

Shakira is arguably one of the greatest symbols of feminine empowerment and sexuality since Madonna! She insisted on a musical style of her own, inspired by the most important things in her life, and has become one of the greatest female artists of today. Shakira's success has resulted in a never-before-seen merging of pop music and Latin music that has been met with much enthusiasm.

### Mini Shakira

Shakira, born Shakira Isabel Mebarak Ripoll in Colombia on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1977, showed a real talent for music at the tender age of 10 years old, winning various local music competitions. Three years later, Sony signed her to their label and she released her first album, 'Magia' (magic in Spanish), which consisted of the songs she had written between the ages of 8 and 13. It was well received as she was chosen to represent her country in a talent competition hosted by Spain. Unfortunately, she was unable to participate due to the competition's age limit of 16. Shakira continued with her musical talent, releasing another album entitled 'Peligro' (danger).

### Platinum Girl

After finishing high school, 15-year-old Shakira returned her focus to her beloved music. This time she hit it big. The release of her album 'Pies Descalzos' (bare feet) resulted in world recognition and sparked a tour that lasted nearly 2 years. The album has sold nearly 4 million copies worldwide, with the most popular song being 'Estoy Aquí' (I'm Here).

### On The Up

Impossible as it may have seemed to most at the time for Shakira to top her latest success, she did exactly that. First, though, she wanted to move her music in a new direction. She insisted on creating her own special blend of music: pop rock with a Latin feel, something that had never been done before. Shakira's anxious record label, Sony, were keen to have her stick to more mainstream, popular styles, but she got her way. Just as well because it resulted in the release, in 1998, of probably the most famous album she has ever recorded, '¿Dónde Están Los Ladrones?' (Where are the thieves?), once again receiving worldwide attention.

### ¿Habla Ingles?

The Spanish-speaking world had taken a shine to Shakira, but she was still little known in the English-speaking arena. This was her next target. She revamped her style for a more 'rocky' feel and blasted onto the English scene in 2002 with her album 'Laundry Service' (also released as Servicio de Lavandería). Despite some of her English lyrics resulting in overly-literal translations, songs such as 'Suerte', better known as 'Whenever, Wherever', and 'Underneath Your Clothes' were huge hits. It was around this time that Shakira became recognised for the sexual belly dancing routines that she performed in her videos.

## Best Of Both Worlds?

After her 'Tour Of The Mongoose' (2002/3), Shakira released a DVD and CD compilation album from the tour in 2004 entitled 'Live And Off The Record'. She then began work on a new project. Her Spanish-speaking fans had missed her while she'd been focusing her efforts on English recognition, so she did something that has never been seen before in the music industry: she released two albums with the same title! 'Fijacion Oral' was released in June of 2005, consisting entirely of songs in Spanish, amongst those 'La Tortura' (torture), which immediately became a massive hit with its infectious Latin beat and starring Spanish heart-throb Alessandro Sanz. The second album, which shortly followed, was entitled, strangely, 'Oral Fixation' and was, of course, dedicated to her English-speaking followers. Although Carlos Santana and his guitar joined Shakira for the song 'Illegal', the album didn't quite make the grade compared to her previous releases. It is uncertain whether this was due to the English-speakers amongst the fans feeling a little second best or if it was merely a case of having already hit the top. Ears to the radio waves for the answers!