

# DIGITAL CUMBIA: TRADITION AND POSTMODERNITY

— TRANSPPOSITION —

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## ABSTRACT

Originally published in the Chilean journal *Revista Musical Chilena* in 2016, this article is focused on the most recent transformation of the popular Latin American cumbia genre: so-called “digital cumbia”.<sup>2</sup> It developed primarily in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Lima, Peru, where an interesting scene of artistic experimentation with cumbia and electronic dance music emerged during the 2000s. As a result this new electronic music genre attracted considerable attention from local and international media during the 2010s. Despite this public interest the digital cumbia phenomenon has not received much academic attention, so current knowledge on the topic is insufficient. This article attempts to fill this gap with this first analysis of the digital cumbia phenomenon and its impact upon contemporary popular music.

KEYWORDS: cumbia, electronic music, technology, internet, postmodernity

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Cumbia is not dogmatic (Jace Clayton, DJ/rupture).

## INTRO: THE MUTATIONS OF CUMBIA

If there is a musical genre in Latin America which has shown an enormous facility to transform and adapt locally to each country—even to particular regions within the same country—it is cumbia. This Latin-Caribbean rhythm and dance born from the historical confluence and the *mestizaje* of Africans, Indigenous Americans and Spaniards, has travelled and mutated considerably throughout the entire American continent since its genesis in the Colombian Caribbean, birthplace of other popular musical genres such as *bullerengue*, *porro*, *mapalé* and *champeta*.

Cumbia is essentially a mobile genre that has undergone multiple transformations during migration throughout its history. Thus, there are regional modalities of Colombian cumbia (*cumbia sampuesana*, *soledaña*, *momposina*, *cartagenera*, *banqueña*, *sanjacintera*, etc.) and national variants of it (Peruvian, Argentinian, Chilean, Mexican, Bolivian cumbia, etc.), which are the result of intense population movements between different regions of the same country (internal migration) and between different countries (external migration). In each place cumbia took on unique characteristics and new variants developed, but it has always maintained a resemblance to its original form. As the US writer and music producer Jace Clayton aka DJ/rupture has pointed out:

The simple sound of cumbia mutates with each journey, but its trademark is a slow 4-by-4 rhythm with bass drums and a raspy scraper reminiscent of the rattle of a train. These days minor accordion chords may be substituted for guitars, flutes or keyboards. Cumbia is not dogmatic.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most interesting transformations of cumbia has taken place in Peru, where beginning in the 1960s cumbia was mixed with the sounds and textures typical to rock and psychedelic rock, genres on the rise at the time, together with indigenous rhythms from the Andes and the Amazon. Peruvian cumbia managed to develop its own characteristic style from the use of the electric guitar as the main instrument. So much so that to differentiate it from Colombian cumbia, the Peruvians invented the term “chicha” to refer to Peruvian cumbia, a term inspired by the famous ceremonial drink which has been present in Peru since the time of the Incas.

Another interesting mutation of cumbia was called *tecnocumbia*, a variant of the Mexican cumbia that became very popular at the end of the 1990s in various countries across the continent. *Tecnocumbia* was an attempt to modernize traditional cumbia through the use of electronic instruments such as synthesizers, electric guitars and bass, in addition to electronic drums which were used instead of emblematic instruments of the genre, such as the guiro or *guacharaca* which have traditionally been used to mark the typical cumbia rhythm.

The so-called *cumbia rebajada* is another type of cumbia, popularized in the city of Monterrey via slowed-down versions of Colombian cumbia recordings operated by the Mexican *sonideros*. They in turn created the famous *cumbia sonidera* through the use and manipulation of sound effects, the mixture of fragments of different songs and the *sonidero*'s own voice, in charge of hyping and greeting people in between the music, the dance and the party.

As can be seen, the number of regional and national variants of cumbia demonstrate the incredible mutability of the genre and its ability to adapt to local tastes and idiosyncrasies. Alejo Carpentier pointed out the range of Caribbean music—although very different and diverse—always preserves “a strange family resemblance”, and the same can be said about all these cumbia variants (*chicha, tecnocumbia, rebajada* but also cumbia *sampuesana, sanjacintera, sonidera*, etc.).<sup>4</sup>

In the 21st century new variants of cumbia have emerged which continue to reveal the infinite possibilities of transformation of this musical genre. Among these variants is *cumbia villera*, a new type of cumbia that emerged in the context of the slums of Greater Buenos Aires, of which the main characteristic is the incorporation of lyrics that portray the living conditions of the inhabitants of these *villas* through direct, violent and sexually explicit language.<sup>5</sup>

But the main transformation of cumbia in the 21st century has occurred as a consequence of sound experimentation facilitated by new computer technologies (using simple, easy-to-use audio editing programs like Fruity Loops, Reason, ProTools or Ableton) and the influence of electronic dance music on the rhythms, sounds and textures typical of cumbia. This type of cumbia is generally known as electronic cumbia, *cumbiatronica*, new cumbia, or nu-cumbia. But “digital cumbia” has become the most popular expression referring to this interesting and innovative cross between cumbia and electronic music.

Cumbia as an artistic and social manifestation has been the subject of different studies and academic analysis throughout its history, in the form of articles and books.<sup>6</sup> But the new phase represented by digital cumbia, given its newness, has received very little academic attention and practically no studies documenting and critically explaining the phenomenon, with only a few exceptions.<sup>7</sup> Most of the existing sources of information come from interviews, news and reports published in the media in different parts of the world, in which digital cumbia has been presented as one of the most original and innovative musical propositions to have emerged in the Americas in recent years. These documents have been key in preparing this article, along with my own fieldwork, done mainly via interviews—in-person and online—with representatives of this scene in the cities of Buenos Aires and Lima, the main sites of this new musical manifestation.<sup>8</sup> This article is the result of all this research, presented as a first attempt of critically addressing the phenomenon of digital cumbia and to open discussion about the meaning of this new musical manifestation in the contemporary artistic panorama, as well as its importance and scope within the general history of cumbia, a story yet to be written...

## SIDE A: DIGITAL CUMBIA IN BUENOS AIRES

Curiously, the phenomenon of digital cumbia does not have its origins in Colombia, the cradle of cumbia. Although the coffee-producing country also has artists who have ventured into the fusion of cumbia and electronic music, like Bomba Estéreo, the greatest experimentation and exploration of these sounds has taken place in two other Latin American countries: Argentina and Peru, and especially in its two capitals, Buenos Aires and Lima. Throughout the decade of the 2000s, an interesting movement began to take shape in both capitals around digital cumbia which managed to attract international media attention and conquer a middle-class and even upper-class audience, something extremely strange for a genre which has traditionally been ignored by the media and perceived as something inferior, as belonging to the lower classes.

Digital cumbia has its origins in the so-called Zizek parties, a series of club nights which began to be held weekly starting in 2006 in the city of Buenos Aires. These parties arose in a context of nightlife in Buenos Aires not going through its best moment. In December 2004, nearly 200 people lost their lives as a result of a fire that occurred during a rock concert of the band Callejeros at the República Cromañón nightclub. As a result, the government of the city decided to review the state of various nightclubs and dance venues—closing several—and the nightlife of Buenos Aires was greatly affected. It is in this post-Cromañón context when the idea of the Zizek parties arose, which were conceived with the objective of reactivating the nightlife of Buenos Aires with a novel concept: that on the same night very different styles of music could be heard, from hip hop and electronics to reggaeton, dancehall, baile funk, or cumbia.

The name for the parties was taken from the controversial Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek, who in his writings mixes Lacanian psychology, Marxism, classic cinema and popular culture. Zizek's name served to symbolize that postmodern mix of rhythms and sounds intended to be realized at these parties, just like the mixed references in the writings of the philosopher. This is how Villa Diamante, one of the founders of the Zizek parties and a key figure in the popularization of digital cumbia, recalls the decision to baptize these parties named after the Slovenian philosopher:

Slavoj Zizek is a philosopher who in talking about North American imperialism, cites Star Wars or in the beginning of a book quotes the X-Files. In addition it was a lot of fun to name a cumbia, hip hop and dubstep party after a Slovenian philosopher who was married to an Argentine and who for many years came to be living no more than ten blocks from my house.<sup>9</sup>

Zizek parties quickly became a veritable laboratory of rhythms and sounds, in which the invited musicians would begin to experiment and collaborate with each other, mixing different rhythms and formats during live improvisations. A scene of digital Latin American sounds began to be defined that had not previously existed so overtly. Artists who did not know each other before began to get together and collaborate at these parties. In this way a new music was conceived which came to be known as “digital cumbia”, due to the prominence

of cumbia in that psychedelic environment of exploration and experimentation. This is how the Zizek parties existing as a space of cultural experimentation dedicated to music and dance, generated a movement first in Argentina and later in other parts of the world.<sup>10</sup>

The Zizek organizers realized a lot of good unreleased and original music was generated at those parties and decided to create a record label called ZZK Records to release these productions. At first digital cumbia was the main genre for the label and this term was used for its first compilation, which included some of the main representatives of the scene: Chancha Via Circuito, Fauna, Frikstailers, El Remolón, King Coya, The Peronists, etc. These artists started their careers around this new label born at the cusp of the new digital age. In fact, the birth of the label coincided with the beginning of the rise of social media, represented at the time by MySpace, antecedent of current social media like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram or SoundCloud.



FIGURE 1. COVER OF THE FIRST ZZK RECORDS COMPILATION: "ZZK SOUND VOL. 1. CUMBIA DIGITAL".  
COURTESY OF ZZK RECORDS.

The internet was fundamental from the outset when it came to making this music known to an audience not limited to the Zizek parties or to Buenos Aires, with the consequent creation of a “digital community” and a “knowledge community” around these new rhythms, which began to become increasingly well known internationally thanks to the speed of internet diffusion.<sup>11</sup> This is recognized by one of the creators of the Zizek parties and of ZZK Records, Grant C. Dull, aka “The G”:

People have been mixing cumbia and electronic beats for quite some time. What Zizek did was give a platform, an audience and a centre of attention so that all these sounds could be heard. The dance floor was our laboratory, the internet our megaphone.<sup>12</sup>

Dull is right to point out people have been mixing cumbia and electronic rhythms for a long time. The success of ZZK was in creating a platform where these sounds were found more easily, but the fusion of cumbia and electronic music had already existed long before.

The origins of this fusion can be traced to the pioneering work of the German Uwe Schmidt as Señor Coconut. This was one of his numerous pseudonyms, along with Atom Heart, Atom™, Almost Digital, Lassigue Bendthaus, and a long etcetera. This German based in Chile, released an album as Señor Coconut entitled *El baile alemán* in 2000, with versions of tracks by the popular German band Kraftwerk based on Latin instruments and sounds. Amongst the homages was a cumbia version of the song ‘Trans Europe Express’. Before settling permanently in Chile, Schmidt had already experimented with this mix of electronic and Latin sounds on his 1997 album *El Gran Baile*, which he also released as Señor Coconut.<sup>13</sup>

Years before Schmidt, British DJ and producer Richard Blair, who had worked as a sound engineer for albums by artists such as Brian Eno and Sinéad O’Connor, had already moved to Latin America, specifically to Colombia, where after collaborating with folk music artists such as Totó la Momposina decided to form the musical group Sidestepper. Initially this project mixed salsa and electronic music, drum’n’bass mainly, but over time it incorporated more diverse Latin and Caribbean influences, including Colombian cumbia.

Another pioneer in the mixture of Latin rhythms and electronic music was Dick Verdult, better known as Dick El Demasiado, a Dutchman who landed in Buenos Aires in 2003 to organize the second edition of the so-called Festicumex, an experimental cumbia festival whose first edition was held in Honduras in 1996.<sup>14</sup> This festival encouraged several young Argentine producers to explore the possibilities of mixing Argentine cumbia with electronic music. In a way, the Zizek parties went on to create a continuation of this festival. Festicumex was a great inspiration for the organizers of the Zizek parties, which can be perceived as a kind of continuation of the philosophy of the festival and its incitement to experiment with cumbia based on modern technologies and sounds.

Finally, before the rise of the Zizek parties, there were already Latin American DJs and producers at the beginning of the 21st century who began to mix cumbia with dub and other types of electronic music. For example, DJ Taz, Javier “Sonido” Martines, Toy Selectah and El Hijo de la Cumbia, who in a way prepared the ground for the type of digital cumbia that

ZZK Records would spread years later. It can be seen those responsible for the Zizek parties did not invent anything new by mixing cumbia with electronic sounds, since this practice had existed since the beginning of the century and even earlier. But they did know how to create a platform to give visibility to the phenomenon and approach electronic cumbia from a commercial point of view. With this purpose in mind the “digital cumbia” label was conceived to describe and catalogue the new sound, together with carrying out an intense and careful marketing work via the internet and social media, a task which turned out to be one of the key factors of its success. In this way, ZZK Records’ work in dissemination brought digital cumbia closer to a mass and global audience, challenging many of the stereotypes and social prejudices traditionally associated with this type of music. Generalist media such as *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *BBC*, *Clarín*, *El País*, among others, and specialized publications such as *NME*, *XLR8R*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Fader*, *Urb*, and *The Wire*, have dedicated news and reports to this scene from different parts of the world, making digital cumbia known to audiences around the globe.

However, “digital cumbia” as a label has lost currency in recent years. As of 2009, ZZK Records no longer uses it to describe their sound, changing it to broader labels such as “contemporary electronic music” or “contemporary Latin American music”. This change is intended to highlight the more flexible and eclectic nature of the new Latin American electronic music, without limiting it to the experimental crossovers between cumbia and electronic music. Similarly, the digital cumbia scene in Lima, Peru discussed later, prefers the broader “tropical bass” instead of the less open and limited “digital cumbia” label, as in their recordings and sessions they also produce and mix other modern genres of electronic dance music, such as dubstep, moombahton, kuduro, zouk bass, among others.

Even so, compositions such as those by Chancha Vía Circuito, one of the most successful Argentine artists of this scene, continue to appear in the media under the general label of “digital cumbia”, even though his latest creations now contain very little cumbia. His sound has mutated from the digital cumbia of its beginnings to a deeper exploration of folkloric, Andean and Amazonian sounds, such as those that can be heard on his latest album, *Amansará*, released in 2014. In this regard, he commented the following in an interview with the Buenos Aires newspaper Clarín:

I find it strange they keep talking about digital cumbia. It was the first label to get Zizek on the pitch. But today I listen to very little cumbia whilst folklore is very present. I think more in an eclectic concept than genre.<sup>15</sup>

Cumbia, in this sense, was the starting point for the exploration of other popular and folkloric sounds. In addition, there are few current artists who maintain a purist vision of digital cumbia. This follows from what Mati Zundel, another of the artists linked to ZZK Records and their “digital cumbia”, points out about his album *Amazónico gravitante* (2012):

I listen to folklore, electronic music, reggaeton, cumbia, indigenous music, and all that comes out as a salad. I think *Amazónico gravitante* is just that: a salad of genres in which there is everything, from a pop song to an ayahuasca song.<sup>16</sup>

## SIDE B: DIGITAL CUMBIA IN LIMA

Just like cumbia generally and Peruvian cumbia in particular, the history of digital cumbia in Peru is also a story of travel and displacement.<sup>17</sup> In 2009, the two members of Dengue Dengue Dengue, not yet known under this name, travel to Argentina invited to the TRImarchi design festival in Buenos Aires. On that trip they encounter the emerging digital cumbia scene. What attracts their attention is not the mix of electronic music with Latin American music, something they had already heard in pioneers like Señor Coconut or Sidestepper, but that this mix is being done in a dancefloor setting, a club setting and succeeding. Upon their return to Peru and inspired by what they had seen in Buenos Aires, they decide to explore their musical roots and experiment with Peruvian cumbia and jungle aesthetics. This is how the new Dengue Dengue Dengue project starts and later they decide to organize the *TOMA!* (“TAKE!”) parties, the equivalent in Lima of the Zizek parties in Buenos Aires.

The “*TOMA!* psychotropical beats” parties organized in the Lima neighbourhood of Barranco, help consolidate the digital cumbia scene in Lima and serve as a rediscovery of cumbia and its variant of “chicha” (a musical genre specific to Peru) especially among the youth, usually reluctant about this genre. In these parties and in the recordings that begin to circulate, generally distributed free of charge through the Internet, they sample classic albums by Peruvian cumbia groups like Los Mirlos and at some parties these groups are even invited to play in their original format, mixing tradition and modernity. This makes the new generations of young Peruvians become familiar with classic cumbia groups that perhaps they would not have come to know in other contexts. The international success of Dengue Dengue Dengue and its discourse of “*reTOMAr las raíces*” (“reTAKING the roots”) connects with these middle-class youth, who regularly attend their parties and actively follow them via the internet and social media.<sup>18</sup>

Soon—just as happened in Buenos Aires—cumbia ceases to be the favourite genre and other sounds begin to mix. The “digital cumbia” label begins to be replaced by the broader “tropical bass”, an expression popularized over recent years in different blogs and websites, later adopted by the specialized press. This label is intended to describe a new type of EDM with an emphasis on lower frequencies and sub-bass, hence the adjective “bass”, mixed with Latin American tropical rhythms. This label isn’t entirely correct either. The word “tropical” in the “tropical bass” label is an exoticizing and simplistic way of referring to Latin America as a unified whole, but it does offer a way of describing more broadly what this new generation of young musicians and DJs have been doing in beginning to explore Latin sounds other than cumbia.

All the musicians in this scene agree it’s not just about cumbia, but about a vision towards the merging of popular and folkloric roots of Latin America with the rhythms and sounds of modern electronic music, especially that of British origin—also called bass music, or UK bass—which puts a greater emphasis on the sonic possibilities of the low and sub-bass

frequencies. This type of electronic music has become very popular among middle-class youth in Lima, and has expanded internationally thanks to the work of bands like Dengue Dengue Dengue and Animal Chuki, two of the most prominent exponents of this scene.

### “BONUS TRACK”: THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF CUMBIA<sup>19</sup>

The success of digital cumbia (later converted into tropical bass) first in Argentina and later Peru, stimulated the emergence of a wave of similar musical productions in different parts of the world. What is surprising about this phenomenon is that digital cumbia projects emerged from countries not usually associated with cumbia like the Netherlands (Umoja, Sonido del Principe), Denmark (Copia Doble Systema) and Australia (Cumbia Cosmonauts). Digital cumbia is played at parties like *Que Bajo?!* in New York and artists like Dengue Dengue Dengue are hired to perform at internationally famous festivals such as *Sónar* in Barcelona. Audiences from different parts of the world now enjoy this music, which has become popular via the internet and social media such as YouTube and SoundCloud, in which geographical borders, racial and linguistic differences are not a problem, or at least to a lesser extent and where the most diverse music circulates and mixes.

Digital cumbia has become one of the first genres of electronic music conceived in Latin America and created and performed by Latin American musicians which has crossed the borders on the continent, attracted the interest of an international audience and managed to influence foreign musicians who are now beginning to incorporate rhythms and sounds of digital cumbia in their compositions and DJ sessions, like the artists mentioned above and many others brought together under the “global bass” and “tropical bass” labels.<sup>20</sup>

The exponents of the genre have tried to find answers to the sudden international interest in cumbia which has arisen as a result of its crossover with modern electronic music. The Argentine duo Frikstailers, for example, understand this crossover as a Latin American response to the influence of electronic music on the continent, with which in turn Europeans and Americans are identifying with:

The first thing that comes to mind is our own vision and experience regarding this outward gaze, movements which were very strong and influential for us, like electronic music. From this point of view, this could be understood as the gaze of the other: they somehow see their identity reflected, but with something that is totally alien to them, new and fresh.<sup>21</sup>

According to Simón Mejía, founder of the Colombian group Bomba Estéreo, cumbia is a millennial rhythm:

It is something mystical, spiritual that has been happening for centuries on our continent and reveals a truth about race that is not pure but *mestizo*: blacks, Indians and whites. This is something other types of music doesn't have and which makes it so interesting for Europeans.

At the same time he adds this awakening of cumbia is “inevitably linked to a trend and a rediscovery of Latin music from another angle, as happened with salsa”.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, Villa Diamante points out the rise of digital cumbia coincides with an exhaustion of the stylistic resources in European and North American electronic music, from which for a while nothing new has been created. The last innovative genre was dubstep and for many it's already a dead genre. In this sense, the success of digital cumbia has to do

with a rediscovery of cumbia and no new dance genre has appeared for some time in Europe, as techno, minimal, house and all the music known as dance music has been around for some time already.<sup>23</sup>

These and other factors explain the current success of digital cumbia, which has become one of the most innovative and influential musical manifestations of recent times, by revaluing a long rejected genre, marginalized and condemned as cumbia has been. And this not only in Latin America but also in other parts of the world. Thanks to the fusion of cumbia with modern electronic music, different countries have discovered a genre practically unknown outside Latin America. Now cumbia belongs to everyone and in the era of globalization and social media, no longer travels and moves only between Latin American countries, as had been the norm, but throughout the entire planet.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Digital cumbia represents one of the most original and innovative musical manifestations which emerged from Latin America in the 21st century. Given the newness of the phenomenon, there has been hardly any academic interest in the issue and most of the information currently available comes from the press and other media. This article has tried to critically approach the problem from a discussion on the origins and development of this new variant of cumbia which has emerged in this digital age. In this last section of the article I would like to present some points by way of discussion and conclusions, in order to generate a debate around this interesting and novel phenomenon and its important role in contemporary popular music.

Firstly, digital cumbia is a product characteristic of the digital age and of so-called “convergence culture”, a culture in which new media technologies

have lowered production and distribution costs, expanded the repertoire of available distribution channels and have empowered consumers to archive, comment, appropriate and re-circulate media content in new and powerful ways.<sup>24</sup>

As Argentine producer Chancha Vía Circuito points out:

None of this music would have been possible without digital tools. In my particular case I live it as a blessing, to be able to have these tools available to be able to create music. It is a gift of our times.<sup>25</sup>

“We are one hundred percent children of the internet”, admits Rafael Pereira of Dengue Dengue Dengue. “Our project was born entirely thanks to the internet. Everything we need

we find on the Internet, old cumbias, modern sounds...”<sup>26</sup> It is therefore not surprising of all the information and culture currently available and accessible through the web, interesting and diverse mixtures between genres are produced, as in this case the various crossovers between cumbia and electronic music. The exponents of digital cumbia themselves point out the internet and portals like YouTube have been instrumental in discovering many of the electronic music subgenres (dubstep, IDM, jungle, drum’n’bass, etc.) which have later crossed over with the characteristic cumbia rhythm and sound, creating that postmodern hybrid that we now know as “digital cumbia”.<sup>27</sup>

The access and discovery via the internet of music and sounds of all kinds allows a greater convergence of styles, experimentation and musical innovation, which had it not been supported by many of these technological processes would have never reached the heights it did. Styles intersecting with cultures previously unimaginable are combining, translating into a heterogeneity and diversity of proposals, mixtures and tastes of an unprecedented magnitude.<sup>28</sup> This eclecticism reveals an era being absorbed, documented and expressed mainly by the youngest, as pointed out by the cultural critic Henry Giroux:

Inside this postmodern youth culture, identities mix and change instead of becoming more uniform and static. No longer belonging to any place or place, the youth increasingly inhabits changing cultures and social spheres marked by a plurality of languages and cultures.<sup>29</sup>

For this reason, as we have seen, digital cumbia is more than cumbia and since their outset the Zizek parties were a space open to the mixture and experimentation of diverse musical styles, from British dubstep to Caribbean reggaeton. The expression “digital cumbia” was more a marketing tool and a way to commercialize the phenomenon, than a clear way of referring to the type of sound experimentation that these young people carried out, in which not only cumbia was mixed with electronic music, but with many other styles, following the “plurality of languages and cultures” which youths today live as completely natural. All this also responds to the eclecticism characteristic of postmodern culture in which these young people have grown up, an eclecticism about which Jean-François Lyotard would go so far as to say that it is “the ground zero of general contemporary culture”.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, the very evolution of digital cumbia points to another characteristic of the contemporary cultural climate, the speed at which new musical genres form and develop. As has been pointed out, several artists have moved on from the label “digital cumbia” and prefer other more encompassing terms such as “tropical bass”, a label which allows them to continue experimenting with a wider range of genres and not limited only to cumbia. Digital cumbia has emerged and has developed at an unprecedented speed, and for many, it is already a dead genre. This is precisely the dynamic and “postmodern condition” that is observed in many of the contemporary musical genres, especially those linked to electronic music, which are born, grow and die at breakneck speed (dubstep, grime, hauntology, skweee, witch house, wonky, among others).<sup>31</sup>

Despite all this, the importance of digital cumbia in the history of cumbia is fundamental. Thanks to its fusion with electronic music, this Latin-Caribbean genre has become internationalized and managed to reach areas where it was barely known before, especially in various European countries where this type of music was previously unknown. Digital cumbia has also brought this genre closer to a middle and upper class Latin American audience which previously completely rejected it, associating it with lower classes and perceiving it as an aesthetically poor genre. The efforts of formations such as Dengue Dengue Dengue by sampling records from classic Peruvian cumbia bands like Los Mirlos, and even inviting them to play at their parties in their traditional format, has meant many middle class youths have rediscovered the genre and become interested in it, which supposes a generational rediscovery of one's own cultural roots and of one's own musical folklore from an urban perspective and sonority.

I will finish the article with a quote from La Yegros—one of the female representatives of digital cumbia and responsible for its internationalization with songs like ‘Viene de mí’—whose words perfectly summarize everything pointed out in this article:

I think today we are going through a super special moment, where our roots can be musically represented in an electronic, modern way, and thus reach a pervious public which identifies with both propositions, the traditional and the electronic.<sup>32</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 The author's current affiliation is Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM), Spain.
- 2 Original publication in Spanish see Márquez, Israel. 2016. ‘Cumbia digital: Tradición y postmodernidad’ in *Revista Musical Chilena*, (226), 53–67. <<https://doi.org/10.4067/s0716-27902016000200003>>.
- 3 Cited in Fiorito (2009: 10).
- 4 Cited in Orovio (1994: 6).
- 5 In recent years, different studies of the *cumbia villera* phenomenon have appeared like De Gori (2005), Cragolini (2006). Lardone (2007), Vila and Semán (2007), Martin (2008), Wilson and Favoretto (2011).
- 6 For books, see Zapata (1962), Londono (1983), Sabbatella (1997). D'Amico (2002), Bailon (2013), Pacini Hernandez (2010), Karmy Bolton (2013). For articles, see Romero (2008), Semán and Vila (2011), Vila and Semán (2011), Fernandez L'Hoeste and Vila (2013).
- 7 See Irisarri (2011), Baker (2015). Both studies collect impressions of the cumbia scene digital in Buenos Aires but they do not talk about other equally important scenes, such as the one developed in Lima, Peru, as well as the impact of digital cumbia abroad, aspects addressed in this study.
- 8 Much of the information obtained for the writing of this work was based on interviews with some exponents of digital cumbia in Buenos Aires and Lima. Thanks to Diego Bulacio (Villa Diamante), Grant C. Dull (El G), Andres Schteingart (El Remolón), Pedro Canale (Chancha Vía Circuito), Rafael Pereira (Dengue Dengue Dengue), Paz Ferrand (Deltatron), and Daniel

- Valle-Riestra (Animal Chuki), for giving me their time and attention and for sharing their experience and knowledge with me in both online and in-person interviews.
- 9 Bulacio 2014, interview.
  - 10 It is interesting to note that in the same decade of 2000, Argentina experienced a boom in music visible electronics at events such as the first Argentine edition of the international festival Creamfields, the experimental art festival Fuga Jurásica and sound innovations such as electronic tango, a fusion between traditional tango and electronic music represented by bands like Gotan Project, Bajofondo or Tanguetto (about electronic tango see Liska 2016). In this sense, digital cumbia can be interpreted as another manifestation of that boom in electronic and experimental music which took place in Argentina in the first decade of the new century.
  - 11 On the concept of “digital community”, see Rheingold (1996). On the concept of “knowledge community”, see Lévy (1997).
  - 12 Cited in BUSTAMANTEMIX (2009) (translation by the author).
  - 13 That same year, the Chilean Jorge González (ex-vocalist and leader of the rock group Los Prisioneros) and producer Martín Schopf (Dandy Jack) released an “electrocumbia” album titled *Gonzalo Martínez Y Sus Congas Pensantes*. In Chile the album was not very well received, but it was successful on the European underground circuit, especially in Germany and the UK. I thank the anonymous reviewers of this text for this interesting note.
  - 14 Angelotti (2004).
  - 15 Cited in Irigoyen (2015).
  - 16 Cited in Ungaro Rial (2012).
  - 17 See Romero (2008).
  - 18 Dengue Dengue Dengue uses capital letters in the slogan “retake your roots” as a play on words to refer to their *TOMA!* party series.
  - 19 “Bonus track” or “additional track” is a term used in the language of recorded music to refer to a piece of music (normally unreleased) included in special editions or reissues of an album.
  - 20 Both Global Bass and Tropical Bass are expressions which have gained currency in referring to a new type of EDM incorporating sounds of the world (global bass) and from Latin America (tropical bass). Both terms come from the label “bass music”, an umbrella term which tries to encompass a series of styles of EDM that have in common the emphasis on the low frequencies and sub-bass. Hence the use of the word “bass”, or “*bajo*” in Spanish. Specifically, the term refers to the various styles of music British electronica that emerged from the rave music of the 90s, ranging from jungle and drum’n’bass to modern grime and dubstep. This type of electronic music has most influenced the protagonists of digital cumbia, and many prefer the expression “tropical bass” to the more hermetic “digital cumbia”. In a future article I intend to cover the tropical bass phenomenon in more depth.
  - 21 Cited in Leites (2013).
  - 22 Cited in Gabino (2010).
  - 23 Cited in Gabino (2010).
  - 24 Jenkins (2008: 28).
  - 25 Canale 2014, interview.
  - 26 Pereira 2015, interview.

- 27 For a historical explanation of these and other electronic music genres, see Blánquez and Morera (2002).
- 28 In this sense, Peter Burke (2010: 141) has pointed out in the world today “no culture is an island”. With the increase of globalization and the spread of the internet, this reality has become much more evident and the result is that “all cultural traditions today are in contact, to a greater or lesser extent, with alternative traditions”, or in other words, all music today is in contact with alternative music.
- 29 Giroux (1994).
- 30 Lyotard (1987b: 17).
- 31 On the “postmodern condition” see Lyotard (1987). For an explanation on the origin and development of the musical genres mentioned here and others born in the 21st century, see Márquez (2014).
- 32 Gazio (2014).

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