



STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

MIJA (ENGLISH) – Mija Música: El ritmo

[00:00:01] - Gavilán

Let me show you what I learned today.

[00:00:05] - Gavilán

I'm in a workshop...and there are two instruments in front of me. The caja, which is a kind of hand-played drum, and the guacharaca, which is a wooden cylinder that you play with a sort of metal brush. These instruments are both Colombian, and they form the base of cumbia and vallenato.

And in my city's streets you can hear them everywhere.

[00:00:32] - Gavilán

On the radio at the corner taco stand, in car repair shops blasting on boomboxes, and, of course, on buses.

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[00:00:51] - Gavilán

My name is Gabriel, but everyone calls me Gavilán. I was born in Monterrey, in northeastern Mexico. And several years ago, life led me across the border to New York. But fate brought me back to visit this city. In this episode, I'll tell you about the rhythms played on these instruments.

Rhythms that have traveled for thousands of miles all the way here, to our streets.

[00:01:19] - Gavilán

Today I'm with el Guacho. He's a large man with a beer belly, wearing a flower shirt, shorts, and flip flops. Gaucho's a musician. He plays cumbia and vallenato. He's also a sonidero, a kind of block party DJ. And people call him Guacho because his go-to instrument, is the guacharaca.

He puts on a record and says: "Listen... This rhythm is quite the traveler. It's a rhythm of resistance. Half Indigenous, half African. Made by people forced to leave their homes, but who brought with them their music, and their instruments."

[00:01:59] - Gavilán

You can play many different musical styles on the caja and guacharaca. Such as paseo, which is joyful and upbeat; or son, which is slower and a little nostalgic; or merengue, which is a lot faster. And of course, cumbia. This music traveled from Colombia to all over the world... including Monterrey.

Legend has it that one night at a party the record player was a little faulty. And suddenly, it started playing the music much slower...and wonkier.

And guess what? People loved it!

And since then, we call that style cumbia rebajada. And it all grew out of these two sounds: The guacharaca and the caja.

In Monterrey, along with cumbia, you hear plenty of Vallenato. And vallenato, I mean, that's, like, Capital C "Colombian," you know what I mean?

[00:03:09] - Gavilán

But believe it or not, we're huge fans of it here. When I came back here for Lolo's funeral, I noticed the streets are full of Colombian-flag-colored posters announcing upcoming vallenato shows. He loved to play songs from the OG vallenato guys like Lizandro Meza and Andrés Landero.

For his 60th birthday he closed down the block for a huge party. He played cumbias and danced all night.

But right before last call, all you heard was vallenato. The kind of music that you can't help but sing just a little off-key.

The kind of music that I'm hearing now in his old room... Because he always said cumbia was for dancing, and vallenato for nostalgia.

[00:04:00] - Gavilán

Sorry I got carried away... Where was I? Right. I haven't really told you why I came to visit el Guacho in the first place.

[00:04:13] - Gavilán

You see, el Guacho was Lolo's best friend. His ride or die, basically. They sang and played music together for so many years. And I'm pretty sure there isn't a single person in this neighborhood that hasn't danced at least once to their music.

Like the bishop who started shimmying in the aisle after a mass for the Virgin of Guadalupe, or the grumpy old man from Castelar street who hadn't so much as tapped his foot to a beat in decades. And even a black bear that they ran into one August afternoon while hiking. They were so scared they started to play, and the bear *allegedly* started swaying its hips.

[00:04:53] - Gavilán

And well, when Guacho's mom died. Lolo was right there to help carry the coffin.

[00:05:06] - Gavilán

I show el Guacho my grandpa's record, and I ask him about the mysterious lyrics

[00:05:15] - Canción

"...Cuando abro brecha y sigo el sendero

Y encuentro nuevos verdes terrenos

A San Cristóbal llevo en mi pecho,

Y lloro por esos cerros"

[00:05:27] - Gavilán

..."I carry San Cristóbal in my heart...and I weep for its hills."

[00:05:33] - Gavilán

El Guacho smiles as he listens to abuelo's voice. He remembers the song well. But he never quite knew what grandpa Lolo meant by that. But I don't leave empty handed! Because at that moment Guacho gets up, walks away, and comes back...with an accordion.

Lolo's accordion.

[00:05:58] - Gavilán

He hands it to me, and my fingers brush the buttons. The same buttons my grandpa made music with for years. And just to the side, there's an engraving. It says "Cuanto más lejano el cerro, más sabroso el cafetal".

"The farther the hill, the richer the coffee."

[00:06:34] - Luis López

This show was produced by Studio Ochenta. Our executive producer is Lory Martínez.

Story, sound mixing, and original music by me, Luis López.

Our creative director is Lory Martínez.

Additional script editing by Maru Lombardo and Jeremías Juárez.

Our production coordinator is Catalina Hoyos

And our art is by William Guevara.

This week's recommendation is the music of Gabriel Duéñez. He's a sonidero from Monterrey, and he's the one to thank for the "accident" that gave life to the now beloved cumbia rebajada. Visit our website, that you can find in our shownotes, for links to his music.

Oh, and one more thing. We have exciting news! Adventure in Atacama, the interactive show produced by Studio Ochenta, has been nominated for Most Innovative use of Audio at this year's Lovie Awards! And if you liked the show, please vote for us [here](#)! Thanks!

Follow us on Twitter and Instagram @MijaPodcast If you liked the show, leave us a comment and a review on Apple Podcasts.

Until next time, with love and recuerdos.

FINAL DEL EPISODIO