

#VIVA LATINO

HOW LATIN-URBAN MUSIC HAS TAKEN OVER THE WORLD

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You can feel the energy waves and the mood of the crowd when you enter a Latin club. In one corner, you may see a group of amigos taking tequila shots, screaming "pa' arriba, pa' abajo, pa' centro, pa' dentro!" On the other, maybe a couple will be dancing to cumbia or reggaeton. If you stand still and look around, everyone will be moving their hips to the rhythm, as Latinos do. Today people from all over the world have become Spanish music enthusiasts, and even if they do not speak the language, they learn the lyrics and move their hips along with the rest.

Antonia Mardones, an AUP student from Chile, was the only Spanish speaker out of her group of friends at Lollapalooza in Paris last year. They promised they would go with her when Bad Bunny came on stage, but little did they know that the entire festival would make their way to his stage to see the Puerto Rican star. "It was absolutely incredible, I turned around for one second, and there were waves and waves of people—everyone rushed over to see him perform," she says. The surprise of seeing a massive, diverse crowd form around the artist is not unfounded. In the past decade, Latin music has spread worldwide in ways never seen before.

Outside of Spanish-speaking countries, Latin music had never been extraordinarily successful or considered mainstream. Back in the '90s, very occasionally, a Spanish track would make the American Billboard charts once every few years. Latin music at that time consisted primarily of traditional music or regional music. The best example is Selena Quintanilla, who is remembered as the queen of Tejano music. Tejano is a genre of traditional Mexican music, including a mix of folk, Mexican cumbia, and mariachi. Selena changed the music industry by being the first incredibly successful female Tejano singer. Her legacy blazed a path for Latina singers by proving that Hispanic women can also take over the charts. With over 60 awards, she was the first Latin American singer to truly leave a mark with her music in the United States. She brought something different, introduced Mexican music in the United States, and was able to reach the success levels of other American artists at the time.



Before the rise of Urban Latin Music, there was more uniformity in Spanish music. Depending on where you lived, you listened to different genres. For instance, Mexico is known for its rancheras, while Colombia, on the other hand, is the country of vallenato music. Although rancheras and vallenato are two completely different styles, they still fall under the category of Latin Music.

Modern Latin music has no boundaries. It is a style that combines all of Latin America, regardless of the country they are from or their culture. The genre of reggaeton first originated in the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico, as the music of the streets. The style itself is already a hybrid genre, consisting of a mix between Reggae, Rap, Hip-Hop, and bears from different Caribbean music genres including Salsa, Merengue, and Soca. Modern Latin Urban is considered by many as a cross-over style that combines both Reggaeton and Hip-Hop. As Leila Cobo, the executive director of Latin Content at Billboard, said, "reggaeton is so universally danceable, it really has helped the music travel."

To Cobo's point, Mardones agrees, explaining, "Latin music is an out-of-the-ordinary genre, primarily because it is incredibly mixed and to some degree, relatable to everyone. Latin music is all about having a good time, dancing, singing, and living in the

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has won over 125 awards, including Billboard Latin Music Awards, Latin Grammy Awards, and American Music Awards. Unquestionably, the last decade changed Daddy Yankee's life forever. However, more than that, he changed the genre of Urban Latin music and created a space for the style to take-off worldwide.

Since Daddy Yankee's success, more Latino artists have made their debuts on the world stage and been wildly successful. "I felt so represented and proud to be Latina," Merdona explains about the day Bad Bunny, an artist in the Urban Latin space, won his first Grammy. "It was the first time I realized how impactful this genre is, and how much weight it has on the industry," she says.

Urban Latin music is so unique because of its diversity of rhythms and tempos. In the late 1980s, the dembow rhythm, which consists of a kick drum, snare drum, and timbal, was created in Jamaica. This rhythm is still the foundation of Latin music today. It was hard to categorize at first because it was not established as a genre. However, as more and more artists emerged, the term Urban became the official term to describe this hybrid, considering the broad umbrella of subcategories that exist, including trap, reggaeton, and bachata. Alongside Daddy Yankee, other artists that pioneered the genre included Wisin & Yandel, Zion & Lennox, Calle 13, Don Omar, and Tito el Bambino. They are all considered some of the first artists who originated what today is known as Urban Latin music.

The genre first began to gain popularity and relevance back in the summer of 2014, after Spanish singer Enrique Iglesias released his viral single "Bailando." The hit song gave Iglesias three Latin Grammy awards, one of them being Song of the Year. "Bailando" remained on the top 15 songs on the American Billboard charts for 21 weeks straight. A couple of months later, a Spanglish version featuring Sean Paul, a Jamaican rapper, was released. This sensation created a trend, and various Latin artists started to record singles featuring English speaking singers.

After "Bailando," the next big hit that shook the music charts was "Despacito" in 2017. Performed by Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee, the single exploded worldwide. Two-hundred days after its release, the music video

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broke the record as the most viewed video on YouTube. Just as "Bailando," the hit song won many awards, including four Latin Grammys, 6 Billboard Music Awards, and many others. A Spanglish version was also made, featuring one of the most famous recording artists in history, Justin Bieber.

Following the release of the bilingual song, it was only a matter of time before the style became a trend. Some artists that mixed the two languages were Ed Sheeran with reggaeton duo Wisin y Yandel, Tyga with J Balvin, and Camila Cabello with Daddy Yankee. These mixes built a bridge between Spanish and English speakers, connecting people through music, and rhythm. This hybrid became so popular that Spanglish tracks by non-Latin artists are now standard.

Santiago Rodriguez, an AUP student from Costa Rica, opened up about the sentimental attachment he has towards Latin music. "Whenever I am in a non-Spanish speaking country and hear music in Spanish, whether it is at a club, a bar, or restaurant, I get very happy, and a lot of memories flow through my mind. I get extremely nostalgic. Sometimes I even call my friends back home," he says.

Rodriguez feels that Latin music creates a curiosity in those who are not part of the culture. "It is important to feature Latin music everywhere because it gives those listening to it a curiosity towards our culture. If they end up liking the song, they might memorize the lyrics and even learn some words in Spanish. That is what it is all about."

moment, or at least that is how it makes me feel."

One of the most influential artists in the genre, Ramón Luis Ayala, better known as Daddy Yankee, was born in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico. He was born in 1977 and grew up in the neighborhood of Villa Kennedy Housing Projects. Daddy Yankee recalled to the New York Times that his home was a part of "a collection of three-story apartment buildings tucked away from the main street of the city center." As a teenager, he wanted to become a professional baseball player, but after being shot in the leg in the 1990s, his life changed forever. He decided to leave his baseball dream to pursue a career in music. Little did he know that fifteen years later, he would become one of the first artists to introduce reggaeton music on a global scale. Today, he is not only known as a pioneer of the genre but as the King of Urban Latin music. From J Balvin to Ozuna, Daddy Yankee has been said to be among the artist's greatest inspirations. He

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