



Want to go Platinum
as an Indie Artist?

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by Sarah A. McCarty

In 1959 everyone was singing to Ritchie Valens' "La Bamba." In the 80s we were dancing to Gloria Estefan's "Rhythm is Gonna Get You." And in the late 90s, Americans were "Livin' La Vida Loca" with Ricky Martin. For years Latin music has slipped in and

out of the U.S. mainstream, but as the Latino population continues to soar in the U.S., their musical influence will surely become a mainstay within American culture.

With Latinos accounting for nearly half of the national

population growth between 2004 and 2005 and claiming the largest minority group at 42.7 million according to the 2005 census, it's not surprising that pop culture covets all things Latin. Latin culture has given us such treasures as Antonio Banderas, the

Evas (Longoria and Mendes), Latin super-couple J.Lo and Marc Anthony, and the new phenomenon Reggaeton – just one reason why music might profit most from the Latin explosion.

As the Latin culture permeated pop culture, the music industry responded in several ways, including creating the Latin Grammy Awards and MTV Tr3, a new music station aimed at the Latino youth. In addition a number of highly acclaimed artists have specifically targeted the Latino audience including Christina Aguilera, whose Spanish-language album *Mi Reflejo* went double platinum. Superstar Beyonce recorded a Spanish version of her single "Irreplaceable," released a duet with Latin siren Shakira, and sings the theme song for a Telemundo show with Alejandro Fernandez. In addition, Jennifer Lopez has recently released *Como Ama Una Mujer*, her first album entirely in Spanish. There are even rumors that Nelly Furtado plans to record a Spanish album. In the same vein, independent artists can establish

themselves within this niche and build a following through this unique musical sphere.

According to the RIAA website, "Total Latin music shipments to retail jumped 14 percent – 55.6 million units in 2005 compared to 48.6 million in 2004." In addition to Latin Pop, newer genres like Latin Hip-Hop and Reggaeton have been instrumental in the increased retail demand. Artists like Pitbull and Cypress Hill showcase the increased popularity of Latin Hip-Hop, while the platinum-selling Reggaeton pioneer Daddy Yankee moved an underground blend of dancehall Reggae, Hip-Hop and other Caribbean flavors to the forefront of the American music scene.

A number of artists keep the music authentic and sing or rap in Spanish, like Pop star Juanes who proved you could make it big in the U.S. without Zrecord only Spanish-language albums and maintains a large following of U.S. fans; nearly a million of who bought his *Mi Sangre* record. Likewise, many Reggaeton artists like Don Omar, Daddy

Yankee, and Calle 13 primarily rap in Spanish, occasionally adding an English lyric here and there.

There are also the exceptions, like Shakira and Marc Anthony who alternate between Spanish and English-language albums. Whatever the language, Latin sounds and rhythms captivate listeners across the U.S., particularly in larger cities where individuals hunger for something new and innovative. As the Latino community in the U.S. continues to grow (and at a faster rate than any other group), more and more musicians can discover new fans by appealing to the U.S. Latino culture. Not only can artists establish new sounds by incorporating Latin beats and instruments, but they can craft interesting lyrics by including Spanish words or weaving together Spanish and English lyrics. Whether it is Latin Pop or Reggaeton, the day where Latin-inspired music appeared as a musical fad is over.

So you want to go Platinum while independent? Learn Spanish.