

ALBUM REVIEW

MI SANGRE

JUANES

(Universal Latino)

By Danielle Kuehnel

[ROCK-POP-INFUSED LATIN] When the late '90s and early '00s were marked by the big-time English crossovers of Latin megastars Ricky Martin, Thalía, Paulina Rubio, Enrique Iglesias and Las Ketchup, one star emerged who was so big, so important, that he didn't have to move from his native language to reach the rest of the world.

His sophomore album, *Un Día Normal* ("A Normal Day"), spent a record two years on the Latin Billboard and produced five hit singles.

His work boasts an impressive 12 Latin Grammys.

So, it's no surprise that when 33-year-old former Ehkymosis rocker, Juanes, released his third album, *Mi Sangre* ("My Blood"), in 2004, fans expected another masterpiece.

And, while the album clearly has its merits—debuting at No. 1 throughout the Spanish-speaking world, reaching multi-platinum status in multiple countries and attaining three Latin Billboard No. 1 singles, according to Juanes.net—it's hard to follow up such a sensation as 2002's *Un Día Normal*.

Similar to his previous albums, Juanes continues his soulful singing in ballads like "Para Tu Amor," ("For Your Love") proclaiming his love with lines like, "I love you with my soul, and with my heart/I worship you today and always," that would make any gal go weak in her knees.

He also gets to show off his masterful guitar work with faster, throbbing riffs, like the ones found at the beginning of "Lo Que Me Gusta a Mí" ("What I Like"), and his ties to Latin America in the get-up-and-Merengue rhythms of "La Camisa Negra" ("The Black Shirt") and "Rosario Tijeras" ("Rosary Scissors"). Yet, despite the fact that Juanes' latest tunes are still pleasing, his musicianship is much better demonstrated in past songs like "Podemos Hacernos Daño" ("We Can Damage Ourselves") from 2000's *Fijate Bien* ("Listen Closely"), or "A Dios le Pido," ("To God I Pray") and "Mala Gente" ("Bad People"), both from *Un Día Normal*.

But, most importantly, the Colombian crooner expresses discontent with the world today, as he has in his past albums, with a pensive piece aptly entitled "¿Qué Pasa?" ("What's Going On?"). In the tune, he alludes to war not only around the world, but specifically in his home of Medellín, Colombia, with words like, "People are killing; people are dying/And I remain here, not understanding/What's going on with the world." His message may be exceptionally moving, as he experienced grief related to Colombian violence; kidnappers executed a cousin, and a close friend was killed in a nightclub.

Overall, *Mi Sangre* shows Juanes' ability to keep his music fresh and exciting, while continuing to spread his message of love and peace to all who will listen. Fans expecting another *Un Día Normal* may be disappointed by all of the slower ballads, but a good listen will surely reveal the album's enchanting lyrics and infectious nature. Look for this fast-rising star in magazines and music stores. It's just too bad he played to a sold-out audience at the Rose Garden last Tuesday, Feb. 7. **B+**