
La Reyna and La Real Keep Seasoning the Scene

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Reyna Mercedes Hernández Sandoval (La Reyna) and Yadira Pintado Lazcano (La Real) met the hip hop movement with a message from and for women: all women have to do what they think they can do, we are still strong, we keep looking our own spaces and we still believe that we can't stop before the macho thinking, because although we live in a country where women accumulate many achievements, sometimes culturally we still think the same way: that housework are solely for us, for example, and it's not like that, we must learn to share everything, explains La Real.

Precisely when they have just premiered a clip against gender violence, La Reyna sustains: it's important not to victimize ourselves for the fact that we are women, being entrepreneurs, empowering ourselves, because sometimes we set ourselves obstacles to keep moving forward and support machismo when we think like that. We are always conveying the message of what we believe should be right. Rather than focusing on the problem, we focus on solutions.

—Although it was difficult for them to gain a spot in a space so masculine that used to be rap, they don't complain at all, nor do they attempt to isolate themselves with categorizations. Female rap?

La Real: I wouldn't like to split it into categories, a hip hop for women or men, says La Real, because that divides us much more along the way; I think it's a hip hop made by and for people who feel that music.

La Reyna: At beginning of our careers it happened to us that most of the times when we went up on stage, many men turned their backs on us, they didn't want to hear us sing, because they said women were always complaining, and today I think we have earned respect, because we have been clear about the message we deliver. Men give the message from their points of view and we do it from ours, each one speaks from their experiences, but it's the same rap, the same movement, the same world; I don't think you have to divide it.

-In terms of sounds, the rap of La Reyna and La Real is characterized by the fusion. Do you still feel yourself as rappers?

La Reyna: We keep rapping. What I know how to do, besides my Chemistry majoring, is rapping. I can't say that I am singer of salsa, Cuban Son, timba, because I am not. I am a rapper, and the fact that it fuses does not mean it ceases to be rap. On the contrary, what I'm doing is contributing a lot to my music, enriching it, and I'm still rapping.

—How did you reach that conception of music you wanted to do?

La Real: We, thanks to heaven, we ran into a great producer named Moisés Whittaker. He showed us a new path, opened our eyes to a new way of making our music, and we began to study how to do it differently, because, in the end, that raw rap was no longer filling us with everything we wanted to do. We wanted to reach many people, so that children, women, men, everyone could listen and see themselves in what we do.

La Reyna: He taught us the ajiaco, he said that any seasoning you add to it would be good, any rhythm, any sound... That's what we've been trying so far, and it has worked for us.

- Within the Cuban hip hop movement, what distinguishes you? What includes you?

La Real: I think we are distinguished by the desire to work and move forward. We don't believe that we are not doing anything new, but what distinguishes us is the desire to do and work, no stopping and study every day, to reinvent ourselves every day.

La Reyna: What includes us is that we are clear about what we want and where we are heading, always defending our music and always fighting for the same objective.

- Which have been the greatest fulfilments in these almost eight years of work?

La Reyna: The acceptance we have had brings great satisfaction. Despite the hard times we've been through, many people follow us. The chance of representing Cuba at the Kennedy Center; international tours, like the one we took in New York, Sweden; the prizes at Cubadisco, Lucas, Cuerda Viva ...

La Real: For me, a great satisfaction is when someone recognizes us on the street; the expression on the face of your child when we began this interview which was like "wow, La Reyna and La Real". We are working hard, but we are reaching people. A girl approached Reyna and even cried in a bus, because she saw herself in what we do, with what we say. That is the greatest thing for us, nothing compares to that.

- What can you tell us about the new album that is already in production?

La Reyna: This album is named **Look at Me**. Under Bis Music record label, with the production of Jorge Luis Lagarza, Yoyi of Real Project and Rolando Bosito. It's an album for which we put great effort, there is a new image of La Reyna and La Real, in every angle, new sound, we approached this rap to the most current trends, it contains funky, electronic music, among other genres. We are going to release soon the first single, called **Goodbye, daddy** and it will also have a video clip. We have a very special guest who is Eme Alfonso.
