

NOISE • MENU DO • PHILOSOPHY

frontera

4

george lopez

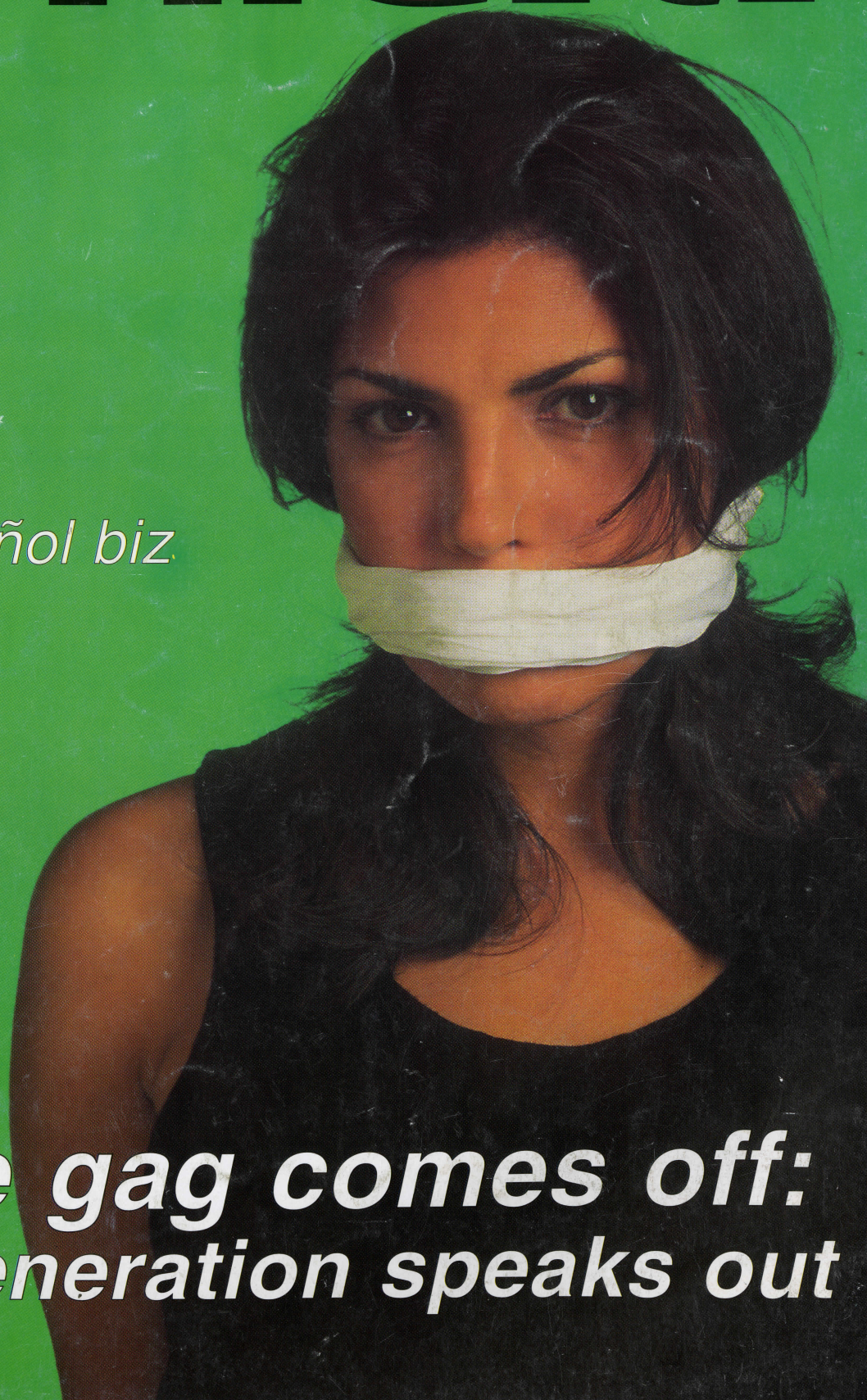
el vez

beck

rock en español biz

pirate radio

sf house djs



*the gag comes off:
a generation speaks out*

Fall 1996

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from the editor

It's easy being silent. As a student at UC Berkeley, it was easiest for me to just sit back and listen as others debated political philosophy, cultural colonialism and feminist theory. I considered myself a full participant in public life at the university – at parties, among friends or in my everyday wanderings around the city – but, for some reason, I just couldn't find a voice for my ideas in class. I sat through five long years as an undergrad and two as a grad student. In all that time, I can probably count the times I participated in class discussions on one hand. Looking back, I feel cheated. I cheated myself out of the full benefits of an education I'll probably be paying off until my hair turns gray. For me, Frontera is a chance to make amends and appease the gods of discourse.

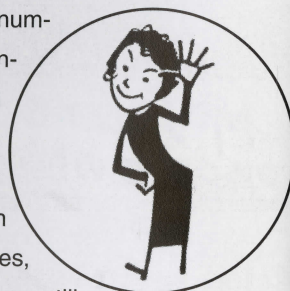
Now, I read the local papers and national news magazines, watch TV news shows and even trashy talk shows, and count on that same hand the number of Latinos whose voices have been deemed worthy of contributing to the national dialogue. I watch for their scattered columns and op eds, their brown and tan faces flashing on and off the TV screen, and I cheer them on, quietly.

But what about the millions of young Latinos and Latinas in cities and towns across the country – in San Antonio, Los Angeles, Denver, Miami, New York, Fresno, Santa Fe – whose voices are still missing from the debate?

Progress comes slowly.

In this theme issue of Frontera, at least for some, the gag is finally coming off. Whether self-imposed or externally inflicted, young Latinos are beginning to tear the gag off and find their voices. In the cover article on page 22, you'll meet a handful of young Latino artists and film makers that are tired of being mute. In Ricardo Elizalde's article on page 20, you'll find a group of Latinos engaged in letting out a collective howl of frustration on pirate radio stations throughout California. Jim Mendiola's piece on page 41 spotlights two young film makers who are opening up the dialogue about what it means to be a minority in America. And, through their music, El Vez, Ozomatli and six Bay Area house DJs are finding that a message doesn't have to be served up straight, no chaser. It's an exciting time for our generation, and I hope reading these articles will inspire some of you to open wide and let out that howl yourselves. With so much to holler about these days, we can't afford not to.

– Yvette C. Doss,
Editor-in-Chief



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photo by Tom Beck

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letters to the editor

Bueno,
I've been re-reading the two issues I bought in some bookstore in old downtown L.A. for about five months now. ¡Que mezcla tan rica están creando hermanos! When I see myself reflected in the pages, I don't even feel 49. I just got the brilliant idea to share the mag with my kids (tienen 17, 23 y 25), but it's almost worn out already, so send more and keep going. And tell me how I can help carnalitos.

Victor Padilla
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Tell all your friends to subscribe! Thanks.

Estimadas Revisteras,
Qué hubole! I just finished reading the premiere issue of FRONTERA ... and I loved it. ¡Bien hecho! Now this is the type of magazine I've been looking for. Ya basta con Hispanic Magazine. Now there's a voice for truly progressive Latinos. I wish you all the suerte in the world!

Tu Amigo
Juan Moran
Los Angeles, California

Dear Frontera Magazine:
Enclosed please find a check for my subscription. I'm impressed with the broad variety of articles in your magazine. Articles like those by C. Ondine Chavoya are very impressive as they represent the different types of work being done in our community. I hope that more articles of this sort will be included. Thank you. I look forward to receiving my next issue of Frontera Magazine.
Eric-Christopher Garcia
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Dear Frontera,
Hello my name is Francisco Lopez. I'm a student at Avenal High School and, most important, a Xicano. I am writing to you about your great magazine and how I would like for the rest of my high school to enjoy it, too. My vice-principal gave me the permission to write to you about a special discount rate that you may have for a high school full of Xicanos (98 percent are Xicanos/as). I hope that you do so that the school will be able to have your great mag in its library, not just for quality reading but as a research tool. It will also be uplifting for the students

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N O S
L I W O
E T E P
A G R E V S E
M A M O N A C I X E M

We apologize to our readers for the small type in the issue three letters section. It was our subversive attempt to get you to visit your optometrist for a check-up. Hope it worked. Another FRONTERA public service announcement: Mothers, we urge you to get your college-age students vaccinated before sending them off to the university. Thank you, the staff.

who are forced to read publications like Newsweek and USA Today. So please help a school that needs it.
Sincerely, a student
Francisco Lopez
Avenal, California
We're in touch with your school now!

Dear Frontera,
Thank you Summer issue with Dave Navarro. I love him! He is my idol. It was a wonderful article! I love your magazine. Thanks again.
Dave Lover,
Cindy Delgado
Irvine, California

Dear Yvette:
First of all I would like to congratulate you. Your magazine truly blows my mind. I can't stop showing all my friends and co-workers this fabulous magazine. I am impressed with the wide coverage of various topics and different media that Frontera focuses on. I had not heard of the comedy group No Spic English until I read your article. Hopefully they will hit New York and I'll have to check them out. As for your article on Angelina Camarillo, I had heard the song but I had no idea who sang it or how young she

was. Thank you so much for publishing Frontera. It is a magazine that all Latinos from everywhere can really appreciate and savor. I look forward to the next issue. You go girl!
George Amaya
N.Y., New York

We recently got a hold of Frontera and really dug it. Finally, something unique and alternative being put out by Latinos!!!
In Struggle,
Alan
New York, New York

Keep up the good work. It's a great magazine!
Deborah Pacini
Somerville, Massachusetts

Hi Frontera,
It's good to see that another issue has hit the stands. I just wanted to say hello and ask, WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO DO AN ARTICLE ON BENJAMIN BRATT! His fans are STILL waiting! We know you are busy trying to prepare the articles for your magazine BUT we want to know his business. Even at 50, he'll still be SEXY, but who wants to wait that long :-). Take care, good luck with your next issue.
Regina
Cyberspace
Regina, we'll interview Benjamin someday soon. Meanwhile, check out the cover article that features his brother, film maker Peter Bratt.

Qué honda? Sabes que I first heard of Frontera magazine through Electric Mercado y ¡I love it! Bye! Y que sigamos unidos!
Naomi Martinez
Cyberspace

Speak your mind. Let us know what you want to see in the pages of FRONTERA.

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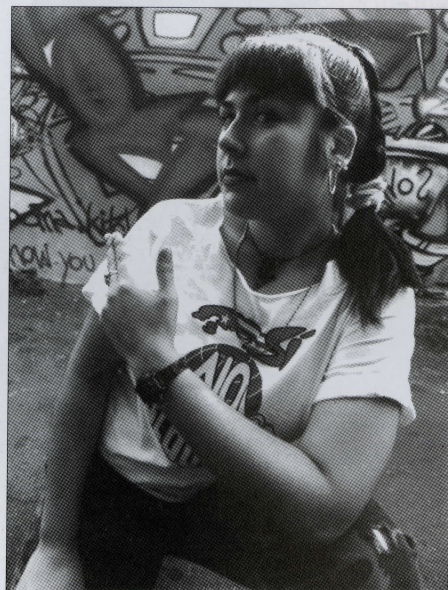


DON'T BELIEVE THE IMMIGRANT HYPE

Next time someone says immigrants suck up social services without contributing to the economy, run these numbers by them. They come from a study by the Tomas Rivera Center that examines immigrants' contributions to the state of California over a lifetime. The study shows immigrants contribute more to the state overall than they cost in government services. Here's how: While an average immigrant individual will cost the state of California approximately \$62,600 in educational expenditures, when lifetime tax payments are adjusted to reflect what is repaid solely to education, he or she will return an estimated \$89,437 in today's dollars. That's a surplus of \$26,837. In social services, the average immigrant does spend a little more than he or she receives. The average immigrant pays an estimated 74¢ for every tax dollar spent on social welfare programs. But, when the tax returns for education (and the average \$62,873 surplus) are combined with those for social programs, the legal immigrant returns a net surplus of \$24,943 to the state. Even the much-maligned undocumented resident returns \$7,890. How can that be? Undocumented immigrants had been eligible only for Medi-Cal and educational services when the study was conducted, so they "consumed" a lot fewer social resources than most think. Now that the Welfare Reform Act has passed, and Wilson rushed his executive order barring illegal immigrants from many social services, that surplus will be even larger, meaning illegal immigrants will be subsidizing the rest of the state's recipients. One more little tidbit for those who like to rail against the fabled immigrant welfare queen: only 9 percent of foreign-born mothers aged 15-44 were on AFDC as compared to 11 percent of native-born mothers in the same age group.

NIGHT STALKER GETS A WHITE WEDDING

Here's one for Ripley's Believe it or Not. Richard Ramirez, a.k.a. the Night Stalker, has married the girl of his dreams from death row in San Quentin. The heavy metal fan who once shouted, "Hail Satan!" in court wed a 41-year-old teen magazine editor Oct. 3. A devout Catholic who claims she is still a virgin, she says she fell in love with Ramirez after following his case for years. She sees the 36-year-old son of an El Paso police officer as the ideal man. The fact that he is convicted of torturing, sexually abusing and murdering 13 people in Los Angeles doesn't phase the woman, known only as Doreen L. "After I knew him, I knew he'd be the only one," she says of their first meeting after months of correspondence by mail. "It was my great fortune that he would fall in love with me, too." Looks like she'll be retaining the title "virgin" for quite a long time. San Quentin does not allow conjugal visits for its death row inmates.

**CANADIAN GRAFFITI ARTISTS TRAVEL TO CUBA**

Four Canadian-based graffiti artists, three of whom are Chilean-born, have embarked on a trip to Cuba to bring their African American- and Latino-inspired graffiti murals to the island. The Cuban government has given the artists permission to use 28 walls in downtown Havana as their graffiti canvases (what freedom!). The murals are a part of a Cuban Hip Hop festival that will include MCs, DJs and breakdancers, all taking place on the *malecon*, or boardwalk. Paula Gonzalez-Ossa, left, who has been doing graf work for over seven years, says she sees "the importance of hip hop culture on an international level," and commends Cuba for, "being the only country on this planet that acknowledges this and is pushing to use it in a positive, non-commercial way."

TACO BELL GOES CLUBBIN'

In a bid to get the Gen-X dollar, Taco Bell has decided to liven things up in its restaurants by hiring Joel Fitzpatrick, a

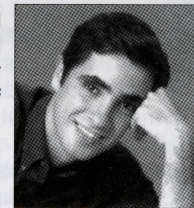


Gen-X fashion designer known for his club-kid fashions such as glow-in-the-dark vinyl pants and neon-colored Hush Puppies, to redesign employee uniforms. His vision? Oversized hockey jerseys, sagging pants and shirts made from the same Space Age reflective fabric used on those orange traffic cones. "Taco Bell is getting very hip," the 29-year-old designer said. What's next, ecstasy in the Pepsi machine?

PEDRO ZAMORA'S CLINIC

In Hollywood, young AIDS patients now have one more place to seek help, one that has roots in an unlikely place. The Pedro Zamora Youth HIV Clinic, the nation's first AIDS clinic to specifically target HIV-positive

teens and young adults, was named for the openly gay cast member of MTV's "reality-based" show "The Real World." Zamora, the sweet-tempered



Cubano in the San Francisco version of the show, was an AIDS activist who used his television fame to educate people about the virus. He died of AIDS-related complications in 1994, at 22. "This is a great honor to my brother's memory," Mily Zamora, Pedro Zamora's sister, told reporters. "I think that if Pedro was born again, he would ask God that he be born gay and with HIV, because he believed in this work and would want again to continue it." According to the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control, young people between 13 and 24, particularly women and minorities, have the highest rate of HIV infection. Yet they are the least likely to seek professional help. The clinic is located on the third floor of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. For more information about the clinic, call (213) 993-7400.

LATINO KIDS NOW SECOND LARGEST GROUP

Hispanics have become the largest group of children in the country after non-Hispanic whites, the Census Bureau reported this fall in an announcement that placed a spotlight on their urgent social and economic needs. According to the bureau, there are 12 million Latino children living in America, up from 9.8 million in 1990. That compares with 50.8 million non-Hispanic whites and 11.4 million non-Hispanic blacks. But Latino children are more likely than whites or blacks to lack health insurance, more than twice as likely as whites to drop out of school, and more likely than blacks or whites to live in poverty when someone in the household works, federal statistics show. "For many years, we have heard that growth trends would someday mean that Hispanics would be the second-largest population group in the nation," said Jane Delgado, president and CEO of the National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Organizations. "For Hispanic children, that day has arrived, and it is time to address this critical mass of children who desperately need services." Another interesting figure: the Census study found that 94 percent of Hispanic children were in the country legally, though their parents might not be.

Note: "Hispanic" is the official census term used by the U.S. Census Bureau.

LATINO-OWNED BUSINESSES BLOSSOMING

These days, Latinos are just as busy starting Fortune 500 companies as working in them. And it's starting to show. Hispanic Business Magazine and the U.S. Census say there are now 1.25 million Latino-owned businesses in the United States. That makes Latinos the minority group with the most family businesses in the country. According to the 1992 Economic Census, the U.S. is home to 771,708 Hispanic-owned businesses, which generate \$72.82 billion in receipts. The number of African-American companies in 1992 was 620,912.

FUTURE LATINO LEADERS GATHER AT CONFERENCE
by Jennie Marie Luna

This summer, the Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Project (CLYLP) celebrated its 15-year anniversary on the campus of Sacramento State University. Out of about 600 applicants, 120 California high school students were chosen for their academic and community leadership to be part of the week-long conference. Participants were exposed to numerous speakers, including Chicano poet Francisco Xavier Alarcón, Sal Castro and other professional and grass roots leaders and organizers. The conference goal is to strengthen participant's knowledge of state government and politics, as well as to encourage them to be active participants and future leaders in government public policy making. Mid-week, this year's students practiced what they had been learning by congregating on the steps of the State Capitol and holding a press conference to address the needs of Latino youth in California. At the closing banquet, Rosa María Melendez, U.S. marshal of the western district of Washington, gave a key-note speech encouraging the students to believe in themselves and their potential to be leaders. Melendez, who was appointed by President Clinton, is the first woman and first person of color to hold this rank, the highest position in her field. Araceli Noriega, a participant from Vacaville, took the inspiration to heart. "Because of this conference, I see myself and I have awakened inside, pushing forward to reach for more," she said.

MIAMI GETS SECOND CUBAN MAYOR

Miami now has its second mayor of Cuban descent. Joe Carollo has taken his place in history alongside Xavier Suarez, who served in the mid-1980s as the first. According to the Miami supervisor of elections, roughly half of registered voters in the city are Hispanic; non-Hispanic whites make up 24 percent and blacks nearly 28 percent of the registered voters. But, an interesting twist means the number of Hispanic voters might actually be higher: many children of Cuban-born parents were recorded as non-Latin whites in the last census.

A BEAST IN HOLLYWOOD

Whether it's in a tiny 50-person theater in Hollywood or a community center in Berkeley, when Paul Saucido finds himself on stage he becomes Phil, the philosophical Chicano sweet-bread maker in an East L.A. *panadería* who tells the story of the day he got his bike back, or Pauli, the love-struck teen who created an alter ego called the Purple Panther. But he's not the tank-top-wearing cholo he plays, or the kid who lied and said he was Italian and Native American, anymore. Now Saucido is a 26-year-old aspiring actor who hands out business cards that read, "Chicano Man." Saucido's identity as the found-again Mexican-American straddling two worlds — the glitzy Hollywood star-making world and the real world of Latino Los Angeles — is his currency, and he works it like a pro.

Currently, his energy is focused on "Sweetbread," a 22-minute, black and white, 16mm film that takes the bread maker, one of a lineup of characters in his one-man show, "A Beast in the Field," and gives him a spotlight all his own. Saucido sees "Sweetbread" — featuring sound by Mark Torres, direction by ILLEGAL intern Flavio Morales and production and co-direction by Richard Salazar — as a step toward writing and directing, as well as starring in, his own feature-length film some day.

Phil, the protagonist in "Sweetbread," is a character many in East L.A. will recognize. He's the guy next door who accepts his lot in life with a Bud and a smile, pondering the ironies of his position, his buddy who was killed when they

were kids, the maddening effect of the stifling heat on the residents of L.A. He's the guy next door, all right, with handlebar mustache and a love of mariachis. "You know, this music reminds me of Mexico," he tells the audience. "Not Mexico, Mexico. East L.A., Mexico. Rows of leaves, bricks and wood, trees blowing in the wind, kids playing in the streets, homeboys just kickin' back, and my old man resting his tired body against his front fence, picking fruit off his trees." The difference between Phil and the guys you might have known is that the guy next

door never got as close to putting his fingers on the bittersweet mystery of why a man with so little to look forward to finds joy and motivation in the simpler things in life. And Saucido's Phil is an accomplishment of subtlety and depth, a character that rings true with his attempts to make sense of it all.

"There's nothing like fresh *pan dulce*," Phil says, sniffing the freshly-baked bread. "Taking the concha into your hand, breaking it down the middle, feel the heat in your hands. That's comforting no? Shit, gives me...ease I guess. I smell it on my hands, taste it in my mouth...that's life. I made life."

"Phil is basically one of those men who's never done anything with his life," Saucido says. "He's content with where he is to a certain point, but he doesn't know what life is like beyond East L.A. Now that he has a kid, he's trying to come to terms with that."

Another distinguishing feature of Phil's is that he's a character you aren't likely to see in most theater productions or films. "It's unique because that kind of story hasn't been told before, the story of a Chicano *veterano*-type who's a baker," Saucido says. "There's no guns, and it's all in a bakery. It's just this real sweet story. That's why we call it sweet bread." Though he's just launching his writing career, the acting is nothing new to Saucido, who grew up in L.A. But he says he's had to deal with roadblocks from the very beginning. "Since day one, my mother nurtured me to be a little a ham," he says. "I was like the only kid I knew who was taking dance lessons and acting lessons. When I was a kid I was a part of the Young People's Theater Workshop, and I was the only Mexican. Everyone else was white. So that was my first experience being an actor and being Mexican, being different."

Saucido, who worked with L.A. Teatro in '93 while still a student at Cal State L.A., says his motivation is just to create meaningful roles for himself. "I was just this actor who wanted to act," he says. "But I found out there's nothing out there that wasn't negative, as far as roles that are Latino. ... I was always really frustrated, so that's how I started writing."

Now that Saucido has sprung his "Sweetbread," which co-stars Robert Arevalo and Benjamin Balderama, from the post-production oven, he's looking forward to a year of promoting the film. And the similarities between Saucido and his character Phil crystallize.

"Mira, even the stars are with me," Phil says to the audience at the end of his monologue. "And my dreams? They're endless."



L.A.'s Pocho Show excels at scatological humor.

CHICANO BENNY HILLS

Straight outta Bell, Maywood, Boyle Heights and other points on the east side of Los Angeles comes the Pocho Show, a comedy troupe that draws heavily on the comedic potential of life on the edge.

"We're not like other [Latino] comedy troupes out there," says co-founder Marco Trejo. "We don't have a political agenda." Having seen a lot of Chicano groups out there whose political humor was often met with no laughs, Trejo, with partner George Castillo, decided to try his hand at making people laugh, minus the rhetoric.

Assembling people from ELACC's production of "Othello" and borrowing cast members from other comedy troupes (like the subterranean Lounge Lizards), the Pocho Show's members have been taping skits and airing them at a local gathering spot in Commerce.

With skits that show what can happen when you run out of toilet paper, as well as the everyday inanities of relationships, the Pocho Show is mining the same kind of scatological territory Benny Hill was mining in his outrageous show. Neither political nor highbrow, theirs is the kind of humor any one can appreciate, or be completely grossed out by.

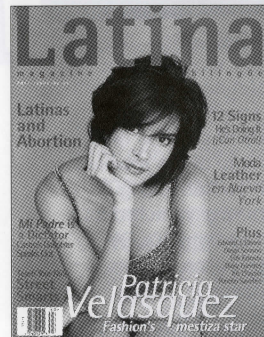
Though it's still a work in progress, the Pocho Show is beginning to see its skits aired on cable access (Buena Vision, Ch. 6, East LA), with future performances slated for Century Cable in LA and cable access in Miami. In the meantime, cast members are either honing their craft doing theater work or taking road trips to Austin and San Francisco to spread the Pocho Show gospel.

—Alfonso Ruiz

1996 MARKS THE START OF A LATINO PUBLISHING REVOLUTION

BY YVETTE C. DOSS

In the last few months, Latinos have made quite a few strides in the world of magazine publishing. We're finally starting to get our act together by producing English-language publications that speak directly to our needs as Latinos in America. From women's magazines to a publication for Chicanos who want to dig into their indigenous roots, there's something for almost everyone. It's almost enough to make me forget about the short thrift we're still getting in most mainstream media outlets. But now onto the good stuff.

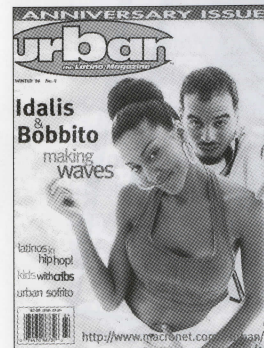
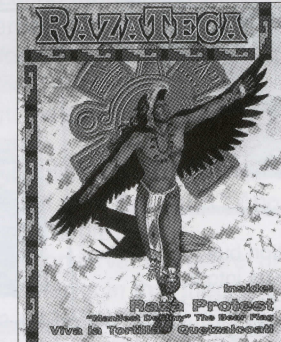


GLAD FOR THE GLOSS

Latina Magazine, a new bilingual women's magazine, was a welcome sight on the newsstand this summer. The national glossy, which is being bankrolled by the publishers of the African American women's magazine, *Essence*, is a huge step in the right direction. With photos of beautiful Latina models filling in the designer clothing, and articles on issues from family to

romance, it's kind of like a sassier, Latina version of *Cosmo* or *Vogue*. Sign me up for a subscription for my mom!

In the Bay Area, **RazaTeca**, a new English-language magazine targeting militant-minded *raza*, has emerged. Published out of San Jose, Calif., it features local news and columns about gang issues, pride and empowerment, politics, web reviews and a hefty dose of poetry. Publisher Jesse Razo, a *pinto* who makes no bones about the time he's served in the clinker according to San Francisco-based activist/author/film maker Elizabeth Martinez, has brought together a group of Chicano *veteranos* to promote the Aztlan movement in this addition to the Latino publishing universe.



On the East Coast, there's a publication that captures the New York Latino flavor with its hip hop, fashion and community issues coverage. It's called **Urban the Latino Magazine** and it has been publishing for over a year now in the Big Apple. Co-founders Jorge E. Cano-Moreno and Rodrigo Salazar started *Urban* in much the same way we started *Frontera*: with lots of hard work and zero corporate backing. Finally, New York Latinos portrayed in a positive light.

BLIPS ON THE CELLULOID LANDSCAPE

In Hollywood, **Cameron Diaz** has been *working it* lately! La Cubana güerita stars in the fall release "**Feeling Minnesota**" with Keanu Reeves; She's also the "she" in Edward Burns' "**She's the One**," which features the "Friends" walking hair style

Jennifer Aniston.

On the "**Selena**" front, **Jennifer López** (who, by the way, was on the cover of *Latina's* premiere issue) is wrapping up her work on **Gregory Nava's** biographical film of the late singer's life, which also stars **James Edward Olmos** and **Jon Seda**. From "**Selena**," López is moving on to two new films: "**Blood and Wire**," with Jack Nicholson, and Oliver Stone's "**Stray Dogs**."

For a movie with a little more substance, John Sayles' "**Lone Star**," set in a fictional border town called Frontera (who knew?), was the year's film-making tour de force. Starring **Elizabeth Peña** and Kris Kristofferson, the film explored interracial strife, long lost loves and a murder mystery, all in 137 minutes.

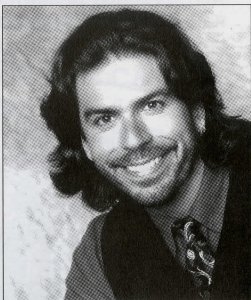


Elizabeth Peña stars in John Sayles' border mystery, "Lone Star."

Salma Hayek, who recently graced the cover of a national magazine wearing nothing but whipped cream, continues to provide plenty of cleavage shots and leggy moves in "**Fled**," with Lawrence Fishburne and Steven Baldwin. She also stars in "**Fools Rush In**" opposite Mathew Perry.

TALES FROM TV LAND

This fall's television season leaves a lot to be desired, but there is one notable exception: ABC's new sitcom "**Common Law**" stars Colombian-Spanish actor **Greg Giraldo** as John Alvarez, a Harvard-educated lawyer in this study of New York culture clash. Veteran actor **Gregory Sierra** plays John's stern father, Luis, **Diana-María Rivas** stars as co-worker María Marqués, and **Carlos Jacot** plays the best-buddy character, Peter. One dirty little Greg Giraldo secret: a misguided appearance on *Star Search*. Shhhhh.



This fall, Greg Giraldo stars in "Common Law."

On CBS, check out **Cheech Marin's** latest role as Don Johnson's sidekick on "**Nash Bridges**." Unfortunately, watching Don Johnson preen on screen is like drinking a glass of bong water. But, Cheech is funny as his usual *payaso* self. In one episode, his character accidentally eats a \$500,000 cake. Ooops!

Meanwhile, "**Good Morning America's**" newest anchor/reporter, **Elizabeth Vargas**, has become TV's most prominent Latina. Now, millions of Americans wake up to her face every day, or at least whenever Joan Lunden or Charlie Gibson call in sick.

And of course, PBS's seminal historical documentary, "**¡Chicano!**" informed audiences throughout the summer and fall, with another airing of the four-part series in September. Maybe it had something to do with that call I placed to PBS asking that they show more Latino programming. I can hear them now: "What else do we have?" "What the heck, run it again."

Finally, let's not forget producer **Jeff Valdez's** "**Latino Laugh Festival**," which aired for 13 weeks on Showtime this year and managed to bring together a diverse line-up of comedians, including ... **Daisy Fuentes**? Well, in any case, it was a great nod to the Latino comedy community, Daisy or no Daisy.



Cameron Diaz and Keanu Reeves in "Feeling Minnesota"

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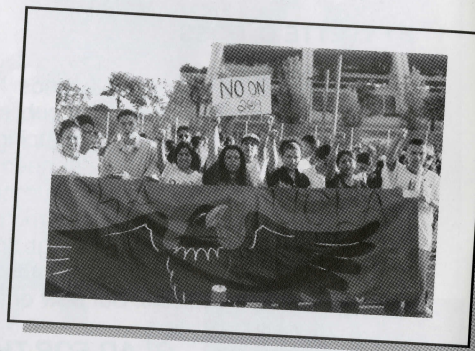
Dear Mom,
Every four years, the republicans gather in some lucky city to hammer out their campaign platform. This year, they descended on San Diego and, guess what? I was chosen to be one of the GOP Convention delegates! I'm sending along some snapshots of my trip to San Diego, and the colorful city of Tijuana. Imagine, Mom, I was in Mexico! We made an expedition into the country (don't worry, I didn't get off the bus) and received a warm reception from the villagers. Enjoy!
Love,
Your daughter

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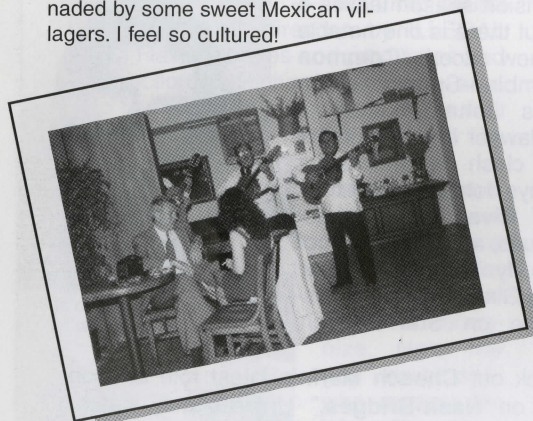
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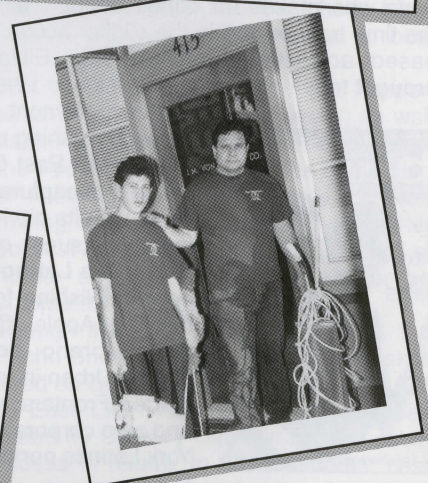
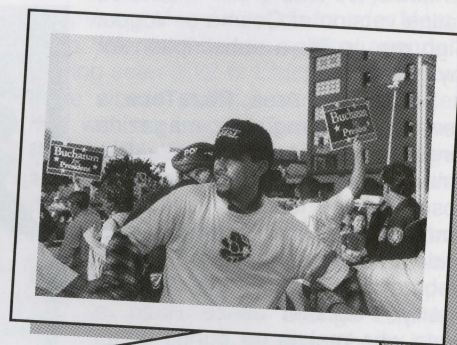


In San Diego, a lot of mean people gathered to scream and shout something about some Prop. 209 at all of us delegates (top). Below, some of the rowdies had to be restrained from attacking Buchanan supporters who ventured into the cage to set them straight. It's OK, though, the thoughtful police officers made sure they all stayed in a cage, and we didn't have to see or hear the shouting people at all after that.

At a quaint restaurant not too far from the convention hall, I had a lovely meal with a senator (below). We were serenaded by some sweet Mexican villagers. I feel so cultured!



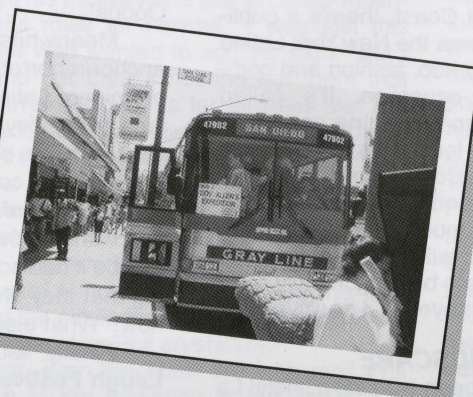
Here's the expedition bus (below) that drove us into the heart of uncharted territory in Tijuana! See me sitting in the front row? Above, that's a sign some of the grateful villagers put up to welcome us.



Oh, almost forgot. These nice men made sure all of our rooms were spotless during our stay in the hotel. I had the best time ever!



I felt really safe in San Diego. One our way back from Tijuana, we saw our hard-working Border Patrol agents doing their job. Here they are stopping this Mexican at a bus stop to ask for her Green Card! It's great to see our tax money at work.



GOP FLASHES DISPATCHES FROM THE HEART OF A TAINTED AMERICAN DREAM

BY CHUY VARELA

As I wandered the convention floor at this summer's Republican National Convention in San Diego, New York Congresswoman Susan Molinari was assuring republicans they were the answer to restoring the American dream. "We can change the direction of our country," she said. "It will be a new day, and every one of us here can be the new patriots, the pioneers, the dreamers, the doers." A booming "Yeah," rose in response. Arizona delegation members waved flags and flashed "Viva Dole" buttons in their blinding red cowboy hats, vests, and "neckerchiefs."

One thing's for sure: the "dreamers" the congresswoman was referring to weren't from across the border. There was very little argument within the GOP when the platform committee adopted the measure to deny citizenship to U.S.-born children of undocumented parents. Are they not "doers?" Nobody wanted to know. Protests against immigration and the anti-affirmative action measure, Proposition 209, were "brownd out" by the local media, despite the fact that they drew thousands. San Diego put on a happy face and kept the disenchanted masses at a distance.

Wandering through a sea of "I (heart) Newt" signs, I passed the Florida Delegation. I searched for high profile Latino republicans like Diaz-Balart and Ros-Lehtinen as well as the "abuelo" of Latino republicans Turco Del Junco. I never found them. Latinos were a marginal 3 percent of the delegates, a drop from 6 percent at the last GOP convention. So much for the party of inclusion.

I did talk to Latino republicans like Rick Ledesma, who's running for Congress in El Paso, Texas. "A 15 percent tax cut," he said. "Just think what it's going to do for our mom and pop businesses in the barrio."

From there his script was set. English Only: "We're all Americans, aren't we!" Immigration: "I believe everyone should wait their turn." Abortion: "As a Catholic, I believe it's morally wrong!" No bucking the party line.

There's an assumption that the conservative nature of the Republican Party appeals to some Hispanics, but I see cracks in that theory. It's definitely the party of "los they." The GOP, too, has written off Latino voters this election. But if they win, it will be a bitter pill to swallow, says Raul Yzaguirre of the National Council of La Raza.

"If Bob Dole wins the election and forms a government that leans towards the ideals of Colin Powell and Jack Kemp, there's a chance for Latino appointments," Yzaguirre says. "But if it's the party of Pat Buchanan and the Christian Coalition, we're in a lot of trouble."

The only attempt by Dole to make inroads into the Latino community during the convention came when he went to lunch at the Old Town Mexican Cafe. His lunch was upset by UC San Diego student Maria Figueroa, who gave him indigestion by calling him a hypocrite for eating the food of those he wants to get rid of. She was quickly escorted out by the restaurant owner and Dole's secret service agents. As she was taken away, a guitar duo that had been serenading the presidential hopeful began playing "Guantanamera," with the lyrics of Cuban patriot Jose Marti. What poetic justice.

The bastardization of Sam & Dave's "Soul Man" to "He's a Dole man!" was blaring out of the sound system as I left. As I walked alongside throngs of older white men, I realized this was their vision of America: an America that still revolves around manifest destiny, conquest, and wealth. I originally thought San Diego '96 might be Chicago '68, but no way. The dude that got the play was Cali Governor Pete Wilson for keeping his 'Meskins' in place. The rage, the *coraje*, of *la raza* never ignited. Many saw it as a chance to take GOP *feria* and run. But the question now is, who'll have the last laugh?

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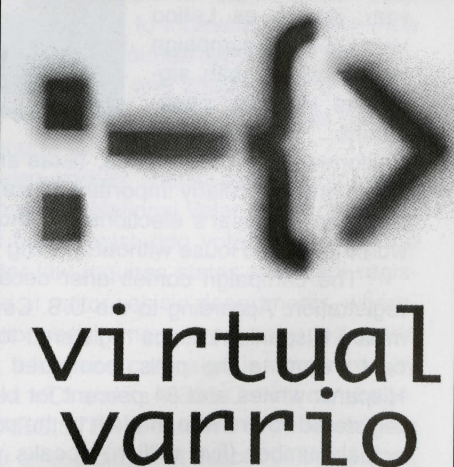
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LATINO VOTE USA: CAMPAIGN TARGETS ONE MILLION COUCH POTATOES

BY PATRICIA GUADALUPE

Proposition 187. The California Civil Rights Initiative and other anti-affirmative action proposals. Welfare reform. English-only legislation. Those and many other issues that have an enormous impact on Latinos are being called by many in the community an unintended godsend because the issues have energized record numbers to register to vote this November 5.

The San Antonio-based Southwest Voter Registration Project, the Chicago-based Midwest/Northeast Voter Registration Project and the Hispanic Educational Fund in New York have been conducting registration drives in the hopes of increasing the Latino vote by one million this year. Known as Latino Vote USA, the campaign targets states with significant Hispanic populations, including California, New York, Florida, Texas and Illinois. California and Texas are particularly important, since both states are decisive states in this year's elections. No modern day president has won the White House without winning California.

The campaign comes after decades of low Latino voter registration. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, of the five million Hispanics/Latinos registered to vote in 1982, 82.5 percent went to the polls, compared to 90 percent for non-Hispanic whites and 84 percent for blacks. The percentage of registered voters who made it to the polls is comforting, but the actual number (five million) speaks volumes about how few Latinos are actually registered.

"There are 27 million Latinos in the United States. About 15 million are eligible to vote and only five million do vote. That has to change if we want to be a part of what is going on," says Antonio Monroig, chairman of Republican National Hispanic Assembly, a Washington, D.C.-based group of Latino republicans with chapters in the United States and Puerto Rico.

Ironically, it has historically been those groups who are

most affected by policy that are least likely to vote. The Census survey also found that only 63.6 percent of registered Latinos voted in the 1994 mid-year elections, when the GOP wrested control of Congress away from the Democrats, who had held control for decades. "Many of us stayed home in 1994, and look what happened. The republicans took over and they are destroying everything we have counted on," says New York Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez. "The (U.S.) Congress deter-

mines almost everything in our lives, from how much money we will have for college to whether there will even be transportation to school, and many, many things. Voting is the only way to have a say in who will be determining these things for our community."

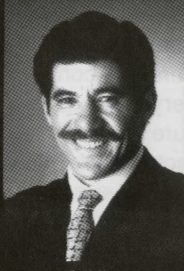
California Congressman Xavier Becerra says he's convinced Latinos could have made a big difference in 1994. "If all the Latinos eligible to vote in the state had actually registered and voted, I seriously doubt Proposition 187 would have passed," he says.

This year, Latino Vote USA is working to make sure 1996 is not another year of regrets. Under Latino Vote USA, Latinos who are already registered are being asked to fill out cards pledging they will vote. Their names will be placed in a computer database to receive reminders near election time. And in conjunction with the National Association of Hispanic Publications, several well-known Latinos,

including actors Edward James Olmos, Cheech Marin, Rita Moreno, television personality Geraldo Rivera and salsero Willy Chirino, have taped public service announcements urging Latinos to vote. "Voting isn't a laughing matter," says Marin in one print and TV ad. "Act Now! Vote," implores Moreno.

So far, it looks like it's working. "For the first time, we are seeing people who have lived here for many years deciding to

Anybody can Talk
Not Everybody can Vote



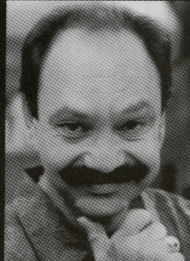
Geraldo Rivera
Actor and TV host

YOUR Vote Counts

Register and VOTE in 1996!

Latino Vote USA created this ad campaign using prominent Latinos to convince people to get out and vote.

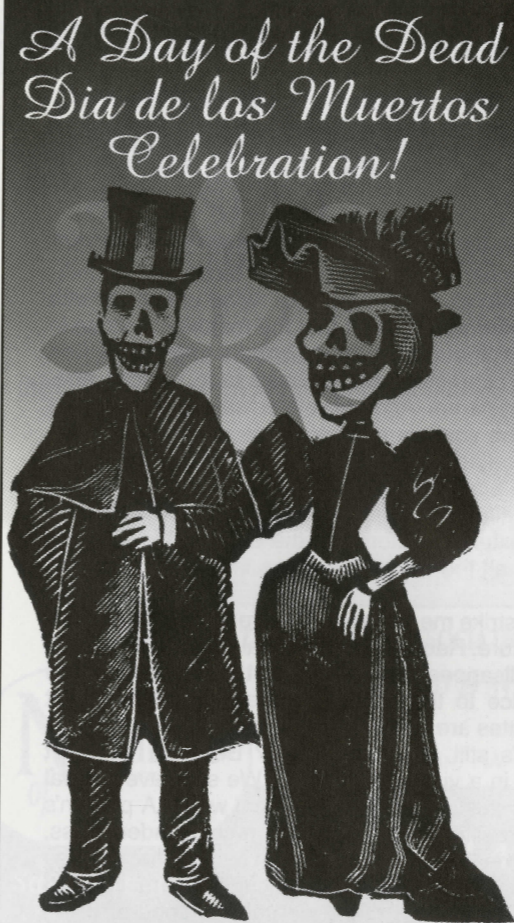
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become U.S. citizens and registering to vote," said Antonio González, president of SVRP. "They are saying that if they continue to stand on the sidelines, they will not have a voice. And many are not registering with a specific party, but rather as independents to see who has their best interests in mind." The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service has been so overwhelmed with naturalization requests — adding to an already months-long backlog — that it has contracted retired or laid-off workers from other federal agencies to help with the paperwork in order to process most by the November elections. This massive registration drive is also reaching a segment of the population that has often been called politically apathetic — young voters in their teens and early '20s. This past June was the 25th anniversary of the historic day when the 26th Amendment was ratified, granting 18-to 20-year-olds the right to vote. But the numbers have been declining steadily, and those in that age group are the least likely to register and vote. In 1972, the first presidential election in which those under 21 could vote, almost 50 percent of 18-24 year-olds voted. In 1988, only 35 percent did. In 1992, MTV's "Rock The Vote" ad campaign helped increase it to 43 percent.

The political process has a huge impact on young Latinos, analysts say, since Latino Generation Xers are a part of the fastest-growing ethnic group in the country. The median age of the Latino population is 25, compared to 34 for non-Latinos, and approximately 500,000 Latinos reach voting age every year. "We are well aware that the young Latino vote could have a decisive impact on some states," says MNVREP president Juan Andrade.

In 1994, 16 members of the U.S. House of Representatives

won their seats by a margin of only four votes or less per precinct. Part of the Latino Vote USA strategy includes registering potential voters in high schools and community college centers, with the help of several youth groups, including students working with the National Association of Latino Elected Officials. Thousands of copies of a slick 15-minute video produced by the non-profit group People for the American Way, which started its First Vote Project to increase voter numbers among the young, are making the rounds nationwide. In it, students from high schools in Virginia and Washington, D.C., talk about the importance of voting. The video also features R.E.M., Aretha Franklin and Young M.C.

Other tactics have also worked. Thanks to the "motor voter law" — formally known as the National Voter Registration Act — Rock the Vote has been registering voters by telephone now, too. The motor voter law requires states to accept registration forms by mail and at motor vehicle departments, whereas before, voter registration requirements were as varied as the states themselves. The telephone campaign is sponsored by telecommunications giant MCI and its 1-800-Collect campaign. Callers who dial 1-800-REGISTER are asked to punch in their zip code. They then hear a recording that describes that state's requirements for registering, which include residing in the locality at least 30 days prior to the election. The recording asks for date of birth, name and address. Within 10 days, a completed form arrives for the caller to check, sign and mail. A stamp is provided. The service is also provided on the World Wide Web (<http://netvote96.mci.com>). "This is all about being involved," says Velázquez.

First off, *gracias* a Karla Turcios and Alex Rios for sending me the URLs to the following sites.

CYBERAZA

<http://www.contrib.andrew.cmu.edu/~tucios/cyberaza.html>
With the goal of promoting *la cultura latina en el Internet*, Cyberaza has an eclectic assortment of resources, the most notable being free web pages for Latino artists. Check out the virtual art gallery, the research page, Latino links or the technological survival section (still under construction) that will provide techie info *en español* on how to reinstall a clean system on a Mac, how to use search engines, etc. The art gallery — which consists of links for the most part — is divided up into music (punk, mariachi, computer-generated, Los Lobos), interactive sites (including the witty avant-garde Cybervato site), written word, images (fractals, superheroes), video and performance. *Suave* — except for the fact that there are too many outdated links. The research page features an interview with Yolanda Rivas, the Hispanic Online editor and the creator of the Cyberspanglish/Pueblos Virtuales site reviewed below. It also provides info on Karla's project, a self-described Latino World Wide Web site which "examines issues of self-identity, artistic expression and community activism." Using Lynx as a browser means you'll end up encountering some mangled characters, wandering around without a clear idea of where you're going and will be almost completely unable to use the interactive sites, view the gallery, or enjoy the "Spanglish" video.

FUTURE LEADERS OF AMERICA

<http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~alexrios/FLAInc.html>
FLA is an Orange County-based organization dedicated to training young leaders from the Latino community in Califas and Mexico. The corporate web site provides a synopsis of the organization's history, philosophy, and activities. You can read through an interview with the current chapter president in their newsletter, "The Networker," or send them e-mail. In Netscape, the choice of font size and background color on some pages makes the amount of information provided tiresome to read, and it's not always clear which icon to click to get where you want. The most relevant information — forms, calendar of events — is accessible using Lynx. But in the on-line newsletter, a description of the photographs provided would have been nice.

CYBERSPANGGLISH / PUEBLOS VIRTUALES

<http://www.actlab.utexas.edu/~seagull/index.html>
Yolanda Rivas' site has a link to the potato page (she's Peruvian, okay?). But she also has links related to her academic interest in Latinos and on-line life. Cyberspanglish examines how Spanish-speakers incorporate techie terminology into their vocabulary, and includes a dictionary (motherboard = *placa madre*). Pueblos Virtuales has the results of Rivas' masters thesis project — she wanted to know the demographics of Latinos on the Net. It can be accessed in either English or Spanish, and has links to info about communities in the virtual barrio. Although the facts are interesting, presentation is a bit *seco* and only about half of the links work. The basic info is accessible through Lynx, but the visuals just aren't happening.

And, for fun:

THE CHUPACABRA HOMEPAGE

<http://www.princeton.edu/~accion/chupa.html>
Yes, *ya llegó la Chupacabra!* It comes complete with a link to the Chupacabra version of the Macarena! This is the official page with info on T-shirts, the Chupas time-line and regional sightings, editorials, other pages relevant to the Chupacabras phenomenon. *Y mucho más!*

Have a site you'd like to pass on for review? You can reach Seline Szkupinski Quiroga via e-mail at latiny@well.com

IN NETLANDIA, GENDER AND ETHNICITY DON'T DISAPPEAR

by Seline Szkupinski Quiroga

It bothers me when I hear the popular *dicho* among netizens that goes: "We're all ASCII here." For those unfamiliar with that little saying, it refers to the fact that the majority of those in cyberspace interact through the typed word using ASCII (the standard computer character font), so one's race, gender, age, etc., is not readily apparent. Another related saying is "In cyberspace, no one knows you're a dog."

Those *dichos* reflect the perception that cyberspace is the grand equalizer, a place where people are judged solely by their words and intellect. It's supposed to be a place where no one is judged by external factors like the color of his skin — a place where we're all the same. The thing is, we're not all the same.

Those *dichos* strike me as naive. They're missing an important part of the picture. Race, gender, sexual orientation and all the rest haven't disappeared. They're just made invisible in cyberspace. It's nice to think that we've arrived at the point where those attributes are not as significant as one's words and behavior, but that's still *un cuento*. Why? Because we can't spend all our time in a virtual community. We still have to deal with the 'isms' that exist in the imperfect real world. A person's identity and lived reality (shaped by their race, gender, class, etc.) are gonna come through in his or her words. What you say or create in cyberspace will reflect a particular cultural context. Some of us operate in more than one cultural sphere, using more than one language and embracing more than one gender identity. Not everyone is insightful enough to pick up on this, *los mensos*, so people often assume others are coming from the same place as they are. For the most part, they assume that you are a white, heterosexual American.

It's that assumption of sameness that bothers me. Electronic communications are so revolutionary, they've allowed netizens to evolve different modes of perceiving and processing information. But in some ways, the inhabitants of *Netlandia* are operating with old, tired assumptions, which are rooted in the real world and in the history of the Internet. Before the information explosion, when Net culture was first developing, electronic communities were pretty homogenous. They reflected the composition of those with privilege and access — *tú sabes*, white, educated males. A lot of weight was given to rationality and the ability to be articulate. Arguments had to be constructed just so, and hunches? *Olvidalo!* Things aren't as rigid now, but individuals who don't adhere to the dominant cultural paradigm are devalued in subtle ways by the community.

So, as my friend Sisu points out, cyberspace isn't an egalitarian utopia. Many blithely ignore the diversity that is creeping up on cyberspace. But just because you can't see it doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. It's there, and it offers us all a chance to chill with individuals we don't usually encounter in our physical suburb, 'hood or barrio. It's a chance for everyone to become more aware and expand their perceptions. We may not feel comfortable interacting with those who operate in a completely different reality, but maybe we'll learn something.

If we don't learn, then we can write off *Netlandia* as the site of perpetual hierarchies. Yet another possibility is that the benefits of electronic communications will allow us to interact across ethnic, racial and class lines, and perhaps even understand each other, finally. This kind of true communication may happen, if we can let go of our assumptions. We've changed the medium in which we interact. Now, can we change the way we interact? Can we create a virtual utopia in which difference is celebrated rather than ignored or erased? *Vamos a ver.*

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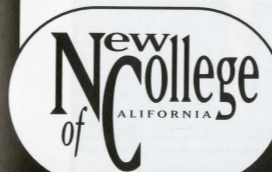
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For Aztlan

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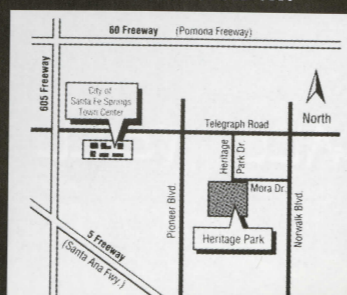
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Macarena...schmacarena:

You've had all
the cheese,
now it's time
for
the Macaroni:
Do the
Macaroni in 9
easy steps

photo by:
Eugenio Castro
model:
Lilianna Batarse



You put your
cellular out ...



you put your brief
case in.



Pretend you're
making a call ...



and hug yourself
for being so hip.



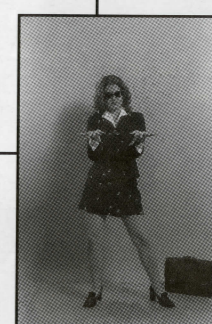
Pretend that
you're yawning ...



but don't hurt
yourself.



Pour a bag of
macaroni on your
head. (To avoid
injury use the
small macaroni.)



Toss the macaroni
in the air and
wave it around
like you just don't
care.



Worship the
macaroni god and
hope this dance
ends soon.

FRONTIERA GLOSSARY

Garbacho: trailer park trash. See Jeff Foxworthy.

Delicagado: humorless Latino, usually a *criticón* too.

Cacaguantes: gloves used to pick up doggy doo.

C.I.A.: Crack Introducing Agents

NOT SO FAMOUS RELATIVES OF FAMOUS LATINOS

Los Globos: Just a fatter band from East L.A.

Lazy Fuentes: No relation to Daisy but quite a coincidence.

Pocho del Ocho: Chavo's Chicano cousin.

Cantinfloss: Cantinflas' nephew the dentist.

Salma Kayak: Aunt who lives in a van by the side of the river.

Salchicha Marin: Cheech's well-endowed brother.

Johnny Carnales: Twin who joined a gang and was taken away.

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Lalo Lopez & Esteban Zul, Co-editors of POCHO Magazine and Pulitzer Prize nominees in the Drunken Cholo Journalism Category. POCHO MAGAZINE, PO BOX 63052, E.L.A., CA 90062

IN THE SPIRIT OF "BACK TO SCHOOL," the Pocho Pages brings you a look into Aztlan's premiere political think tank, the National Pochismo Institute, and its academic approach to Pochismo. Et tu Pocho?



National Pochismo Institute Extension Courses Fall Schedule 1996

NPI, Now Aztlan's Premiere Educational Institution

Thanks to President Clinton's lofty campaign promise to guarantee a 2 year Community College degree for everyone, we at the National Pochismo Institute have decided to offer courses in the study of the often ignored field of Pochismo. NPI offers itself as a viable alternative to cosmetology, fast food and upholstery shop educational institutions which will be overflowing with Pochas and Pochos, due to the elimination of affirmative action.



NPI Extension Course Descriptions in Pochismo Studies

Self Improvement

RAZA COSMICA IN CRISIS

Rugged-faced actor Edward James Olmos will lead this frank but necessary workshop on the problems regarding Raza reunification, as well as how to combat the "Crab Theory" and "Olmos Face Jokes."

TRANSCENDENTAL LOWRIDING

Dr. Jose Cuellar of San Francisco State University's La Raza Studies Department will lead this class in the mysteries of your sesos. Don't let the title fool you -- this promises to be a mind expanding New Age workshop combining Brujotecnico sciences and Zen Buddhist meditation. There will be a special performance by Pocho New Age musician Yanni Chingues.

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Hispanic funnyman Paul Rodriguez discusses his membership in the Republican Party and how it has helped him zoom to the top. Famous conservative Hispanic guest speakers include: assimilationist writer Richard Rodriguez (no relation), "english only" advocate and USA Today columnist Linda Chavez and Nightstalker Richard Ramirez (no relation).

Careers

POCHOS IN HOLLYWOOD

Instructor Danny De La Paz will speak on Pochos in the entertainment industry. Mr. De La Paz is a Chicano actor best known for his riveting portrayals of cholo life, especially Puppet in "American Me" (1992), Chuco in "Boulevard Nights," (1979) and Roger the Transvestite in "Miracle Mile" (1989). De La Paz will show you the ways of the casting couch.

JANITORIAL ARTS

This course will meet nightly in the NPI lobby after all other classes are over. Students

must bring own cleaning supplies and tools.

History

GLORIOUS POCHTECA CULTURE

San Francisco anthropologist Dr. Rene Yañez will discuss the importance of the ancient Pochteca culture and its relevance to today's upscale Latino. The always controversial Dr. Yañez is the author of several interesting books on pre-Hispano cultures, including "Mayan and Yours," and "Olmeca From The Neck Up." He is currently on parole from La Universidad Carcelera Correccional de Baja California in Tijuana. He has been named a 1996 Indigenous Fellow by Arizona's Bitter Indio Council.

The Arts

POCHA PERFORMANCE ARTE

In this course, performance artist Nao Bustamante will be performing and discussing her new experimental work "Bare Knuckled Chola," which features live music performances by Trio Sin Pantalones, one of Los Angeles' freshest new male Chicano folk groups. Ms. Bustamante is on the cutting edge of Pocho performance and is currently featured in *Spaghetini 2000*, an Italian art magazine.

BEYOND EL MARIACHI

Raunchy Ranchero Records artists Carnitas de Aztlan will instruct this class in the various forms of Pocho/a music. Their mixture of searing Hispano Hip Hop, indigenous music technology and performance art has made them the darlings of the avant-garde Encino rap scene. Their stage show features Aztec dance troupe Sticky Jaguar Loincloth.

Recreation

MACARENA-FU

Learn this self defense technique developed especially for use at weddings, quinceañeras and political conventions.

The Macarena-Fu is a deadly combination of martial arts and rhythmic line dancing with a punishing Latin twist.

Business

RAZA SWAP MEET TECHNOLOGY

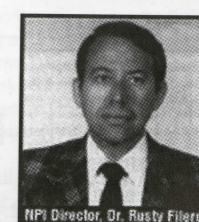
This course will meet on Saturdays and Sundays in the NPI parking lot, from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. Cost is \$17 per 20 x 10-foot space. Please, no food, drugs, pets, firearms or unauthorized Chupacabras T-shirts.

REGISTRATION

Visit the NPI offices at 2424 Chivo St., Los Angeles, Monday-Thursday 10am -7pm or register on-line at <http://silcom.com/~tonkin/pocho/npi.html>. Mail in registration form at least two weeks prior to first day of class to: NPI EXTENSION COURSES, PO BOX 63052, East Los, Califaztlan 90063. Please do not call unless you want to get chewed out by Shady, our angry recovering Cyberchola receptionist.

Un Mensaje From El Director de NPI

NPI -The National Pochismo Institute is dedicated to the preservation of Mexican-American, Chicano and Pocho cultures. We understand the unique and special needs of our people -- La Raza Cosmica, and have pledged our service and all available resources to the cause of Raza Reunification and Pocho Pride. NPI conducts



NPI Director, Dr. Rusty Filero

many experimental academic activities como our groundbreaking work in identifying the Mad Pig Virus and proving the link between Chicanos and the Bigfoot. We also operate the Cyberchola Retraining Center, the Brujotecnico Research Lab, the Narcosatanico International Operations Fund and the top secret Virgen de Guadalupe Apparition Testing Grounds in Nalgagorda, New Mexico. Thank you for your support of the National Pochismo Institute y Que Viva Pochismo Forever!
-- Dr. Rusty Filero, PhD., Director

pirate radio:

voices of discontent

by ricardo omar elizalde

"Chucho Chilango" answers the phone. His voice is quiet, almost a mumble. Wary that the FCC might be listening and trying to shut down Radio Libre again, he tells me he'd rather not answer questions over the phone. Three hours later the pirate radio DJ walks into a Mission District cafe. Now, Chilango's ready to talk about his "Sacrichingo Show" on 103.3 FM.

At Radio Libre, Chilango tells me cryptically, "we sacrifice the demons of information."

In October of 1995, the bilingual pirate radio station had a different sacrifice to make: its home. Facing heat from the FCC, a nervous landlord evicted the station and four of its DJs from its Mission District headquarters. It took the group four months to find another temporary home. The FCC tried to slap fines on four people who were in the house at the time but refused to let the FCC agents in. The FCC then wrote a letter threatening them with prison and fines of up to \$100,000, as well as accusing the individuals of conspiracy.

But despite the FCC scare, and his resultant cautious behavior, Chilango, who wears his long black hair in a ponytail and has skin the color of clay, refuses to think of Radio Libre as an illegal entity. "Just like a community has its newspapers and community centers, it should also have its own radio stations," he says matter of factly.

His show, which airs on Sundays between 4 and 6 p.m., is broadcast from the back room of a grey victorian in the heart of San Francisco's Latino neighborhood. During a visit to the makeshift station, I notice a hint of sour milk emanating from the kitchen. Bike frames are strewn throughout the flat. This is Radio Libre's temporary home, but it's so packed it looks like the station's DJs have been here forever. The room is crowded with crates of records, speakers, a conga and a grey couch with a guitar case sitting on top. In the corner there's a blanket posing as a curtain in front of a broken window.

"We offer an alternative, a different point of view from what you get in the mainstream media," says Chilango, fingering one of the eight silver rings on his fingers. On the air, along with playing the occasional mambos and old jams, he tackles political and social themes and delivers Latino com-

munity news and information.

"Where is the minority community gonna get access if it's not through micro-powered radio?" asks Stephen Dunifer, founder of Free Radio Berkeley. "The media resources have dwindled down. The minority community is under-represented. You can't communicate, you can't organize. You can't organize, you can't fight back."

When it comes to access, Dunifer's the man to ask. He's been fighting for the right to broadcast his micropowered station in the bastion of liberalism for years, often in open defiance of the Federal Communications Commission. Because of his activism, and the many lawsuits the FCC has filed against him, he has become somewhat of a hero among pirates. If there's a pirate radio station in the state of California, chances are Dunifer helped in some way, either by selling one of his do-it-yourself broadcasting kits, or by serving as consultant. Pirate radio has never been as popular in the state, and Dunifer is the reason.

Not long after Dunifer created the first station in the Bay Area, Latino and other minority voices began popping up on the air. From Watsonville to Sacramento, the list of Latino-run pirate radio stations continues to grow. But the stations' names, Radio X, Radio Zapata, Radio Libre, hint at another shared inspiration: the radio stations run by revolutionaries in Latin American countries.

The history of pirate radio in Latin America goes back at least as far as the late 1950s, when Fidel Castro broadcast tactical information via Radio Rebelde in his successful battle to overthrow the dictator Fulgencio Batista. More recently, rebels in El Salvador created Radio Venceremos, which transmitted from the ditches throughout the war and eluded capture by the U.S.-backed Salvadoran government. (Now, Radio Venceremos is broadcasting legally as a commercial radio station.) In Mexico, Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation is still transmitting from the jungle in Chiapas through a clandestine radio station.

In Salinas, Calif., though he isn't fighting a military war, Jose Ibarra of Radio Zapata finds that reflecting his community is a battle in itself. The station goes on at the crack of dawn because that's when the migrant workers who are his community rise. His DJs are seasonal because they are also a

part of that community. Radio Zapata offers fewer programs at the end of Summer, because that's when all the migrant workers follow the crops or return home.

Because of Ibarra's strong sense of community, Radio Zapata is one micropowered station that doesn't break the FCC's rules on profanity, rebel station or not. "On mainstream radio they glorify drugs, gangs and sex because that's what sells," says Ibarra. "That culture no longer has any dignity. ... We don't play pop music. We play traditional, indigenous and revolutionary music that is popular with us. We have felt that the *viejos*, or elders, were being excluded from our programming. Our job is to keep their music alive. ... It's a very important job."

But that's just the music they play.

Radio Zapata also offers a wide variety of community and

national news from a Zapatista perspective. "A person has to be aware of his rights," says Ibarra. "We are struggling for what is just."

In 1978, the FCC passed a provision that forbade stations to broadcast at less than 100 watts (most micropowered stations broadcast at about 30 watts), saying that was the most efficient way to regulate the medium. It costs between \$50,000 and \$100,000 to start a legally-sanctioned station — not exactly the kind of money Chilango and the rest can come up with.

Radio Libre's lawyer explained the precedents that have been set in the Dunifer case, and which most micropowered stations are now using in their defense. "The FCC is arguably violating ... the first amendment by refusing to visit the issue (of the ban on very low power FM broadcasting) in *U.S. v. Dunifer*," he says. The verdict in the case, which came January 20, 1995, backs up Dunifer's claims. In this case Federal Judge Claudia Wilken did not grant the FCC a preliminary injunction it was seeking to bar Free Radio Berkeley from broadcasting. The judge ordered the FCC to check the constitutionality of its regulations. Almost two years later, the FCC is still seeking a permanent injunction.

Verdict or no verdict, officials at the FCC view all pirate radio operators as outlaws. They see no need for further channels of communication. David Hartshorn, an electronic engineer with the FCC, said there are stations already

on the air that address community issues and concerns. "That's what public broadcasting stations are for," Hartshorn said. "You can go down to the stations and talk about getting a program on the air, (even though) you can't force them into putting it on."

Jennifer Navarro, who has traveled all the way to El Salvador to help set up pirate stations, doesn't think that's enough. "That's what I like about pirate radio. We're not asking anyone for shit. We're doing it ourselves," Navarro says. "I see (pirate radio) as a tool, a big responsibility."

In San Francisco, she says she would like to see a radio station that reflects the community. But it would be hard to say exactly what a Latino community looks like because it's so diverse. "I don't want to hear just activists. I want to see house wives, I want to see kids. If it's for the community then it should reflect the community."

O N T H E A I R	89.7	Que Pasa Radio San Rafael
	96.1	Radio Watson Watsonville
	96.3	Free Radio Santa Cruz Santa Cruz
	92.3	Free Radio Fresno Fresno
	93.7	Radio Libre San Jose Daily
	104.1	Free Radio Mt. View Mountain View
	106.7	Radio Zapata Salinas Dawn to 11 a.m.; evenings
	102.5	Radio Califas Berkeley
	103.3	Radio Libre San Francisco
	93.7	Liberation Radio San Francisco
	102.5	Radio X San Francisco 4-5 shows per week
	104.1	Free Radio Berkeley Berkeley 24 hours a day

Robert Gandera is another person who has bought a transmitter from Dunifer and is planning to start a station in the near future. Currently, he produces a program in Sacramento three times a week on another micro-powered radio station run by the Friends of the Nation. His program is called "La Hora Sabrosa." In it, he plays strictly salsa because up in Sacramento, there are too many stations playing banda, he says.

If all goes as planned, his very own station will be up and running any day now. "I plan to call it 'La Tuya FCC,'" jokes the one-time activist.

And let's not forget the hip hop stations. While many stations are focusing on activism, you can also hear a lot of hip hop on pirate air. Myke1 and L.O.C. are young DJs who practice their routines on the Radio Libre air before spinning at clubs. The radio station serves to get their names out into the neighborhood. Certainly nothing socially conscious about that, but the beats they play wouldn't normally be on the radio. "This is straight up underground flavor," says L.O.C.

A QUICK GUIDE TO GETTING ON THE AIR

by Jaime Welton

Ready to take matters into your own hands? Before you run off and do anything that might get you into trouble, remember this: Pirate or unlicensed radio stations are illegal. They are a violation of FCC regulations and if the FCC catches you, they can fine you — anywhere from a \$700 slap on the wrist to the \$20,000 or so fine they've levied against Stephen Dunifer and Free Radio Berkeley. In plain English, don't enter into this venture thinking that it's risk-free and legally acceptable. It's not.

FIND YOUR SPOT

If you're still willing to start your own pirate radio station, your first task is to find an open space on the band. You need to listen in for a space unoccupied by a signal. Ideally, the spaces above and below your own should be free and clear as well, so if you're shooting for 102.3, 102.1 and 102.5 should be clear. The way to find this cherished spot is to get yourself a decent digital receiver with a decent antenna and listen all over the dial, day and night, for an unoccupied space. You can also get an FCC log of stations in your area and use that to chart all licensed stations in a 150-square-mile area. You can probably squeeze yourself onto whatever spot is left over. Be aware that your signal can interact with nearby transmitters — TV, cellular phone, HAM radio, etc. — in unforeseen ways. Do a lot of listening before you pick your spot. Also, don't go above or below the allocated bandwidth for radio broadcasting because those frequencies are being used for other things. Doing so is a quick ticket to an FCC bust.

EQUIPMENT

At the very least you'll need audio equipment (such as turntables, tape decks, CD players, microphones and a mixing board), a transmitter, an antenna and some coaxial cable to connect the two.

AUDIO: Your basic electronics stores are a good place to find audio equipment. Radio Shack has some small, cheap mixing boards that can probably serve a pirate's needs.

TRANSMITTER: There are loads of companies that sell kits for low power transmitters. A great way to find these guys is on the World Wide Web at The **Free Radio Network** site (<http://www.clandjop.com/~jcrusan/fm.html>), which has a load of links to other helpful sites. The voicemail number is (510) 464-3041. You can also buy a transmitter that's already assembled. Check out publications like **Panaxis**

Production's catalog. One pirate called it the holy grail of bootleg radio. Call (916) 534-0417 to get a catalog.

ANTENNA: Once you've got your audio equipment and transmitter, you'll need an antenna to get your signal out. Proper placement and height of an antenna is as important as a working transmitter. You can have a high-power transmitter, but if the antenna is poorly placed or inefficient, you'll be lucky if your block can hear you. Again, The Free Radio Network web site is an excellent beginning source.

THE STUDIO:

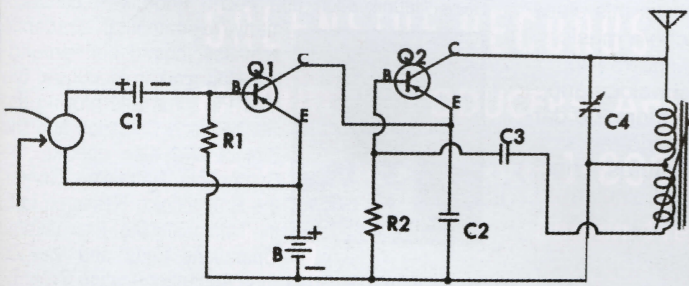
Once you have all of your equipment -- and there are some items that aren't included in this brief list like filters, swr/power meter and dummy loads -- it's time to build your studio. Many pirates assemble mobile studios, making it harder for the FCC to track them down. If you keep moving your transmitter, they can't triangulate your signal. Constructing your studio and sound board, as well as hooking up and tuning your transmitter, requires some electrical know-how. You can educate yourself fairly easily through books and Web sites. But don't assume you can just throw it together. Doing things wrong can lead to a messy signal, an electrical fire and other bad stuff.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Log onto <http://members.aol.com/harrison7/lowpower.htm> (This is an "Frequently Asked Questions" site for low power broadcasting.)

Contact Stephen Dunifer at **Free Radio Berkeley**: e-mail FRBSTD@CRL.COM or write to 1442 A Walnut St., Suite 406, Berkeley, Calif., 94709.

Or, read "Sex and Broadcasting," Lorenzo Milam's guide to starting a community radio station.





They're scapegoated, ignored and misrepresented. They're a new generation of U.S. Latinos and they're fed up with being denied their place at the table of American culture. Now,

the gag comes off

by yvette c. doss



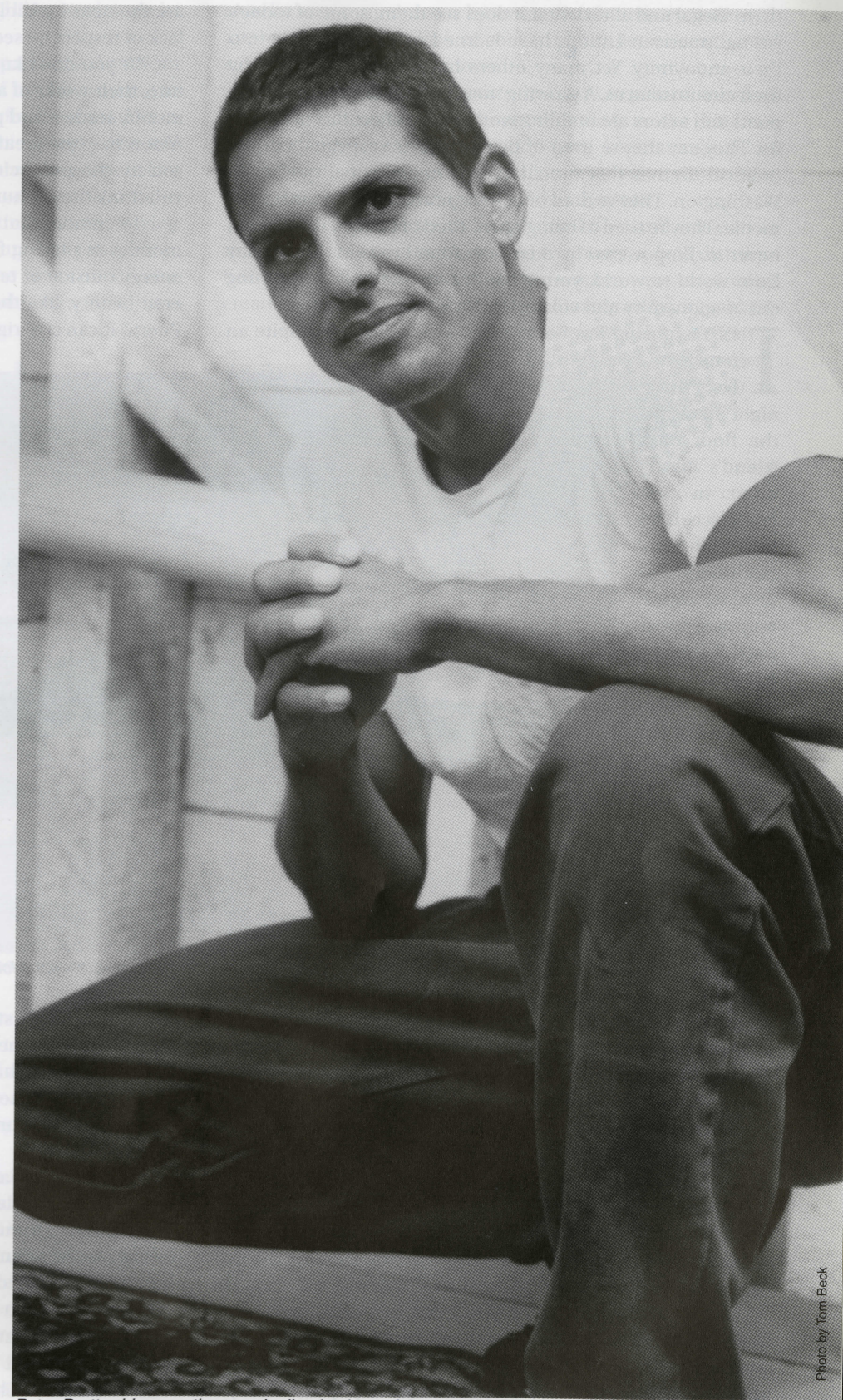
It's Thursday night, and a group of about 25 Latinos and Latinas are gathered at San Francisco's Galería de la Raza to watch a short film, "Pretty Vacant," about a Texas Chicana who plays in an all-girl punk band and publishes a 'zine that covers everything from La Virgen de Guadalupe to the Ramones. A twentysomething Latino with a pierced eyebrow and a flannel shirt tied around his waist sits on the floor near me, leaning against a wall that's covered with paintings and posters. To my right, a tall young woman in leggings, shiny go-go boots, long wavy hair and dangly earrings perches on one of the art gallery's fold-out chairs. As the film unfolds, the young man and the woman, along with all the others sitting in the metal chairs or cross-kneed on the carpeted floor, strain to hear the narrator's voice over the noise from a steady procession of passing cars outside.

In the film (by director Jim Mendiola), Molly, a spunky college student whose life is hybridity personified, thinks she's made a discovery that's going to rewrite punk history. In this slice of life in the borderland, she spends her time rehearsing with her band, organizing a gig and publishing her 'zine, *Ex Voto*, in which the earth-shattering discovery will be detailed. In one issue, she also publishes an essay that she calls a "screw you, Octavio" because it refutes Mexican essayist Octavio Paz's theory on the pachuco.

Had Paz known well-adjusted Mexican-American kids like Molly would some day exist, he might have retracted all his theories about Chicanos in America. In 1950, Paz wrote about the Chicano's "lack of center" in his now-infamous essay, *The Pachuco and Other Extremes* from the book, "Labyrinth of Solitude." According to the Mexican theorist, the Chicano was a lost soul, whose "sensibilities are like a pendulum, but a pendulum that has lost its reason and swings violently back and forth."

That may have been true for the generations coming up in the '50s and '60s, but for today's young Latinos the swing of the pendulum from one culture to the other is a joy ride, not a violent aberration. Members of this generation are masters of shifts and changes. While facing hurdles just as big as those faced by the generations that came before, Latinos now in their '20s and '30s are the first to be fully comfortable straddling two worlds.

Pained by living in a country that in many cases refuses to see them, and calls



Peter Bratt addresses the marginalized voices of America's minorities in his film, "Follow Me Home."

them illegal and alien when it does see them, some of today's young American Latinos have learned to simply recede into their anonymity. Yet many others have been toughened by their circumstances. A growing number of film makers, artists, poets and actors are building worlds that reflect this new reality. They say they're tired of being used as scapegoats in the political dramas that unfold every Congressional quarter in Washington. They're tired of being ignored by the mainstream media. They're tired of being quiet, tired of being talked about, never to. Empowered by their new-found ease in the journey from world to world, young Latinos and Latinas are coming out of anonymity and voicing their views.

It's 9 a.m., and Ray Santisteban is wide awake despite an uncomfortable night spent on the floor of a friend's apartment in San Francisco. The tall, 29-year-old documentary producer and director has spent a lot of nights on friends' couches and floors in the last year or so, crashing for a few days here, a week there, wherever his work takes him. His latest job as associate producer for one of four segments of the landmark PBS Chicano civil rights documentary "¡Chicano!" sent him to Denver to interview famed Chicano activist Corky Gonzalez and back to Los Angeles for post-production. For Santisteban, a half-Mexican, self-described Chicano raised in San Pedro, Calif., traveling is one of the perks of the job, a vocation he found himself drawn to because of all the stories he felt weren't being told. His days are filled with meetings, interviews, flights from city to city and, lately, a more steady gig at the University of Madison, Wisconsin, where he is a guest instructor in Chicano cinema.

His recent appointment as instructor in a town not known for having many Chicanos doesn't seem to faze the young director and producer whose eyes light up when the conversation turns to the status of Latinos in popular culture. Two issues that he seems to spend a lot of time thinking about

are the near-invisibility of Latinos in American film, and the lack of respect he sees for Latino cultures in the U.S.

"If you don't know another culture's history, their literature, their works of art," he asks of the forgotten Latino community leaders and political activists he works to bring recognition to, "the great people who have struggled within their society, the great scientists and authors and poets, why would you think they're human beings?"

To combat that lack of understanding and help create a more even playing field for Latinos, Santisteban expends his energy outside of teaching panning for nuggets of undiscovered history, like the story of the founding members of the Puerto Rican civil rights group, the Young Lords, or the story of a group of Black Panthers (the subjects of his first documentary). The people he interviews are a goldmine of inspirational stories, he says, their lives shining examples of community leadership and spirit. But putting

the community's stories to film isn't enough. The next, and toughest, hurdle he faces is finding an avenue of distribution for his work, so that his voice will reach as many people as possible. In a sense, he's acting as ambassador for his generation and its culture by bridging the two worlds he travels between daily.

At a barbecue hosted by a member of the Los Angeles Latino jazz, funk and salsa band Ozomatli, plates of *carne asada* and frijoles are being passed around. People swill *cervezas con limón*, and a couple of the band members begin an impromptu jam session, pounding on congas to keep the beat. Andrea Porras, a 23-year-old theater performer and Sacramento State University student (whose father was editor of *La Colondrina*, one of the first Chicano magazines to be published in the 1960s) is telling me about her experiences as a member of a

reviled minority group who has been fighting to change its image.

Porras, who has traveled to China as part of an American dance troupe and has also spent much of her life working in the Chicano activist community, says she finds no comfort in the growing number of Latinos living in this country. She still sees the same stereotypes being perpetuated everywhere she looks — the *lazy* Mexicano hunched over, wearing his pancho and sombrero -- and far too many Latinos gladly buying enchiritos at Taco Bell, selling their culture out for a buck. "Everyone keeps talking about how by the year (2005) we're going to be the largest (minority group)," she says, "but, have they heard of South Africa? The Africans are the largest group, but do they have any power? And if they do have some, how recent is that power and how effective is it? We're the sleeping giant (in that same way).

Santisteban is just as frustrated. "I don't believe the United States has ever been a melting pot for Chicanos, Latinos, or for most people of color," he says. "I don't think this nation has ever wanted us to be part of this society in any real sense. ... America is trying to ignore its growing ethnic diversity while artificially propping up the culture of a dwindling Anglo Saxon constituency. What you see on television, the people you hear or read about in the news, that's not a realistic representation of the ethnic diversity in America."

Because of that, he makes little effort to hide his resentment. "This country wants Latinos to give up everything, while it offers us very little," he says. "I'm not into the relationship as it's been set up because in many ways it's built on the idea of Anglo superiority."

San Francisco film maker Peter Bratt has had his share of encounters with unyielding mainstream cultural institutions. His movie, "Follow Me Home," a dramatic feature about four young men who travel to the White House to "tag" their colors on its walls, speaks volumes about his own frustration with the lack of respect for the realities of minorities in America. But when "Follow Me Home," which stars such big names as Jesse Borrego and Alfre Woodard, as well as his brother, "Law and Order" actor Benjamin Bratt, was finished, the soft-spoken, half-Peruvian, half-white 33-year-old

says he was turned down by every distribution company he approached. It's that lack of concern for other voices that he says he addresses in his movie.

"There are these four artists that want to paint a mural on the White House that is a metaphor for these voices that have been excluded," Bratt says, "that have been marginalized since the colonization of the Americas. It's about trying to hear these voices and respect the value that they offer."

Now, his film is set to be distributed — and released at mainstream theaters throughout the country — by a distribution company two African American women were inspired to create so that they could help get his film out there. By making

"Follow Me Home," Bratt is fulfilling his protagonists' wish to add their color to the "White House" of American culture.

It's not easy being invisible in your own country. Members of this generation look out and find that they're missing, that their faces are nothing but a faint impression on the pageant that crosses in front of them in the form of movies, magazine covers, news anchors. To others, they are the moving bodies that blur in windows as crowds spill out of gleaming office buildings, the theater, restaurants. The few exceptions, Daisy Fuentes and Idalis on MTV, John Leguizamo's defunct sketch comedy show "House of Braggins," and the recent Latino-themed films

"Mi Familia" and "The Perez Family" don't make up for their status as shadows in America. Because of that, this generation is taking a closer look at a society in which they matter so little, and deciding to create its own cultural affirmation.

Sustained by the centrifugal force of their pilgrimages from one space to the next, the Latinos of the '90s are stable in their transitory status as intermediaries from one culture to another. For members of this generation, the journeys from their Latino world to the mainstream world are second-nature, an intrinsic part of who they are. The borderland between the different worlds makes up their true home, the place where they feel they finally belong. The different worlds and cultures they have experienced are as tied into their identity as Chicanos, or American Latinos, as the different flavors of *pico de gallo* are into making the salsa. More often than not, the culture that members of this generation are affirming is an



Photo by Tom Beck

Ray Santisteban -- associate producer of a segment of "¡Chicano!" -- pans for nuggets of undiscovered history.



Photo by Kevin Qano

Zilah Hill says she became an actress because she wanted to be able to tell inspirational stories, but finding her voice is a daily struggle.

equal mixture of their ancestral one and the one they have cultivated in America.

"I'm Chicana," Porras says. "I've never known any other name for myself. I've never had that, 'What am I? Should I ... ? But what if ... ? And it's because I knew from the beginning that Chicana was a derivative of the word Omexicana. And 'ome' means two, you know mestizaje. ... Also growing up in a border town, I was very blessed to have both cultures feeding me."

"I grew with the San Felipe Springs on one (the American) side and the Rio Grande on the other," she says of her upbringing in Texas. "Mexico was my backyard."

Twenty-four-year old multimedia and video editor Cristina Ibarra takes a similar approach in describing her cultural influences and upbringing in El Paso. "I grew up in the border, and in the border it's more apparent what kind of American you are because you're brown, you listen to mariachi music," she says. "When I was growing up I liked alternative music and at the same time I liked Los Bukis."

Like many of the 7.5 million Latinos between the ages of 20 and 34 in the U.S., Ibarra grew up in a household that was filled with both English and Spanish. "My mom (who was born in Chihuahua, Mexico,) would speak to me in Spanish, and I would answer her in English, but to me we were speaking the same language," she says.

In her films and art, she explores that world of apparent contradictions. "The stuff that motivates me comes from an eagerness to learn about the contradictions inherent in me and, from there, my culture," she says. "And how to contribute to the dialogue, whether it means developing a program or researching an idea. That involves my family. Understanding the differences between us, because there are a lot of communication problems between us. To learn more. Right now I feel like I'm wandering, but it's not aimlessly. It's trying to figure out what the best way to say things is."

"I'm definitely (straddling two) worlds, trying to make sense of them and trying to find balance," says Bratt, whose mother joined Native Americans in the '60s and – with her children – lived on Alcatraz Island during the protest takeover. He says he's learned to adapt to the different environments he's found himself in, be they a reservation, the inner city, or a university campus.

"When I went to the university, it was a really different experience. Everyone was white, middle class. I definitely had to make an adjustment in my language, behavior. ... You have to walk in different worlds. You have to speak differently, act differently, adjust to the dominant culture," he says about his

time at U.C. Santa Cruz and later at NYU film school.

"I have pride in my heritage, but I also know that I'm an American," says Zilah Hill, an actress with a string of credits in theater productions and film. But she says affirming her Mexican heritage has always been a struggle. "In junior high school I had a girlfriend who asked, 'What are you?'" Hill remembers. "I said I was Mexican and she goes, 'No you're not,' and then, 'Well you're not a real Mexican.' (She was basically saying) I was OK because I didn't fit the stereotype."

This awareness of her background didn't come without help from her family. "As a young girl growing up, my uncles were very 'Viva La Raza,' very anti-establishment," she says. "For the longest time I thought my name was Zilah Mendoza

Carranza Mexican Hill. I really did, because my uncle Andy, who was very active politically, wanted to make sure I knew I was a Mexican. Until I was 5, I used to introduce myself that way, until one of our neighbors said, 'What did you say your name was?' and I told her and she said, 'Are you sure mi'ja?' and I said 'yeah' and she goes, 'Go ask your mom.' I asked my mom and she said, 'Well, actually, 'Mexican' isn't in there, Zilah.'

"I consider myself a Chicano," says Santisteban, echoing the sentiments of growing number of Latinos of Mexican descent who prefer the term Chicano over Hispanic. "If you look at the word historically, I feel the term Chicano signifies someone who is actively trying to address issues of importance to our community. I think the term also is an active acknowledgement of our Indigenous heritage, more so than the blanket, homogenizing term Hispanic, which to me has racist connotations, as it only acknowledges the contributions of Spanish culture to who we are as a people."

Despite the work they've been doing building up the borderland and making it into a more comfortable home – furnishing it with prints of paintings from their ancestors' homelands as well as the modern art they see in American museums, filling it with music by mainstream British and American musicians as well as Latino musicians, learning how to cook the food their parents made as well as their favorite Thai dishes – this generation's biggest dream has yet to be fulfilled.

In that collective dream, we're all a part of the dialogue and contributing equally to American culture. "If everyone's at the table, and everyone can equally contribute, the pie would change structurally," Bratt says. "So if ... we all come to the table and everyone respects everyone's values and world views, then that's what we're shooting for."

continued on page 46



Andrea Porras, a theater performer and activist, says she has never known herself as anything other than a Chicana. Her strong sense of self has always been a stabilizing force in her life.

wax alchemists

bay area djs

putting latin

into house

photographs by
michael satori-rodriguez

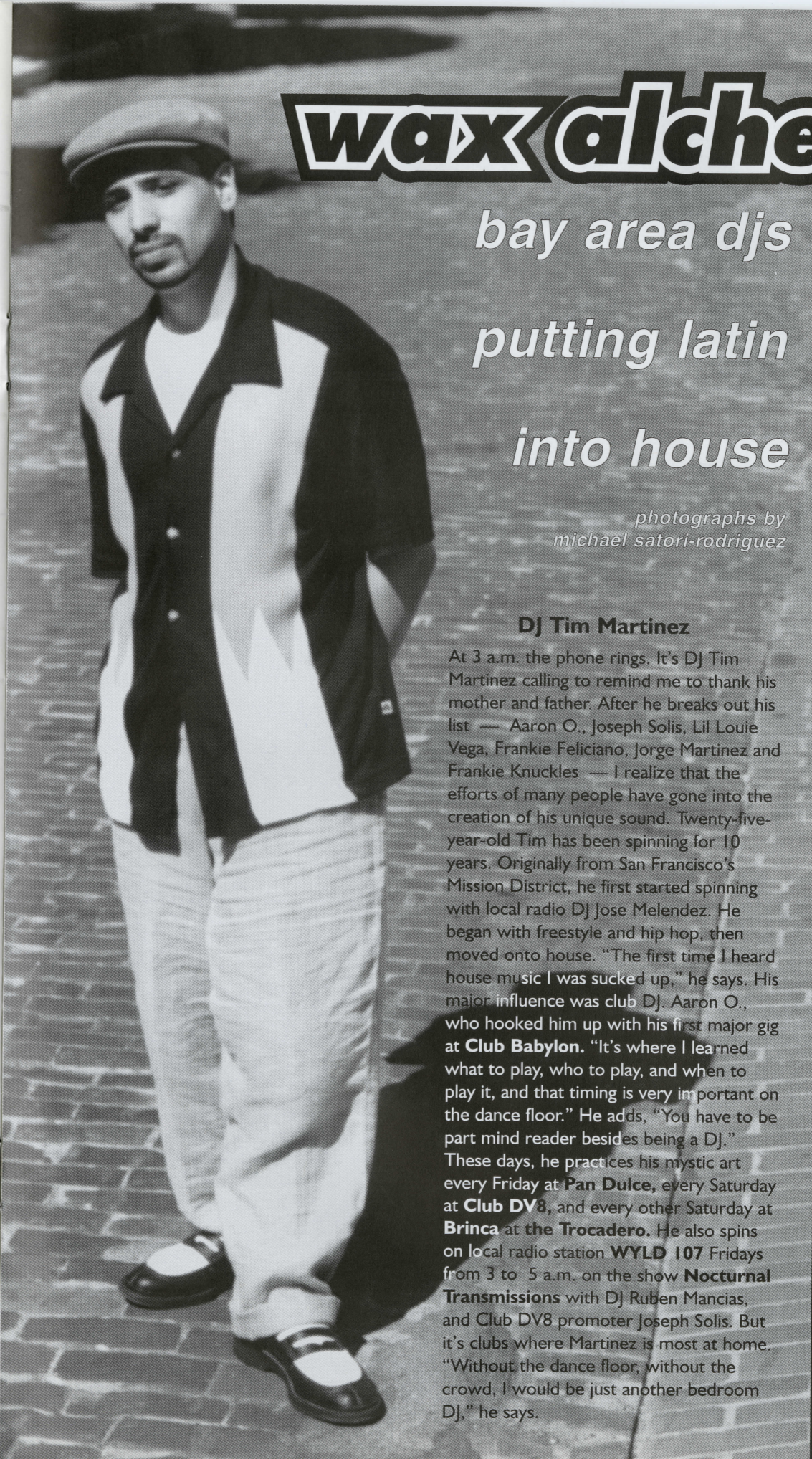
DJ Tim Martinez

At 3 a.m. the phone rings. It's DJ Tim Martinez calling to remind me to thank his mother and father. After he breaks out his list — Aaron O., Joseph Solis, Lil Louie Vega, Frankie Feliciano, Jorge Martinez and Frankie Knuckles — I realize that the efforts of many people have gone into the creation of his unique sound. Twenty-five-year-old Tim has been spinning for 10 years. Originally from San Francisco's Mission District, he first started spinning with local radio DJ Jose Melendez. He began with freestyle and hip hop, then moved onto house. "The first time I heard house music I was sucked up," he says. His major influence was club DJ Aaron O., who hooked him up with his first major gig at **Club Babylon**. "It's where I learned what to play, who to play, and when to play it, and that timing is very important on the dance floor." He adds, "You have to be part mind reader besides being a DJ." These days, he practices his mystic art every Friday at **Pan Dulce**, every Saturday at **Club DV8**, and every other Saturday at **Brinca at the Trocadero**. He also spins on local radio station **WYLD 107** Fridays from 3 to 5 a.m. on the show **Nocturnal Transmissions** with DJ Ruben Mancias, and Club DV8 promoter Joseph Solis. But it's clubs where Martinez is most at home. "Without the dance floor, without the crowd, I would be just another bedroom DJ," he says.

words by robert karimi

The DJ. More than the person who spins Trinere and Sheila E. in your garage, or Vicente Fernandez at your niece's quinceañera, the DJ is an institution. Just think of Run DMC's many tributes to DJ Jam Master Jay or the house tribute anthem "God Damn that DJ made my day." You know what I mean.

In San Francisco, house DJs have been incorporating a variety of influences into the mainstream house sound. But they aren't just spinning the wax. They're *artistas del spin*. *Tu sabes*, they carefully pick their records, like a painter picks colors to emit feeling, or the way an alchemist blends different metals to produce gold. The goal: to move the body and, often, the head and corazon. We profile six of the Bay Area's best.





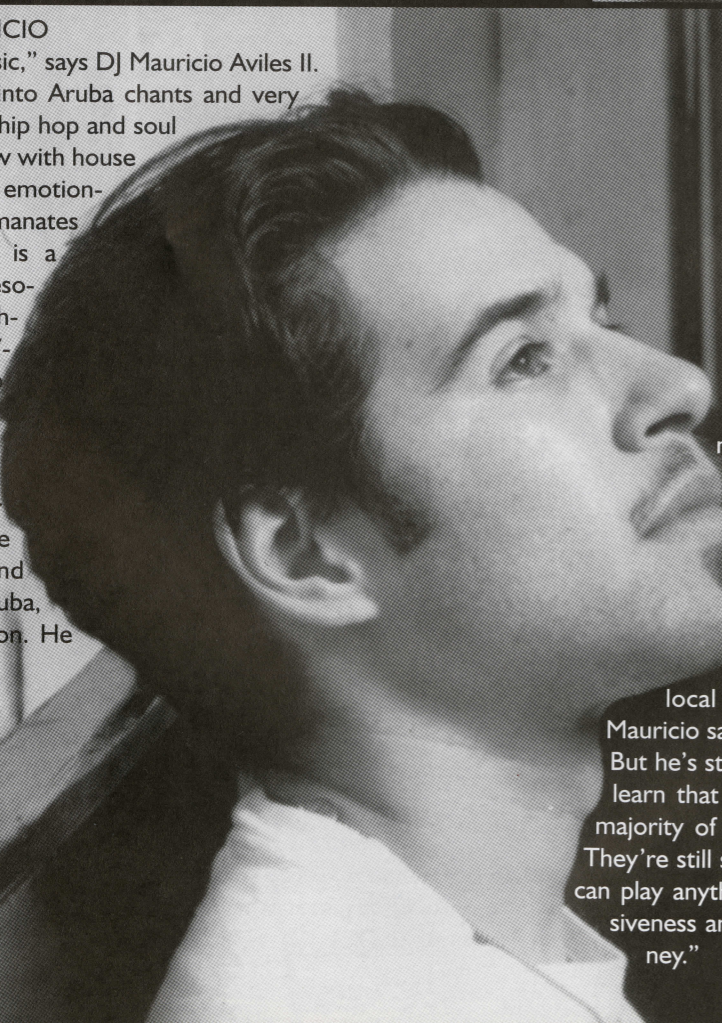
LUIS & JOHN, SFO SYNDICATE
 "Me and Luis mix our live music with the DJ tracks," John Segura, right, says about the role he and Luis Lopez, left, play at **Corazon**, a hot spot at the **Elbo Room** every Monday. "We're like the third turntable." Luis sings live to John's tracks, surrounded by dancing people and albums covers of Yma Sumac and Javier Solis. "A lot of the mass population misunderstands house music," says Luis, who started out playing in industrial bands with John before undertaking the house partnership. "Unfortunately, they are only subjected to what they hear on the radio. They don't understand that house music is so awesome."

John, 26, and Luis, 27, met in the Los Angeles area. After a performance they did together at a going away party, they say they knew they had something unique. So they moved to the Bay Area and, drawing inspiration from DJ Nadeeah and others, have been working together ever since.



MAURICIO

"I'm into the deeper side of music," says DJ Mauricio Aviles II. "When I was into salsa, I was into Aruba chants and very heavy vocals and percussion. In hip hop and soul I'm into the moody stuff. Now with house and jazz, I'm into that very dark emotional feeling." The sound that emanates from DJ Mauricio's turntables is a unique blend that some call esoteric, some postmodern, and others just straight up fresh. The 27-year-old Salvadoreño moved to S.F.'s Mission District in the late '70s with his family, who played a role in building the arts community in the area. His father produced music from the Americas: flamenco, salsa, and music from the Andes and Cuba, providing early musical inspiration. He explains, "I was in the middle of it. I was bombarded with all these styles." Mauricio's sound fills a void he felt in the music. It's a sound he says he owes to his

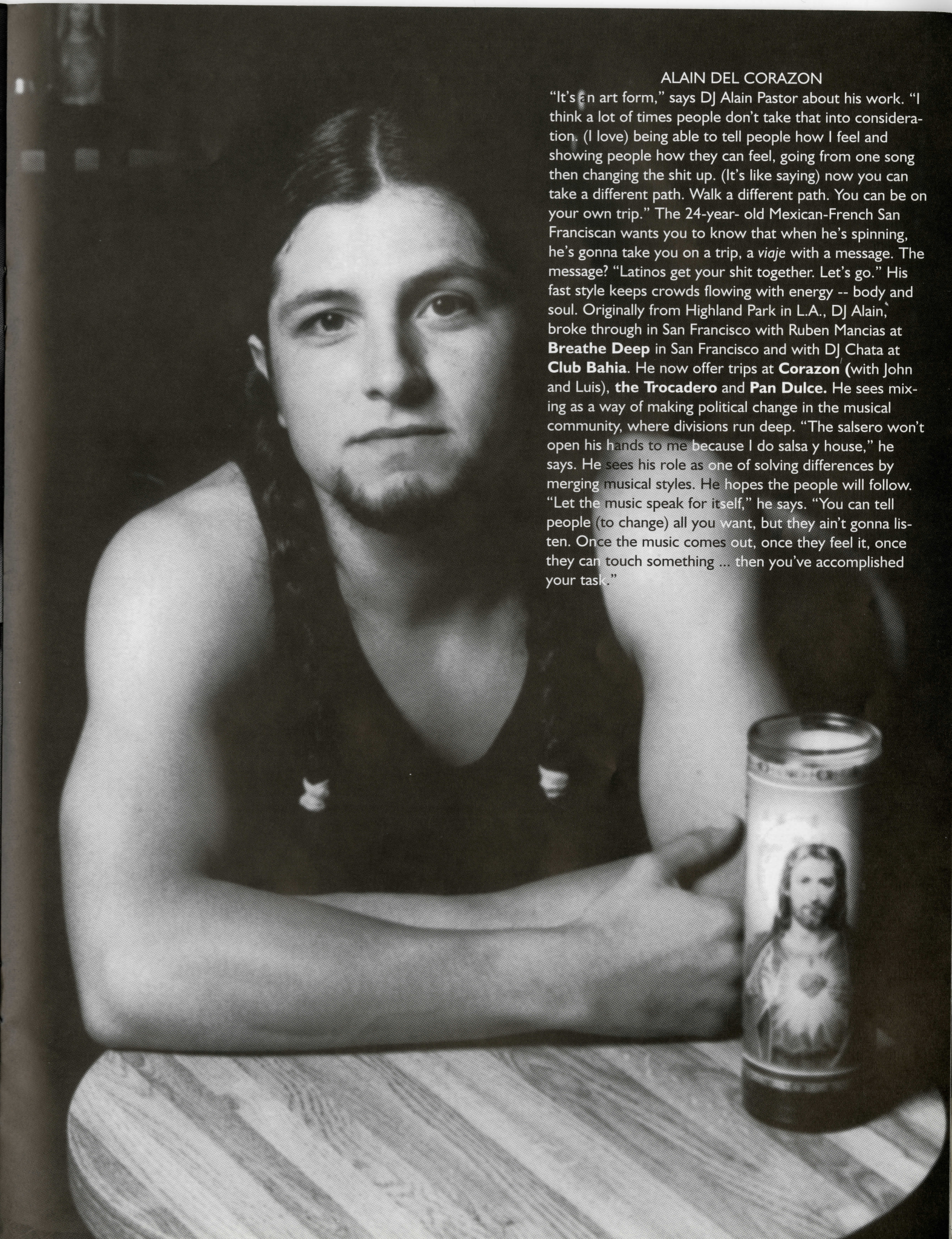


mentor, club **DJ Aaron O.**

He looks down on the music he hears on the radio. "I just think the industry has been trying to manufacture coolness," he says. Whether it's at **Corazon**, **181 Minna** and **MetroJazz**, or in a unique collaboration poetry piece he did with local poet Ricardo Bracho last year, Mauricio says he's into creation. But he's still exploring his vision. "I'm starting to learn that being a DJ is very competitive. The majority of people want to hear familiar things. They're still stuck on pop and radio," but, "the DJ can play anything he wants as long as it has cohesiveness and energy. ... I've just begun my journey."

ALAIN DEL CORAZON

"It's an art form," says DJ Alain Pastor about his work. "I think a lot of times people don't take that into consideration. (I love) being able to tell people how I feel and showing people how they can feel, going from one song then changing the shit up. (It's like saying) now you can take a different path. Walk a different path. You can be on your own trip." The 24-year-old Mexican-French San Franciscan wants you to know that when he's spinning, he's gonna take you on a trip, a *viaje* with a message. The message? "Latinos get your shit together. Let's go." His fast style keeps crowds flowing with energy -- body and soul. Originally from Highland Park in L.A., DJ Alain, broke through in San Francisco with Ruben Mancias at **Breathe Deep** in San Francisco and with DJ Chata at **Club Bahia**. He now offer trips at **Corazon** (with John and Luis), **the Trocadero** and **Pan Dulce**. He sees mixing as a way of making political change in the musical community, where divisions run deep. "The salsero won't open his hands to me because I do salsa y house," he says. He sees his role as one of solving differences by merging musical styles. He hopes the people will follow. "Let the music speak for itself," he says. "You can tell people (to change) all you want, but they ain't gonna listen. Once the music comes out, once they feel it, once they can touch something ... then you've accomplished your task."



DJ GILDA

"I'm committed to telling other Latinas that they can do it," Gilda Gonzales says about being a DJ. "If they like it, they don't have to kick back and watch the boys do it. They can do it themselves." And what Gilda says, she does. But it wasn't always that way. Gilda had to deal with some serious negativity to get to where she is now. Other people's words got in her way. "I wanted to (DJ) around three years ago," she explains. "I let other people's reactions get me. I thought, 'Shit. Maybe I'm doing something wrong.'" At 31, Gilda, who's from the San Joaquin Valley, said, "F— everything! I'm gonna do what I want to do and I don't care because I love it." She bought a deck, a mixer, and other necessary tools and started doing house parties in the Bay Area. "It's very rare that women do this, period. Let alone Latinas," she says. "Anytime I go to record stores, I'm the only woman there." She finances her business with a day gig working in the political arena in Oakland, and brings a little bit of the politics into her music. She's intense. If you watch how meticulous she is while she spins, you can see her gears turning. It all comes from her passion for the art. "There's nothing like being at home, or anywhere else, and hearing a pure, clean mix. ... It's so beautiful and powerful."



Victor "Chicles" Munroy, front, and Adrian Munroy in 1993 as part of Juana La Loca (now Pastilla). Photo by Maria Madrigal.

it's not just business as usual

by maria leon

Rock en español makes steady progress in its ascent from the industry margins to the mainstream

When Rowan Jimenez first immigrated to the U.S., he found himself working a dead-end job with no prospects for a career. But with the recent signing of his band, Orixá, to Aztlan Records, the Venezuelan singer is confronted for the first time with a startling possibility: that he may actually make a living playing the music he loves.

"All I know is that I came here as an immigrant," Jimenez says, "not knowing what was ahead, and worked for \$3 an hour. I never imagined that I, Rowan Jimenez, would be singing in a rock in Spanish band in the mid-'90s. It's absolutely amazing."

The promising new careers of U.S.-bred bands Maria Fatal, Pastilla, Ley de Hielo and Orixá signal the evolution of the diverse U.S. rock en español movement from a rock 'n' roll underground — behind the borders of language, geography, culture and ethnicity — into a revolutionary Latino musical style on the cusp of mainstream success. On the same vein, the recent signing of New York's King Changó by David Byrne's Luaka Bop Records label, as well as the formation of U.S. rock and punk en

español labels like New York's Grita! and L.A.'s Sarzo Music, affirms what the founders of San Francisco-based Aztlan Records have sensed all along: U.S.-bred rock en español is an emerging genre destined for large scale success.

As bands like Houston's Skarnales, New York's La Ruta and Chicago's La Malinche pop up across the country, the record industry is beginning to get a glimpse of the immense possibilities of a U.S. musical movement that is expanding beyond its roots in Los Angeles and into a wider, national market. For musicians like Jimenez who prefer rock sung in Spanish, that means a world of possibilities is opening up. But it comes after years of hard work and sacrifice.

The search for identity, self-definition and exposure reverberates through the unfolding story of rock en español Angelino. The movement came into its own in the late '80s in Los Angeles, after locals — mostly immigrants in their early '20s — rebelled against the notion that they had to settle for rock Mexicano from the other side of the border, or the mainstream Brit-rock sounds of The Cure, The Smiths and Depeche Mode. "The emergence of rock en español in L.A. is analogous to the rise of rock 'n'

roll in Mexico," says Mariluz Gonzalez, founder of an independent publicity firm, El Sindicato del Hambre, and co-founder of El Guateque, an annual L.A. rock en español music festival. "In Mexico, everyone was into bands from Argentina, the so-called 'Invasión Sudaca.' When they got tired of that, the Mexicans started checking out the rock bands in their own back yards. Similarly in L.A., although they inspired us, we got tired of (Mexican groups Maldita Vecindad) and Caifanes. We wanted our own bands."

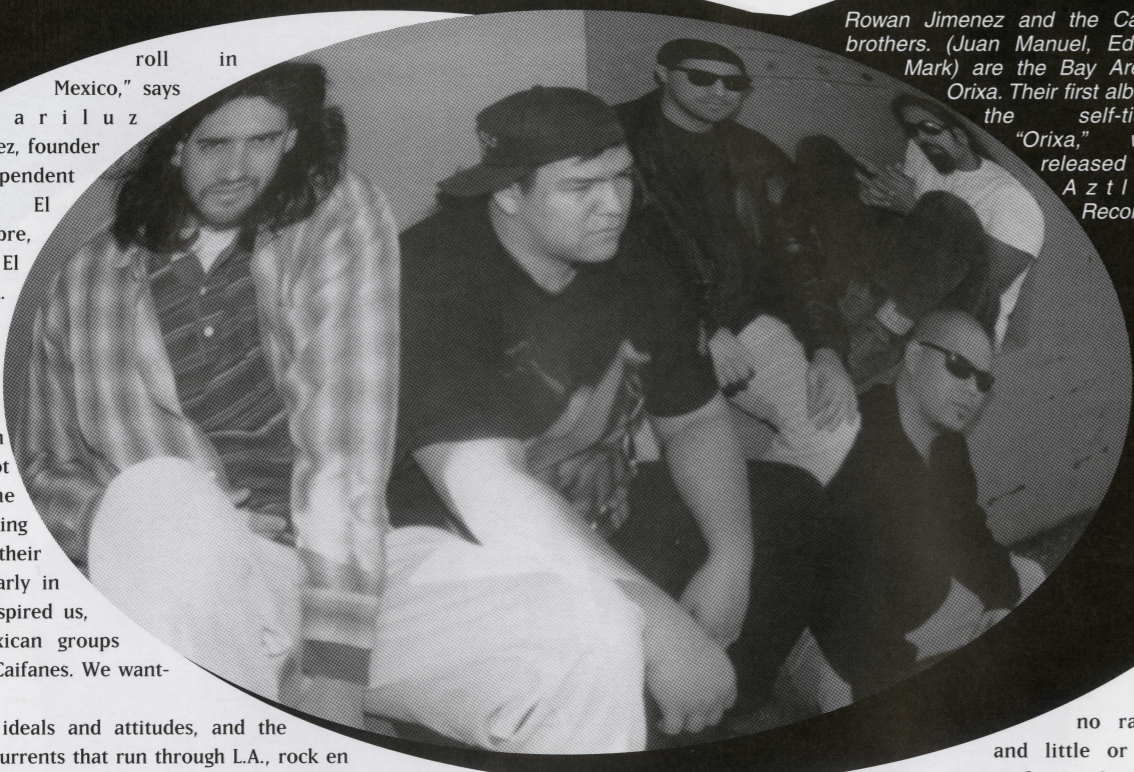
Fueled by rock's ideals and attitudes, and the relentless pop culture currents that run through L.A., rock en español bands inadvertently became a voice for the Spanish-speaking segment of the growing community of Latin American immigrants, as well as for English-speaking Latinos who found their realities missing from mainstream rock. Uninspired by traditional Latino genres like tejano and banda, the fans identified with a new breed of *rocanrolleros* who, for the first time, addressed the realities of immigrant life through rock. "Now we had (our own bands)," says Gonzalez. "Maria Fatal, Los Olvidados, Juana La Loca (which has regrouped as Pastilla). They represented us, and sung about things affecting us in the U.S. They were our local heroes."

Eclipsed by the success of the Mexican rock bands that had inspired them, L.A. rockeros struggled to find venues and outlets through which to promote their music. Supported by a small, tight-knit network of promoters and musicians, bands played at *tocadas*, which were first organized in abandoned jails in Lincoln Heights, warehouse parties in South Central and in the now-legendary Hong Kong Low in China Town. "There was a lot of anger back then," Gonzalez confides. "The local bands hoped the multi-national (labels) would sign them since they were producing the rock from Mexico and Latin America we were buying. But they paid us no attention. We



Elena Rodrigo, executive director of Aztlan Records, is at work securing international distribution for the growing roster of rock en español bands in the U.S. Photo by Kim Moy.

Rowan Jimenez and the Caipo brothers. (Juan Manuel, Eddie, Mark) are the Bay Area's Orixá. Their first album, the self-titled "Orixá," was released on Aztlan Records.



had no radio and little or no press. Except for La Opinion and (the first U.S.-based rock en español magazine) La Banda Elástica, we were virtually ignored."

The appearance of San Francisco-based rock en español label Aztlan Records three years ago marked an important step in the evolution of the local movement. For some rockeros, Aztlan Records, the first label in the United States to dedicate itself to the genre and to sign domestic bands, represented for the first time the possibility of earning a living playing rock in Spanish. Elena Rodrigo, executive director of Aztlan Records, spends her time nurturing local acts, which until now have received scant attention from international Latin labels. But, she says, she sees a symbiotic relationship between the support of the U.S. movement and the success and acceptance of the rock en español genre as a whole. "We need to support our local bands. They are the ones who keep this movement alive," she says. "They organize the gigs, attract press, and more importantly, they create a new audience every day. Their hard work benefits the local scene and the Latin American movement."

Operating with limited resources, and without mainstream radio support, the label is busy creating avenues of support and promotion for the label's bands. Anxious to introduce its artists to Latin America, Aztlan introduced Ley de Hielo to Mexico via a short promotional tour last November. Maria Fatal will follow suit in 1997.

"The signing of Maria Fatal and Ley de Hielo by Aztlan Records was a turning point for the movement," says Carlos Ladino, long time manager of the L.A. group Cabula. "The fact that a label was willing to put its money on those two bands, and market them on a national level sent a strong message to the entire U.S. rock en español movement."

Adding momentum to the budding rock en español business is mainstream punk label Epitaph Records' signing of the Voodoo Glow Skulls, a bilingual Riverside punk band. The Glow Skulls, which are fronted by the Chicano Casillas brothers, released two versions of their first CD *Firme* on Epitaph, which also hosts punk acts Rancid and NOFX. One version of their album is in English and one in Spanish.

Both encouraged by — and worried about — what a mainstream English-language label's interest could mean to the scene, bands are waiting to see whether Epitaph's promotion of the Glow Skulls

in both languages will mean they are willing to become players in the rock en español industry. But Jimmy Hole and Joshua Rosenblatt, the two-man team promoting Voodoo Glow Skulls at Epitaph, say the label's deal with the Glow Skulls, and now its latest deal with another bilingual punk band out of L.A., Union, doesn't exactly mean Epitaph will be plunging head-first into the scene.

"The release of *Firme* was not about spearheading some kind of aggressive Epitaph marketing plunge into the rock en español scene," says Hole. "The record came about because it was something (members of the Glow Skulls) wanted to do because of their Latin American heritage."

Considering L.A.'s huge bilingual population, releasing *Firme* in English and en español was a timely and smart move no matter what the motivation, given the growing population of bilingual Latinos starved for quality rock. To promote the CD, the Glow Skulls toured with other rock en español bands under the guidance of Gonzalez's savvy publicity firm.

"We wanted to put the band and the CD out there, to see if kids would get into them. I hope no one thinks we were jumping on some kind of band wagon," says Rosenblatt. "That was not the spirit in which the record came about. We thought the project was a cool idea and rock en español is a cool scene."

In the months following the release of *Firme*, the Voodoo Glow Skulls continue to play with rock en español bands and are now planning a tour of Latin America. Their first single, "Fat Randy," has been on heavy rotation on alterna-radio station KROQ in L.A. Gonzalez, who continues to handle the band's Spanish-language publicity, sees their Spanish-language album as a good sign of things to come for rock en español. She says: "The awareness Voodoo Glow Skulls have brought to our bands is immeasurable. Now Epitaph knows about Los Olvidados, Motita, La Banda Elástica. That's an accomplishment in itself."

As for Union, Rosenblatt and Hole say they don't know yet if their album will be released in Spanish. "We may do an English and Spanish CD, but that is still up in the air," he says.

Along with too few record labels supporting American rock en español, a lack of mainstream radio has plagued the scene since its inception. Because of that, some labels are finding alternative ways to get exposure for their music. "I am not going to waste my time or money chasing after radio that I know is two to five years away from supporting rock en español," says Jay B. Ziskrout, the mastermind behind New York-based punk en español label Grita!

The former head of Epitaph Europe and original drummer for Bad Religion has launched a grassroots campaign to promote Grita's eclectic artists, which include Cerebros Exprimidos & Los Mas Turbados from Spain, as well as the multicultural group, The Pleasure F---ers. Instead of hoping for radio exposure, Ziskrout and his label find immense marketing possibilities by taking advantage of the bilingual and often tri-lingual music of their bands, whose CDs often include tracks in Spanish, English, French and Portuguese, all on one album. "I have optimum exposure in the record stores," he explains. "In Tower records in the U.S. for example, we are under the rock en español category, the English punk rock section and the International music section."

Grita! has its eye on a global youth market tired of the same recycled music. "Buenos Aires, Los Angeles, Canada ... anywhere there are young people who like fast loud music, we will be there," Ziskrout says. Keenly aware that exposure is everything, he knows that the success of the label will depend largely on its ability to keep the artists on the road, as well as its effectiveness in supporting a handful of indie rock en español radio shows like L.A.'s "Caracol Pucini." Since there are still so few labels trying to figure out ways to market the music, Grita's global vision and marketing approach could well become the model to success-

fully presenting rock en español to international audiences.

But Ziskrout is also aware that despite all the promotion in the world, the scene is only as strong as its musicians. Because of that, his advice to fledgling bands is to focus on the quality of their tracks. "I want to (tell) the bands to think of the rock first and the español second: Language is actually less important than content. *La letra* must have power, so that when it is translated into German or English, you feel the sentiment. The bands also need to look at the quality of the music: how creative is it, how imitative is it. If the creative and artistic elements are in place, the bands will succeed."

I first stumbled across Maria Fatal at the 1994 Big Top Locos, a bilingual music festival in L.A. In a vivid moment that symbolized the arrival of rock en español Angelino, Maria Fatal out-rocked better known Mexican rocanrolleros Tijuana No, and captivated Latino and non-Latino crowds who had gathered to see headliners Cypress Hill and Rage Against the Machine. This set a precedent for their role as ambassadors of the scene who would bring the music to the attention of diverse audiences in the years to come.

Fernando Ramirez, lead singer of Maria Fatal, and I sit in the front yard of his South Central home. As he recalls the roadblocks he saw other bands encounter during his days booking bands at Hong Kong Low in the '80s, he cradles his 2-year-old, Victor. "We knew it was going to be harder for the L.A. bands because we didn't have an infrastructure to support us," he says. "The Mexican bands had labels and money behind them, and people knew them in and out of Mexico. But with us, you'd think we were in Alaska selling ice cubes."

Unfortunately for U.S.-bred bands, major Latin labels like BMG, Polygram and SONY Latino have historically focused their efforts on releases by established international acts like the Mexican group Caifanes, (now Los Jaguares) and U.S.-based acts in traditional genres like salsa, banda and R&B.

Until now, that



San Francisco's Lodo y Asfalto performed at the first Festival RockAztlan in Los Angeles this summer. Photo by Elena Rodrigo.

N.Y.'s King Changó, on David Byrne's Luaka Bop Records, combine ska, bossanova, funk and punk -- often within one song.

has meant U.S.-based rock en español bands were on their own. "If it weren't for Aztlan Records, I don't know where we'd be," Ramirez says of his label. "I know they've got their limits ... promoting us without any mainstream radio support. But I think they are doing a great job."

Still, the growing movement and the increased avenues of support have begun to make the prospect of a career playing rock en español a distinct possibility for the dozens of bands growing out of the underground.

For one, J.P. Roffredo, bass player for the L.A.-based rockabilly punk band Calavera, is optimistic about his chances of making it in the music business. "I see rock en español evolving quite naturally," Roffredo says. "It's like what happened to hip hop and punk: They started out small, labels got involved, got big and went mainstream. The same is happening to rock en español. It is spreading out of the underground."

At Leonardo's this summer, where the first annual Festival RockAztlan took place, the rock en español contingent, was, as usual, out in full force: Band members, girlfriends, wives, promoters and managers celebrated another stepping stone in the ascendance of U.S. rock en español. (That night's *tocada* is being released as a live compilation by Aztlan Records. On the bill are Maria Fatal, Ley de Hielo, Pastilla, Motita and San Francisco's Orix and Lodo y Asfalto.) The excitement and energy at the show was contagious, and typical of the mood that has been growing in the community in the last couple of years.

Like Calavera's Roffredo, many musicians are beginning to feel very optimistic about the future of rock en español. They see 1996 as a landmark year in the movement. "In 1996 we have gained credibility and territory," says Emilio Morales, editor and publisher of La Banda

Elástica. "In the beginning no one believed we could create our own scene. Now Los Angeles has enormous economic power coveted by artists from all over Latin America."

In the dressing room at Leonard's that night, the mood was equally celebratory. When I asked Victor Munroy, a.k.a. Chicless, the outspoken lead singer of Pastilla, about his forecast for the movement, he said half-seriously, half in jest: "Tell Frontera (readers) that Mexican rock is sooo over, and that English rock is dead too. Now it's our turn."

Epitaph's Hole says he thinks it's just a matter of time before rock en español find mainstream success. "Like punk, its going to take a while for rock en español to break out," he says. "... If each record is better than the last, it can happen."

"Expectations have to be realistic," Rosenblatt says. "Definitely the music needs more exposure, but I see Maria Fatal for example as a success and as a band that is going to grow. The bands need to remember that it is all about the music. And maybe about being able to quit the old day job."

Rodrigo, meanwhile, is at work securing international distribution for the growing rock en español roster. Despite Aztlan Records' limited budget and small staff, Rodrigo is confident the day will come for her label, and the scene. And when it does, she hopes it's not just Spanish-speakers who will be enjoying the music. "It's going to be a while before we can measure success," Rodrigo says. "Eventually I would like it to cross over, to reach people who don't care that they don't understand the lyrics. One thing is for sure: rock en español has enormous potential. Unlike rock in English that is subdivided — with metal that has one crowd, and grunge that has another — rock in Spanish, because it mixes genres, attracts and unifies diverse audiences."

Note: Contributing writer Maria Leon is at work on a rockumentary about international and domestic rock en español called "Después de la Frontera." She will document Pastilla's first U.S. tour, as well as Maria Fatal's Mexican tour next year.



L.A.'s Maria Fatal have acted as ambassadors of the scene, introducing diverse audiences to the rock en español sound.

Play That Funky Music Ozomatli's Transcultural Grooves Are Driving a New L.A. Dance Movement

by E.V. Aniles

Let's face facts. We don't have signs dictating where we can and can't eat lunch, attend school or dance anymore, but people pretty much stick with their own kind. Go to any major city and you'll find communities so divided by race and class, you'd think there were still a law. If anything, Friday nights should be the perfect opportunity to tear down racial, cultural and geographic barriers. But more often than not, the self-imposed segregation continues.

It's easy to become cynical about the whole thing. Don't. A high-energy Los Angeles Latin jazz-funk-hop-salsa-reggae-world beat-band called Ozomatli is making some fresh noise in L.A.-area clubs and proving multicultural bliss is still possible.

Take a recent night at Moguls in Hollywood. A crowd of city hipsters heavy into leather and sports stripes lurched near the bar, ordering Dewar's and Buds, smoking and chatting over the background music. The distant sounds of conga drums and cymbals filled the room for a brief second, then burst into full force as a parade of musicians marched its way onto the dance floor. Instantly, the crowd joined in the conga-line as it weaved its way through the vinyl-covered booths and tables. Clack clack clack clack. Boom boom tsa tsa.

After warming up the crowd, Ozomatli, the self-titled "L.A. Gods of Dance," hopped on-stage and ripped through an instrumental set that blended Latin jazz brass with Caribbean rhythms and African drum beats. On the dance floor, an African-American woman in a floral-print '40s-style dress danced with a Latino in jeans and baseball cap; an Asian kid in a tight Rude Boy suit and pork pie hat skanked to the funky beat next to his Latino and African American buddies; and blondes, both male and female, grooved with them all. They danced solo, paired up Swing-style, and when Ozomatli introduced Spanish-language lyrics, the crowd sang along without missing a beat.

Lead singer Willy "Wil-Dog" Abers says he draws inspiration for his music from an L.A. upbringing rich in cultural diversity. "We want to break down all those racial barriers," the Jewish twentysomething says. "Especially in L.A. It's not a melting pot. ... It's more like a salad. Every bite has its different flavor. And that's how L.A. is. Everyone comes here from all over the world. Where I live in Silver Lake is Little Havana, and right over there we got Armenian and Salvadorans."

Band members Raul Pacheco, José "Crunchy" Espinoza, Ulises Bella, Chris Johnson, Pablo Castruera, Cut Chemist, Jiro Yamaguchi, Justin "Niño" Poreé and William "Echo" Marufo bring to the table Mexican, Cuban, African, Japanese, and other musical heritages on the congas, turntables, tabla, drums, bass and guitar. It's a mix of ingredients that makes for a serious combo salad.

Jose "Crunchy" Espinoza, the band's 22-year-old saxophone player, spends a lot of his time and energy exploring musical cultures across the globe to get just the right sound and feeling into his music. Along with jazz and performing arts, Espinoza is beginning his studies in ethnomusicology at the California Institute of the Arts.

"Ozomatli's a world band," Espinoza says. "We don't just play Latin. We play salsa, we play funk, we play fusion, we play pseudo-jazz, or whatever, so it helps a lot if I know more about different cultures. That way the music is more authentic."

For inspiration, he draws from diverse musical genres, including classical. "I love the way the classical musicians made everything sound so epic," he says. "So that's stuff I like doing, stuff that feels like everything's moving, like the earth is moving when you hear music."

He also cites Benny Goodman, John Coltrane, Sunny Rollins, Ben Webster and David Murray as personal influences. As for the band, Espinoza says they draw from "everything from Irakere to Parliament funk, Grand Central Funk to hip hop."

The group takes its name from Ozomatli, the Aztec god of dance

who, according to band members, blended the wilderness in nature with the order of human civilization. And they take the "dance" part seriously. With guitar-heavy "alternative" rock making its way through mainstream radio airwaves everywhere you go, I asked

Will-Dog where Ozomatli fits into the equation. "I play dance music, that's my thing," he says. "(Rock) is cool, but it's not really where my heart is. I love the beat, the backbone of dance."

Raul Pacheco, a 27-year-old Mexican-American guitar player who moonlights in a norteño band when he's not playing with Ozomatli, agrees. He says he's moved on from rock to other things.

"I just appreciate this music more," Pacheco says of his work with Ozomatli and the norteño band. "I don't like the other stuff. It just doesn't move me. I think at one point in my life, music like that did."

The politically-inclined Pasadena City College and East Los Angeles City College student, who once did a political internship at the California Legislature, spends the rest of his time studying jazz. He describes Ozomatli as "10 people with very distinct ideas and musical taste." But according to Pacheco, that adds to, rather than detracts from, their strength. "I think we happen to be open enough to play together," he says. "Because a lot of people wouldn't think of it ... getting a DJ, playing percussion on a salsa."

Among other things, political activism has played a large role in unifying the members of Ozomatli. The group shares a political and social consciousness that goes hand in hand with its musical philosophy. Ozomatli was born out of a protest at the Peace and Justice Center. "We went on strike (against the Los Angeles Conservation Core) and had a sit-in in our building," Wil-Dog says. "We made (the Core) sign the lease over to the Peace and Justice Center itself. We had a few benefits. I called up 15 of my friends, and that's how the band started. I said come on over and jam. We all got fired, but we (took) the center."

Musically, Ozomatli joins the ranks of what some call the new school American jazz generation, which includes SF's Alphabet Soup, Mo'Fessionals, Charlie Hunter Trio and Los Angelitos; LA's Soulsonics, and NYC's Groove Collective, Digable Planets, Guru, Massive Attack and Stereo MCs. Some of these groups lean more heavily toward hip hop, others toward jazz and still others toward funk, but the one thing they all share is a love of a good beat and the ability to create music that speaks with honesty to a dance-hungry generation.

And Ozomatli wants to be the group to bring the music to them. "My ambition for the band?" Wil-Dog asks. "To take it all over the world and to continue learning ... not stop with the salsa. Going to Brazil ... wherever we go, to keep learning from dance music, break down all barriers: the age gap, the race gap, the gender gap and sexual preference."

As practitioners of a genre of music few people have been able to define — acid jazz — Ozomatli find themselves in a musical borderland. Call it jazz-funk, funky Latin jazz or Latin funk. Whatever name you give it, there's one thing you can't call it: segregated. With performances booked well through the end of the year, Ozomatli is one of the busiest musical acts in Southern California these days. That gives the group plenty of opportunities to bring its harmonious message to the people — and audiences seem to be ready to hear it. "We've never had that, you know, 'You guys aren't all Latin,'" 28-year-old Jiro Yamaguchi, who plays a mean tabla, tells me. "Everybody's bringing something different to the group. Both culturally and musically. As for a message, it's celebration, to bring people together, and I think that's what we do through our music."



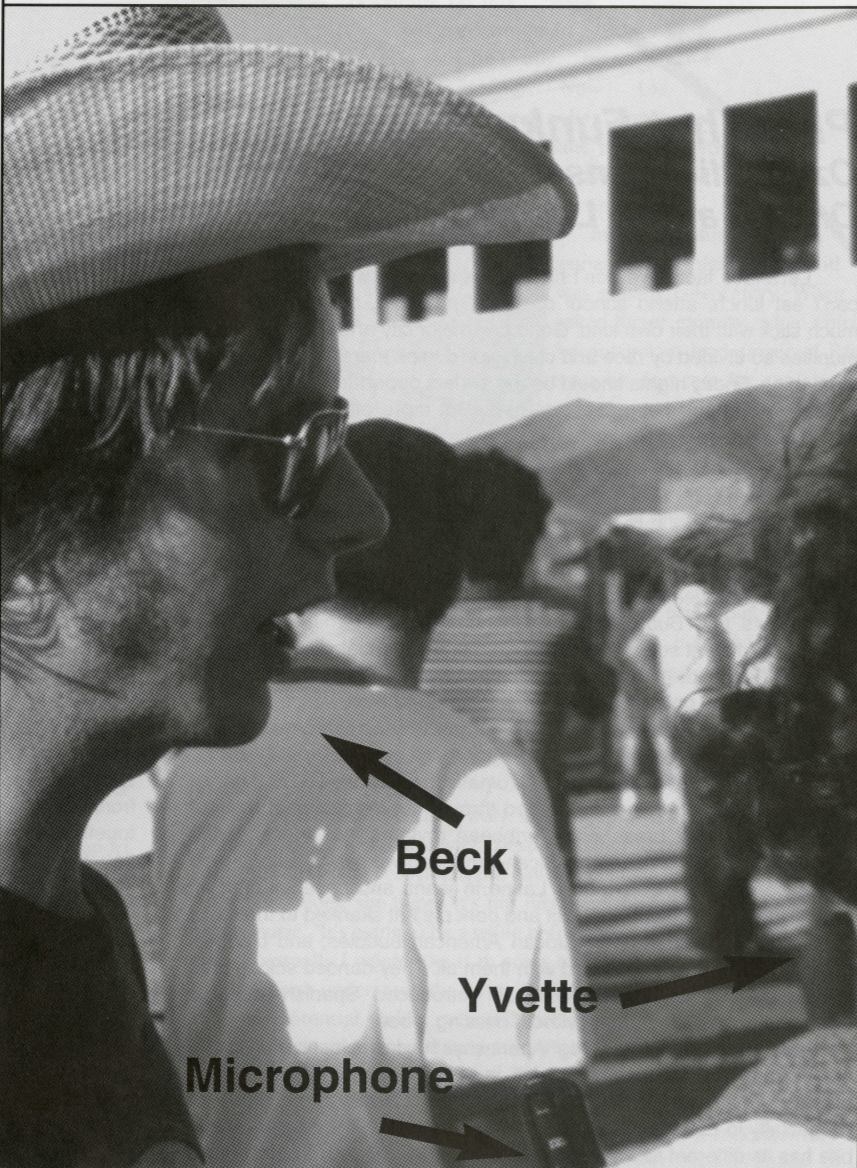
Downtown
L.A.

Dang
Beck
is down

A brief
chat with el
perdidor
supremo,
the
Chicano
Jew, under the
gray Los
Angeles sky.

by Yvette C. Doss

Who would have thought? There I was, just hanging out, and then wham! There he was, standing in front of me looking like that skinny kid in my third grade class, except he had grown side burns. At a recent benefit for C.A.N. (Cure Autism Now), organized by L.A. community activist Alberto Miyares, I ran across stereopathic homeboy Beck Hansen hanging out at the downtown shipping yards with the rest of the concert-goers, watching a local band perform. The blond *perdidor* was sporting his *campesino* look, with hillbilly jeans and sombrero *‘a la mi abuelito*, and biding his time before his own set, which would top off a full day of information exchanges, scented candle sales, genre-hopping music and huffs of the grey, metallic-tasting L.A. air. And a fine day it was, in a Blade Runner-esque sort of way, so I was damned if I wasn't going to walk right up to Beck and get the scoop on that album of his, *Odelay*. Rumor had it he was doing a riff on pachuco slang, anglicizing it, if that's possible.



So tell me about the name of your album.

Beck: It's the incorrect spelling of the word "orale," a Mexican slang word that I grew up hearing and, uh, I didn't really know what it meant. It's a word you grow up with... you know what it means, but you never knew literally what it means. It's a word that I associate with being among friends and enjoying myself, you know.

Where did you grow up?

Beck: I grew up around the Pico Union area, you know, down by 9th Street and River, you know, down there by MacArthur Park.

Someone told me that your step dad is Mexican-American. Is that true?

Beck: Yeah, yeah, his family's from Chihuahua.

No way, that's where my family's from...

Beck: Oh yeah? Cool.

Are your parents still married?

Beck: Oh, yeah

So did your step dad kind of raise you?

Beck: Yeah. Yeah.

So you're an honorary Chicano, then.

Beck: Yeah, I'm a Chicano Jew, and I'm proud of it.

Right on.

The attacks on welfare, immigrants and countries we already invaded years ago have convinced you this was just a bad year to get out of bed. Feeling overwhelmed and wondering who to turn to? Superbarrio? Vatoman? El Chapulín Colorado? More alive than Che and easier to catch than Marcos comes the hardest-working Chicano in the music business, El Vez, in his new guise as the glitter *revolucionario*. The M-E-X-K-I-N-G (as his one-time 900-number proclaimed him), who has brought us his "incredible stimulation" of Elvis for the last eight years, is now ready to make revolution rock. As his rallying cry, he quotes folk musician Phil Ochs, saying, "If there's hope for America, it's in a revolution. If there's any hope for a revolution, it lies in Elvis Presley becoming Che Guevara."

Not that El Vez, a.k.a. Robert López, is unused to culturally radical moves. As a teen, he played rhythm guitar for the seminal SoCal punk band The Zeros with his brother Javier Escovedo, and later became curator and publicist at the iconoclastic La Luz de Jesús Gallery on Melrose Avenue, where El Vez was born in 1988 out of a show on Elvis-inspired folk art. Springing full-blown from López's head, El Vez made his first

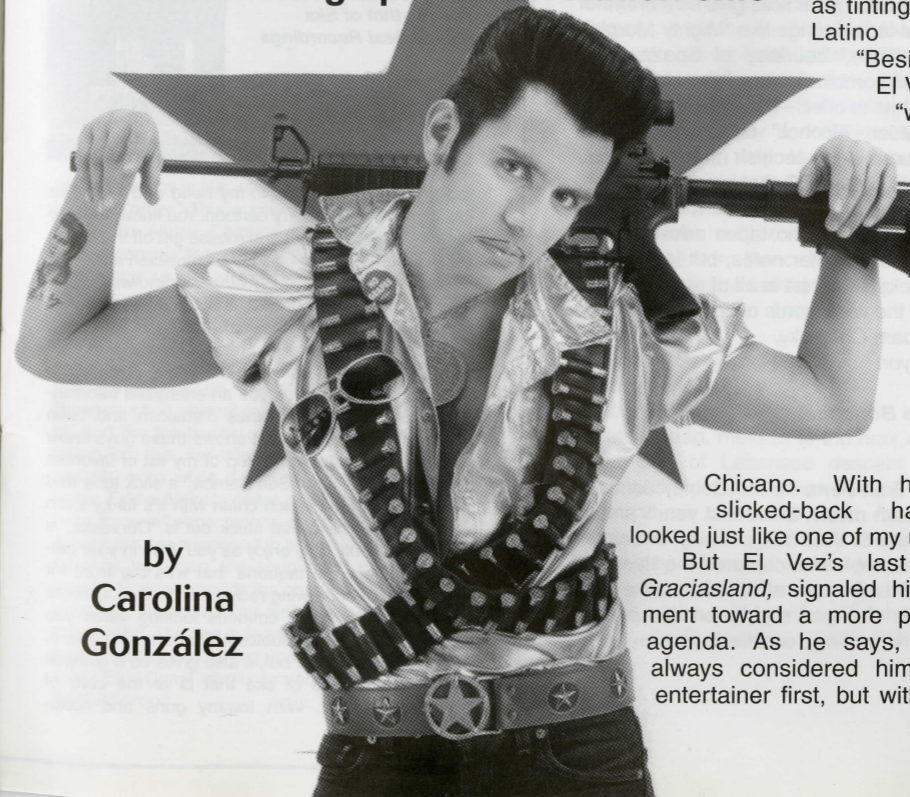
appearance at Weep Week — the annual celebration of Elvis' birthday — in Memphis, when López scammed his way into a booking at the Elvis impersonator mecca, Bad Bob's, as "the Mexican Elvis." There, he promptly secured himself a Los Angeles Times feature, as well as offers for appearances on national TV, all before he had played a single gig in his hometown of L.A.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Flanked by the versatile Memphis Mariachis and the Lovely Elvettes — Gladysita, Priscillita, Lisa María and Qué Linda Thompson — El Vez has made an admirable career of pochoizing the King's oeuvre into biculturally viable hits such as "You're Nothing but a Chihuahua," "Good Golly Miss Lupe" and "Blue Suede Huaraches." Displaying showmanship that's equal parts Las Vegas and Plaza Garibaldi, his shows feature as many as six costume changes, including jumpsuits such as an orange bell-bottom number made of Mexican blanket fabric, a white 1972-style suit with a sequined Virgen de Guadalupe stitched on the back, a patriotic red-white-and-green one with the Mexican eagle and serpent conveniently hovering over his crotch, plus the obligatory gold lamé. On his records, his loving parodies and pastiches have matter-of-factly captured the pocho aesthetic in all

All that glitters ...

El Vez, the King of Hybrids, puts a shimmering spin on revolution chic



by
Carolina
González

its contradictory glory, introducing what he calls "Mexamericana" for non-Latino audiences, as well as tinting Elvis for Latino eyes. "Besides," as El Vez says, "when I was a kid I

thought
Elvis
was

Chicano. With his dark, slicked-back hair, he looked just like one of my uncles."

But El Vez's last album, *Graciasland*, signaled his movement toward a more politicized agenda. As he says, he has always considered himself "an entertainer first, but with a sub-

versive intent." He reaffirmed the currency of a Chicano homeland in the "Graceland"-derived "Aztlán," put "Little sisters" stage center in "Chicanisma," and celebrated heroes like Zapata, Cesar Chavez and Cuauhtémoc, while musically quoting Carlos Santana and Aztec Camera with equal zest. In his *tour de force*, "It's Now or Never," he infused the Elvis ballad with a sincere yet amusing anti-gang plea. He even enlisted Culture Clash-er Herbert Siguenza as an Edward James Olmos stand-in during his nods to "Zoot Suit" and "American Me."

Now, the material from his new release, "G.I. Ay Ay! Blues," has upped the militant ante a notch. This is clear from the staging of "Say It Loud, I'm Brown and I'm Proud," in which he and his band descend from the ceiling dressed in camouflage to the shrill screams of an air-raid siren, as well as from songs such as the new version of "Cesar Chavez '96," in which his usually pristine vocals change into an angry near-growl. Despite having taken up a harsher sound and a look, which echoes newer guerrilla movements such as the Zapatistas as well as older homegrown ones such as the Brown Berets, El Vez is nevertheless thoughtful about the images he's evoking. He wants to reflect on "what it takes to get people interested in the revolution," while questioning the extent to which the revolutionary ideal is romanticized into guerrilla chic.

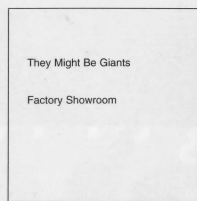
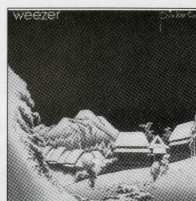
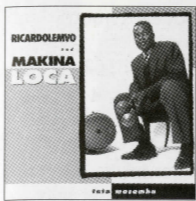
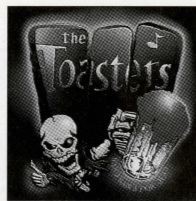
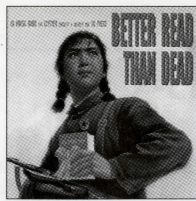
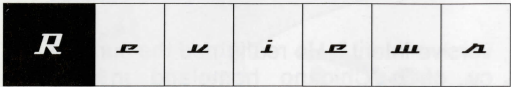
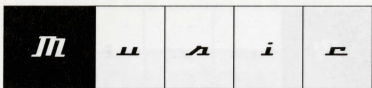
For El Vez, el macho *revolucionario* is always teetering on the verge of the reactionary, and needs to be "doused with a big dash of glitter rock." He also says he sees danger in Chicanos retaking past militant models uncritically. "We chose, literally, brown shirts for the Brown Berets, and a black stylized eagle for the UFW logo. Some rather fascist-looking symbols, if you think about it. Why did we the oppressed people choose imagery that echoed the oppressors? Where does nationalist feeling take off and become something else? When does pride go too far?"

Lyrically, El Vez's newer material continues to mine territory untouched by American pop of any period; musically, he strays from the Elvis canon, indulging his long-time love for early '70s Brit-rock bands such as Queen, T-Rex and David Bowie. Our favorite overexposed surrealist *santa* is once again revered in "Frida's Life of Pain" and La Malinche gets hers in a jazzy original complemented by Yoko Ono-esque operatic shrieking.

But his more impressive achievements in this release are the O.H. (Original Hybrid) manifesto "Soy un

continued on page 46

f r o n t e r a



The Toasters Hard Band For Dead Moon/Ska Records

What can you expect from the undisputed champs of ska if not a fist-full of rhythm knocking your teeth out? On this their sixth release from Moon Records (I know this from reading the handy-dandy catalogue included in Moon CDs), the Toasters prove that five albums of experience can produce something more than your average bargain CD bin material. The first track on *Hard Band For Dead* is "2-tone Army," setting the mood for a boot and beat revolution and that ends with a checkered army's march. Another song that got my toe-a-tappin' is "Mouse," a tribute to the super hero rodent we all love, but secretly fear. Yes, it's the "Mighty Mouse" theme followed by soulful accompaniment. On their latest CD, the Toasters feature the seasoned sounds of such heavyweights as Laurel Aiken on vox, the sax of The Skatalite's Lester "Ska" Sterling, and the guitar work of Jerry McGee of the Ventures. Song number ten, "Maxwell Smart," makes me wish I had thought of turning the "Get Smart" theme music into a ska tune. If they ever make a compilation of TV theme songs turned into ska I'm gonna be kicking myself all the way to the record store. What's really cool about this CD is that, like most Moon CDs, you have a whole catalogue (errrr... skatalogue) of stuff you can send away for if you don't particularly love the CD you're listening to. So whether you love 'em or don't give a flying toaster about 'em, no one loses to the standing eight count.

Ariel Alborno

Orix Orix Aztlan Records

Rowan Jimenez and crew have finally crawled out of the Rockola in Berkeley to show the rest of the world what Bay Area rock en español is all about. As a lead singer, Jimenez is a crazed poetic shaman who lays down a punked-out version of a Latino kids' song ("Canción De Cuna/Arroz Con Leche") one minute, then spits a defiant rap ("Xicano") at you the next, then spins you with a chant to the *orishas*, the gods of the African pantheon ("Musica Del Alma"). The dude is bad! But this is a band that works and creates as a collective, and is fueled by the drive to rock! The Caipo brothers. (Juan Manuel, Eddie, Mark) are the propulsion on drums, keys and bass. With great chops they push tunes like "Mentiras" to a feverish pitch for Ronald MacKee to float some slicing solo guitar riffs over. The group also surprises you with cool folkloric touches from Venezuela, Peru, and Brazil. "500 Years" is an all-too-brief Afro-Peruvian piece that uses wooden boxes

known as *cajones* as a bed for a chorus and response that sounds like it's out of the docks of Lima. With a variety of textures and colors, this is a rock band with a musicality that explores new boundaries and fusions. The ability to write a good song is an added plus. If this doesn't have you slamming into the walls by the time it's over, check your pulse. Orix has arrived!

Chuy Varela

Better Read Than Dead Various Artists Epitaph/AK Press

Anarchy...it's what the kids go crazy for. So AK Press (known for releasing some of the finest revolutionary literature) and Epitaph Records have teamed up to put out a compilation for the cause. The results ... well let's just say the urge to form a revolutionary movement on your block doesn't hit you right away. The first time I heard this CD I was ready to turn it off about a third of the way through, but decided it was best (for the sake of the review) to let it play. It eventually starts to grow on you. Which is good because it gave me the opportunity to give some of the songs a chance, like "Hooton 3 Car's Prozac," a nice zippy punk tune which I like more for the vocals than for the music, and "Zoink! Roid Rage Talkshow." Still, neither song really offers anything we haven't heard before. One thing I should point out about this comp is that it is actually musically diverse — as opposed to being the punk fest compilation I was expecting. Wayne Kramer offers us "Turn the Trick," one of two standouts on the album. Kramer's rockin' guitar licks give us a breather after metal-laden songs like "Mighty Morphin Power Violence," courtesy of Spazz. Gary Floyd Band combines two of the best things this world has to offer — blues and booze — in "Too Much Alcohol." *Better Read Than Dead* includes a low-techish multi-media catalogue right on the CD that you can pop into the most impotent of machines. It features the same books and audio tapes advertised by AK Press on the liner notes, but in a format for the geeky anarchist in all of us. Be sure to check out the wise words of linguist and deep thinker Noam Chomsky.

Ramon Ayon

Descarga Boricua II Abrazate RMM

Producer Fran Ferrer is the Quincy Jones of Puerto Rican music. Since last year's smash debut, "Esta Si Val," this critically acclaimed all star ensemble has captured the hearts of salsa and Latin jazz aficionados alike. The faces have changed slightly on this edition, but superb writing, excellent musicianship,

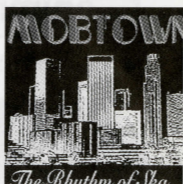
and a rhythm section that could melt a polar cap still define a high standard. More polished and commercial, what gets lost at places is that jam session spontaneity implied in the name (Descarga = Latin Jam Session). Yet soloists Juancito Torres (trumpet), Mario Rivera (sax), Papa Vasquez (trombone), Nestor Torres (flute), and drummer Cachete Maldonado radiate with brilliant chops on the opener "Descarga #2 ... A Gozar." Jerry Medina is an explosive singer, with an amazing range, who ably demonstrates his excitement on "Oye Como Suenan." A vocal arrangement of the Tito Rodriguez's gem "Mama Guela," in a style reminiscent of Cuba's "Vocal Sampling," is cute at best. Trap drummer Alex Acuna is featured on "D.B. Goes To New York," written by Anthony Carrillo and Cachete Maldonado. A percussion tour-de-force, it's an invigorating tribute to Puerto Rico's rhythmic legacy. My favorite is Piro Rodriguez's "Sonadores," for its great ensemble writing with the broad strokes of jazz harmony. For the critical listener, this is a much duller album than their debut, but if you dig good music with vibe, groove, and chops this is happening!

Chuy Varela

INDEPENDENT

Mobtown The Rhythm of Ska Steady Beat Recordings

As I listen to the third track on this CD I imagine myself sipping an icy blue drink -- the kind with an umbrella in it -- on a Jamaican beach. The steel drum reverberates in my head and I feel like I'm in that Tom and Jerry cartoon. You know, the one where the bickering cat and mouse get off the cruise ship to listen to some cool island musician and finally stop trying to kill each other. Mobtown's debut album, *The Rhythm of Ska*, is a collection of music from some of the coolest cats to come out of the L.A. scene. They don't just reproduce the same old ska sound — stuff Tom and Jerry wouldn't stop to listen to. Mobtown gives you an energized traditional ska sound that combines Jamaican and Latin beats with a tightness that shows these guys know what they're doing. At the top of my list of favorites from this CD is "Zoot Suit Samba," a slick tune that made me twirl my watch chain with it's funky Latin beat. Another song that stuck out is "Cerveska," a lick you can only truly enjoy as you drive in your get-away car from the taqueria that was the front for your illegal beer brewing racket. Inside the CD notes is a picture of some ominous looking vatos you might run into at a Mobtown concert, so beware. This CD is harmless, but, it also gives us a glimpse of the shady side of ska that is at the core of Mobtown's music. With tommy guns and saxo-



RELEASES

phones in hand, Mobtown is best described as "gang-ska."
— Ariel Alborno

Ricanstruction Ricanstruction Ugly Planet Media

"When tyranny is law, revolution is order." This quote by Pedro Albizu Campos from Ricanstruction's debut album tips us off to the fact that this hard-core Nuyorican foursome's music is a political bomb. Through angry lyrics that are sung, not shouted, Alano Baez tells it like he sees it. From Mumia Abu Jamal to the Shining Path and Chiapas to the guerrilla insurgency on the streets of New York, Ricanstruction unleashes rebel truths on the planet. And like the band's socially charged lyrics, the music on this self-titled debut is a hard-edged assault, even while it's blended with softer Latin beats. Eddie Alsina's guitar and Arturo Rodriguez' bass throw all expectations of what Puerto Rican-Americans are supposed to sound like to the wind. As they lay down the soundtrack to revolution, Joseph Rodriguez adds the percussion that is their signature. Ricanstruction isn't just another thrash metal band. The group is just as powerful musically as lyrically. Look for bigger and better things from these East Coast *revolucionarios*.

Ariel Alborno



acceptance among hip hoppers, be they East or West, as he slices and dices like a Benihana chef. Look out for him in the nine lucky.

DJ Jorge

Various Artists The Eastside Sound: 1959-1968 Dionysus

"You know I feel all right children!" To hear the late Francisco Garcia - a.k.a. Cannibal - sing the opening to "Land of a Thousand Dances" with his Chicano gospel tinge is worth the price of this disc alone. But the 30 historic sides presented here are really a tribute to the late Eddie Davis, a record producer who through his label Rampart Records gave rise to surf music and a generation of young Chicano stars from East Los Angeles. A nightclub and restaurant entrepreneur, Davis had aspirations as a singer. When his career stalled in the late '50s, he took up producing and formed his record company. Early on, a manager called Billy Cardenas brought him a band called the Romancers (Who can forget "She Took My Oldsmobile"?). That opened the door to a vault of young Chicano kids playing R&B in garage bands around E. L.A. They fused the Fender Stratocaster guitar sound pioneered by Richie Valens with horns, keyboards, and cool vocals, and came up with: The Blendells ("La, La, La, La"), The Premiers ("Farmer John"), The Salas Bros ("The Return of Farmer John"), Cannibal & The Headhunters ("Nau Ninny Nau"), and others. In the label's heyday, Rampart used to issue albums with all the party tunes on one side and all the ballads on the other. This is largely a party record but features The Jaguars instrumental ballad "Where Lovers Go." Early surf sides include Gene Gray & The Stingrays doing "Surf Bunny!" This collection is definitely a collectors' item. Years ago the only way to get these pioneer Chicano 45s was to cruise to Thee Record Inn on Whittier Blvd. and hope that owner John O'Valle had them. Long unavailable, the party *rolas* from the *calles* beyond the Sixth Street bridge are calling us back.

Chuy Varela

Corazón Sangrante Astrid Hadad Cabaret Records/Rounder

Astrid Hadad, mestiza to the max, a resplendent diva of Lebanese descent raised in Quintana Roo, is billed as Mexico City's premier po-mo chanteuse, and, for once, the hyperbolic praise just barely measures up to the reality. On record, Hadad gives only a hint of the experimental baroque flavor of her live shows, which bring stylized Brechtian theater and expressionistic Kurt Weill-inspired

cabaret into *fin de siècle* multimedia performance art, shifting musical modes and personas as often as she moves from one elaborate set-size costume to another. Yet this small taste packs a wallop: the biting chiles of her satirical comments on love and politics subversively hidden in her smooth heartfelt crooning and her band's flawless traditionalist chops. For the Spanish-impaired, the CD insert provides helpful English translations of the altered lyrics, nestled among color-drenched shots taken from Hadad's low-tech yet inventive videos.

In her 1995 debut, *Ay!*, Hadad tweaked mariachi and ranchera conventions by exaggerating gender slips between the songs' feminine love objects and their *macha* singer, as well as pushing their melodramatic *telenovela* logic of overwrought emotion to absurd conclusions. *Corazón Sangrante* mines the Afro-Cuban territory of *boleros*, *guarachas* and *sones*, which are ripe for the transforming power of Hadad's manic yet devotional touch. She takes on sacred cow composers from the mambo era, such as Miguel Matamoros and Nico Saquito, and refries their work into irreverent homages that more accurately channel their original spirit than insipid McNuggets like Luis Miguel's. Equally adept at excavating bawdy quirky tunes and singing them straight as at subverting a classic such as "Lágrimas Negras" by adding safe-sex lyrics, Hadad can play any song both for its pop profundity and its gratuitous histrionics. She even manages, in her rendition of "Babalú," to simultaneously refer to and redeem the song from its kitsch Desi Arnaz associations, while restoring it to its *santería* roots. Equally appropriate as a soundtrack to a knock-down, drag-out lovers' quarrel or as lip-synching material to bring out the Latina drag queen in all of us, *Corazón Sangrante* is as addictive and tear-inducing as a chile high.

Carolina González

Tata Masamba Ricardo Lemvo & Makina Loca Self-produced

Slap this record on at the next party where you want to break up the talky-talkies, and dancers and innocent bystanders alike will surely start gyrating and bopping uncontrollably to the jammin' Fania-era salsa. However, halfway through the first song, someone will realize that he's having a hard time singing along to the chorus, that in fact most of the words aren't even in Spanish. No matter. The African influence on Caribbean culture — its religion, music, and cuisine — has been remarked ad nauseam. What is less known is the flip phenomenon, the mark that Cuban music from the 1930s and 1940s left all over the West Coast of Africa, contributing to

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African pop forms such as soukous and high-life. Recent musical collaborations between Caribbean and African musicians, such as the Nigerian-Caribbean group Africando and Dominican nouveau *merengero* Juan Luis Guerras' work with guitarist Diblo Dibala, have sped up the circulation of these influences. Into this fray comes L.A.-based Makina Loca, led by the dynamic duo of Zairean Ricardo Lemvo and Cuban arranger extraordinaire Niño Jesús Alejandro. Jumping between languages and rhythms, it's hard to tell where the *guaracha* ends and the juju begins. Lemvo's singing and stage patter shuffle gracefully between Portuguese, Spanish, Lingala, and the occasional English, and he doesn't miss a beat. "Mama Kiyelele" tinges the son montuno with a soukous lilt, while "Yiri Yiri Bon," a disarming cover of a Beny Moré tune, activates the part of your brain that recognizes music played by your parents, no matter how transformed. "La Milonga de Ricardo en Cha-Cha-Cha" sandwiches a Zairean classic by Grand Kallé between two Cuban classics, "La hija de Juan Simón" and Orquesta Aragón's "Me Voy Pa'la Luna." Surprisingly, though, most of the compositions on the disc are originals. The sheen of familiarity comes from the warm horn sections of '70s-era orchestral salsa arrangements. If you want to go back to the future of salsa's African connection, get this record, or, better yet, catch Makina Loca at one of their frequent gigs in the L.A. area.

Carolina González

King Changó
King Changó
Luaka Bop

From the streets of New York City comes King Changó, one of the most talked about musical groups in the alternative Latino scene. The group borrows its name from the Changó, the Yoruban Deity of Thunder, who is also the owner of the Bata drum. With a little help from this magical deity, King Changó released its first album on David Byrne's Luaka Bop label, with production by Andrés Blanco (Changó's lead singer) and King Changó. The songs on this album explore a variety of musical genres, often within one song: ska, cumbias, dance hall, and reggae in songs like "Don't Drop Your Pants" or "Confesión." "Latin Ska," a track that appeared on Moon Records' *Latin Ska Compilation*, makes an appearance on this album as well, this time with a new introduction. Pop the CD in and listen as King Changó weaves through many musical traditions with ease, carrying off the hybrid sound seamlessly. Drawing imagery from the worlds of soccer, karate, Japanimation and *santería*, Changó's universe is as multilingual and multicultural as the Americas.

Pedro Arroyo

Nada Surf
High/Low
Elektra

Nada Surf. The name sticks in your head all day, nagging at you. Nada nada nada. What's that all about? Just another one of those no talent rock bands that use Spanish words in their name to be kitschy? Not exactly. These guys are making some innovative music. In the first hit single of their Elektra debut *High/Low*, "The Teenage Guide To Popularity,"

a psychotic Dear Abby-type counsels young high school kids on dating dos and don'ts. The group is headed by the cosmopolitan duo Mathew Caws and Daniel Lorca, who met in grade school. That explains the band's cohesive sense of neurosis. Lorca and Caws formed a band and put out an album for a Spanish record label, though they ended up pulling the album at the last minute. The Spanish recordings were eventually produced by a small label called No. 6, under the title *Karmic*. Aha, the Spanish connection. Mystery solved. After kicking around in New York for a while, they landed a deal at Elektra thanks to Ric Ocasek. The end result was the punk/pop *High/Low*. With songs like "Zen Brain" ("Throw away your crushes/all your childhood crutches") and "The Plan" (There's a way to drive/I see it once in a while/I watch the tail-lights and memorize") and the surreal "Sleep," Nada Surf are staking their claim on the territory of teen anxiety and universal angst.

E.V. Aniles

Weezer
Pinkerton
Geffen

They look like such sweet kids but you know, sometimes those suburban boys have the meanest streaks. Weezer's songs seem to be wholesome -- take their video for "Buddy Holly," which juxtaposed old Happy Days footage with the Weezer kids playing at Al's, surrounded by Fonzie and the gang. But behind that Richie Cunningham facade lies the ugliness inside all adolescent boys.

Singer Rivers Cuomo wrote most of the album's ten songs in the same sequence in which they appear on the album. The album chronicles his tortured sex life and struggles with the "shadier portion of his masculinity," as he calls it. This includes a song about loving half-Japanese women to one about realizing that the girl of his dreams is a lesbian. Rivers at times sounds like he needs a little action. But the melodrama of a shy school boy doesn't detract from the fact that these guys are creating some of the most innovative music around. Though the tunes are catchy as hell, the album isn't one-dimensional like all that grunge the kids are listening to nowadays. Weezer has a way of capturing that cat-in-heat kind of dissonance.

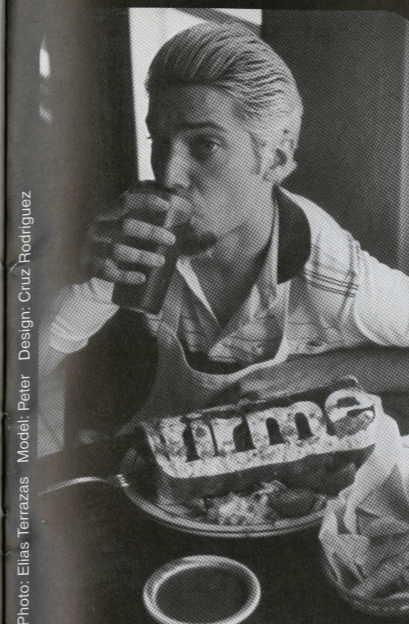
Martin Alborno

They Might Be Giants
Factory Showroom
Elektra

Like other brainy bands out there, you either love They Might Be Giants or you hate them. Their new CD *Factory Showroom* is classic Giants, but with a full band now, the two Johns have added a harder edge. All the catchy, quirky, "highly caffeinated shtick," from *Flood* is there, and more. Aside from "S-E-X-X-Y," the '70s retro anomaly on the CD, it's all the same unique lyrics and catchy tunes you're used to, though I do miss that darned accordion. Songs like "Exquisite Dead Guy," "XTC vs. Adam Ant," and the hilarious "James K. Polk" follow that tried and true absurdity that works so well for them. In "James K Polk," their '90s version of a School House Rock song, they earnestly extol the virtues of our 11th President, including his taking of Mexican land and other acts of Manifest Destiny. "I Can Hear You" is an interesting experiment that was actually recorded on an 1898 Edison wax cylinder recording device, using no electricity.

Martin Alborno

Photo: Elias Terrazas Model: Peter Design: Cruz Rodriguez



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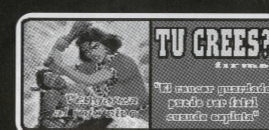
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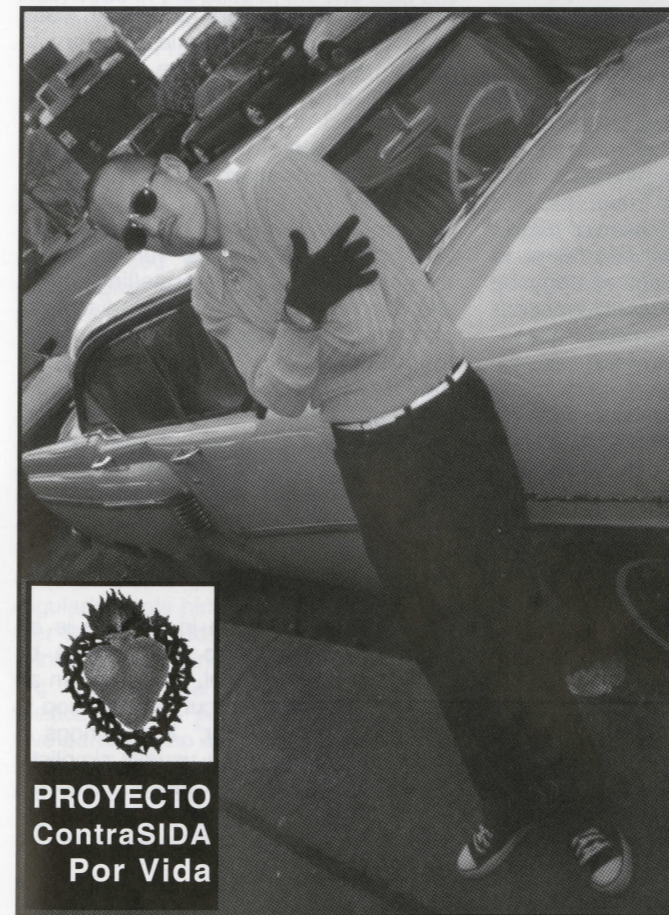
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Trees falling in the forest

Two new directors are redefining Chicano/Latino cinema

by Jim Mendiola

"Follow Me Home" (1996)
written and directed by Peter Bratt
"Staccato Purr of the Exhaust" (1996)
written and directed by L M Meza

As you read this, deep in the heart of neglected Aztlan — that's Texas to the Calificentric — cameras roll on the largest Chicano film production to date, the \$20 million bio-pic of slain Tejano star Selena Quintanilla. For future *raza* consumers across the Americas, it's the calculated start of a manufactured "Bidi-Bidi-Bom-Bom" blitzkrieg like we've never seen before. I mention this future movie juggernaut because of a significant and telling cinematic void Latinos hungry for more realistic depictions of their bi-cultural lives face. Films exist, *gente*, that fill the void, only we may never see them. While Selena will be everywhere, other alternative images remain dark. A recent example this year is the near-total absence in any theaters — multiplex, art house, or Spanish language — of two recently completed and culturally redefining Chicano/Latino features by first time film makers Peter Bratt and L M Meza.

Never heard of Peter Bratt's "Follow Me Home" or L M Meza's "Staccato Purr of the Exhaust?" I'm not surprised. To turn the old "if a tree fell in the forest ..." question into a more politically relevant one, I ask: If they shot a *chingón* Chicano/Latino movie, and no one saw it, would it make a sound? And who would

know? And, more importantly, how would this rare shout in the collective conscience of brown self-representation have an impact? Little by little, film festival by film festival, I'd say. But if distribution problems persist, we can at least take comfort in the fact that both films exist.

Since "Staccato Purr" and "Follow Me Home" shared their respective world premieres at the prestigious '96 Sundance film festival, both films have led a coincidental yet symbiotic relationship on the Film Festival circuit, one that next took them both to the San Antonio CineFestival and more recently to a joint appearance at the CineLatino Fest in San Francisco. While I hate to perpetuate the old "they-all-look-alike" tendency, these films share a relationship based on the assertion of cultural significance. While the individual stories are worlds apart (not to mention their aesthetic and political sensibilities), what unites these two films, ultimately, is they both represent a resurrected strategy to get brown people on the screen. In the spirit of historically neglected Chicano film pioneer Efrain Gutierrez in the '70s, both film makers raised the money for production themselves. In Peter Bratt's case, significant community support — again in the spirit of collective movements in the past — contributed to the effort.

After initial attempts by Chicanos to colorize the white U.S. media via public television in the '70s, and after the Hollywood trip in the '80s (the decade of the Hispanic, I think it was called), in which studios vowed to — but never managed to — support more brown product despite the financial successes of "Stand and Deliver," "La Bamba," and "Born in East L.A.," the most recent strategy by young film makers is the totally independent, no budget, by any means necessary, see-you-at-Sundance formula. It's definitely more democratic and infinitely more accessible. So while this strategy has produced new films like "Follow Me Home" and "Staccato Purr," the catch is that the so-called independent distribution system still isn't working for these Latino films. So seek these films out, *raza*, at a special screening near you.

"Follow Me Home"

Peter Bratt's "Follow Me Home" unabashedly wears its multicultural politics and critique of U.S. internal colonial-

ism on its collective sleeve. It's a political film: *Y qué?* Visually stunning, "Follow Me Home" is an allegory of four quixotic urban artists, of various colors, intent on driving across the country to paint a mural on the White House. It's all the more amazing considering its budget limitations.

Led by a gifted Chicano artist named Tudee (Jesse Borrego) who flirts with Basquiat-like gallery stardom, the gang of four also includes Tudee's vato loco cousin, Abel (Benjamin Bratt); Kaz (Calvin Levels), a pacifist/vegetarian African American; and Freddy (Steve Reeves), a Native-American struggling with his alcohol-related demons.

Somewhere in mid-America the group's journey, intersects with that of a young African American woman, Evey (Alfre Woodard), who is on a spiritual quest of her own. Soon after, a group of grown white men playing cavalry reenactment games — complete with cheesy costumes — blunder into their paths, and before you know it, inevitable racial violence, U.S. style, explodes.

As with most road movies, it's the journey, rather than the destination, that counts. Bratt audaciously sets that journey through the mythic American West, previously a canvas for the likes of John Ford-type film makers and their dead white male takes of American history. In Bratt's revisited West, the film maker recovers once-native land and rightfully gives it back to the displaced *raza* that used to thrive there — generationally displaced urban dwellers.

By Western narrative standards (as in European, and not big-hatted cowboys), "Follow Me Home" further defies expectations in its storytelling style, allowing, at times, American Indian people's creation myths and spiritual beliefs to dictate the film's structure. Tudee's dream sequences, for instance — based on what traditional medicine people call "dreamtime" — reveal not only his personal struggle within the film, but on a more metaphorical level suggest a larger story, one critical of a native people's history of colonization, internal and historical, here in the U.S. and throughout the Americas.

Of particular note in the film is an amazing and dynamic performance by Benjamin Bratt as Abel. Better known as the uptight and clean cut younger cop in TV's "Law and Order," Bratt brings a rarely seen depth to a usually simplistic character, the bad-ass Chicano homeboy. As the tattooed gangbanger ready to fight at the slightest *dis*, Bratt's Abel conveys a



Ron Garcia is the deadpan Leonard in "Staccato Purr of the Exhaust."

vulnerability and intelligence rarely seen in *vatos locos*, a novel and poignant interpretation that hints at the sad individual results of 200-plus years of U.S. oppression of American Indian and meztizo people.

What "Follow Me Home" does best, and what is most fun to watch, is its shameless transgression of traditional and expected character roles. Bratt makes the people of color the good guys, and the gringos, for the most part, unequivocally bad. It's amazing how seldom this is done, and even more amazing how this deceptively simple role reversal empowers as only film propaganda can do. This rare effect empowers everyone who's been traditionally ignored by Hollywood in the past. In the two sold out screenings I witnessed, in San Antonio and in San Francisco, the results were the same: standing ovations, enthusiastic recognition, and a hunger for more.

"Staccato Purr of the Exhaust"

While "Follow Me Home" is a sobering exploration of race, violence and multicultural identity, "Staccato Purr," Meza's self-described "quiet film about a quiet guy," begins with the already-established premise of non-judgmental Mexican-American assimilation.

In Meza's universe, we exist beyond questions of cultural debate and live quite contentedly in a brown suburban world of placid, almost complacent normality, of neat, tidy lawns, and dreamy rock. Leonard, Meza's Gen Mex quasi-hero, couldn't care less about Aztlan, much less about taking it back. His more immediate concerns include a girlfriend who regularly beats him up (trust me, it's funnier than it sounds), a dead-end job, an annoying "best" friend who keeps insisting that, unlike Leonard, he's not Mexican, and a pair of passive aggressive parents who auction off large pieces of his bedroom furniture, one by one, rather than order their beloved *mi'jo* to move out of the house.

It's not exactly "I Am Joaquin" level

angst here; Leonard's vida-slacker is more like that of one of the brown dudes we never saw in Linklater's film "Clerks," and never saw in "Before Sunrise," but knew were there, somewhere. I mean, we know people like this. Some of us are people like this.

At the start of the film, everything's somewhat cool in Leonard's world — or cool enough that he doesn't complain. Until the day his Dad tries to add Leonard's beloved car to the growing list of items for sale. That's when Leonard is jolted into something resembling action. Lured by a postcard from Texas, he decides that a better life awaits him in the Lone Star State. Unaccustomed to making decisions, and giddy at the novel prospect of a self-determined life in Texas, Leonard takes revenge on all those who've dealt him grief in the past: his girlfriend, his parents, the "best friend." With all bridges burned, things, of course, don't quite work out the way he planned. On the brink of driving away to the good life, his beloved car is stolen right before his eyes, and Leonard spends the rest of the movie tracking down the culprit. Sort of like a road movie on foot.

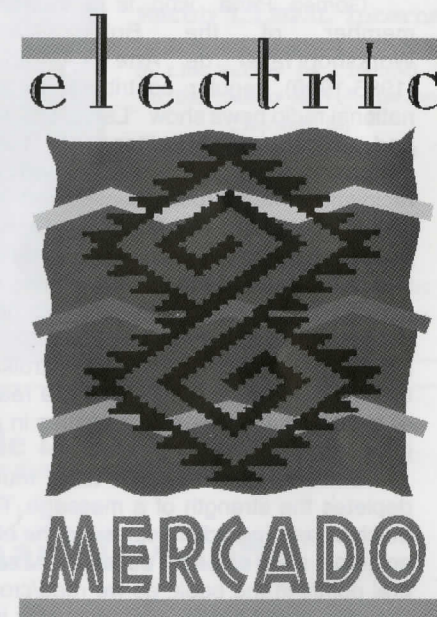
In his search, Leonard runs across an organized group of brown fascist types who wear berets and look suspiciously like some MEChistas I've seen in the past. A critique of self-defeating Chicano nationalism? You decide. In any case, it's absurdly hilarious. Their leader, a psychic mystery man who may or may not levitate, encourages Leonard with cryptic visionary clues to continue his paranoid search for his stolen car. Will Leonard make it to Texas? Will his girlfriend ever beat him up again? And, more importantly, will he find his car?

As the hapless Leonard, Ron Garcia's perfectly comedic deadpan performance makes an Olmec head look Jim Carrey-ish in comparison. "Staccato Purr" constantly delights in a well-chosen, carefully maintained low-key tone. Shot with a calculated, minimalist style, Meza's black comedy captures perfectly the rhythms, boredom, and potential bleakness of life *sin cultura* — or at least life in the 'burbs.

Jim Mendiola is an independent film maker and former director of the San Antonio CineFestival, the nation's oldest and largest Chicano/Latino film and video festival. A self-exiled Tejano, he currently programs media at the Center for the Arts in San Francisco and is developing a no-budget feature film, "An American Artist."

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Peter Bratt, right, and brother Benjamin Bratt on the set of "Follow Me Home."

The New World Border

Guillermo Gómez-Peña
(City Lights)

by domingo Nuño

¡No se me asuste bñey! Guillermo Gómez-Peña is at it again with his new book "The New World Border" — a conglomeration of performance texts, essays, poetry and a bit of graphics. This boisterous collection is bound by a cover featuring a photograph of internationally acclaimed writer and experimental artist Gómez-Peña performing. But, for all the border-crossing discussed inside the book, we are greeted with a book cover in which the text and image remain in their "proper" places, compositionally pleasing and separate enough for each to retain their visual autonomy. It speaks volumes.

Gómez Peña, who is a founding member of the Border Arts Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo (1985-1990), regular contributor to the national radio news show "Latino U.S.A.," and contributing editor at High Performance Magazine — as well as recipient of numerous theater and art awards, including a MacArthur Genius Award — has been producing work that has been key to the ongoing debates on cultural diversity for years. With this new volume, "The New World Border," following his 1993 "Warrior For Gringostroika," Gómez Peña again challenges the reader to reconsider changing identities in an intercultural space.

Sometimes, saying too much depletes the strength of a message. Too much of *one* ingredient can send the others into a state of forced obscurity. At several points in the book, as we read/cross this *new world border*, we encounter the

wasпитos, wasperos, or waspbacks. The basic rights of these downtrodden people are constantly violated ... deporting all insubordinate gringos who don't carry the national identity card ... and so on. It's a playful tactic which fails to truly represent the plight of migrants. Instead it's a kind of therapy session — let's address some *real* issues with this exercise and become enlightened about those *others*, and we'll all feel much better. This kind of inversion, now we have IT and *you* don't, facilitates the opportunity to express our desire for the coveted position of those in power and simultaneously, for those in power to *experience* what it might be like to be an authentic wetback. The whole thing is a bit too wet — what is it that is desired here? Some dribble of empathy from dominant culture? Inversely, temporary joy in the fantasy of being on TOP?

This type of inversion has the effect of ignoring the realities which are fueling the mass migrations of our times. What is neglected is the fact that, no, in actuality, México and the U.S., culturally/economically, will not trade places — the border is a "low intensity" military zone.

"The New World Border" does address relevant contemporary questions concerning race, immigration and cultural hybridity, but in general, many of the texts move too fast, evading those subtle, tenuous points which make a world of difference. It is these not-so-visible locales which are in need of elucidation. The experience of the migrant, his suppressed history, and his indefinite existence in the margins are intricate terrains with thick layers of shifting strata. No one artist, no one novel or performance or essay can speak for it all, but what any of these particular forms of expression can do is render the experience it seeks to articulate without compromising its complexities and contradictions.

Reading "The New World Border," I'm left with some questions: Who is Gómez-Peña speaking to? Who does he speak for? In *The Loneliness of the Immigrant*, one of his performances from 1979, the artist chose to spend twenty-four hours in a public elevator, wrapped in Indian fabric and tied into a bundle with rope. The text proceeds as an explanation of what this piece was to Gómez-Peña: "a metaphor of painful birth into a new country, a new identity: Chicano ..." What's disturbing about this performance is not the audience reaction or — as we are told — a discussion by two adolescents about the

possibility of setting him on fire. What is disturbing is the fact that what is chosen as relevant to tell is solely the *painful experience*. It appears as if the arrival to this new identity has come through an old doorway — the doorway of martyrdom, the bleeding hearts, nails and a couple of crucifixions, *why not?* It is an instance in which the rousing of a transcultural identity is reduced to the *pain* experienced. Of course, the histories of the lower classes and the reflection of those histories in our contemporary social spaces are painful and difficult in many ways. Yet, as we well know, that is not the whole story. Gómez Peña seems to forget that he chose his rite of birth; other choices were possible.

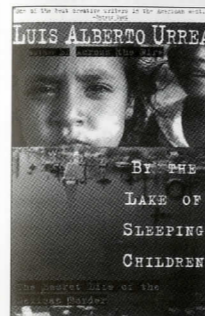
He seems in many instances to be consumed by hybridity and to be in pain because of it. At some point, we are told, he felt compelled to scream at the top of his lungs over the Los Angeles skyscrapers: "Deal with me! I am here to stay! *F—ing deal with me! See my people all around you! See yourself in me, in my people, in our collective pain! Deal with us! We are here to stay!*" What's with all the desperate screaming? Most of us have developed complex and astute strategies which we make use of in dealing with our invisibility. Why resort to this frantic screaming in "our" art? Is it because it's easy, accessible? At whose expense is this accessibility delivered and for whose consumption? My grandmother, Dolores, said something not too long ago that comes to mind: *de lo feo hace uno algo bonito*, in English, *out of the ugly one makes something beautiful*.

This message of willful transformation from the grim to the eloquent is what is left out of this "New World Border." Gómez Peña chooses to focus on "our collective dolor," rendering almost as a sideshow a psychedelic hyper-exotized landscape in which cultural exchanges flow in an infinite stream of recombinations, no border crossing card needed. All this, apparently, in a culturally equitable zone. Nice thought.

Which is not to say that there's no humor in "The New World Border." This excellent reference of the evolving Gómez Peña discourse comes with a great glossary of "borderismos." A bonus included in the top left corner is a visually addictive flip book — a favorite activity as one muses over the book's content.

domingo Nuño is a San Francisco-based multimedia artist.

NEW BOOKS



Two recent book releases are taking the publishing world by storm. "By the Lake of the Sleeping Children: The Secret Life of the Mexican Border" by Luis Alberto Urrea (Anchor Books) has been hailed as one of the most gripping, beautiful and vigorously argued accounts of life on the border.

"Drown," Junot Diaz's (Riverhead Books/Putnam) collection of short stories set in the immigrant slums of northern New Jersey, has already been singled out as one of the most noteworthy debuts of the year.

Coming in January, Julia Alvarez brings us "Yo," the sequel to "How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents." Published by Algonquin Books, "Yo," is the story of Yolanda, one of the famed sisters. Also in January, Delta publishes "New World: Young Latino Writers," edited by Ilan Stavans. In February, look for "The Hispanic Guide to the Internet: Culture, Style and Web Resources" by Michael Tovaes, Ronald Marin. This guide, published by Owllet, is a standard guide to resources for Latinos who are feeling a little lost on the Internet.

Some recent book releases worth checking out:

"The Law of Love"
by Laura Esquivel, (who brought us "Like Water for Chocolate")
Published by Crown

"East Side Stories: Gang Life in East L.A."
by Joseph Rodriguez, Ruben Martinez, Luis J. Rodriguez
distributed by Art Publico Press

"The Multicultural Student's Guide to Colleges: What Every African American, Hispanic and Native American College Applicant Needs to Know About American Colleges"
by Robert Mitchell
published by Noonday Press

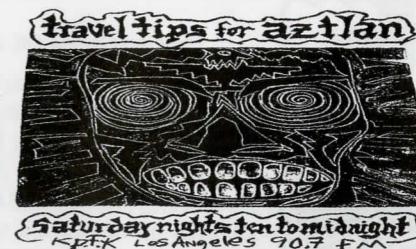
"Color of My Living Heart"
by Floyd Salas
published by Arte Publico Press

"The Fire in Our Souls: Quotations of Wisdom and Inspiration by Latino Americans"
edited by Rosie Gonzalez
published by Plume

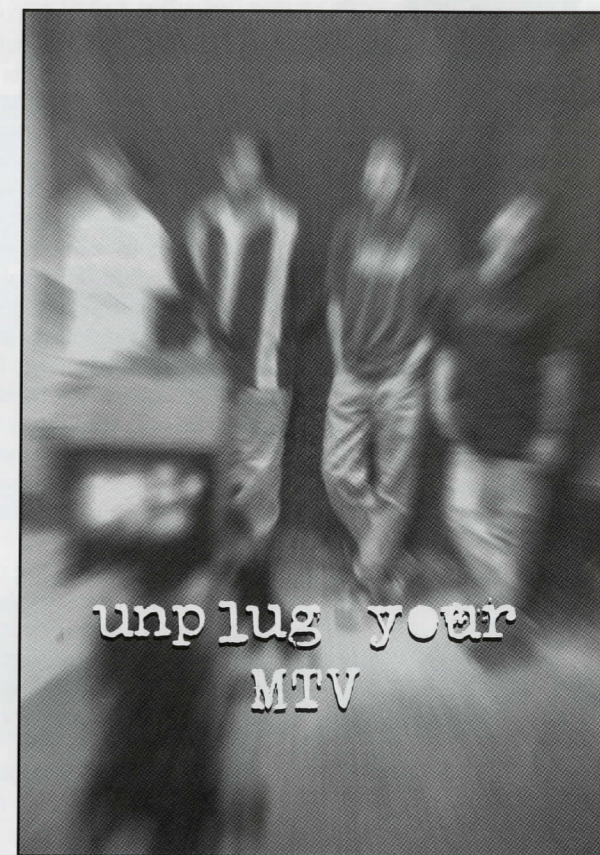
"Under the Pomegranate Tree: The Best New Latino Erotica"
by Ray Gonzalez
published by Washington Square Press

"Latino Magazines, Newspapers and Fotonovelas: A Selection Guide"
edited by Salvador Guereña and Vivian Pisano
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"Going Under"
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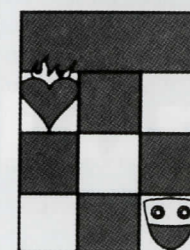
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The Gag Comes Off, continued from page 26

Until that happens, these generational representatives will continue expressing their desire through their art, writing, films and acting. Laura Mercado, a 24-year-old poet and student who lives in East Los Angeles, says finding her voice has been the biggest struggle of her life. "I had to teach myself how to write. No one gave me the words. ... I've felt mute all my life ... (When I wrote) my first essay I cried, because I realized I had words inside of me."

For Hill, it's also a constant struggle to find ways of expressing her desire to be respected on her terms without alienating the same people she wants to reach. "My inability to structure my voice so that it can be heard (is my biggest frustration,)" she says. "... So I have to find a way to communicate what I'm feeling without putting people off, so they can actually hear me. And the fact that so many non-Latinos are so surprised that I feel this way frustrates me 'cause it means that I've been mute for a long time. I think I was listening a lot. I think I was trying to find what I really cared about. And probably a little afraid, because I am angry."

Finding the balance between leading productive lives and addressing their desire to be met halfway by the rest of the country takes up a lot of energy for members of this generation. It's a constant struggle to get their messages out there, but they're persevering. The only thing they have to lose, after all, is their silence.

And what if these young Latinos and Latinas had the opportunity to address a captive audience for just 15 minutes, one filled with every single person in the country? What would they tell them?

"If I had one thing to say to this country and every American would hear," Ray Santisteban tells me, "I'd say, 'People learn by example. If Latinos ever become the majority in the U.S., pray we don't do to you what you've done to us.'"

Cristina Ibarra's statement to the country is a simple, yet powerful, one. "I would want people to know who I am," she says, pausing before adding, "... as a Chicana. There's a lot of misunderstandings about who we are. And I would want to tell them that I feel that people need to be open minded about ways to solve things, that democracy works when people listen to others' perspectives. ... It should involve a lot of different cultures."

Zilah Hill says she thinks the country could benefit if it just listened to what Latinos have to say. "I would say that without proper support, the genius in everything lost. People are missing out on a lot of beauty, a lot of life."

El Vez, continued from page 37

Pocho" and the protest-worthy pro-immigrant anthem "Taking Care of Business." In the former, he defends the rights of non-Spanish-speaking Chicanos; the latter blows all the hot air against immigrants into an indictment of a California economy built on immigrant backs.

With a hectic touring schedule in the U.S. and Europe, and upcoming projects such as a starring role in a German-produced film described as a "Faust-Phantom of Paradise Chiapas revolutionary fantasy" and a gospel album, there seems to be no rest for this musical *bracero*. As López says, "This is just one stop in the many travels of El Vez," who has proven more versatile than his origins would let on. Just like any hard-working immigrant, "you can put him on stage, behind a counter, in a picket line, or heading the revolution."

"He's the son of immigrants, and the first to graduate from high school." Comedian George Lopez hates intros like that. This recent introduction is typical of the ones he has received in his numerous appearances on "The Tonight Show With Johnny Carson," "The Arsenio Hall Show," "Entertainment Tonight" and other shows. "It's like we can't be funny without that melodramatic hook, we need to be made more digestible," Lopez tells me as we sit down in his hotel suite to discuss his CD, "Alien Nation," and his opinions on Chevy's, cocos (sellouts), and the current state of the Latino nation. "When they introduce George Wallace, they don't say 'He's the grandson of slaves' or 'Jerry Seinfeld, whose grandmother died in the Holocaust,'" he tells me, pointing out that the image of Latinos hasn't caught up with our modern-day reality. Take his performances during a recent tour promoting "Alien Nation." Decked out in a tailored suit, he immediately throws the audience — many of whom expect a different look from a comedian with a Latino surname — for a loop. He deals directly with stereotypes of all kinds, lobbing jokes at audience members eager to snatch them up when they're at the expense of their neighbors, not so eager when the jokes hit a little too close to home.

His comedic bullets fly fast and hard: "The fact that a restaurant chain like Chevy's would base its name on a Mexican stereotype is terribly degrading," he says on stage, referring to the fact that Mexicans are often shown packed into Chevy lowriders in the movies. "You wouldn't open a Jewish deli and call it 'Stingy's.'" When the audience lets out a muffled groan, Lopez retorts: "Oh, it's not funny when it's about you."

Lopez, who was born and raised in California's San Fernando Valley, reports on the double standards upon which our shaky society rests, addressing the skewed view everyone seems to have of Latinos.

"Everything Latino is popular right now — the food, the Southwest decor, the nannies," he says. "Everything except having an actual relationship with a [Latino] person."

Beneath the humor in many of his jokes lie deeper issues, and his audiences often end up laughing themselves into a new way of looking at things. One joke in his routine begins with a discussion of "Free Willy," who he calls the "illegal whalien" because he came from Mexico without papers, stashed away in a ship's cargo bin. The joke gets him a big laugh. Then he segues to a harder look at the hypocrisy of anti-immigrant movements. "Take those people fired from Apple (Computer) and put them in the fields," he recommends. "They'll be going from Apple to lettuce. Let's see how long they last. Mexicans, on the other hand, work even on freeways. They sell you shit you don't need: 10 lb. bags of peanuts, a bag of 53 oranges. But they work."

With his polished look, he says he's doing his part to promote a positive visual image of Latinos. It's in stark contrast to his in-your-face delivery on stage, but that's the way he likes it. Lopez enjoys jolting people into his way of seeing things.

Where some diehard Chicanos might criticize him for capitalizing on the Latino thing, Lopez says he's using the stereotypes to awaken Latinos and everyone else, even if it means taking shots at popular Latino icons like Selena and the new movie based on her life. "Thirty thousand girls go for a casting call. But will those same parents take them to register for school?" he asks. "I don't think so. (But) on a whim, you pack up the van and drive all the way to Texas thinking that your daughter can shake her nalgas to 'Bidi Bidi Bom Bom' and hope to get a call back."

Still, Lopez is careful about being too preachy with his audiences. He says he employs a two-for-one formula: two jokes for the audience for every one of his choosing. It's a ratio that's O.K. with him for now, but that he's convinced Hollywood still finds too threatening. "They give *coco* tokens like Greg Giraldo, who's as Latino as Linda Rondstadt, a prime time show," he says of the new "Common Law" star on ABC. "He's light-skinned and palatable."

If he ever gets his own show, Lopez says, he won't compromise to please anyone. "I'll have the backbone to say that you're not putting a rooster in my living room, or 12 people in my house, or that I'm not going to drive a broken-down car."

Until then, Lopez will just keep doing what he's doing, going from comedy club to comedy club. He has to. If not him, then who? "We're like condors," he says about the scarcity of high-profile Latino performers. "(There's) me, Paul Rodriguez, and the guy in the bumble bee suit selling insurance on Telemundo."

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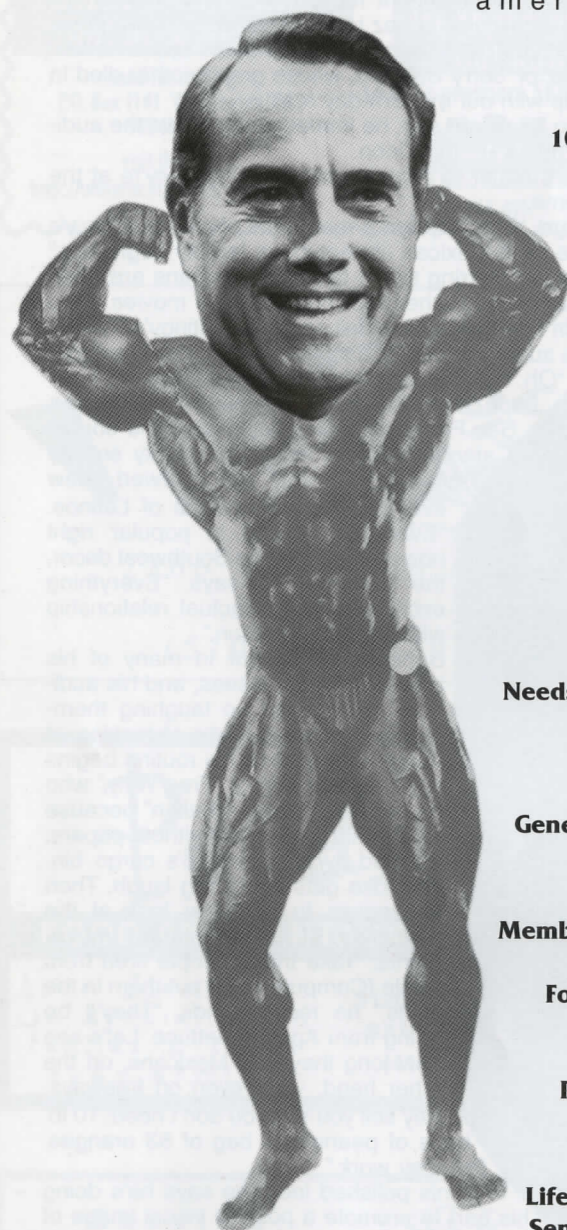
George Lopez

by

Alfonso Ruiz

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Needs Respirator to Inhale Claims He Didn't Inhale

GENERATION
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AWARDS
Purple Heart Purple Nose

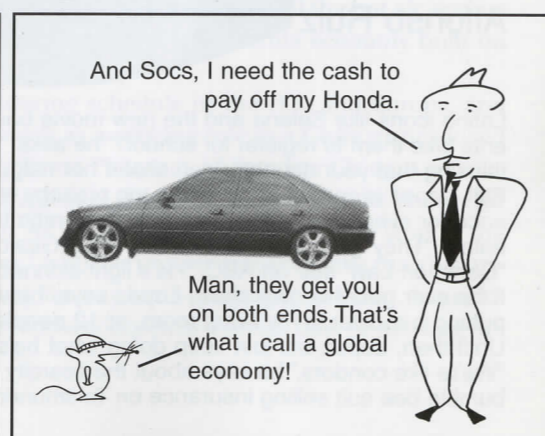
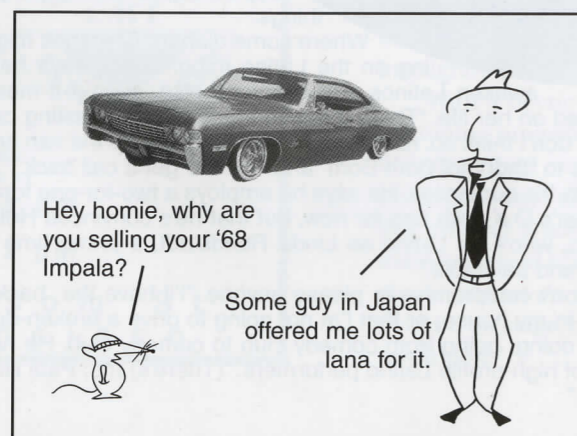
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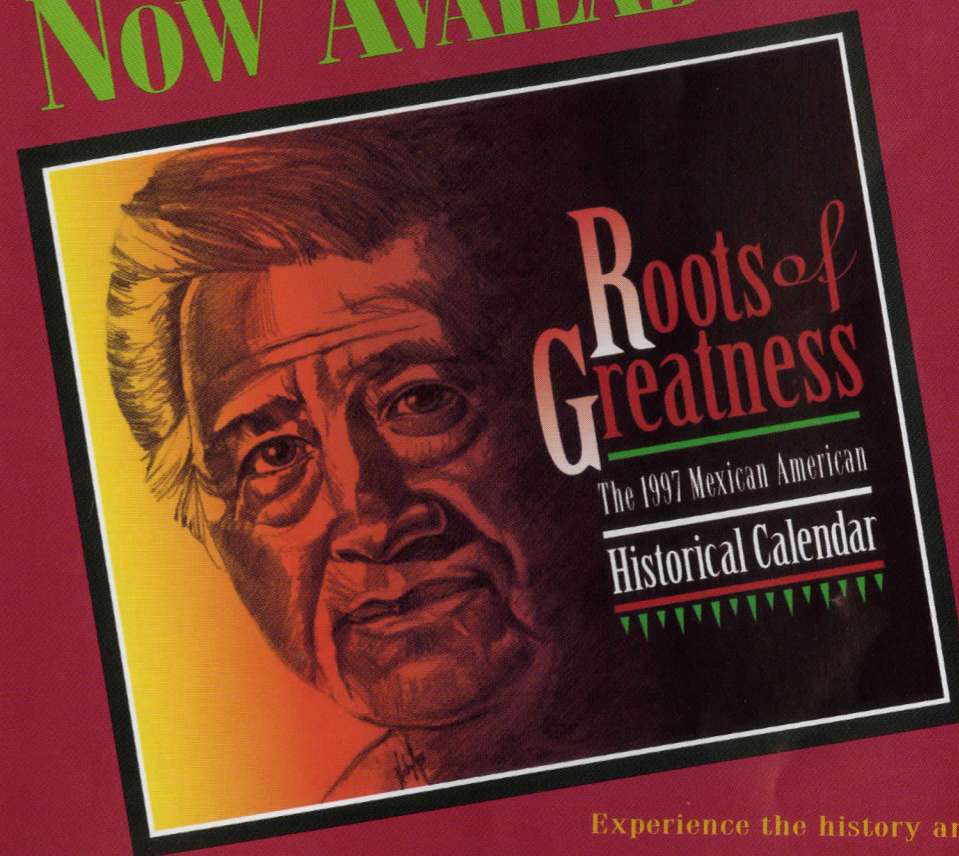
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