

René Martínez

Untouchable in his job and in his hobby.

By Larri Jo Starkey



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THE BRIGHT LIGHTS. THE NOISY THRONGS. THE BUSINESS OBLIGATIONS. The travels between towns and countries. And finally, when everything comes together, the music and the rhythm are a way of life for René Orlando Martínez.

Rene has taken his musical talent from tiny Zapata, Texas, to the world. With his group, Intocable, Rene is a huge success in Tejano music. When he is seated behind the drums, the fans scream for more of the mix of romantic melodies and smooth instrumentations that Intocable serves up.

And during all the commotion, Rene thinks about his American Quarter Horses.

"My first horse – the one that turned me onto Quarter Horses – was named Triple Twist Bar. He was our first registered AQHA horse," Rene said. "He was a racehorse. We used to live in Grapevine, Texas, right by Dallas, and that's where my dad bought the horse. We came down here to Zapata and started racing."

Rene's father, Carlos Martínez, trained the horses.

"He was a typical old-timer who used to wake us up and have us help with the horses," Rene said. "That's what got us interested in horses when we were little."

Racehorses became rope horses, and Rene found a hobby for his teen years.

"My dad, my uncles and everybody in my family used to work on ranches here in Zapata," Rene said. "I started riding – my first horse was a little pony, of course. I was around 7. I bought my own Quarter Horse when I was 12. I used to raise lambs and pigs for 4-H and FFA. My mama and daddy saved the money I earned by selling them. As soon as I got enough money, I bought my own horse to ride and rope on."

Rene's enthusiasm for the hobby lost a little luster when he attended a clinic.

"I was a header. 'Was.' Write that down. We went to a clinic in Seguin, Texas, where a professional roper just back from the NFR was helping out," Rene said. "When I shook his hand, I saw he was missing a thumb. I asked him how he lost it. He said roping, and I said, well, if he's a professional roper and he lost his thumb and I don't do it professionally, I should get out of the business."

He already knew that music would be his future and that his hands would play a big part in his success.

"Music, that's what really feeds me," Rene said.

Rene formed Intocable, which means, "untouchable" and is pronounced "een-toh-KAH-blai" with his friend Ricardo Munoz. "Ricky" also likes horses, and once in a while, the two are business partners as well as musical partners.

In 2005, Intocable received its first Grammy award for the album "Intimamente," a repayment for the years of fighting for success.

About the same time, Rene found a new hobby.

"We were playing in Oklahoma City in December one year and I saw a bunch of horse trailers passing by the hotel where we were," Rene said. "I said, 'I want to go check it out and see what's going on.' That's the first time I ever saw reining competition – at the National Reining Horse Association Futurity. When I saw it, I said, 'There's more to do than just rope. You can just ride and have fun on your horse without losing your thumb.'"

Rene's new hobby would last.

"I started buying reining horses and breeding my horses,



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Gold Olena Pine was featured on the cover of the album "Cruce de Caminos."

too, and hopefully someday I'll go to the Futurity and compete on a reining horse," Rene said.

Rene concentrates on the structure of horses more than their lineage.

"If I see an athletic horse that has the conformation to stop and spin, then I'll turn to the pedigree and see what he's bred to do," he said.

In 2006, some of Rene's horses were featured on the front of the album "Cruce de Caminos." Rene rode his 1998 stallion Gold Olena Pine, a buckskin son of Mr Gold O'Lena and out of Sal Pine Perkins by Perkins Pine.

Today, Rene and his father have racehorses, and Carlos trains them. In 2008, they had Brother Grimm at the track. Brother Grimm, a 2006 stallion by Spanish Boot and out of Katies Memories by Leaving Memories, finished second in his first race and first in his second race at Retama Park in San Antonio. That race was the Grade 2 Texas Juvenile Challenge, and with this year's races, Brother Grimm already has \$37,683 in winnings.

"When some of my horses are racing and we're close by, we'll go see them," Rene said. "We'll go

to the track when they're going to run. We've been to several races."

When Rene and Intocable plan their travels, between thinking about dates and countries and what sponsors need, Rene asks for one more consideration: the horses.

"Everybody on the road thinks I'm weird," Rene said. "I try to schedule the dates where horse events are going to be. I try to accommodate the dates where we're going to be by looking at horse shows and races so I can see where we're going to be and I can try to fit in touring. I've never been able to perform in Oklahoma City when the AQHA World Championship Show is going on, but I've tried to."

Intocable's members have friends in various countries who have ranches and horses as a distraction from the road.

"If we're going to be somewhere and we have a promotional weekend or week, I try to go to friends' ranches to ride and have fun. We have friends in the States and in Mexico, and we go to their ranches all the time. We try to mix the business with having fun and doing stuff we like," Rene said.

It's important to him to maintain a balance in life.

"Some people think being on the road is the funnest job there is – going from town to town every day and trying to set up the circus with everything that goes on," he said. "It gets pretty hectic, and having all these friends who own Quarter Horses and coming home and just being on the ranch at the barn with the horses, it's a really stress-relieving hobby.

"Being on the road, there's a lot of negative stuff that goes on. A lot of people surround you who don't mean well. Being involved with horses has kept my career going straight and not leaning toward anything else."

He continued giving thanks to his parents, Carlos and Maria Elena Martinez, for his opportunities.

"I thank my parents for having horses and letting me be around horses and have that responsibility," he said. "Horses can't feed themselves – they're like babies – so we have to take care of them. When I was a teenager, they kept my mind straight and really looking forward to doing something, having responsibility. A lot of teenagers can get involved in the wrong things. Having Quarter Horses helped me a lot in taking a steady and straight road in life." 🐾

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Several members of Intocable enjoy saddling up for a ride.

