



Rubén Blades: Why the 'Fear the Walking Dead' Star Deserves a Second Look

He's a Panamanian human rights hero and master of the Salsa floor.

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In a few days, after *Fear the Walking Dead*'s big premiere, Rubén Blades still won't be as famous in the U.S. as he is across South America. Vaguely recognizable from an acting career in middle-weight fare, Blades, a human rights activist in his native Panama, currently sports a more impressive discography than IMDB page. Here's the ten-cent version of everything you need to know about the guy trying to escape L.A.

He's the Joe Strummer of Salsa

Blades is hell on maracas, and had his first hit with 1977's *Pablo Pueblo*, a song about a working-class father. Blades' impressive music career has long focused on tales of working class heroes and the brutal exploitations of the ruling class. But he can also turn the lights low and kiss the sky. Here's Blades being a smooth mother at Lincoln Center.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3TkM8rWFDg>

He doesn't just talk the talk

Blades is probably smarter than you. He has a law degree from the University of Panama and a degree in International Law from Harvard, and served as his country's Minister of Tourism from 2004 to 2009.

He even took a run at the Panamanian presidency in 1994 as the founder of his own *Papa Egorgo* party, and, though he didn't win, he managed a decent 18 percent of the vote. His party even got reps into the legislature. Way better than the odds give Donald Trump in 2016.

He's a hell of an actor, even if you don't know it yet

Blades' acting credits aren't nearly as distinguished as the rest of his CV: He played the comic relief detective in *Color of Night*, a favorite of teenage boys up late watching Cinemax with the sound low in the mid-90s; he showed up in *Predator 2*. So, yeah it's like that. Still, don't let the shitty movies fool you. The man's a fine instrument in search of a worthy player. Here's Blades as a high ranking cartel member laying down the secret fate of all life in the better-than-its-critical-reputation *The Counselor*.

<https://youtu.be/EIn7y4ejFM>

Damn Rubén. Genial.

Photos via Getty

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<https://www.inverse.com/article/5533-rub%C3%A9n-blades-why-the-fear-the-walking-dead-star-deserves-a-second-look>