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Ruben Blades Dishes on Playing a Zombie Killer in AMC's 'Fear the Walking Dead' and His Armageddon Anthem

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By [Leila Cobo](#) | August 21, 2015 11:56 AM EDT



Ruben Blades, winner of Best Tango Album, poses in the press room during the 15th annual Latin GRAMMY Awards at the MGM Grand Garden Arena on November 20, 2014 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Maury Phillips/WireImage

[Ruben Blades](#) is something of a multi-*multi*-hyphenate: He's a seven-time Grammy-winning singer-songwriter and an actor, who also has a law degree from Harvard, served as minister of culture in his native Panama and even ran to be its president. Just when the 67-year-old was on the verge of retiring, he was presented with a new gig: playing a zombie-fighting barber in *Fear the Walking Dead*, the AMC *Walking Dead* spinoff that premieres Aug. 23. "This show will be seen by millions," he says. "People who don't know me will say, 'Hey, this guy also sings.'" That's a good thing, since he just self-released a new album, *Son de Panama*.

Rubén Blades Q&A: Salsa's Crossover Pioneer Gets Emotional on 'Tangos'

On landing the part: "I collect comics, including *The Walking Dead*. They offered me the role; I didn't have to audition. But I wasn't sure whether to take it because I had my retirement plan in place -- to retire by 2016. But it isn't easy to find leading roles at my age. The dramatic challenge is good for me."

On working on a show with many Latin characters: "The producers did the right thing, which is depict Los Angeles' diversity, and Latins are part of that. That diversity is impossible to ignore, but is somehow ignored every day by casting directors."

Latin Music Legend Rubén Blades Turns Teacher For New York City High School Students

His zombie-apocalypse survival tips: "Wear something thick so they can't bite through to your skin. Check the expiration date of canned goods so you don't die of botulism. And pack toilet paper -- lots of it."

His Armageddon anthem: "'La Cancion del Final del Mundo' [The End of the World Song]. I recorded it in 1990: 'Prepare yourself people, 'cause everything will be over. Drink your last drink; don't complain, the show was good and cheap ... Take out your date and dance.'"