EPILOGUE: SPECIAL REGGAE WITH Ñ

BRIEF HISTORY OF REGGAE IN SPANISH (FROM 60'S TO 2002)

Por CARLOS MONTY & DR. DECKER

« Reggaeton has helped turn the focus towards our music. South Americans wonder themselves where this music comes from, because it is not their origin. When they check the source, they realize that the root is in reggae. Also the appreciation that Brazilians have for our music has really helped to reinforce their interest in the continent. Brazilians… They love our music. We have similarities with them. They have a dish that is like our rice and peas, just as we share culture. Being the most influential part of the black population outside from Africa, our music has a unique appeal, level of appreciation and capacity for people to adhere to it in these countries where English is not spoken»

JUNIOR KELLY on the "JAMAICA OBSERVER"

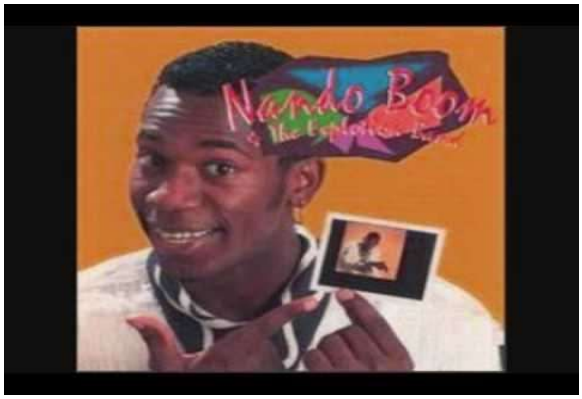
INTRODUCTION

The popular imagination places the birth of Jamaican music sung in Spanish on the impact of the wrongly named rhythm dembow in the Spanish Caribbean. Nothing further from reality. Convert part in the whole is an error that must be cleared at once.

The different and powerful branches of Jamaican culture spread throughout the Spanish-speaking world in different times and through different channels and levels. Sometimes directly linked to rock and underground culture, as in Latin American Southern Cone and Spain, where number to have its own entity neither cultural nor musical in the whole of the country, having to depend on the radio or of visits from great Jamaican stars as catalysts of the genre itself reggae (this is what happened in such different places such as Argentina, Chile or Venezuela).

REGGAE WITH 'Ñ' ANTHEMS

1. General Echo - People are yuh ready (Mummy, 1980)
2. Jah Macetas - Dime (Xiu-Xiu, 1990)
3. El Roockie - Se acabó el Bad Bwoy (JM Productions, 1998)
4. Los Pericos - Runaway (EMI, 1994)
5. Basque Dub Foundation - Ministerio del Dub (Massive Sounds, 1997)
6. Nando Boom - Pensión (Shelly's 1990)
7. El General - Tu Pum Pum (New Creation, 1989)
8. Potato - Rula (Oihuka, 1988)
9. Los Cafres - Suena la Alarma (Reliquias/DBN, 1997)
10. Jam & Suppose - Camión lleno de Gun (Raggaforce, 1992)



Nando Boom. Source: Pinterest

Other places, on the other hand, all in the Caribbean, Colombia and Central America (particularly Panama, Belize, Costa Rica and Honduras), where the black population does have historical ties and cultural traces, Jamaican influences have a letter of their own nature that explains the evolution of these communities local towards subgenres with entity in themselves.

Notably, the Panamanian plena music, Colombian African influenced champeta, Puerto Rican reggaeton, tico reggae and its pura vida style, the first Dominican dembow or the raspazon of the black Honduran/Belizian called Garífunas.

It is impossible to elaborate in a single chapter a rigorous catalog of artists and the records of such a big milestones scene, so we apologize in advance to whom surely they should be; we really have chosen to explain the context of how a scene as local as the Jamaican gets cross the language and cultural barriers until becoming universal in Spanish with local contributions of folklore that mix the original spark of Jamaican flavor to create new musical universes.

SPANISH CARIBBEAN ORIGINS

Jamaican music sounds in the Spanish Caribbean does not originally come out of the island through Panama or Puerto Rico, as is believed. But its first natural extension occurs throughout the British Caribbean, both by Trinidanian musicians that in the sixties they already mixed with their traditional calypso as for minor islands, such as Antigua, St. Thomas or Grenada. For example, musicians of the latter island will plant the Jamaican seed in countries like Venezuela, through the legendary band **Jah Jah Children**, whose debut with the single “Freedom Cry” in 1978 made them settle in Venezuela after a tour in 1982, debuting in long format with his LP “Black Truth”, still in its entirety in English; although thanks to them raised in the eighties and nineties Venezuelan groups like **Onice** or **Dur Dur**. But the real gateway to the continent is the formerly called British Honduras and then Belize.

In the early sixties, the usual calypso sounds of Lord Kitchener or Mighty Sparrow mixed with the new ska formula that is coming of Jamaica, particularly Byron Lee & the Dragonaires, The Skatalites, The Maytals or The Blues Busters, or the Belizean *brukdown* style promoted by radio station The Broadcasting Corporation of Belize, and the youth

movement from the neighboring Mexican state of Quintana Roo (internationally known by tourist emporium of Cancún and later of the so-called Riviera Maya) takes good note. In parallel, musicians especially talented, like **'Toño' Quirazco and his Hawaiian Boys**, and at the end of the sixties the brothers Benito of Chetumal (the capital of Quintana Roo) and also founder members of Orquesta Siboney, organize their Jamaican music influenced band called **Benny y su Grupo**. On the other side, the *maestro* Eliseo Pech Yama together with Tropical Managua Orquesta member Eddie "Mr. Babaloo" Ortega create **Ely Combo y El Negro de Belice** (Anthony Jones).

In both cases, the ska versions in *spanglish* have given way to versions of bluebeat, rocksteady and, above all, early reggae and, maintaining the parallelism, both formations will debut in long format in 1972 ("El Nuevo Ritmo Reggue (Reggay)" for RCA the first ones, which included versions from the very influential band on that time Byron Lee & the Dragonaires, but not their greatest success, "Kaliman", which will not be published until 1977, and "El Increible Reggay" for Eli Combo) and both will be presented live that same year on the popular television show from Mexico D.F. "Always on Sunday", making Jamaican music so popular in the country.

Another example: the Colombian DJ and scholar Crono Piano tells us that, on the shores from the Caribbean to the port city of Cartagena de Indias, discs and equipment arrive and facilitate the birth of a movement of sound systems called *picós* (anglicism of pick up), which program Creole and international music in the sixties. This is added to the emergence of the Caribbean Music Festival (1982-1996) that presents in Colombia big Jamaican names such as Freddie McGregor, Dennis Brown, Byron Lee, Burning Spear, Culture, Inner Circle, Eek A Mouse, Mystic Revealers and many more Jamaican music bands, give rise to the appearance of the musical style known as ***champeta***.

Colombian Picó - Street Pic

Reggae influence is evident in first album of this genre called "Anne Zwing" (1988) by **Viviano Torres**; or in the songs of Elio Boom, Sayayín, etc., as well as naturally reggae as such it emerged in Colombia in the eighties with the San Andrés group **The Rebels** and developed in the nineties by Magical Beat, Job Saas and **Alerta Kamarada**, among others, tell us from Cartagena de Indias journalists J. J. Carbonell and Pablo M. Rojo.

ORIGINS IN ARGENTINA

While in different parts of the Caribbean Jamaican musical expansion patterns are repeated as a prolongation of a common historical, social and racial experiences, on the other side of the continent, in the Argentina of General Perón, Daniel Morano, son of the owner of Radio Rivadavia, founded in 1974 “El Tren Fantasma”, a weekend radio show that plays especially rock in English. Through that program in the second half of the seventies Great Britain punk-2Tone-New Wave enters the country. And with it the international explosion of reggae in the “white” world.

Los Pericos

In 1979 Morano formed the band Calipso DeLuxe, which would later become **Alphonso S’Entrega**, a kind of punky-reggae-party that do not acquire musical solvency until the entry of the bass player Rinaldo ‘Rino’ Rafanelli, a “Beatlemaniac” with previous extensive experience in rock and blues that had arrived to reggae-pop through Police and Eric Clapton. Alphonso S’Entrega only edited two late albums before dissolving, their self-titled debut in 1987 and “El Paso” in 1988, but throughout the decade they became an underground reference for all those who would come after, singularly **Los Pericos**. 'Rino' Rafanelli has said in various occasions that since its founder, Ale 'Perico', until the following bass player of that band were his students and until Fernando Hortal “El Bahiano” joined them and get the first commercial hit from him, “El Ritual de la Banana” (1987) -sung in English—,

they did not come out of reggae “for whites” like the commercial UB40 from mid-eighties and The Police. Then they would end up recording with the Wailers (“Runaway”).

Similarly, linked to “El Tren Fantasma””in the early eighties, the renowned rock guitarist Tito Fargo (Héctor D’Aviero) joins the Italian-Scottish musician Luca Prodan, recently arrived from London and who will teach the argentines that there is a way to make Jamaican music beyond reggae-pop. With his training also underground band, the **Hurlingham Reggae Band**, which did even not record a tune, was Prodan's experimental band parallel to the most commercially successful, Sumo, can be considered the first true Argentinian band with fundamental strictly reggae style.

And that will be precisely the problem of countries without black or Jamaican presence, that the adoption of Jamaican music is not natural, but imported and even in certain point imposed. They ended up understanding musical fundamentals, adopting mystical and cultural concepts, but the language barrier makes difficult the reinterpretation to be credible if it is sung in Spanish.

That's why until the second half of the eighties, the Spanish vocals became just translations, Also, the expansion of the Jamaican thing depends in excess to media and popular local people.

THE SPANIARD AFFAIR

For example, in Spain it is well known the decisive contribution of the A&R of Ariola (Island Records publisher in Spain in the seventies) Carlos Juan Casado (later director of Virgin Spain), whose initiative to copy as a platform promotional for Bob Marley's albums sound system concept with a promotional truck (like the classic Swing A Ling) that toured Spain that recently exit from Franco's regime, distributing merchandising while selling records during those times, had a lot to do with the popularization of genre in key environments to concerts of the Reggae King in Ibiza (1978) and Barcelona (1980).

That stale and sleepy Spain of the Francoism, clearly far from migratory sphere of Jamaicans, Africans and Caribbeans in general, was not ground propitious, during the decades of the sixties and seventies, so that ska and reggae will take root with solvency. The sounds that came from Jamaica were considered as the umpteenth “fashionable dance” or “the song of summer”, without understanding its background and placing them clearly outside of context.

As in Mexico, the model that is took to, on rare occasions, reproduce the Jamaican sound was the one that Government of the island exported expressly, that is, that of Byron Lee & The Dragonaires (with emblematic cuts like “Jamaica Ska”) and some songs that they highlighted the folkloric after

taste that tourists wanted to find in their trips to Jamaica, were these real or imaginary.

Starting in 1964 and throughout those two decades, some Jamaican hits were enjoying their respective Spanish editions: “My Boy Lollipop” by Millie Small, “Israelites” by Desmond Dekker or “Double Barrel” by Dave & Ansel Collins (to give just a few outstanding examples) they testified that something really interesting was happening in that secluded corner of the Caribbean. In some cases, those songs were chanted, danced and even covered.

The case of “Shame & Scandal”, a traditional air in Trinidad and Jamaica that spread internationally being popularized, above all, by Peter Tosh And The Wailers. The Spanish contribution came from the hand of Los Tres De Castilla, Los Jois, Los Tres Sudamericanos, La Orquesta Vergara, Aníbal, Los Cénits or Tom Cats (of English origin), often under the title of “Qué Familia Más Original” and changing the ribald contents of the lyrics by more innocent others and admissible by the censorship of the time. Also “My Boy Lollipop”, number one on the English charts in the strident voice by Millie Small, had its impact in the country with groups like Telstars, El Dúo Radiant or Los Catinos.

What jumps to our ears when we listen those scattered songs is that both in Spain and in a good part of Europe had misunderstood the rhythm syncopated ska and rocksteady as if it was a vulgar and insipid little troupe with low-grade Spanish pasodoble resonances.

Despite early visits from some of the original protagonists, such as of Prince Buster in 1964 as it is mentioned in his album “I Feel The Spirit” but never really confirmed, here in Spain the Jamaican sound was practiced according to the model that came from Italy with “Operazione Sol”, sung by Peppino Di Capri. The disaster, transferred to Spain, took course of the national ska “phenomenon”: Los De La Torre, with songs like “Marionetas en la Cuerda”, (“Puppetr On A String” version), “Hay que Vivir”, “Te Puedes ir en Paz” or “Señor López”, the latter composed by Argentinian artist Palito Ortega and performed also by Payadores. For their part, Los Sónor made “Do The Blue Beat” and Los Profesores del Ritmo “Baila Ska” and “Ska Jamaicano” (“Jamica Ska” version).

But perhaps the worthiest example of local reinterpretation of Jamaican sound we find it in “Rudy Enamorado” (1969) from Los Bravos, version of the cut (“Rudy In Love”) that the British The Locomotive had recorded a year before. Also in 1969 Jorge Querol and his group Los Go-Gó performed their own version in Spanish of the same original. The boiling of Jamaican reggae during the seventies imade possible for first division artists of the genre like Bob Marley & The Wailers, Burning Spear, Third World or Gladiators, will enjoy powerful coverage international thanks to the editions of big labels, like Island or Virgin; the sharpened reggae began to act as loads of depth in a Spanish State, which starting in 1975, it stretched after almost forty years of dictatorship.

Jah Macetas - Source: Carlos Monty Collection

It wasn't until the early eighties when allowed the emergence of a timid reggae and ska scene: the democratic transition brought fresh winds of change and the echoes of musical movements like by Bob Marley in 1981 (with his ascension to the altars of martyrs of music modern) and the barrage of the explosion Two Tone in England put first flat reggae and other Jamaican herbs that some, few and scattered at first, rushed to collect here.

At first, we find to formations like **Potato**, originating from Vitoria-Gasteiz (Basque Country) and the Valencia's **Jah Macetas**. Guaki Taneke (renamed **Malarians** in the nineties) and **Desakato Dadá** did the same from Madrid and, in Barcelona, **Skatalá** and **Dr. Calypso** opened fire with a sound more oriented towards ska and sixties sounds.

At that time, they were already integrating ska and reggae in their musical arsenal the formations of the called Rock Radikal Vasco, a label punk oriented that didn't quite satisfy anyone, but which included groups from the Basque environment with marked punk roots like Hertzainak, Kortatu or La Polla Records. In this case, Jamaican represented an alternative stylistic more within their proposal, in a similar way to how it had been for British punks.

Slowly, a scene in which ska and reggae were the center started. It was practiced with more enthusiasm than

real knowledge, with more desire than technique, with more enthusiasm than promotion. The first lights were activated in the Basque Country (the already mentioned Potato, Kannabis Band), Valencia (Jah Macetas, **Naturals**), Catalonia (Dr. Calypso, Números Rojos, **Roots Generator**, To' Pa Jah), Madrid (The Masters, Desakato Dadá, Malarians)and, to a lesser extent, some points of Rioja region (Banana Boats) or Andalusia.

These pioneers, even with forays into the toasting DJ Style, like **DJ Ragnampaisser** in Barcelona or **Julio Far-I** in Valencia, they planted the seed in an arid land; the public in general applauded movements like the new wave or the Madrid British oriented musical movement, but new formations of reggae were seen as something anachronistic and out of touch place in our musical panorama.

The stereotypical image of joints, well vibe and neo-hippieism that they had about them prevented his message and work from being understood in all its depth. That vison changed thanks to the arrival of new technologies and, especially, the internet, and recording and editing music became something like preaching in the desert for the most of these formations. But sting stone sometimes has its results and little by little a channel was opened each time wider and more abundant. Jobs like "Toda una Vida" (1990) by Jah Macetas, "Crónicas de Puerto Sinmás" (1992) by Potato, "No Tengo Bandera" (1993) by Banana Boats, "Guaki Taneque" (1991) from Malarians, "Contraoscuridad" (1998) from Roots Generator or "Cuerpo a Cuerpo" (1997) of **Arawak** represent some of the most celebrated moments of that meager harvest.

The Latin Reggae Festival, held in Barcelona in 1991, 1992 and 1993, was the first contest that brought together those formations in something that was beginning to take on the appearance of a scene. In 1993, the U-Zona Reggae festival took the relay with a schedule that included also international artists and other fires began to burn in various points of state geography such as testimony of the growth of a current unstoppable bands that began to activate, nourishing the scene from the Basque Country —**Akatz**, Ambassadors/Vibes All Stars, 12 Tribu, Ke Rule/Ke No Falte—, Madrid—Afrobrass, **Cañaman**—, Galicia —Bush Doctors—, Valencia —**Natty Dread**/**Ras La Tribu**/Llança de Foc—, Aragon —**Jah'Sta** — or Andalusia —Ital Roots/ **Amala Family Band**/ Rootsamala—.

Deserving special mention is a vibrant scene of roots reggae and dub circa 1994 that made its way from Santander with the creation by Roberto 'Ras' Sánchez and Borja 'Schust' Juanco, whith projects such as Lone Watti, Better Collie and Loud & Lone, who soon began to interact with members of Basque groups, such as **Ambassadors**—giving rise to the project Vibes All Stars—or Akatz. That order of things will lead to the creation of the A-Lone Ark Studio, essential in the years to come as the epicenter of reggae in Spain and other bands, such as Super Ape, Batiscafo or the vocal trio The Nortones. With the time, **Roberto**

Sánchez has stood out, as a solo artist or in front of his band Lone Ark -or Lone Ark Riddim Force as support band facet for singers- and he has become bastion in the genre, building a solid career that includes work with prominent artists, Jamaican or not, from international prestige.

Potato. Pic by Iñaki Ibáñez via Dr. Decker Collection

On the other hand, and from Bilbao, Iñaki Yarritu put the project into operation called **Basque Dub Foundation** with interactions with London reggae and a coherence that pointed the musical project very far, just as time has been demonstrating. The progressive entry into the reggae scene of Sánchez and Yarritu is the point that has made reggae done in Spain as an adult movement that has grown both in quality and quantity.

Furthermore, in this last decade of the twentieth century began to germinate an incipient and reduced sound system concept scene that will go taking shape in the early years of new millennium with pioneers like Rocker Sound, Leones Humildes and One Blood (in Barcelona), Rootseeker, Pastizal, Kachafyah or Chalice (in Madrid), Stereotone (in Valencia), Jah Ras (in Tenerife), or Bomb Bass (in Bilbao).

The network of artists, producers, formations and sound systems that have appeared under the arm of those pioneers, give a good account of the health of the scene in recent years, without counting on the recent approach of the scene of Madrid hip hop to reggae dancehall, in particular from Mallorca island with **El Hermano**

Ele and La Puta Opepé ("Raggafla") and the nucleus of hip hop group Club de los Poetas Violentos formed by **Skeep Rango and Kamikaze** under the Kiki Sound label and after their trip to Jamaica in 2001, which promises to give a lot of itself ("Bien Sobre Mal", 2002).

THE SOUTHERN CONE (ARGENTINA, CHILE, URUGUAY)

Fidel Nadal (left) with Los Cafres.
Source: Wordpress

In similar evolution, even more popular than in Spain, in the late eighties and early nineties, in Argentina the reggae rhythm is in fashion until a point that there was no pop group that didn't have a song with a Jamaican rhythm, when they had not directly assimilated their ways.

Thus, the second generation of groups, particularly **Los Pericos** (which will adapt Jamaican classics with great success and played at Reggae Sunsplash in 1993 and 1994, bringing also the festival to Argentina), Los Fabulosos Cadillacs, **Los Auténticos Decadentes**, Zimbabwe and even Todos Tus Muertos will take over so that groups, like **Los Cafres** (with percussion and horn section of Los Auténticos Decadentes in their initial line-up), they end up harvesting the sowing of Los Pericos that recorded their first album "Frecuencia Cafre" in 1994 engineered by Errol Brown at Tuff Gong.

Other parallel bands and musicians, such as **Lumumba** (with **Fidel Nadal** and the great **Pablo Molina**, both Afro-Argentines who came of Todos Tus Muertos, local imitation of Manu Chao's Mano Negra), they put more emphasis on Rastafari, although after four anthological albums, both have had their own solo careers, including Molina's *alter ego* **Abed Nego** and his celebrated jamaican classics in spanish (2000). The most recent **NonPalidece** band have continued the international projection of white/mestizo reggae from Argentina.

The same can be said about the rest of the Southern Cone, Chile and Uruguay. On the shore of Andes Mountains, the same milestones are reproduced. A concert that brings together (UB-40 in Santiago in 1987) a parallel experiment of a rock group (Tam-Tam Reggae in 1991, formed by Mario Planet, former member from the rock group Upa!), some groups suburbs that will jump from the underground rock to international projection (Prisioneros, **Gondwana**) and a group putting the Rastafarian accent like **Nyabinghi**, but of more jazz musical inspiration.

Southern Cone Reggae Flyer

Or in the homeland of African yoruba music candomblé, Uruguay, where the mestizo and black presence is greater than in the rest, and reggae is called there **Kongo Bongo**, the multiracial band created in 1989 by guitarist Gabriel Otero, the bassist and composer Gustavo Casenave and vocalist Alfredo 'Chole' Gianotti, who would end up forming the well-known mestizo rock band La Abuela Coca after seeing Mano Negra in Montevideo in 1992, was replaced by Álvaro Albino, better known as the black 'Apagón', which had already joined the band in 1990.

But as is often the case with adaptations of foreign sounds to Spanish, and with very honorable exceptions, like those of **Bahiano** and to a certain extent the vocal harmonies of Los Cafres in Argentina or **Pere Andrés 'El Rumbero Jamaicano'** (Jah Macetas, Ras La Tribu) or El Hermano Ele in Spain, all these mestizo groups or directly emerged from rock culture is that they do not represent with verisimilitude nor harmony nor Jamaican vocal techniques. Such time for this the first time the label "reggae in Spanish" (Nando Boom, 1991) becomes popular internationally, it does very far from these latitudes, and the reinterpretation is embodied directly by Caribbean blacks.

PANAMÁ vs. PUERTO RICO

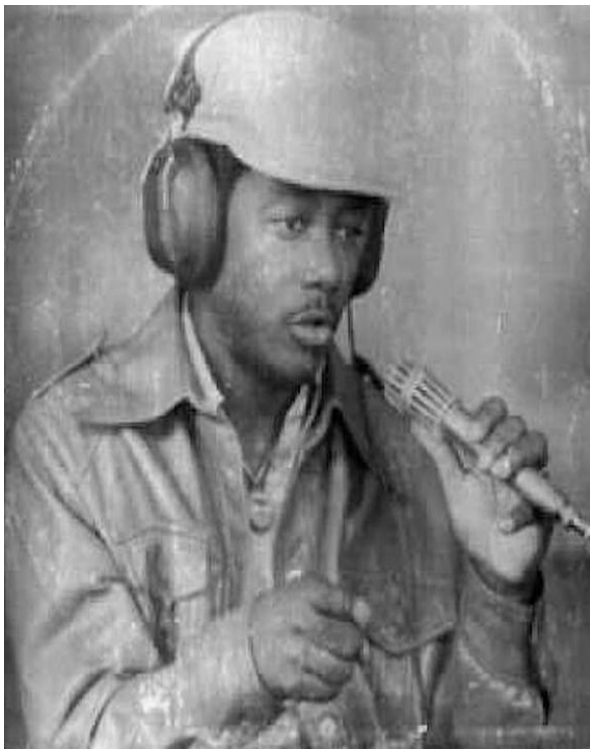
When the Jamaican producer Ephraim 'Count' Shelly dropped in London launches that Nando Boom album through the subsidiary Americana from his Super Power label, and within a few months the powerful Columbia appropriates the term "Spanish reggae" by adding the "dancehall" label to give nature charter throughout the continent at versions of Jamaican rhythms of the moment in Spanish, it was hardly imaginable to twin English-speaking Jamaica with the spanish-speaking continent, or that the executives of the multinational knew really that in Panama and Puerto Rico already there was a lot of ground traveled in that twinning.

Already in the last seventies, pioneers such as **Calito Soul** (who was the first to make rap and reggae disco covers as Denroy Morgan "I'll do anything for you", DJ Wassabanga and, in particular, Rastanini, who with his brother Hernando 'Super Nandi' Brin will end up publishing with the help of local Rastafari group **The Cheb** the first Spanish reggae album "Treatment" in 1984, they practice an still primitive adaptation to Spanish to Jamaican sound like.

But they are almost immediately after, **Renato** first, with the edition of his first hit ("EL DENI" an adaptation to Spanish of the Punnany riddim that there was a popular fact by Lovindeer and, above all, "La Chica de los Ojos Café", who opened her eyes international doors), and Nando Boom, to the few months, although he had already been stepping stages since late seventies with his debut album "Mi Mujer Habla Asi" from the hand of the producer Ramón 'Pucho' Bustamante and what he takes in 1986 to obtain a contract with Sony in New York, with which launches the first international edition of it with the album "El Explosivo" (1988), who are going to truly incorporate Jamaican resources already in the raggamuffin' period microphone in the language of Cervantes.

Producer Dennis 'The Menace' Thompson had just shed light on the "Poco Man Jam" riddim by Steelie & Clevie for the label Shelly's Records, New York trademark for Superpower label, a new riddim called "Pounder", initially recorded in 1990 by minor artists, such as Bobo General & Sleepy Wonder, when 'Pucho', Nando's manager and **Nando Boom** (Fernando Orlando Brown Mosley) producer, contact in Brooklyn with them and the recording that will the Panamanian do under the title "Pension" will unknowingly cause the birth of reggaeton.

Popular in 1991 as "Dem Bow" ("Ella Benía") heading their second album "Spanish Reggae" (Shelly's,1991), the album adapted many other versions of Cutty Ranks, Bob Andy and others, including "Too Experience/My Time" (curious, the same versions as will later select Bahiano with Los Pericos from Argentina). The success is such that Bobby Digital in parallel edits his own variation of the riddim, particularly with Shabba Ranks impact, although it was never clear if it was before the chicken or the egg.



General Echo - Rocking & Swing Cover

But Spanish reggae fire burns from New York City, where the bilingual Panamanian and Jamaican colony melt easily at the connections idiomatic thanks to the permeable circuit in the eighties of sound systems in Brooklyn, on the isthmus, the rivalry between the capital Panama City and the bustling city of Colón had brought in the second mid-eighties significant growth of the approach to Jamaican originated, above all, by the presence in Colón in 1980 of the Jamaican prematurely failed **General Echo** with his

Stereophonic sound system (Ragga Fyah sound system named as his band) and his slogan then People are yuh ready!, which can be considered the true foundation of Jamaican patwa talking, according to an eyewitness of those days, the pioneer **Tingo San**.

A relief is coming with artists like Chichoman, Pocho Pan, The Prophet and Rigoman, and above all **El General** (Edgardo Franco), who in 1989 published his version of "Punnaney Tagereg" which was popularized by Little Lenny a year earlier, under the title of "Tu Pum Pum" (originally "No me va a Matar") and becomes an instant success, because, as with Nando Boom, the lyrics and phrasings in Spanish by first time they literally sounded like the Jamaicans.

El General - Promo ARP

A year later, his first mini-album "Estás Buena" was released, including numbers like "Son Bow" and "Te Ves Buena", as well as versions of John Holt ("A Love I can feel"). The album became released as 12" at 45 RPM in Spain under the title of his hit "Tu Pum Pum" by BMG Ariola a year later, and already in 1991, which was followed by others throughout the nineties, like "Muévelo con El General" (1991) or the morbid but endearing hit "Rica y Apretadita" by 1995.

As with Nando Boom, behind the international success of El General was another Panamanian ambitious producer in Manhattan (New York), Michael Ellis who, through his company, New Creation Enterprises with important connections with the multinationals WEA and BMG-Ariola, will divulge the subgenre recently born with other artists, such as The Prophet or Killer Ranks, and will connect that scene both with hip hop as with house (which can be seen well in some productions of El General).

That derivative use of the genders will explode in Puerto Rico. At the end of the eighties what entered the Borinquen island was, above all, hip hop. The kids were trying to rap to the rhythm of **DJ Negro** (Félix Rodríguez), at only sixteen years old, in a slum in La Perla suburb in Old San Juan called Joseph Café. Negro will associate with another young pioneer in rap in Spanish, '**Vico C.**' **Rodríguez**, while still was part of the duo VG Princess, and with whom he will publish his first albums between 1991 and 1992 ("La Recta Final", "Misión: La Cima" and "Hispanic Soul").

Scorned by the owner of the slum where he had made a name for himself, in1992 he opened his own club, “The Noise”, with **DJ Playero** (Pedro Gerardo Torruellas), tropicalizing hip hop mixtapes from 1990, together with him as a resident, the place becomes the official door to Puerto Rican reggaeton, when that year the song “Bobo” (about the “Maddy Cry” riddim popularized by Papa San), by the Panamanian Pocho Pan, breaks the stage in the version of the very young local **Kid Power Posse**.

From that moment on and also due to the transfer of riddims by Panamanian producers to Puerto Rican DJs to popularize their own artists and expand the market, say evil tongues, the so-called Puerto Rican underground of the pioneering MCs of Latin hip hop (Vico C, Lisa M., Ruben DJ) gives way to a proto-reggaeton with a new generation much more aware of the Jamaican news than the American ones and that goes from **Ivy Queen**, **Guanabanas**, Baby Rasta, Big Boy and the Mexican until Don Chezina and some upcoming artists as Daddy Yankee (protege of DJ Playero) and the debutant **Tego Calderón** in 1996 with “Me Toca a Mí” (still under the stage name of Tego-Tec).

The economic influence of Miami and New York, the changing taste of the influential niuyorican community and a protectionist policy that has led to musical blockades against Panama and Dominican Republic with its contagious local merengue has made that Jamaican flavor in Puerto Rico mostly disappear by the end of the century, given by other rhythmic bases extracted from other more Latin styles and productions much colder and electronic oriented to the North American record market.

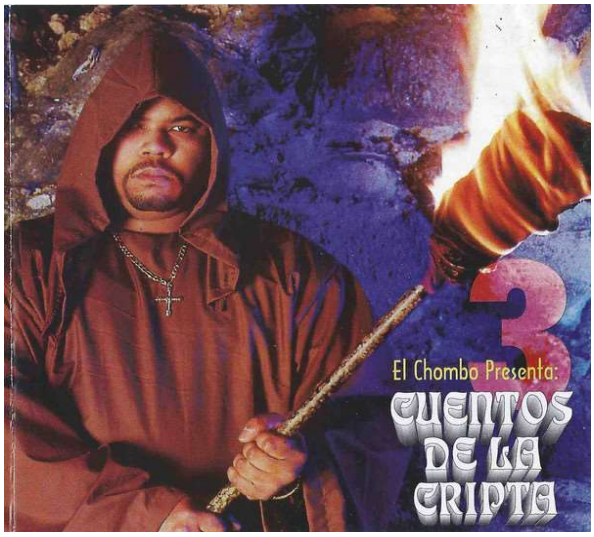
It is true that beyond the San Juan-New York, the Jamaican call has been maintained more on a cultural than commercial level, through roots reggae, thanks to groups coming from the British speaking Caribbean, as Jomo Pemberton and The Jah Seed Band, The Zioniers or the reggae gospel band Obedience, which will serve as inspiration for local rastafarian tribe with groups as **Cultura Profética** (the only one with certain international repercussion) and others like Millo Torres, first with the Third Planet and currently with Sonando Realidad, or the most recent Roots Natty. But it is still a marginal testimony within the bustling activity of Borinquen island of charm.

Cultura Profética. Source: Wordpress

Out because international expansion of the Panamanian rhythm called plena was moving away from the conditions of misery and banditry those that arise, outside of a pure generational change, the music in the isthmus country

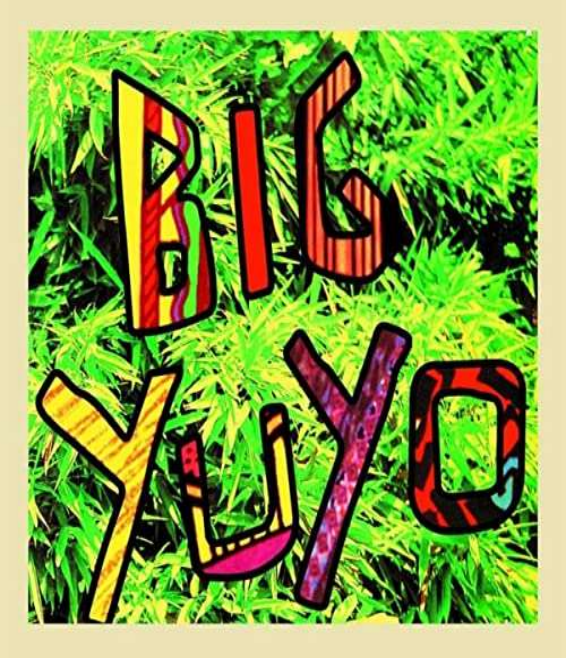
becomes much more sinister based on its international success. **Danger Man** along with Jr. Ranks and Tony Bull founded the **Killamanjaros** crew in 1991 with satires on the violence of gangs and weapons that will lead to bultrón reggae subgenre, although its anthem “Camión Lleno de Gun” was recorded by the duo Jam & Suppose in 1992.

Also, riddims like “Reggae 110” (named for its BPM), which all the new talents are signing up: **Aldo Ranks**, Papa Chan, El Renegado, Apache Ness and even the first timer **Kafu Banton**. The hardcore formula reaches its peak in 1996 when the renowned local producer Rodney S. Clark Ronalds, better known like **'El Chombo'**, does business with DJ Negro in Puerto Rico to launch the series “Los Cuentos de la Cripta” with artists from the two countries, with three deliveries and a fourth on the way of those that have become world hits have such as “El Gato Volador” by the duo Cracker Jack or the most recent “Papi Chulo” by Lorna, who have renewed the Spanish speaking music.



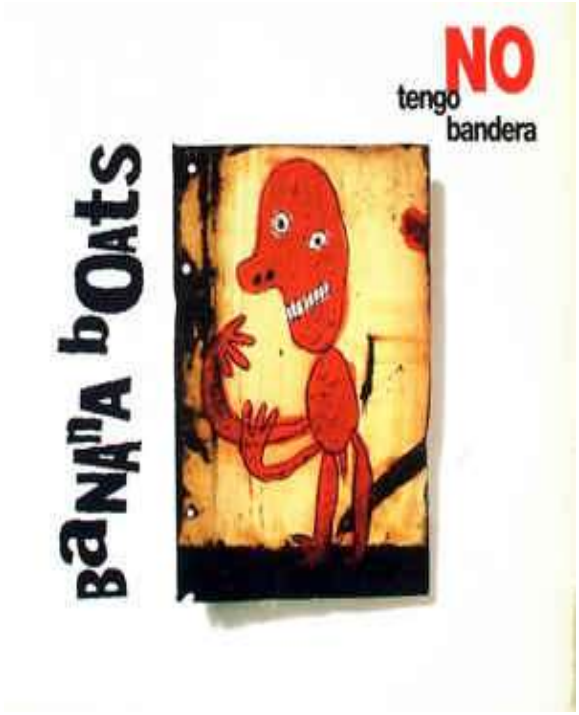
The excesses of guns & production of Panamanian bultrón reggae slackness had its own counterreaction, as is also usual in Jamaica, in what in Panama was called romantic reggae and that changes negativity for positivity with love stories and heartbreak in the foreground, but also incorporates a conscious side in the lyrics in the face of so much senseless violence, like the documentary “One Dollar. El Precio de la Vida” (2001), that relates this era with many of its protagonists. Some of his most notable “lyricists” are **Nigga**, El Aspirante or Eddy Lover, all of them after the omnipresence from producer Irving DiBlasio, who was also after bands like Raíces Y Cultura or La Factoría despite producing usually Danger Man at the opposite polo.

But above all, the personality more emerging on this conscious side from the Panamanian ghetto is Iván Vladimir Banista Castillo, better known as **El Rookie** (or The Wailan Rookie in his early days), born in the neighborhood of El Chorrillo in the capital and whose neorealism for capture the tragedy of gangster life borders it will surely inspire to the young people of the new century who sing Jamaican seed in Spanish, since will attract everyone's attention hand of DJ Pablito in 1996 with the underground hit “Más Armas No”. Since then Pablito is coveted by all Panamanians producers and his first two albums, “Revelation Lyrics” (1999) and “Máquina de Lírica: La Revolución Continúa” (2001), have already left incontestable hymns of the urban reality of large metropolises of America, like “Se Acabó el Bad Boy”, “Bway del Barrio” or “Carcelero”.



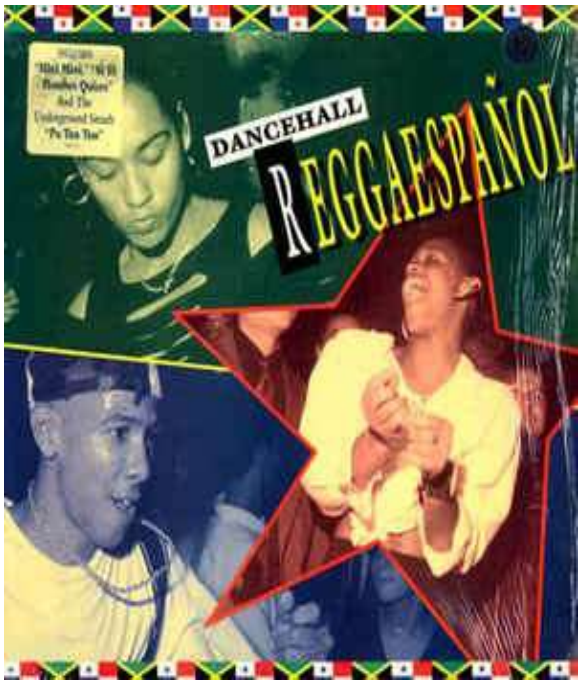
1. "Big Yuyo" - Los Pericos (EMI, 1992)

The fourth album by the Argentine band and first produced entirely for them marked a before and after in the interpretation in Spanish of the classic canons of Jamaican music, without being a simple copy. Optimistic and relaxed, reggae and ska sounded naturals in the voice of El Bahiano, opening the doors not only to the Latin American market, but even of the interest of Reggae Sunsplash, which would invite to his main stage the following year. That balance between standards of the genre such as Bob Andy covers ("My Time") via Nando Boom ("Mi Resistencia") or the Rolling Stines version of "Harlem Shuffle" via Bob & Earl, to the resounding dance pop hits "Me Late" (which had an impact in Spain), "Waiting" and "Eu Vi Chegar" or the irresistible ska of "Voy Caminando Lento" and "Hacé Lo Que Quieras" connect Ibero-American rock culture with Jamaican instrumental lust proving that it is also possible in Spanish.



2. "No Tengo Bandera" - Banana Boats (1993)

The autumn of 1989 saw the first rehearsals of Banana Boats from La Rioja region in Spain. In September of the following year, the band joined Byron Downs as soloist singer, a native of Corn Island (small island nearby to Jamaica, but belonging to Nicaragua), which gave the band the necessary plus for its consolidation and takeoff. In 1991 his own tunes "Good Level" and "Love & Hate" were included in the compilation called "Latin Ska Fever" (Semaphore/Sock It), but his best recordings appeared on this their only LP, published in 1993 on the Color Songs label which continues to be one of the most solid works of those years, where ska, rocksteady, calypso and reggae combine with astonishing naturalness in a work that remains so brilliant and authentic as the first day.



3. “Dancehall Reggaespañol” (Columbia, 1991)

If “Big Yuyo” by Los Pericos connected the Jamaican imagination with the Ibero-American rock culture, this New York compilation in key of dancehall opened the doors to the Spanish and black Caribbean of current Jamaican style of the moment. Reinforced in CD version with up to five more vinyl-related songs (including tunes from Sugar Minott and Cocoa Tea plus Honduran Arzu's version of “Number One” and “Night Nurse” by Gregory Isaacs), the album was conceived by CBS's savvy Jamaican A&R Maxine Stowe in tribute to the undeniable Panamanian push in New York from that beginning decade, including both the Panama channel deejays and their most successful hits (El General and his “Tu Pum Pum” and his cousin La Atrevida with the feminist and empowered rhymes or Nando Boom and his “Desorden”) including also the original Jamaican riddims of those Spanish versions by Little Lenny, Cutty Ranks, Super Cat, Ninjaman or even Fab 5 Freddy. All reinforced with the *niuyorican* Lisa M and La Diva on the classic Audrey Hall’s “One dance won't do.”

CREDITS:
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Design: Carlos Monty
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