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Author

Duque, Bruno Fragoso Pires

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A Global Powerhouse: A Data-Driven Exploration of Latin America's Contemporary Music Scenes

BRUNO FRAGOSO PIRES DUQUE
Head of LatAm and Brazil

Abstract

This article offers a comprehensive and data-driven exploration of the Latin music market's transformation into a global cultural and economic force. It traces the evolution of Latin genres through streaming, algorithmic curation, viral trends, and artist innovation, from pioneers like Shakira and Daddy Yankee to new-generation icons such as Bad Bunny, Karol G, and Peso Pluma. Drawing from original interviews with producers and executives, industry reports (IFPI, RIAA, Luminate), and case studies from across Latin America, the United States, and Spain, the article reveals how language, genre fusion, strategic collaborations, and localized consumption patterns shape the music economy. It also analyzes the rising importance of Brazil's and Mexico's markets, the global traction of Música Mexicana, and the roles of independent distribution, catalog ownership, and algorithmic exposure. Special attention is given to emerging scenes in Central America and the structural, technological, and cultural shifts that are fueling Latin music's enduring growth on the global stage.

Keywords: music streaming economy, algorithmic playlists, música mexicana, reggaeton, brazil, mexico, ifpi, riaa, luminate, artist development, latin america, global music trends

Resumen

Este artículo ofrece una exploración integral y basada en datos sobre la transformación del mercado de la música latina en una fuerza cultural y económica global. Analiza la evolución de los géneros latinos a través del streaming, la curaduría algorítmica, las tendencias virales y la innovación artística, desde pioneros como Shakira y Daddy Yankee hasta íconos de la nueva generación como Bad Bunny, Karol G y Peso Pluma. A partir de entrevistas originales con productores y ejecutivos, informes de la industria (IFPI, RIAA, Luminate) y estudios de caso de América Latina, Estados Unidos y España, el artículo revela cómo el idioma, la fusión de géneros, las colaboraciones estratégicas y los patrones de consumo local moldean la economía musical. También se analiza la creciente importancia de los mercados de Brasil y México, el alcance global de la Música Mexicana y el papel de la distribución independiente, la propiedad de catálogos y la exposición algorítmica. Se presta especial atención a las escenas emergentes en Centroamérica y a los cambios estructurales, tecnológicos y culturales que están impulsando el crecimiento sostenido de la música latina a nivel mundial.

Palabras clave: música latina, economía del streaming musical, playlists algorítmicas, música mexicana, reggaetón, brasil, méxico, ifpi, riaa, luminate, desarrollo de artistas, américa latina, tendencias globales de la música.

1. Introduction

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Latin artists played a pivotal role in elevating Latin music to a relevant position in the global music industry. Through their artistic innovation and voices, they broke cultural barriers and reached heights that had never been seen before. Artists like Shakira from Colombia and Ricky Martin from Puerto Rico led the Latin pop explosion of the 1990s and 2000s, combining traditional rhythms with worldwide popularity. Also, before her death, Selena Quintanilla-Pérez, Tejano music's Queen, took regional sounds to the masses, Gloria Estefan and Luis Miguel had already been ensuring that Latin and international markets were connected by their chart-topping

songs. Latin and international markets were also reshaped by bands, such as Maná, Soda Stereo, Café Tacvba, and the Los Fabulosos Cadillacs, among many others, by reinventing Latin rock. New and vibrant styles of salsa were also being introduced to global listeners by Marc Anthony through his salsa-infused ballads. Pop and R&B music were combined by artists such as Enrique Iglesias, Thalía, and Jennifer Lopez for the global audience.

This time also included the continuation of the genre blending innovators such as Carlos Santana's return in 1999 with his album *Supernatural* which brought Latin rock to the world stages, with hits such as "Smooth" and "Maria Maria" which awarded him with nine Grammys in one night and showing the power of Latin music to cross over to the mainstream. Alejandro Sanz changed the face of the industry with his unique lyrics and unique albums, such as *Más*, which made him achieve millions of copies sold in Spain and other countries in Latin America. Other groups, for instance, Aventura, headed by Romeo Santos, introduced the world to bachata, making sure that the genre was made available to the global audience in the recent past.

On the urban scene, Daddy Yankee made reggaeton go global in 2004 with "Barrio Fino," and his 2004 song "Gasolina" became the theme song for Latin youth, and his influence was felt in the rest of the urban music. He was followed by other artists like Don Omar and Wisin & Yandel who built the reggaeton career to become the next big thing in the global charts. Meanwhile, younger pop acts, such as Thalía, Paulina Rubio and Christina Aguilera (who revealed her Ecuadorian origins in her Spanish-language album *Mi Reflejo*) showed the many faces of Latin American singers and musicians in different genres.

They didn't just entertain but also transformed the music industry into a different place by proving that Latin artists are a huge commercial opportunity in the mainstream. They set the stage for the next generation of Latin artists to come and dominate the streaming platforms where Latin music would eventually become a mainstream genre appreciated by millions of people around the world. This makes the 1990s and 2000s significant as they contributed to enhancing Latin music and making it a part of the global pop culture.

When we look at the Brazilian music industry, specifically before 2017 - Spanish language songs were rarely heard on the local radio until Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee broke out globally with their song "Despacito" featuring Justin Bieber. Only a few others like Shakira, Jennifer Lopez and Ricky Martin could make it through the barrier with aggressive marketing strategies with the help of major labels.

Historically, recent generations of Brazilian artists have had a relevant difficulty of exporting their songs. The language and the market consumption for local genres make the life of Brazilian artists harder. One of a few successful global viral cases was the Brazilian singer Michel Teló, and his 2011 hit "Ai Se Eu Te Pego" that proved how Brazilian Sertanejo music could capture the hearts and minds of people around the world. The song's success also showed how a strategy for viral content, promotion, and universal appeal can make regional music cross over to the global stage.

Have over 1.2 billion views on YouTube and more than 400 million streams on all platforms including Spotify and Apple Music as of this moment in 2025. The song topped the charts in 15 countries in Europe, Eastern Europe and Latin America and became the first Brazilian track to top the

Billboard Latin Digital Songs chart. It earned millions in global royalties, and the big part of the revenues were generated from the international markets. At its peak, the song inspired more than a thousand fan videos due to viral moments such as the dance move made popular by soccer stars Cristiano Ronaldo and Marcelo. This success helped to boost the digital music export from Brazil in 2012 and made the track to be one of the most selling and most known Brazilian songs of all time.¹

A recent example, built on a well-planned strategy focused on an export-oriented mindset, is Anitta. Her success shows how she has a clear understanding of the current and future market trends, how she manages the risks and opportunities that come with the global market and how she knows how to use cultural and linguistic insights to reach out to more people by singing in Spanish. Anitta's "Envolver" was a global hit in 2022, and she became the first Brazilian artist to top Spotify's Global Top 50 chart. Its success was contributed by the viral TikTok campaign called "El Paso de Anitta" which encouraged millions of user-generated videos and engaged international users with Becky G & Tini collaboration.² Anitta's songs with Spanish lyrics were written to appeal to a cross-border Latin American and global audience and with a stunning performance and look in the music video that had minimalistic choreography. The song "Envolver" had Spotify's algorithmic playlists like "Viva Latino" and "Today's Top Hits" working properly and her social media output as she took the song to number one on the Billboard Global Excl. U.S. chart and established herself as an international star.

One interesting fact: Despite the language barrier between Portuguese and Spanish which has been raised in various music consumption reports, there is a rather peculiar tendency which is the popularity and export of Brazilian music in Portugal. For example, analyzing the Portugal Top 50 playlist on Spotify, Brazilian artists are seen as participating frequently and even topping the chart, especially Brazilian Funk and Pop Artists. Since this playlist is algorithmic, it reflects direct listener consumption. However, the opposite is not true; Portuguese artists have no music consumption in the Brazilian market. So, what is the catch?

Most of the music consumption in the Brazilian market is by local music genres and the music from the Brazilian region accounted for 93.5% of the total 200 songs streamed in 2023, and according to the recent Luminate Midyear Music Report released July 2025, approximately 74.7% of all on-demand (audio + video) streams in Brazil come from local Brazilian artists — one of the highest percentages globally, which is in line with high cultural localization.³ Also, an interest behavior is due to the fact that Brazil is a cultural power that exports its music to Portugal and its music is considered to be colorful and close to the people, while the traditional music of Portugal such as fado does not appeal to the young or the mainstream Brazilian audience. This further enhances this disparity as the algorithmic based playlists play a big role in this process as the Portuguese listeners' interaction with

¹ Emmanuelle Saliba, "How Michel Telo Went from Obscure Brazilian Country Singer to Global Superstar," Billboard, February 7, 2023, <https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/how-michel-telo-went-from-obscure-brazilian-country-singer-to-1098220/>.

² Jessica Roiz, "Anitta Unveils Becky G & Tini Collaboration, Talks Viral 'envolver' Challenge & New Album: Watch," Billboard, March 15, 2022, <https://www.billboard.com/music/latin/anitta-envolver-live-billboard-latin-interview-1235044311/>.

³ Mercado-Brasileiro-em-2023.PDF, accessed February 24, 2025, <https://pro-musicabr.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Mercado-Brasileiro-em-2023.pdf>.

the Brazilian tracks make them visible while the opposite does not happen due to limited exposure and consumption of Portuguese artists in Brazil.

If we considered the Latin genre as one asset to export to other international markets, two recent articles caught my attention in recent months. Expansion and dominance of the Latin genre in the U.S and the respective size of revenue generated. These numbers support the significance of Latin music in the current U.S. streaming market and its future growth potential.

Fastest-Growing Music Genres by Metro Area (2021–2024)

This visual highlight the genre with the highest growth in on-demand audio streaming across major metro areas between 2021 and 2024. Each city is labeled with the genre that experienced the largest share increase in streaming activity, offering a snapshot of regional listening trends and the evolving musical preferences shaping local markets.

1. **Regional Dominance:** Latin music has grown considerably, especially in the Southwest and some parts of the Southeast, which are consistent with the regions with high Hispanic and Latino populations.
2. **Rapid Growth in Specific Areas:** Latin music streaming has increased dramatically in metro areas like San Antonio and the share has increased from 10.2% in 2021 to 16.2% in 2024. This shows that Latin music is gaining popularity and acceptance in these areas.
3. **Genre Expansion Beyond Traditional Borders:** While historically limited to certain regions, the growth of Latin music suggests that it is growing in popularity outside of its traditional regions, possibly due to global hits, collaborations, and crossover success.
4. **Marketing Opportunities:** From an artist's and distributor's point of view, metro areas with high growth in Latin music are ideal for focused marketing efforts, touring, and local playlist targeting to leverage this trend.
5. **Demographic Influence:** The growth of Latin music is in accordance with demographic patterns, thus indicating that it will remain on the rise as more people, especially the young and the diverse, embrace the music.

Also, recently, RIAA reported the revenue from Latin music reached \$1 billion in 2025 while showing a 4.2% annual growth which exceeded the 3.1% expansion of the U.S. music industry. The United States recorded 8.8% of its total recorded music revenue from Latin music during this period while the previous year it stood at 8.1%.

The streaming industry generated 98.2% of all Latin music revenue during this period as paid subscriptions contributed with two-thirds of those earnings, generating approximately \$557 millions (9.8% increase YoY) and ad-supported on-demand streaming produced \$357 millions. The streaming revenue from ad-supported streams accounted for approximately 35% of total Latin music streaming earnings.⁴

⁴ RIAA, rep., RIAA 2025 Year-End US Market Latin Music Revenue Report (RIAA, 2025), <https://www.riaa.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/RIAA-US-Latin-Year-End-Revenue-2025.pdf>.

These insights support the significance of Latin music in the current U.S. streaming market and its future growth potential.

2. Latin Music: A Global Powerhouse: When ‘Despacito’ Spoke: The Voice of a Global Movement

Leila Cobo, in her book *Decoding “Despacito”: An Oral History of Latin Music*, observed, “It took more than seven decades to come full circle, to 2017, when Despacito another great track built on quintessential Latin beats, hit #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and stayed there for sixteen straight weeks, a record at the time.”⁵

The success of “Despacito” by Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee, and later boosted by a remix with Justin Bieber, was the first breakthrough of Latin music worldwide. The album was released in January 2017 and broke all the records: More than 4.6 billion streams across all digital platforms within its first year and made it the first Latin video to cross 8.6 billion views by 2024 setting a new standard for music from a language other than English to take over the world.

At the time of its popularity, “Despacito” spent 16 consecutive weeks at the top of the Billboard Hot 100, tying Mariah Carey and Boyz II Men’s all-time record for the most weeks at number one with “One Sweet Day.” It topped the charts in several countries, including non-Spanish-speaking countries such as Germany, Australia, and the UK ⁷. It also made history as the first Spanish language song to achieve this since “Macarena” in 1996. This made it drive a 37% increase in Latin music sales in the U.S. in 2017 as stated by the RIAA.⁶

This is where streaming services came in handy, as “Despacito” was added to main global playlists like “Today’s Top Hits” and “Hot Hits Global,” which exposed it to millions of people on a daily basis. At its peak, it was streamed 25.2 million times in a week on Spotify only. As reported by Spotify, “Despacito” had been streamed over 4.6 billion times till 2021 and became the most-streamed Latin song.⁷

The economic effects of the song went further than the world of music. In Puerto Rico, where the music video was shot, the Puerto Rican Tourism Company reported that the number of inquiries about tourism increased by 45% due to the presentation of the video, which beautifully presented the island and its people. The song earned millions in international royalties, and the majority of the royalties’ earnings were made in areas that are not the usual market of Latin America.⁸

The collaboration with Justin Bieber only helped to increase the song’s popularity worldwide and make Latin music popular among English-speaking fans with the help of Bieber’s audience across

⁵ Leila Cobo, *Decoding “Despacito”: An Oral History of Latin Music* (New York: Vintage Books, 2021), 3.

⁶ Rose Connelly, “RIAA Announces 2017 Latin Music Revenue Statistics,” RIAA, April 23, 2018, <https://www.riaa.com/riaa-announces-2017-latin-music-revenue-statistics/>

⁷ Lars Brandle, “Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee’s ‘Despacito’ Sets Global Streaming Record,” Billboard, July 19, 2017, <https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/despacito-breaks-record-most-streamed-song-all-time-7873032/>.

⁸ RIAA, rep., RIAA 2024 YEAR-END US MARKET LATIN MUSIC REVENUE REPORT (RIAA, 2025), <https://www.riaa.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/RIAA-2024-Year-End-US-Market-Latin-Music-Revenue-Report.pdf>.

the world. This strategic partnership has greatly contributed to the extent of the song's stay in the charts and its cross over to different demographics.

When looking at the consumption of Latin artists versus American artists, it is noteworthy what is needed to create a global Latin hit like "Despacito." It has been necessary for artists to collaborate in order to reach new audiences in different areas.

When looking at consumer behavior it is evident that Latin artists have their highest fan base in Latin American cities. For instance, Regional Mexicano singer Christian Nodal's listeners are mostly in cities like Mexico City, Bogota, Guadalajara, Santiago and Guatemala City. He doesn't have the costume to collaborate with artists who usually are not Spanish speaking, thus his audience is mostly Latin and Latin American listeners.

However, artists like Bad Bunny, who collaborated with Travis Scott and The Weeknd in 2023, are still of the same nature. Although these are big name collaborations, his top listening cities are still mostly in the Latin American regions including Mexico City, Santiago, Bogota, Lima and Buenos Aires. This shows that while there is a place for collaborations with artists from other languages as a means of expanding to new territories, this alone cannot be relied on to achieve this.

Just because an artist is collaborating with a non-Spanish speaking artist, that does not mean that the artist is expanding into new markets. It needs a well-thought-out strategy, good partners, and a smart way to make music that can be enjoyed by people around the world.

So, when is the next *Despacito* coming? It will probably be a Latin artist who is already using innovative collaborations combined with data analysis and a strategic approach to fan growth and territorial expansion.

3. Rhythms of Revolution: The Rise of Modern Latin Music Icons

The evolution of Latin music artists such as Peso Pluma, Grupo Frontera, Rosalía, Karol G, Feid, Becky G, Rauw Alejandro, Ana Castela and Bad Bunny illustrates the variety and originality that has made Latin music popular all over the world. From Jalisco, Mexico, Peso Pluma started his musical career by singing traditional corridos with an urban touch, thus starting the corridos tumbados trend, with songs like "Ella Baila Sola." Grupo Frontera is a Texas based band that has brought back Regional Mexicano or Música Mexicana and added cumbia and norteño rhythms to it, and their song "No Se Va" has gone viral. Rosalía has been shaping her path since 2016 in Spain and has been experimenting with the flamenco genre to make it more contemporary and challenging, as seen in her debut. Ana Castela, one of the big names in the Brazilian music industry, has made the Brazilian music industry shed its traditional Sertanejo clothes and embrace country music in its contemporary form. She has come up as an innovator and has been able to gather a large following from social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, having more than 24 million followers on Instagram and 17 million followers on TikTok in a really short time and lately came in with her album *Boiadeira Internacional* which made her win the 25th edition of the Latin Grammys in the category of Country Music Album.

The Brazilian music industry is a cultural melting pot, especially for a country with a large domestic market that has begun to shift towards streaming services like Spotify and YouTube, thus pushing local music to the spotlight. As of early 2025, the market reflects a dynamic shift, with urban

styles such as funk, rap, and trap gaining ground alongside the traditionally dominant Sertanejo and the rising Piseiro sound. Funk, which started in the Rio slums, has become a cultural phenomenon in the 90's, with artists like Claudinho & Bucheca, MC Marcinho, MC Catra, MC Bob Rum, DJ Marlboro and many others which in the past years we seen surging others important voices such as MC Ryan SP and Ludmilla combining the funk with trap elements to appeal to the new generation of listeners and even get international recognition. Rap and trap have been on the rise through artists like Grego, who can easily shift from hip-hop to Piseiro and prove it in his 2019 hit “Pane No Sistema” which is a perfect example of generational change in Brazilian music. The Piseiro genre that originated in the Northeast and is characterized by the use of synthesizers and forró elements has produced stars like João Gomes who are conquering the country.

Karol G, made her entry into the reggaeton scene in Colombia and gained fame through songs that celebrated women empowerment like “Ahora Me Llama.” Feid, also from Colombia, was a ghostwriter for other Latin artists before he began crafting his own brand of reggaeton with emotional lyrics and unique production. Becky G's early life was marked by her transition from pop-rap artist with songs like “Becky from the Block” to reggaeton star with “Sin Pijama” as she attempted to embody the Mexican American identity in the international scene.

The appearance of Colombian music on the world stage has been unprecedented in the past few years and can be considered as a turning point in the history of Latin music. This rise is no coincidence; it lies in the perfect balance between the authenticity of its cultural roots and the ability to innovate with fusions that deeply connect with global audiences. It has been well noted that Colombia has been able to incorporate its traditional music genres like vallenato and champeta with modern music genres like reggaeton, trap and even Afrobeat to create a new genre that is popular not only in Colombia but other parts of the world. This approach, enriched with real instruments like accordions and trumpets, stands out in a global landscape dominated by synthetic sounds.

In my first round of interviews with local executives, artists and producers across Latin America, I had the chance to speak with Alex, the Big Pieces, a well-known Colombian producer and I was able to get more insight into the Colombian music industry and together we talked about how despite the lack of support from the government, Colombia has been decentralized when it comes to its creative centers.⁹ Today, Medellín, the Colombia capital of reggaeton, is not the only city that is famous for being the capital of reggaeton but other areas including the Caribbean coast, Cali and the Pacific which have brought their afro and tropical taste while Bogotá is becoming the capital of rap. This diversification has enabled different parts of the country to produce artists who can capture the attention of the international audience and prove that Colombian artists are not only limited to specific regions.

Colombian music used to remain regional, but now we have demonstrated through various success stories that artists can reach a global audience, even without being known in their own city.

He said that in this vibrant landscape, Penyair, BROKIX, and Maisak, who are in some way new in the scene, are helping to define a new generation of Colombian musicians. From Bogotá, Penyair

⁹ Bruno Duque and Alex, The Big Pieces, Interview - Big Pieces-20250109_130731-Meeting Recording, personal, January 9, 2025.

has been able to captivate a diverse audience by combining his rap foundations with reggaeton and salsa. Although BROKIX comes from an indie background, they have collaborated with Feid to change the perception of the style in their region.

Maisak, who concentrates on the modernization of vallenato, demonstrates how these traditional elements can be re-imagined addressing the present audience. These fresh proposals are not just the basis for the development of the country's cultural identity but also the foundation for the interaction with international markets. In this musical revolution, producers and composers are also assuming a significant role.

The success is also due to the fact that we use Colombian sounds, but we adapt to rhythms that are not from our region, such as reggaeton, trap and rock. We mix them with our roots and connect with the audiences.

A few years ago, most of them stayed in the background, but these days, many of them are coming up as artists too, leading projects that explore new creative directions. This change not only enhances the musical experience but also provides a chance for more Colombian artists to get recognition on the global stage.

The cases of producers turning into artistic figures depict the industry's progress and its capacity to meet the requirements of the market, which is changing. Nevertheless, there are difficulties. Some of these challenges include; unequal access to recording studios, lack of training in important areas like marketing and international distribution and many others. However, the technology and digital platforms are gradually enabling more artists to gain access to these tools and market their music to new territories.

As for the future, strategic identity and creativity will be crucial for the rising artists, according to Alex.

Colombian talents have all the tools necessary to become a leading force in Latin music and beyond, with a sharp understanding of their target market and an innovative approach. In this context, Colombia is reaffirming itself as a global power, where every region, every artist, every producer is contributing to a movement that is changing the face of international music.

From Puerto Rico's underground Latin trap scene, Bad Bunny broke the genre with his debut album *X 100PRE* and created a path for his spectacular rise as the most-streamed artist in the world. Released in 2025, Bad Bunny's *DeBí TirAR Más FOToS* is a very personal and culturally enriched album that shows his growth as an artist as well as a tribute to Puerto Rico and its music. The album is traditional in that it crosses genres like salsa, plena and bolero, but it is also contemporary in that it is reggaeton and Latin pop. Songs like "NUEVAYoL" make use of classic Puerto Rican tunes while songs like "LO QUE LE PASÓ A HAWAii" address pressing social issues like overdevelopment and gentrification. From the title track, "DtMF," the album offers a clear reflection on memory and the importance of living in the moment, a message that resonates with fans. The album is not just a set of songs, it is a love letter to his homeland written through the lens of activism, tradition and innovation in the way that only Bad Bunny can.

These artists' initial attempts indicate a common ambition to integrate cultural traditions with the new tendencies in their music. In the same manner, Puerto Rico's Eladio Carrión has emerged as one of the top performers of Latin trap, his album *3MEN2 KBRN* reached the top 10 on the Billboard Latin Albums chart in 2023 and included hit songs like "TATA." Myke Towers also reached the top of the charts with his song "LALA" and became a viral super hit with more than 1.1 billion streams on Spotify.

A new generation of Latin artists are taking over the international stage and proving that diversity in music and identity is key to being a global superstar. Puerto Rico's PJ Sin Suela, a doctor turned rapper, continues to grow with his socially inspired music and unique reggaeton rap sound that appeals to the current generation of young people who look for real stories.

Constantly being vocal about Puerto Rico's independence and known as an activist through his lyrics for blending social inequality and political struggles, his songs share a lovely and direct message with conscious artists' freedom, leading to millions of streams on platforms.

PJ has been playing a huge and important role in Puerto Rico and in Latin Music. Lyrics that each phrase targets to his perception and admiration of music, he had the opportunity to have featuring Jorge Drexler in one of his many songs called "Vivo" and recently in "Todo se Complica." Constantly collaborating with artists across Latin America, in his recent album in 2024 *Toda Época Tiene Su Encanto*, PJ's determination to spread his message not only in the island but out to everywhere and everyone who wants to hear masterpiece lyrics and melodies.

Flying to South America, Trueno from Argentina has established himself as one of the biggest names in Latin hip hop after clinching the freestyle battle crown and combining his delivery with political messages and collaboration with other artists around the world.

Newcomers Ca7riel and Paco Amoroso from Argentina are at the forefront of the new wave of Latin music, with electronic, rock, and trap elements in their music. They are especially popular among Gen Z audiences, as shown by their 2024 NPR Tiny Desk concert that had over 5 million views in its first week in October 2024 and now in 2026 with more than 52 million views.

Their music can be classified into different genres which makes them attractive to the alternative music fans all over the world, showing the depth of the present Latin musicians.

In an interview I did with Tweety González, Tweety who is a producer, musician and a label manager from Argentina mentioned Ca7riel and Paco as an excellent musician and also give me some key insights into the longevity of rock music in Argentina, the emergence of the urban genres and the importance of independent artists and producers in shaping the industry.¹⁰

When I started the interview with Tweety, I said that I am lucky that the TikTok algorithms showed me Ca7riel and Paco Amoroso's viral video from their Tiny Desk performance of "El Único." A completely different version from their album.

¹⁰ Bruno Duque and Tweety González, Entrevista Tweety-20250113_133419-Meeting Recording, personal, 2025.

Tweety also mentioned the duo as transformative artists whose unique fusion of music styles has captured widespread attention. Their appearance at Tiny Desk was considered a milestone, which greatly increased their popularity and presented them as very talented performers. Tweety, who is personally good friends with Ca7riel and has worked with him closely, applauded him for being a great musician, comparing him to greats like Prince and Gustavo Cerati for being a versatile, charming, and complete artist.

Also, Ca7riel's association with Buenos Aires's municipal music school, Esnaola, where he met Paco. Their story, which is based on rock and jazz, shows how they easily moved from rock and jazz to urban music without losing their uniqueness and originality.

The power of music gives those numbers, there are no, there are no campaigns, there are no Google Ads, there is no record label.

This was further supported by the fact that their YouTube videos had been watched more than 26 million times in a short span of time and now overpassing 52 million views.

The interview was more extensive, and it focused on Argentina's rock music heritage, which still thrives due to gene rationality and cultural significance. Groups like Divididos still have fans of all ages and perform for grandparents, parents, and grandchildren. This cultural persistence demonstrates the effectiveness of rock music. The appearance of female solo artists, such as Marilina Bertoldi, Mariana Michi, Loli Molina and Ignacia shows a clear change in the Argentine music scene towards more representation and diversity, as well as new approaches and ideas on the contemporary music scene.

He discussed the socio-political history of Argentina as a factor in the development of rock music, including how it sprung up as a counterculture during the Malvinas War. Rock was a form of rebellion and a means of expression, and it became an integral part of the national spirit. The cultural significance of the genre is also proved by the fact that Teatro Colon has become a home for Cerati tribute concerts.

It seems to me that the independent spirit of rock in urban music does not exist.

As for the challenges and opportunities in the Argentine music market, he made a significant point about the role of managers in the artist's careers. In most cases, management has been considered to be a more critical determinant of an artist's success than talent, including Facundo Cruz who helped mentor Ca7riel and Paco Amoroso in the early days of their careers, displaying visionary leadership. According to Tweety, several talents came up from independent labels like Mandioca and Pelo Music. These labels helped to develop artists like Kevin Johansen and Lisandro Aristimuño, who subsequently moved to the major labels, with the help of the win-win scenarios that enhanced their careers.

One of my questions was the Bzrp Music Sessions format, and how he broke down the barrier with his collaboration with Shakira to take Argentina to the world stage in the area of urban music. The Latin urban music movement is currently on the rise internationally through the collaborations of Bizarrap. His sessions with various artists proved that two brains are better than one, and his

creative production and Shakira's popularity created a social media storm that could be felt around the world.

This collaboration did not only help Bizarrap achieve success in the Latin American music market but also helped Shakira return to the music scene internationally. Other artists who have contributed to the current music scene include Duki, WOS, and Trueno, who have established themselves as authorities in the urban genre. The difference between the initial, independent rock and the highly managed urban music was one of the main topics discussed, which is relevant to the overall trends in the industry.

When we began talking about the regional factors that are also equally responsible for the development of music in Argentina, Tweety instantly pointed out that Buenos Aires being the cultural and economic capital is the nucleus of sophistication and innovation. On the other hand, the suburbs of Gran Buenos Aires are responsible for the authenticity of the urban music and are famous for combining cumbia, a traditional music of the region, with other genres of music. According to Tweety, emerging hotspots like Mendoza and Cordoba are important regions developing new talents and styles. Mendoza has recently produced good artists while Cordoba with its own distinct musical form, *el cuarteto*, gives the region's music a strong identity.

His useful and practical advice for the upcoming artists was to know the market, set realistic goals and grab both the local and international opportunities as the key tips. The first thing he shared is the first piece of advice: It is important to clarify your objectives and understand the environment in the music industry, which means that you should know what league you are in and who will be your rivals and friends, and what opportunities are available for you. Examine which areas you are ready to win and distinguish between those that may be beyond your grasp. While it is wonderful to dream big, it is also important to keep your feet on the ground and to realize that not every person can become a Duki or Charly García.

[The] first advice is to understand where you are going, who you are going to play with, who are the other players in this championship that you want to play.

Success is about finding out what makes you special while not letting ambition override reality.

The development of the Argentine music industry is a perfect example of the combination of the traditional and the modern. From the legacy of rock to the development of urban music, the country's cultural output has never been static. Tweety's recollections capture the spirit of tenacity, flexibility, and skill that characterizes music in Argentina and makes it a significant player in the local and international markets.

Mexico, the second largest market in Latin America, with Natanael Cano reaching a generation of fans and one of the pioneers of Corridos Tumbados still leads with his songs fusing the traditional and the urban. Eslabon Armado have also made their mark in *sierreño* music and have set a record for a *sierreño* track to appear on the Billboard Hot 100 with their single "Jugaste y Sufrí." In 2023, their collaboration with Peso Pluma on "Ella Baila Sola" was the first Regional Mexicano song to

appear on the global top 50 on Spotify and reach 1 billion streams, illustrating the growing international audience of the Regional Mexicano genres.

For several years, the term “Regional Mexicano” has been used to refer to various traditional and contemporary Música Mexicana genres, including banda, norteño, ranchera, and others. However, over the past few years, there has been a rebranding effort, one that has been driven primarily by the music industry itself. The role of streaming giants, most especially Spotify, in the promotion of the label “Música Mexicana” to represent the entire music of Mexico is considerable. But this shift is more than just a name change—it is a deliberate attempt at making the genre more international friendly. In my interview with Marco Cataño, who has spent his career supporting artists—from major labels to independent music—helping them navigate an ever-changing industry, and now leading Universal Music Mexico, he shared his deep passion for Música Mexicana and his strong commitment to artist development.¹¹ Marco believes the essence of Mexico should be made to bear the Mexico brand rather than being referred to as ‘Regional’ which could have limited importance in other countries.

Nevertheless, there is a discussion. Regional Mexicano is considered by some industry stakeholders to be a suitable term to classify the diverse kinds of Música Mexicana, while others regard it as a tendency to reduce the genre to a particular kind of music, rather than making it a global movement. In any case, it is evident that the efforts made towards changing the brand are in line with the general vision of increasing the awareness of Música Mexicana beyond its usual markets. One of the questions I asked Marco was about how the Regional Mexicano sector has evolved in recent years, comparing and contrasting it with Brazil’s Sertanejo about a decade ago. While live performances have always been the main driver of Música Mexicana or Regional Mexicano, the most significant shift in the last few years has been in the recording end of the industry.

Over the last few years, the recording and digital music industries have changed a lot. Marco identified the most important change that has occurred in the recording industry with more labels of Música Mexicana not only in Mexico but in the United States as well. Most of these labels have been set up by Mexican or Mexican American people, some of whom are first or second generation and have a passion to take the genre up the ladder. Some of the labels that have helped in this shift include Rancho Humilde, AfinArte, and Double P Records.

This is because historically, major labels used to control distribution and therefore limited the opportunities for independent artists. However, this is no longer the case as independent labels and distributors have become more powerful than ever. Peso Pluma and Natanael Cano have gone as far as to create their own labels and build professional structures while still keeping the control of the music they create. Marco said that today, Mexico’s Top 50 charts have a lot of independent artists coming up – something that was barely possible a decade ago.

This independence movement is not only about business structures but also about cultural preservation and authenticity. Mexican artists are now fully aware of the value of their catalogs, a realization that aligns with global trends where music rights and publishing have become lucrative

¹¹ Bruno Duque and Marco Cataño, marco_entrevista.m4a, personal, 2025.

assets. The ownership of a catalog is now more important than ever, as billion-dollar deals are becoming more common worldwide. Mexican artists are beginning to realize that their intellectual property is their most valuable asset.

The value of catalogues is becoming increasingly important. We see this in multi-billion dollar deals that have been made worldwide, and the same is happening in our local market, where owning the catalogue is becoming more and more relevant for the artist or the record label.

It is not only the recording industry where Música Mexicana artists are experiencing a rise; they are also doing very well in the live performance sector, especially in shows. It is well known how to engage the audience among industry professionals – from the remote villages in Oaxaca to the major city squares. What has changed is the fact that the big players like Ocesa, Live Nation and other similar companies have realized the business potential of the genre and are now investing in it.

Mexican music artists have been especially successful and have generated huge revenues through their shows.

The evolution of Música Mexicana is not only structural—it's also stylistic. In recent years, the genre has absorbed influences from hip-hop, trap, and urban music, leading to the explosion of corridos tumbados.

There is a new wave of young artists, very young artists, very inspired by trap culture that has been able to integrate traditional Mexican sounds with contemporary urban elements and has given birth to a new music movement that is both fresh and compelling. This transformation is the result of changing demographics and global consumption habits.

The Mexican diaspora in the U.S., which is now over 40 million people, has been key to the commercial success of Música Mexicana on streaming platforms. The presence of Música Mexicana tracks at the top of the Billboard charts proves there is a massive, dedicated audience consuming this music in the U.S. This was not the case before; thus, it is a very recent phenomenon. And yet, despite this success, Música Mexicana is still mostly limited to Spanish-speaking markets. While reggaeton has gone beyond the borders and topped the global charts, Música Mexicana has not gone beyond Mexico, the United States, and some Latin American countries. If Música Mexicana is to move to the next level, it must find a way to burst into markets like Brazil, Europe, and Asia.

So, in your view, what is keeping Música Mexicana from going global? Marco provided a great response: Rhythm and Accessibility. Global superstars in Latin music, such as Bad Bunny, J Balvin, and Karol G, make music that is danceable and club friendly. On the other hand, Música Mexicana is a storytelling genre with melodies and traditional instruments. This does not mean that Música Mexicana that incorporates other genres has to abandon its core to achieve success on the global stage. Instead, new fusions and collaborations may be the answer to help make it more appealing to international audiences. The rhythm could be the key if beats that can be incorporated into the global club culture and still keep the authenticity of the genre can bring its own “*Despacito*” moment.

I never see genre fusions as a threat because this promotes diversity in our music.

Mexican music is no longer limited to the regional scene— it is becoming an international movement. The only question now is not whether it will keep on growing, but how far it will go. In the right strategies, collaborations, and innovations, it could find itself joining the main genres of the world in no time.

Música Mexicana is a movement, not a moment!

In 2024 and 2025, the Venezuelan music scene is experiencing a resurgence thanks to new artists who are fusing traditional music with modern genres. However, among them, the duo Alleh & Yorghaki has received international recognition for their song “capaz (merengueton),” a merengue-reggaeton track that has gone viral on platforms like TikTok. They have gained popularity to an extent that they have been performing in big events like LOS40 Primavera Pop 2025 in Spain and sharing the stage with artists like María Becerra and Abraham Mateo.

Venezuela’s Micro TDH is establishing itself in the rap/hip hop category while also displaying pop and soulful ballad vocals. These artists are a part of the changing face of Latin music and are each able to contribute their cultural background and unique sound to the ever-expanding Latin population and has gotten more than 800 million streams on his songs like “Te Vi” which shows his ability to combine emotional content with pop sensibility.

Rawayana, Viniloversus, and Akapellah have been some of the key players in the expansion of Venezuelan music on the international scene. In 2025, Rawayana won the Grammy for Best Latin Rock or Alternative Album for *¿Quién trae las cornetas?*, which proved their ability to incorporate different genres and write socially meaningful tunes about the Venezuelan issue. Viniloversus, with their album *Cambié de Nombre*, was nominated for Best Rock Album at the 13th Annual Latin Grammy Awards in 2012 and recently with a few other nominations in 2024, thus cementing their status in the rock music scene in Latin America. Hip hop lyricist Akapellah has been nominated for multiple Latin Grammys, including for his 2024 nod for “Veneka” with Rawayana, a song that has started a discussion regarding the Venezuelan cultural identity.

There is also another act, which was established in 2003, Zeta has used its music to convey messages on injustice, inequality and identity. Their first release in 2025 *Was It Medicine To You?* is a collection of songs that encapsulates the band’s exploration of the more common struggles that exist within society in Venezuela.

The acclaimed Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, a product of El Sistema’s music education program, marked its 50th year with a European tour. Despite the fact that the orchestra has been able to demonstrate great potential, it has received criticism for being linked to the present political administration, thereby raising questions on the relationship between art and politics in Venezuela.

The band still continues to perform well despite the country’s economic and political issues and indicates a positive sign as far as the future of the music industry in Venezuela is concerned. To the old continent, Spain’s music scene in 2025 is a living proof of traditional and new artists in different genres of music and traditional and new trends. The music industry in the country has

continued to grow and earnings were reported to have hit €249 million in the first half of the year, this being a 16.6 % growth from the same period last year.¹²

In the last few years, Rosalia has helped the Spanish music industry to stay on the international charts and even more so in the American continent. The Spanish singer Quevedo made waves online with “Quédate” in 2023, a song that ascended to the top 20 on Spotify’s global top 50 in 2023, continuing to prove that European Latin music has a place in the global market.

New artists are on the rise. Ralphie Choo, a singer-songwriter from Madrid, caught people’s attention with his 2023 debut album *Supernova* and a collaboration with Rosalía in 2024 on the track “Omega.” Iñigo Quintero is also a Spanish singer-songwriter who is currently rising in the industry and gained fame from his song “Si No Estás,” which surprisingly topped global streaming charts in 2023 and even took the number one spot on Spotify’s global playlist.

In April 2024, Spotify’s RADAR Spain program was set to feature six rising artists who are reshaping the face of music in the country: Mushkaa, Charlie USG, Luis Cortés, pablopablo, shego, and Samurai. Mushkaa is an important voice in the urban and pop music scene of Catalonia and has the mission to take Catalan language music further than its usual boundaries. Charlie USG moved from performing street covers in Madrid to recording original songs like “Gran Vía 82,” which fuses classic rock with contemporary pop. He’s a gypsy with African blood, and his music reflects that, fusing flamenco, soul, and R&B into a distinct sound. In 2022, pablopablo, who began as a producer and composer, started to gain recognition after collaborating with Spanish pop star C. Tangana. From rock to electronica, shego, a Madrid-based band, is slowly but surely rising the ranks of Spanish indie rock. Samurai brings a fresh perspective to the scene, and his contribution is a significant part of the diverse and growing Spanish music industry.

Innovating, Peru’s music industry is in the process of shifting, with a new generation of musicians pushing the country’s musical boundaries by fusing traditional Andean music with contemporary global music. Newcomers like Renata Flores, the “Queen of Quechua Trap,” are changing the Latin urban music scene by incorporating the language and culture of the Quechua people into their music. Lima’s underground hip hop scene is a key player in Peruvian hip hop with A.C.O., whose lyricism and smooth beats have made them stand out. International acclaim is also being seen by indie-folk artist Adrián Bello with his soulful tunes and his poignant songwriting. Los Niños Vudú is a band that is bringing new life to the alternative rock genre, and Susana Baca, an Afro-Peruvian artist, is still inspiring a new generation of fusion artists who are experimenting with the country’s rich musical heritage.

Chile, its music scene is in the process of an exciting change with a new generation of artists, who are pulling together traditional sounds with the latest global sounds. Princesa Alba, a trendsetter of Chilean pop and reggaeton, has provided a new vision for Chile’s urban music with her futuristic beats and inspirational words. Another rising force is Soulfía, who has combined R&B, soul, and Latin rhythms into a sound that will appeal to young people. Chilean urbano acts like Pailita and

¹² Sparrow, Joe. “Country Profile - Spain 2025.” Music Ally, February 24, 2025. <https://musically.com/2025/02/24/country-profile-spain-2025/>.

Standly are also making their mark on streaming platforms with their take on reggaeton and Latin trap. Along the indie and alternative world, Pascuala Ilabaca maintains Chile's tradition of socially conscious and innovative music by combining folk with experimental elements. The new generation of Chilean artists is defining a new bold era for the country's music industry through neo-perreo, trap, and electronic folk fusions while also gaining international recognition for themselves and their roots.

You have enough proof so far that Latin America's emerging music scene is thriving and it's A GLOBAL POWERHOUSE. This paper also includes information about the music scenes in Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay, Cuba, Ecuador, and Central America, the last of which is also gaining global recognition. Some of the current musical acts in Uruguay include Pekeño 77, who are at the forefront of Latin trap, and Niña Lobo, an up-and-coming indie rock act. In Bolivia, which figures the most open market to regional imports in Latin America with 64.5% of streams come from other Latin countries and have local artists like Luzmila Carpio emerging to combine Andean traditions with contemporary music. The urban music in Paraguay is also on the rise, with performers like Kaese, who is redefining Latin rap. Cuba, a country famous for its rich musical heritage, is in the middle of a reggaeton and urban explosion with performers like El Taiger and Lenier. The scene in Ecuador is expanding and diversifying, with pop rock act Mar Rendón making her entry into the mainstream. This paper also focuses on Central American countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica, which are nurturing reggaeton, hip hop, and indie acts like Sabina Cazalla and Dengue Dengue Dengue.

With a wave of chart toppers and groundbreaking acts, Latin America is at the center of the world's musical evolution.

4. Stream by Stream: How Latin Music Took Over the Charts

Over the last decade, Latin music is no longer a regional music genre but has become global, topping streams and influencing other genres of music globally. In this chapter, the author discusses how with the help of streaming platforms, Latin music has broken all records and reached a success that was impossible before with the support of data, case studies, and opinions of professionals.

4.1. The Shift to Streaming: A Change Agent in the Latin Music Industry

The emergence of streaming services such as Spotify, YouTube, Amazon Music, and Apple Music has shaken up the music industry, opening it up to artists from different regions to market their music to fans across the globe. Latin music has been affected by this change greatly. The recorded music market in Latin America has now grown to become an important part of the world's music industry, and according to recent estimates, the market had a growth of approximately \$1.8 billion in 2024. This growth has been incredible and can be attributed to the CAGR of 16.8% between 2024 and 2030, which shows the increasing influence of the region. In 2020, streaming services were the main reason for this growth; that year, Latin America was the fastest-growing market for recorded music, with sales up 15.9%. For instance, Brazil and Mexico are the biggest markets in the area and account for approximately two-thirds of the total recorded music revenue. These increases can be attributed to increased internet penetration, the use of smartphones, and the popularity of streaming services.¹³

¹³ Swasti Dharmadhikari, rep., *South America Music Market*, n.d., <https://www.cognitivemarketresearch.com/regional-analysis/south-america-music-market-report>; IFPI, rep., *Global Music Report 2021*, 2021, https://www.ifpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/GMR2021_STATE_OF_THE_INDUSTRY.pdf.

Giving the proper spotlight to Mexico, which is considered a top global streaming asset, Mexico ranks #3 globally in total streaming volume, only behind U.S and India, with 226 billion total on-demand streams.

Some platforms that helped in this change include Spotify. In 2014, Spotify created its main Latin playlist, ¡Viva Latino!, which has more than 15 million subscribers. This playlist has helped in boosting Latin songs to the entire world. Just like Spotify, YouTube is another video sharing platform that has grown popular among Latin musicians.

Spotify's Viva Latino playlist has continued to discover new Latin artists and bring them global recognition. In 2024, the site presented its "Artists to Watch," including Bellakath, Chino Pacas, and Xavi.

These artists have recently gained popularity, Bellakath's music having a city and country Latin flavor, and Chino Pacas's Regional Mexicano songs have been streamed many times. Xavi has also come up as a new generation of Latin pop act, and his contribution to the genre cannot be overlooked.

5. The Role of Playlists and Algorithms in Latin America: *Playlists and algorithms are telling millions of listeners what they want and need to hear.*

For instance, Spotify's playlist algorithms are developed with the help of machine learning and data analysis to suggest recommendations to users. The development process starts with collaborative filtering to predict preferences based on user behavior such as listening history, skips, and likes. Moreover, Spotify uses content-based filtering, which employs NLP to analyze song details, words, and even conversations about the music. Furthermore, audio analysis tools analyze properties like rate, key, and energy from the recordings to sort them. These findings are incorporated into a recommendation engine developed using deep learning models that suggest relevant playlists like Discover Weekly or Release Radar and are updated based on user signals and comments.

It also helps to expand this model by suggesting songs to the users based on their activities. For example, if a listener likes reggaeton, then the listener will be introduced to similar artists and, in the process, expose Latin music to a wider audience.

Latin America is home to 24% of Spotify's global premium subscribers, approximately 70 million users, and the region has particularly high take-up rates of the streaming services. This has resulted in a situation where algorithms through playlists like "Viva Latino" or "Brasil Hits" not only promote famous artists but also function as filters for new artists, influencing visibility in a very competitive market.¹⁴

¹⁴ Spotify, rep., Q4 2024 Update, 2025, <https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/spotify-subscriber-base-grew-by-3m-to-293m-in-q1-company-posted-837m-operating-profit-for-the-quarter/>.

Independently, in the larger Latin American area, artists are also doing very well. Grassroot music is on the rise in Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia. These initiatives enable artists to circumvent the middlemen and directly upload their music to the platforms and earn from the streams.

6. Regional Growth and Global Impact

Streaming has been a key driver in Latin America. According to the IFPI, the music industries in Latin America had a significant increase of 17.1% in 2025. The total revenues for the region were \$1.5 billion in 2023, more than triple the \$446 million reported in 2017 and 2025 approximately \$1.9 billion and the region has now posted growth for the 16th consecutive year and has once again topped the global growth rate.

This expansion in 2023 and 2024 was mainly due to streaming, which was the source of 87.8% of the region's revenues. It is important to highlight that the biggest markets in the region, Brazil and Mexico, had a revenue growth of 14.1% and 13.3%, respectively.¹⁵ Mexico, which overtook Australia, and became the 10th largest market of the world.

Central America, usually not mentioned in the discussion of Latin American music's growth, is gradually creating its own position on the streaming stage. Although the markets of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica were growing at 16.7% in 2023, the area is slowly but surely becoming a significant market. YouTube and Spotify have helped revive interest in regional genres like marimba in Guatemala, cumbia in Honduras, and Garifuna music from Belize and Honduras, which has African and Caribbean roots.¹⁶ Gaby Moreno from Guatemala is a singer-songwriter who emerged as the winner of the Best New Artist award at the Latin Grammys in 2013 and has since been gathering international acclaim, and Aurelio Martínez from Honduras is a Garifuna music artist who has been leading the way for the genre. In the same manner, Costa Rican punk band Adaptados has developed a devoted following in the region, and Salvadoran ska-punk band Adhesivo has gained fame for its social lyrics and festival appearances across Latin America.

Streaming platforms have started to take notice, with localized playlists such as Central America Vibes on Spotify, which showcases a mix of emerging talent and traditional sounds, and TikTok campaigns fueling viral trends like the resurgence of marimba reinterpretations. However, the region faces challenges, including low premium subscription rates and limited algorithmic visibility, as global playlists are often dominated by reggaeton and pop. Despite these hurdles, Central American artists are finding creative ways to reach global audiences, such as through international collaborations, like Gaby Moreno's work with Hugh Laurie and Ricardo Arjona, and strategic use of social media. With a strong foundation of cultural richness and increasing digital adoption, Central America is poised to expand its influence on the global music stage, showcasing its unique blend of modern innovation and traditional heritage.

¹⁵ IFPI, rep., *Global Music Report 2025*, March 19, 2025, https://ifpi-website-cms.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/GMR_2025_State_of_the_Industry_Final_83665b84be.pdf.

¹⁶ Luminate, rep., *Luminate 2023 Midyear Report*, 2023, <https://luminatedata.com/reports/midyear-music-industry-report-2023/>.

Luminate's 2023 Midyear report found that 40% of music listeners in the US are listening to non-English language music, and Spanish is now the second most consumed language for music in the world, with an on-demand streaming volume of 120 billion in 2025 reflecting its growing influence in the mainstream music industry.¹⁷ In 2024, Regional Mexicano music was a significant contributor to this growth, reaching 28.57 billion on-demand audio streams in the U.S., surpassing Latin pop, which garnered 24.09 billion streams, highlighting the genre's expanding appeal beyond traditional audiences. This upward trend continues to show the increasing prominence and acceptance of Spanish-language music among diverse listener demographics in the U.S.¹⁸

Regional Mexicano music has seen explosive growth across Latin America and the United States, cementing its status as a leading genre on the global music stage. Led by Grupo Frontera, Grupo Firme, Natanael Cano, and Peso Pluma, the genre has moved beyond traditional mariachi and norteño roots and into contemporary sounds like trap and reggaeton. Streams of Regional Mexicano music increased by over 55% globally in 2023, with the U.S. playing a significant role in this growth, as reported by Spotify. Regional Mexicano music also became one of the top-streamed genres among Hispanic audiences in the U.S., indicating its growing appeal among younger generations. Música Mexicana was largest in Guatemala, Colombia and Chile where it had the most streams on Spotify during the period April 2023 to March 2024.¹⁹

Over the last few years, the music industry in Mexico has been on the rise and is now one of the biggest in Latin America and one of the most important in the world. According to the 2026 IFPI Global Music Report, the revenue of the recorded music business in Mexico in 2025 increased by 13.3% (2024 was 15%) for the fifth year, maintaining double-digit growth for a decade. The country has grown very fast in the global ranking and is now 10th in the world for recorded music markets, surpassing Australia. This growth is supported by the growing number of internet users—98.8 million in total—combined with near-saturation of mobile penetration, which enables widespread music consumption. Moreover, the streaming service is now responsible for 95% of the country's total recorded music revenue, and Spotify, YouTube Music, and Apple Music are the most popular.²⁰

The local talent is one of the main engines of the music in Mexico. In 2023, 70% of the national artist chart was Mexican and 50% of the top 50 most-streamed songs on Spotify in Mexico were by local artists, a significant rise from 14% in 2014. Peso Pluma, a leader of the new generation of Música Mexicana artists, was extraordinary, appearing in all of Mexico's top five singles of the year. His global breakout was underlined by the success of his album *Génesis*, which reached number three in the U.S. charts, and *Éxodo*, which peaked at five in 2024. The visibility of Música Mexicana internationally has also been boosted by the rise of artists such as Junior H, Natanael Cano, Fuerza

¹⁷ Luminate, *Luminate Releases 2023 Midyear Report*, 2024, <https://luminatedata.com/reports/midyear-music-industry-report-2023/>.

¹⁸ Luminate, rep., *Luminate 2024 Year-End Music Report*, 2025, <https://luminatedata.com/reports/yearend-music-industry-report-2024/>.

¹⁹ Spotify, "Música Mexicana Isn't Just a Phenomenon in Mexico and the U.S.-It's Taking over Latin America.," Spotify, May 3, 2024, <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2024-05-03/musica-mexicana-colombia-latin-america/>.

²⁰ Music Ally, rep., *Mexico*, 2023, <https://musically.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/11-2023-Mexico-346568.pdf>.

Regida and Grupo Firme, while total streams of Mexican artists have increased by more than 300% globally since 2019, up by 220%.²¹

The Música Mexicana sector is attracting growing financial interest from the international markets. Amazon Music reported that Música Mexicana, which includes corridos tumbados, banda, and norteño, grew by 249% year over year in 2024, and Spotify said that global streaming of Música Mexicana increased by 440% between 2018 and 2023 and by 55% in 2023.²² These numbers show not only a continued growth in Mexico but also a growth in international markets especially in the United States, Colombia and Argentina. Thus, Mexico City has become one of the most important ‘trigger cities’ for global streaming algorithms, and the music of the country is therefore in a good position to maintain its regional dominance and global appeal and thus attract investments, talents, and audiences from all over the world. People migrate and culture goes with them! No borders!

7. Challenges in the Streaming Era

It has also brought its set of problems while opening up the music industry to streaming – Royalty Disparities: Many Latin artists have expressed concerns over being paid little for their royalties. In a 2022 report by Rolling Stone, it was found that artists get between \$0.003 and \$0.005 per stream which is not enough for new artists to support themselves.

The differences in streaming music royalties between Latin America and the United States are shaped by variables such as the price of subscriptions, the share of revenue from advertising, and the size of the market. Monthly subscription prices for services such as Spotify in Latin America are usually lower than those in the United States, which means that the money that is being generated from the subscriptions and later distributed to artists as royalties is also low. For instance, in 2023, Spotify’s ARPU in Latin America was lower than that of North America and was significantly higher than that of India. Therefore, artists in Latin America receive less money for each stream; This lower ARPU, which is a result of pricing decisions made for specific markets, affects the royalty revenue, which is paid per stream in the range of \$0.0015 to \$0.003 in Latin America, but this rate can be even lower in countries with low subscription plans, while American artists receive \$0.005 for one stream. You still need to take into consideration a number of factors when you are going to receive a pay per stream amount: whether the stream was premium or freemium, how many ads Spotify sold that month, whether the stream was in the United States or some other country and a few other factors.

Moreover, the preponderance of freemium models in significant Latin American markets such as Brazil and Mexico means that the users who do not pay for the service (that is, the majority) decrease the revenue that goes to artists through advertising. Inflation and currency devaluation worsen the situation in some countries, for instance, Argentina, where the high inflation rate erodes

²¹ Spotify, “From Corridos Tumbados to Mexican Reggaetón, Experience the Wide-Ranging Sounds of Mexico at Mexcla Spotify,” Spotify, October 29, 2024, <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2024-10-29/from-corridos-tumbados-to-mexican-reggaeon-experience-the-wide-ranging-sounds-of-mexico-at-mexcla-spotify/>.

²² Spotify, “Música Mexicana Isn’t Just a Phenomenon in Mexico and the U.S.-It’s Taking over Latin America.,” Spotify, May 3, 2024, <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2024-05-03/musica-mexicana-colombia-latin-america/>; October 29, 2024, <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2024-10-29/from-corridos-tumbados-to-mexican-reggaeon-experience-the-wide-ranging-sounds-of-mexico-at-mexcla-spotify/>.

the value of the royalties and, therefore, artists have to stream their music for a very large number of plays to get the same revenue that they get from the United States market. In addition, the majority of free, ad-supported streaming models are found in Latin America, which further reduces the amount of money per stream because of the lower advertising revenue compared to the United States. These economic differences mean that Latin American artists need to get their music streamed many times to gain the same level of earnings that their American counterparts do, which shows the difficulties in equalizing the royalties between the two markets.

These disparities cannot be addressed through casual interventions; they require strategic interventions, such as encouraging premium subscriptions, improving ad revenue models, and implementing user-centric payout systems that would enable Latin artists to earn fairly and at the same time exploit the region's strong streaming growth.

Moreover, the costs of a Spotify subscription vary across countries in Latin America due to differences in economic development, people's purchasing power, and marketing strategies for increasing the number of users. In 2024, a Spotify Premium account in Mexico was offered at \$5.50 per month, while in Argentina, the cost was \$2.50, which is different from the GDP per capita and the exchange rate. Spotify uses the 'local pricing' strategy which varies the membership fees to match the economic environment of the market. This approach enables the platform to increase subscriber numbers in cost-sensitive areas where affordability is key in the competition with the free or ad-supported models and piracy. For instance, the platform's user base in Brazil can be linked to the fact that it offered the cheapest monthly subscription among the countries in Latin America at \$3.80. Although this approach enhances user engagement, it results in low ARPU of \$4.50 in the region in 2023, from \$5.50 in North America. These price differences are an indication of the effort that Spotify has put into making the service accessible to all while at the same time being profitable in the different economic zones.

8. Latin Music Economics: From Local to Global Markets

The economics of Latin music have taken a dramatic shift in the last two decades; Latin music that was once limited to regional markets has grown to become a global giant. Latin music can be traced back to their local roots and genres like the mariachi, salsa, and cumbia, which were mainly for Spanish speaking audiences. But the digital platforms like Spotify, YouTube and Apple Music have suddenly exposed Latin artists to the global stage, in a world where the local is connected to the global and local sounds are heard by international audiences. Latin music is now one of the biggest genera in the world and has witnessed a record high of \$100 million revenue increase in 2022 versus 2021 and 2023 versus 2022, ending up in 2025 with \$1 Billion in revenue in U.S, according to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).²³

The other factor that has led to growth is streaming. This has opened the market for Latin artists to reach out to billions of people without the help of radio or physical album sales. "Viva Latino" on Spotify and Latin music channels on YouTube have become important resources in promoting artists, be it the big names or new artists like Peso Pluma and Grupo Frontera. This change

²³ RIAA, rep., *RIAA YEAR-END 2025 US LATIN MUSIC REVENUE REPORT*, 2025, <https://www.riaa.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/RIAA-US-Latin-Year-End-Revenue-2025.pdf>.

has also impacted revenue streams; artists are no longer just receiving income from music sales but also from global touring, merchandising, and brand endorsements thus expanding the economic value of the Latin music industry.

Furthermore, the globalization of Latin music has opened new markets besides the usual Latin American and United States markets. Countries like Germany, Japan, and South Korea have emerged as markets for Latin music due to collaborations with international artists and the crossover of Latin beats. For instance, “Despacito” by Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee brought in millions of dollars in royalties from around the world, many of them from non-Spanish speaking countries, thus revealing the cross-cultural potential of Latin music.

Besides its cultural influence, the economic emergence of Latin music creates investments in talent identification, marketing strategies and technologies. Companies and streaming platforms are now investing heavily in the discovery and development of new Latin talents as the genre continues to show growth. As Latin music continues to dominate global charts and influence pop culture, it is no longer just a genre—it has become an economic force reshaping the global music industry.

9. Conclusion

Latin music has become one of the most important parts in the global music industry today and this is due to the cultural diversity, the technological advancement and the new generation of musicians who have expanded the audience for Latin music. In the past, Latin music was mainly limited to the regional scene but today, it is a billion-dollar industry with artists like Bad Bunny, Rosalía, Karol G and Anitta at the helm. These pathfinders along with other genre prophets have expanded the horizon of Latin music and make it an international phenomenon that is still growing.

The genre’s success has been attributed to the “democratizing power of streaming platforms” that now account for nearly all revenue in key markets such as the United States. Other tools like the Spotify playlists and TikTok campaigns have also been used to enhance visibility and provide a new chance for both the established stars and the newcomers. Moreover, the interactions between Latin singers and pop icons have helped to overcome language and cultural barriers and open up new markets for the genre. The data on the sustainable double-digit growth of the revenue in Latin America and other regions shows that these trends have a significant impact on the transformation of the economic base of the music industry.

As Latin music remains topical, it can be used as a case study how cultural loyalty combined with new media strategies can capture the attention of international audiences. Artists and industry people should capitalize on this momentum by employing data-driven approaches, looking for new partnerships, and ensuring their music is suitable for consumption in various markets. The emergence of independent distribution platforms and algorithm-based discovery also offers a way for niche genres and artists to make their breakthrough in crowded markets. Looking ahead, the future of Latin music lies in its ability to evolve while remaining true to its roots. Its story is one of resilience, creativity, and adaptability—a testament to the power of music as a universal language. With its continued growth in both cultural and economic influence. Latin music is not only thriving but shaping the future of the global music industry.

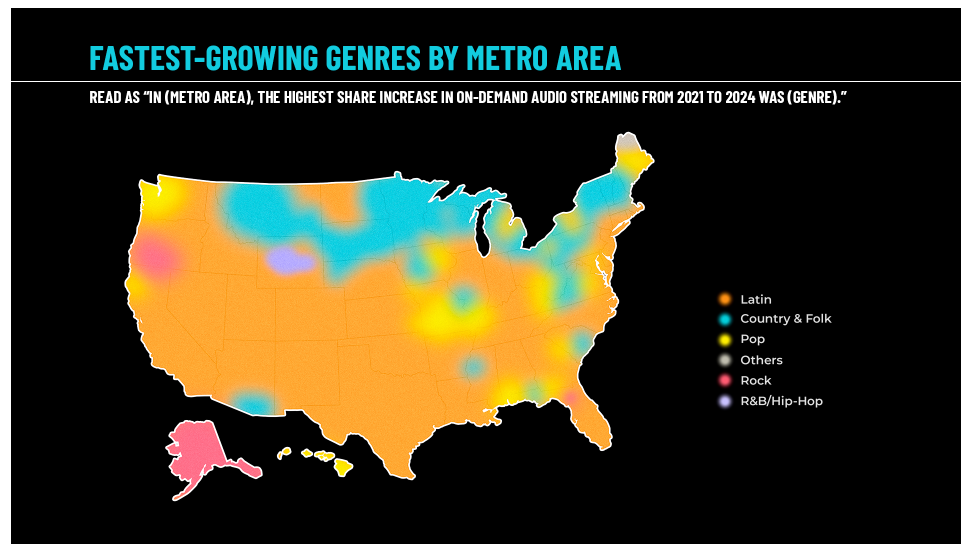


Figure 1. Fastest-Growing Music Genres by Metro Area (2021–2024).²⁴

US LATIN REVENUE REPORT

Latin revenue outpaces overall
US market growth, hitting
10th annual high of

\$1B

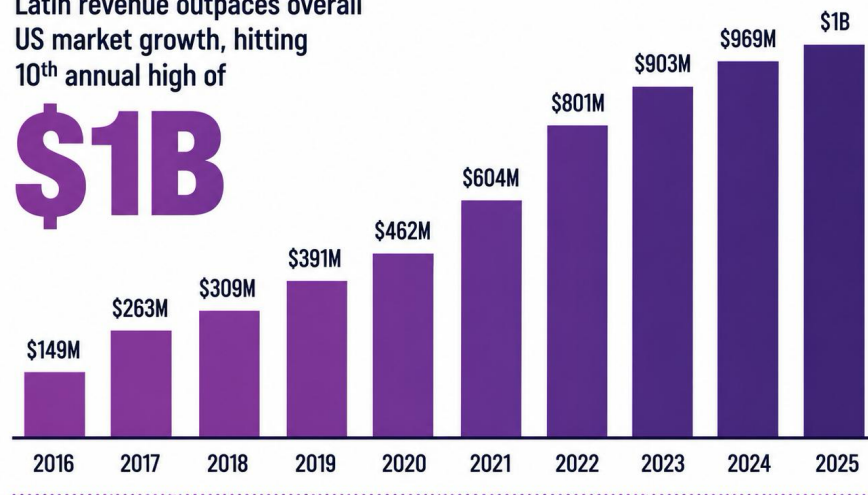


Figure 2. Latin music revenue trends.²⁵

²⁴ Original illustration by the author, based on data from Tyler Moore, “Metro-Level Streams: The Next Frontier,” Luminate, December 3, 2024, <https://luminatedata.com/blog/metro-level-streams-the-next-frontier/>.

²⁵ Original illustration by the author, adapted from data Leibfreid, Megan. “RIAA: US Market Latin Music Revenues Hit New High 18% Above 2005 Peak - RIAA.” RIAA, April 11, 2025. <https://www.riaa.com/riaa-us-market-latin-music-revenues-hit-new-high-18-above-2005-peak/>.

TOP 10 MUSIC MARKETS 2025		
1	USA	
2	JAPAN	
3	UK	
4	CHINA ⁺¹ ▲	
5	GERMANY ⁻¹ ▼	
6	FRANCE	
7	SOUTH KOREA	
8	BRAZIL ⁺¹ ▲	
9	CANADA ⁻¹ ▼	
10	MEXICO ⁺² ▲	

IFPI GLOBAL MUSIC REPORT 2026

Figure 3: Top 10 Music Markets, 2025.²⁶

²⁶ Original illustration by the authors, adapted from data IFPI, rep., *Global Music Report 2025* (IFPI, 2025), https://ifpi-website-cms.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/GMR_2025_State_of_the_Industry_Final_83665b84be.pdf.

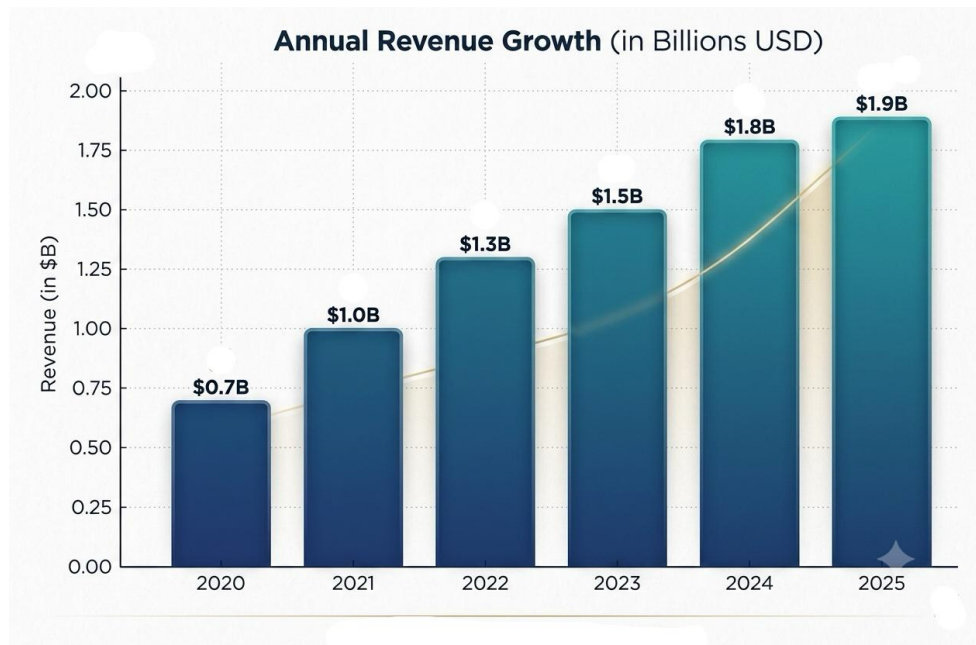


Figure 4: Annual Revenue Growth, 2020-2025.²⁷

Duque, Bruno Fragoso Pires. "A Global Powerhouse: A Data-Driven Exploration of Latin America's Contemporary Music Scenes." *Diagonal: An Ibero-American Music Review* 11, no. 2 (2026): 35–59.

²⁷ IFPI, rep., Global Music Report 2025, March 19, 2025, https://ifpi-website-cms.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/GMR_2025_State_of_the_Industry_Final_83665b84be.pdf.