturally

and economically to do so. People love music more than ever and live music is a collective ritual that is necessary to culture everywhere and it stays very difficult for starting bands to move around, tour and get played on the radio.'

A.A. 'You have profited from "European Tour support", one of the EU artist support schemes. Do you think they are useful?'

G.R. 'Very much so. Touring, even in a small scale, is very expensive and we couldn't have done half the things we've done till now without that sort of support.'

A.A. 'If you could change the European anthem, which song would you choose?'

G.R. 'I don't know. Although I think a union is necessary and very useful I don't like anthems. I would probably choose something without words.'