

Wide Angle View

Market Changes Prompt Revisions In Latin Rhythm Airplay Chart Methodology

What a difference five years makes.

In 2004, when reggaetón was all the rage, U.S. radio stations quickly rushed to keep pace with the trend, switching their formats to accommodate the deluge of music that a growing number of listeners seemed to want.

Recognizing the importance of reggaetón and a growing Latin urban movement, Billboard created the country's first—and only—Latin Rhythm Airplay chart in 2005, with a panel of 15 stations that played predominantly urban music, from reggaetón to more hardcore rap.

But reggaetón wasn't quite a gold mine at radio. As Billboard reported during the next couple of years, stations switched their formats back to pop or tropical or oldies, driven by a variety of reasons, from lack of music to fill programming to lack of advertisers for that target listener.

The number of stations on Billboard's Latin Rhythm panel eventually dwindled to eight, even as the overall number of stations playing urban artists and music grew. Now, in an effort to provide a more accurate snapshot of the market—one that isn't determined by just a handful of stations—the Latin Rhythm Airplay chart will undergo a change in methodology. Effective in this issue of Billboard, the chart will reflect the top Latin Rhythm titles across all reporting U.S. Latin stations each week.

"It's a great move because now you'll have the top

20 most-played urban tracks in the country, as opposed to just any remix that plays on urban radio," Universal Music Latino/Machete national promotions director **Gabriel Buitrago** says. "The urban movement is stronger now than ever in the sense that it's getting mainstream [Latin] radio."

The consolidation of urban music as a mainstream genre—similar to what happened in the English-language market with hip-hop a decade ago—is part of an overall musical shift that sees urban acts embracing pop and tropical elements (Billboard, Dec. 10, 2010) to gain airplay.

"Urban acts that have reinvented themselves have gone more pop, without losing their essence," says **Fidel Hernandez**, marketing director for Vene Music and Siente, whose artists include **Tito "El Bambino"** and **Cosculluela**. "They have to do that if they want to be on the radio. Songs today can't just dwell on violence, for example."

Buitrago says that as recently as a year ago, some pop stations used to have an exception rule on playing any urban act, even those who paired up with big pop names (e.g., **Wisin & Yandel** with **Enrique Iglesias**).

But the sheer appeal of the urban/pop fusions has been such that they've come to dominate Latin radio. For example, **Don Omar's** current single, "Danza Kuduro," tops this week's Hot Latin Songs



Urban/pop fusion:
DON OMAR

chart for a ninth consecutive week.

"Urban is no longer urban," Capitol Latin VP of promotions **Jose Marquez** says. "Joey Montana was a rapper for [Panamanian group] **La Factoria**. Now, he's a pop urban artist."

Granted, all these acts' albums still include hard-hitting "urban" songs; they're just not radio singles.

So where does this leave hardcore urban acts that want to remain defiantly true to their roots and don't want to play musical ball, so to speak? They're not on U.S. radio.

When Latin urban artists incorporate pop or tropical sounds into their music, it's not about selling out "but about being listened to by the largest possible number of people," Hernandez says. ■■■

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EN BREVE

MEXICO'S YEAR IN MUSIC

Live albums and revivals dominated the charts in Mexico in 2010.

Norteño band **Pesado**, whose name means "heavy," was a notable heavy-hitter with the second volume of its 2009 *Disa*/Universal debut album, "Desde la Cantina." Volume 2 went double-platinum—shipping 120,000 units in 2010—while the first set has shipped 200,000, according to Mexico's record producers association **Amiprofon**.

When Warner saw the results of "Desde la Cantina," it released two Pesado compilations in 2010 from the group's days at the label: "En Vivo Desde la Expo Guadalupe" and "Clasicos Para la Bohemia." Both went gold, shipping 30,000 copies each.

Both "Cantina" sets are live albums featuring Pesado performing traditional **norteño** classics. "We wanted to do it when we were recording for Warner Music but they never approved it," lead singer **Beto Zapata** says. "Such is life."

NOSTALGIA FOR THE '80S
Another covers album—ex-Kabah member **Maria Jose's** "Amante de lo Ajeno" (Warner Music/Ocesa)—went double-platinum. The set features Jose performing Latin hits from the '80s that were originally recorded by female stars like **Ana Gabriel** and **Lucia Mendez**.

The '80s were a common theme in other hit releases. Female singing trio **Pandora** re-united for its 25th anniversary with "De Plata," a set of the group's hits featuring guest artists. It has sold 30,000 copies, according to label **Sony Music**. Two veteran Latin pop singers, **Yuri** and **Mijares**, also released '80s cover albums.

Two unrelated Sony releases shared the same title—"Primera Fila" (Front Row)—for hit live sets. **OV7**, the '90s bubble-gum pop group, re-united for a live acoustic album, which was certified platinum, while **Thalia's** 2009 Sony debut continued to generate robust sales in 2010 and was certified diamond for 300,000-plus copies shipped.

—Teresa Aguilera
and Leila Cobo

Name That Tune

MTV's Debut Telenovela Series To Feature Onscreen Song IDs

MTV's first telenovela series, "Niñas Mal," will premiere Jan. 17 in the United States on the network's bilingual Tr3s channel. The novela, which has enjoyed strong ratings in Latin America since debuting there in September, has already become an important promotional platform for music.

"Niñas Mal," which will air five nights per week, features songs from more than 150 artists ranging from independent acts like Peru's Adammo to such pop idols as Belinda, whose Capitol Latin track "Lolita" is the show's theme. Whenever a song plays during the program, the artist's name and the song title appear in a corner of the screen, along with the address of the show's Tr3s website, where viewers can get more information. In addition, each of the three main characters is tied to a particular theme song that fits her personality, a convention sometimes used in other Latin American novelas.

"Niñas Mal," which means "bad girls," is a spinoff of the 2007 Mexican movie of the same name. It follows the lives of three well-to-do teenage girls who rebel against their parents and are sent to the last remaining charm school in the city. Since its premiere, the number of "likes" at MTV Latin America's Facebook page has surged from 800,000 fans to 2.8 million.

"Music, being a key pillar for the series, became a huge asset for us and drove the conversation," says Jesus Lara, senior VP of music and talent for MTV Networks Latin America and Tr3s. "I'd say that 50%-60% of the conversations we saw developed on social networks sites revolved around the music and the artists."

In addition to using Belinda's "Lolita" as the show's theme, MTV produced the song's video, which features the three main actresses from the series, and has put the video for Belinda's other single, "Egoista," in heavy rotation on Tr3s. Belinda makes a cameo in the series playing herself and hosted a "making of" special on Tr3s in December.

"We haven't seen her digital sales go through the roof but her Twitter account went from 200,000 followers to [404,000], and we've noted increased interest in other territories such as Argentina and Colombia," Capitol Latin senior VP Diana Rodriguez says.

MTV has committed to airing the series in Spain, France, Portugal, Italy and Greece and has begun preproduction on a new, even more music-heavy telenovela, Lara says. —Nuria Net

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