
YOUNG AND ARTIST: Yadira Pintado, a woman championing Cuban rap

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Being a woman and rapper at the same time in a country with marked traditional musical genres is not easy at all. Nonetheless, you can see some daring flirts with foreign sounds.

Prejudice prevails and standing out is tough. When you reach your goals, the result is always gratifying. That's the way Yadira Pintado Lazcano seizes the world surrounding her. She is one of the members of the duet **La Reyna y La Real**. Both have been on top lately in Cuba and the U.S.

La Reyna y La Real performed recently at **Artes de Cuba Festival** at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC.

Tell us about your experience of performing in a nation with great hip hop tradition?

When Yohana Grass —the event producer— told us we were going to perform at the Kennedy Center as part of the **Artes de Cuba Festival**, we did not really believe it. We knew the Festival would be awesome and our main goal was to defend the Cuban music. Many people doubted we were going to succeed as we were going to perform a musical genre that was born in the U.S. We were going to

beat them in their own turf.

A lot of people thought we had nothing to show. However, the performance went very well and we received a warmed acceptance. We knew how to show our Cuban roots. It was really a boost to our musical career since the U.S. is a great market for all musicians. It was very exciting.

Have you always been attracted to rap genre?

I have been always attracted to rap and never thought too much on the many obstacle I had to face. I just did what I loved. When you are in love, the first thing you do is not to think too much on handicaps.

Do you take music lessons?

No, never. I have never attended to a music school. My education has been absolutely empirical. I knew rap would become an inspiration source to externalize my inner world and everything happening in my mind.

What are the subjects you like to address in your songs?

Rap has been linked to politics on several occasions. But we rather address other subjects that have a lot to do with Cuban society as family relations and routines in every neighborhood of our nation. I believe it is a musical genre that can be used in this regard.

Is it so difficult to do rap in Cuba?

I do believe so. It is by far the less promoted genre of all even though there are lots of artists who like the sonority. Indeed, rap does not make you rich; therefore, make time for this art implies a huge sacrifice.

Being a woman make things tougher?

Of course! Doors are closed for us most of the time. This is because there are still prejudices in Cuban society. However, we always win through every obstacle.

We can attest your lyrics have a marked feminist signature. Why?

We are focused on portraying the role of Cuban women in our society, all virtues and flaws. I believe this is extremely important. And it must be convincingly done.

We have performed in pro-feminist festivals and we are proud of it. For instance, we participated in the 2nd Feminist Hip Hop Festival *Margenes* held in Holguin. We also performed in a festival organized by the Embassy of Spain in Cuba named *Ellas crean*. We shared the stage with Isis Flores and other artists. We also attended the *Love In Festival*, whose 6th edition was devoted to women; not to mention the *Havana World Music*, an outstanding experience.

The already popular song *Que se queme el arroz* (Let the rice burn!) is a very nice example of such tenacious efforts to highlight women's value in our society

I agree. We tried to champion those women who cannot go out to enjoy life as they must be at home doing all the housework. I did not like the refrain at the very beginning because it did not convey any message to me: "I am going out and let the rice burn!" I was afraid of the public's reaction. But I finally came to understand that it was going to be a hit. Luckily people have loved it, even several men.

The song is part of the album *Miky y Repa*, under license from **Tumi Music**, U.K. We spent almost three years producing the CD. At first, it was a very diverse album but the record label asked us to follow a more rapper line and we had to cut eight singles.

You have fused together rap with other musical genres...

Moises Witaker —our producer— suggested that we could do a kind of rap different to what was usually being done at the time. The idea was good to us and we found out that we could fuse rap with other rhythms. It has been tough, but extraordinary road. I believe our goal is to keep on being innovative and offer the public songs with which they feel identified with.

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