



The Best Latin Music You Don't Know

Our annual guide to breakthrough musical acts from the U.S. and (nearly) every corner of the Spanish-speaking world.

By Grace Bastidas

WE WOULD TOTALLY pretend that putting together this package required months of tedious research, except we cannot lie: Discovering the newest rock en español darlings from Argentina or identifying the next Juanes by way of Mexico is sort of what we live for. And lucky for us, there's no shortage of Latin talent out there. Although we don't discriminate on the basis of genre, country or gender, it seems like this year there's a surplus of musically gifted Latinas with a fierce fashion sense.

Okay, so maybe we're a *little* biased toward that particular demographic. Can you blame us?

CHILE

Ana Tijoux



SOUND
Old-school rap



DOWNLOAD
"1977"

Born in France during the Pinochet dictatorship, Tijoux began rhyming in French before

moving back to Chile and forming the hip-hop group Makiza. After striking out on her own in 2006, she collaborated with Julieta Venegas on the Mexican singer's hit song "Eres Para Mí," captivating a new legion of fans with her jazzy voice and old-school beats. She channels the golden age of rap on her recently released U.S. debut, *1977* (Nacional Records), a tribute to the year of her birth.



ARGENTINA

Sofia Tosello

SOUND
Soulful
Latin jazz



DOWNLOAD
"La Clarosa
Cruz"

Ever since making her professional debut at age 8, Cordoba-born Sofia Tosello hasn't stopped evolving. A fan of Duke Ellington and

Ella Fitzgerald, the 29-year-old moved to New York City more than a decade ago to study jazz. But while playing with different Latin ensembles throughout the Big Apple, she became enraptured by her homeland's folk music and began mixing tango with Cuban bolero, Brazilian bossa nova and Peruvian vals. Her new album, *Alma y Luna* (Sunnyside Records), is a collage of all of these sounds and the reason she was invited to perform at a Mercedes Sosa tribute concert last year.



CHILE

Valentina Fel

SOUND
Electro-
gypsy rap



DOWNLOAD
"Sin Control
Mi Diversión"

Your body will know you're listening to Fel's defiant rhymes long before your brain catches up to it on the dance floor. Much like her Lizard King

labelmate Santigold, the Santiago native links genres—in her case, electro, dub, rock, hip-hop and flamenco—to create an unexpected sound steeped in attitude. Her self-titled debut is in the works.

ARGENTINA

Banda de Turistas

SOUND
Psychedelic
pop



DOWNLOAD
"Días de
Prosperidad"

Though the members of this quintet are only in their early 20s, their dreamy pop evokes the 1960s. Credit this retro sensibility (they're big fans of disco bands such as Liquid Liquid and the Super Furry Animals) for earning them the LAMC Artist Discovery Award at last summer's Latin Alternative Music Conference in New York City. The accolade helped propel the February release of their U.S. debut, *Magical Radiophonic Heart* (National Records), which was compiled from their two previous Argentine albums and supported by the likes of Coldplay, who recently invited the *porteños* to open for their Buenos Aires concert.



USA

Rana Santacruz



SOUND
Mezcal-
spiked
Celtic folk



DOWNLOAD
"El Funeral
de Tacho"

Whether you categorize his music as Mexican bluegrass or Irish mariachi, Rana Santacruz is in a class all his own.

The Brooklyn troubadour with Mexico City roots brews a cross-cultural concoction full of Celtic rhythms and ranchera regrets that are pulled together by banjos, jaranas, violins and other acoustic instruments. The 13 tales in his debut album, *Chicavasco*, take their cue from the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez and tell of funerals, peacocks and ghosts.





USA

Fancy Me Yet

SOUND
Yeah Yeah
Yeahs,
Miami-style



DOWNLOAD
"Amusing
Me"

After snatching a big-time record deal and racking up three Latin Grammy nominations as a Spanish-singing alt-rock soloist, 22-year-old Natasha Dueñas (formerly JD Natasha) craved the collaborative effort of a band. In mid-2009, the Cuban-and-Argentinean vocalist reinvented herself and formed the Miami-based indie pop trio Fancy Me Yet with guitarist Alex Gaynor and drummer Chris Bernard. Since then, they've been making waves across Florida with their swelling rock riffs and unflinching vocals.

Their new EP, *Skip the Previews*, gets down to business with unabashed energy meant to get you moving.



PUERTO RICO

Suturee

SOUND
Healing
folk pop



DOWNLOAD
"Afraid
of Hands"

Lurking behind the beautifully somber folk songs of Suturee are Julian Brau and Rebecca Adorno, a boy and girl duo that craft soothing sounds meant to ease the pain, as the band's name suggests. In their self-titled album, the pair's haunting English-language vocals and soft acoustic guitars set

a mood that strays far away from their home of sunny San Juan and into bleaker territory, allowing listeners ample space to reflect. A follow-up CD is in the works, and should be even more atmospheric now that the group has relocated to New York City.



SPAIN

Huecco

SOUND
Fusion
without
confusion



DOWNLOAD
"Reina de los
Angelotes"

The long dreadlocks are the first sign that Iván Sevillano, aka Huecco, isn't looking to fit in. And judging by his 2006 self-titled album that went gold in Spain, he doesn't have to.

Often compared to Manu Chao for his pan-Latin fusion, he contorts rock, rumba and cumbia into "rumbia" while singing in Spanish, French and Portuguese. His latest CD, *Assalto* (Warner Music Spain), was produced by the multitalented Thom Russo (Alejandro Sanz, Aterciopelados, Maná) and continues the musical assault with a crisscrossing of flamenco, hip-hop and punk in cathartic tracks like the socially-conscious "Se Acabaron las Lágrimas," a call for domestic abuse victims to break free.

COLOMBIA

Eka

SOUND
Afro-Colombian Soukous



DOWNLOAD
"Corre que Te Corre"

Influenced by soulful singers such as Totó la Momposina and Angélique Kidjo, Eka's founder, Erika Muñoz, combines Afro-Colombian rhythms and congolese soukous in the same pot and stirs them with her booming voice. And though the Barranquilla native still tours around the world as part of the electro-Latin band Sidestepper, she celebrates her Caribbean roots in this new musical project.



PERU

Autobus

SOUND
Vintage pop rock with an electro twist



DOWNLOAD
"El Duelo"

Since forming in 2006, Autobus has played all the major venues in Lima, opening for international acts such as the Killers, Soul Asylum and Franz Ferdinand. The quintet's Brit-tinged pop rock has even earned them high-profile exposure on national television and heavy rotation on MTV Peru. Their self-titled LP, a melodious road trip driven by potent singing and good vibes, has stretched the band's fanbase way beyond the Andes.

MEXICO

Carla Morrison

SOUND
Minimalist pop with a country heart



DOWNLOAD
"Esta Soledad"

Much like her idols, country star Patsy Cline and ranchera queen Lola Beltrán, Morrison closes all emotional distance between her and the listener. Her soft, yearning lyrics pull at the heartstrings in her debut EP, *Aprendiendo a Aprender*, a selection of delicate pop songs that are big on sentiment yet simple at their core. Aside from a microphone, the Tecate native uses little else than her vintage Casio keyboard, a tambourine and guitar to bring them to life. Fans include fellow musician Natalia Lafourcade, who was so impressed by her compatriot that she's producing her upcoming first full-length feature, *Mientras Tú Dormías*.





ARGENTINA

No Lo Soporto

SOUND
New wave
indie rock



DOWNLOAD
"Nunca Iré"

Legendary Soda Stereo frontman Gustavo Cerati put this leggy pop-rock threesome on Argentina's musical map when he praised them in a local newspaper in 2006. The following year they won Best Independent Artist at Los Premios MTV. Fast-forward to the present: The ladies have finally landed stateside with the 2009 digital release of their second album, *Avión* (Warner/Chappell), which has Cerati lending his voice to the instant hit "Nunca Iré."

PANAMA

Los Rakas

SOUND
El General
meets
the Clipse



DOWNLOAD
"Miel"

Named for a Panamanian slang term used to describe "ghetto folk," Los Rakas have been rhyming about politics, parties and—of course—ladies

ever since cousins Ricardo Guillam Bethancourt ("Rico") and Abdull Dominguez ("Dun Dun") began rhyming in 2005. So far, their bilingual blend of hip-hop, plena and dancehall has put them on the same stage as everyone from KRS One to Mos Def. And though they're now based in Oakland, Calif., their beats and lyrics still reverberate throughout Central America's most famous canal. A full-length debut album on Nacional Records will be the fifth release in an ever-expanding repertoire.



VENEZUELA

Jóvenes y Sexys

SOUND
Sticky
and sweet
lo-fi pop



DOWNLOAD
"El Reloj"

Young, sexy and irresistible, Lorena Orlando ("Loocila") and Ezequiel Bertho ("Cheky") are the awesome twosome behind this folksy pop outfit resonating all the way from

Caracas. Their 2008 acoustic *Bruno* EP is still creating significant buzz with four escapist tracks that feature cuckoo clocks, hand-clapping and even a little "sonic sex" among the lovely melodies. If it leaves you craving more, the pair covered Los Tucanes de Tijuana's tune "Amor Platónico" on the soundtrack to Carlos Cuarón's 2009 film, *Rudo y Cursi*.



COSTA RICA

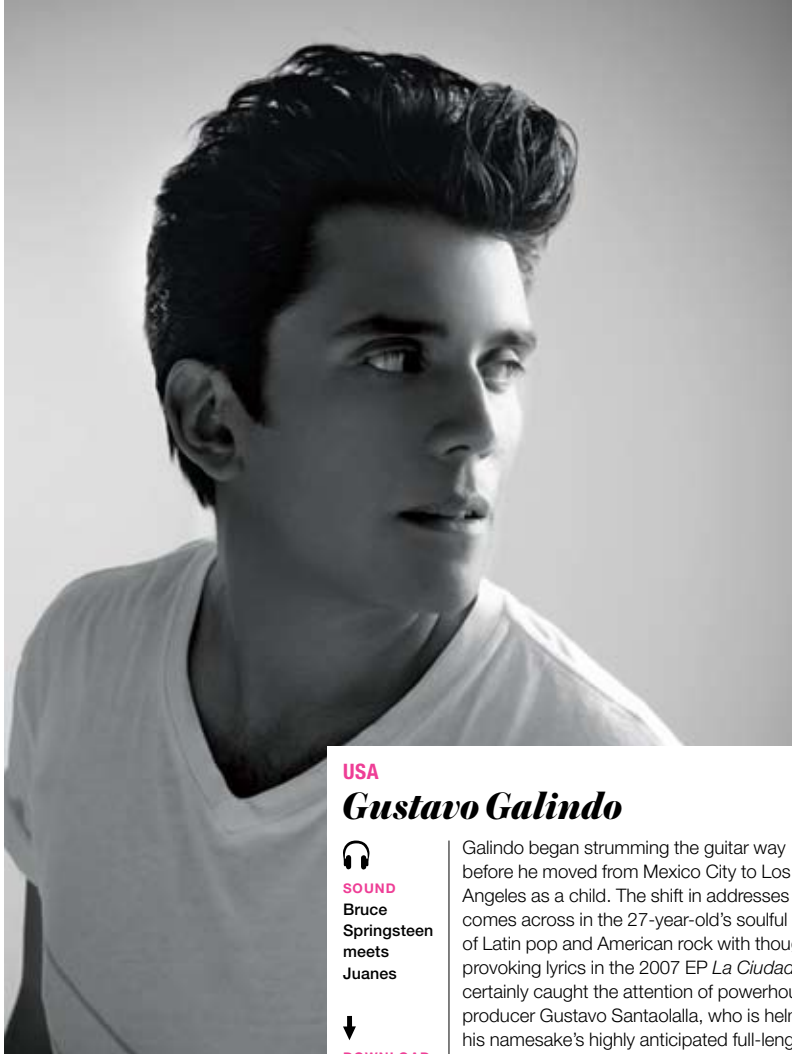
Debi Nova

SOUND
Potent pop
in Spanglish



DOWNLOAD
"Drummer
Boy"

At 24, Nova has already left her imprint on six Grammy-nominated projects, building a résumé other budding musicians can only aspire to. She's penned tracks for the likes of RBD and performed with everyone from Ricky Martin to the Black Eyed Peas, so it's no surprise that superproducer Gustavo Santaolalla (Café Tacuba, Juanes) helmed her bilingual debut, *Luna Nueva* (Decca Records). The album's hip-swaying pop songs showcase Nova's sultry voice and talents as a multi-instrumentalist.



USA

Gustavo Galindo



SOUND

Bruce Springsteen meets Juanes



DOWNLOAD
"Amor de Alta Mar"

Galindo began strumming the guitar way before he moved from Mexico City to Los Angeles as a child. The shift in addresses comes across in the 27-year-old's soulful blend of Latin pop and American rock with thought-provoking lyrics in the 2007 EP *La Ciudad*. It certainly caught the attention of powerhouse producer Gustavo Santaolalla, who is helming his namesake's highly anticipated full-length album on his Surco label, which also happens to be the home of a certain Colombian *rockero*. Coincidence?

BRAZIL

Mallu Magalhães



SOUND
Feist-y Folk



DOWNLOAD
"Make It Easy"

With more than 4 million hits (and counting!) on her MySpace page, this 17-year-old singer/songwriter became an instant sensation when she used the birthday money she received when she

turned 15 to record her first folk songs and post them online. MTV Brazil dubbed her a "mini-Feist," and so far she's living up to the hype. Her 2009 sophomore album (Sony), a self-titled collection of English and Portuguese tunes produced by Alexandre Kassin (Caetano Veloso, Vanessa da Mata), is full of eclectic melodies that are easy on the ears.



USA

Maleco Collective



SOUND
Genre-bending hip-hop



DOWNLOAD
"Serenata Para Ti"

Chicano rapper Malverde and Peruvian producer Marthin Chan had established solid reps as forward-thinking musicians well before doubling their creative efforts with this tropical-

flavored, hip-hop-infused project rounded out by Puerto Rican bassist Ibo Rodríguez and Mexican guitarist Cuevo Pérez. Their goal ("To make a savory and soulful mix") has so far resulted in the record *Al Horizonte* (Maleco Music) and tracks like the politically charged "Yo Soy la Voz," which was featured on Fox's *Lie to Me* and the VotoLatino/iTunes compilation for the 2010 Census. Talk about representing!



“Palmer’s funciona.
Yo soy la prueba.”

Después de usar Palmer’s Cocoa Butter
mi piel queda tan suave y sedosa que
siempre noto la diferencia.

- Traci D.



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MUSIC

FLAMENCO'S FIRST LADY

CONCHA BUIKA
revolutionizes the
traditional
Gypsy genre.



“CONCHA IS ABLE to make her audience feel completely exposed,” writes Pedro Almodóvar in the liner notes of Afro-flamenco siren Concha Buika’s fifth and latest album, *El Último Trago* (Warner Music Spain). “Her songs transport us to a place where we are left face-to-face with our own love history, one in which our failures stand out the most. After listening to her sing, one is determined to keep making the same mistakes because there are no rules, common sense, caution and regret in passion.”

The filmmaker isn’t the only one who’s been rendered vulnerable by the 38-year-old’s dark, smoky voice, an instrument that is fervent, guttural and enthralling—weaving jazz and soul into traditional coplas and bulerías. Juanes, Gloria Estefan and Alejandro Sanz are also fans.

“I compose and sing sincerely to get the things I have inside me out, so they don’t hurt me,” says the openly bisexual singer, who was once committed to a man and a woman—a complicated, relationship that ended in heartbreak and inspired the

track “Jodida Pero Contenta,” (“Screwed But Happy”) off her 2006 album *Mi Niña Lola*.

Born on the Spanish island of Mallorca to political exiles from Equatorial Guinea, the songstress was raised in a poor gypsy barrio. Her mother, a member of the Bantu tribe, taught her to appreciate African and Latin pop tunes, as well as American jazz and R&B. Still, flamenco’s cante jondo was everywhere.

In 2000, she spent a year in Las Vegas, where she worked as a Tina Turner impersonator before finding her voice with the help of Javier Limón, a renowned producer and songwriter known for blending genres. This collaboration has resulted in “Nuevo Flamenco,” a style that teeters between Spain’s castanet-clacking back alleys and the New World’s haziest blues clubs.

Stateside audiences will finally be able to experience the raw power of Buika when her first major U.S. tour kicks off Oct. 15 in Chicago and wraps up Nov. 20 in Miami. —G.B.