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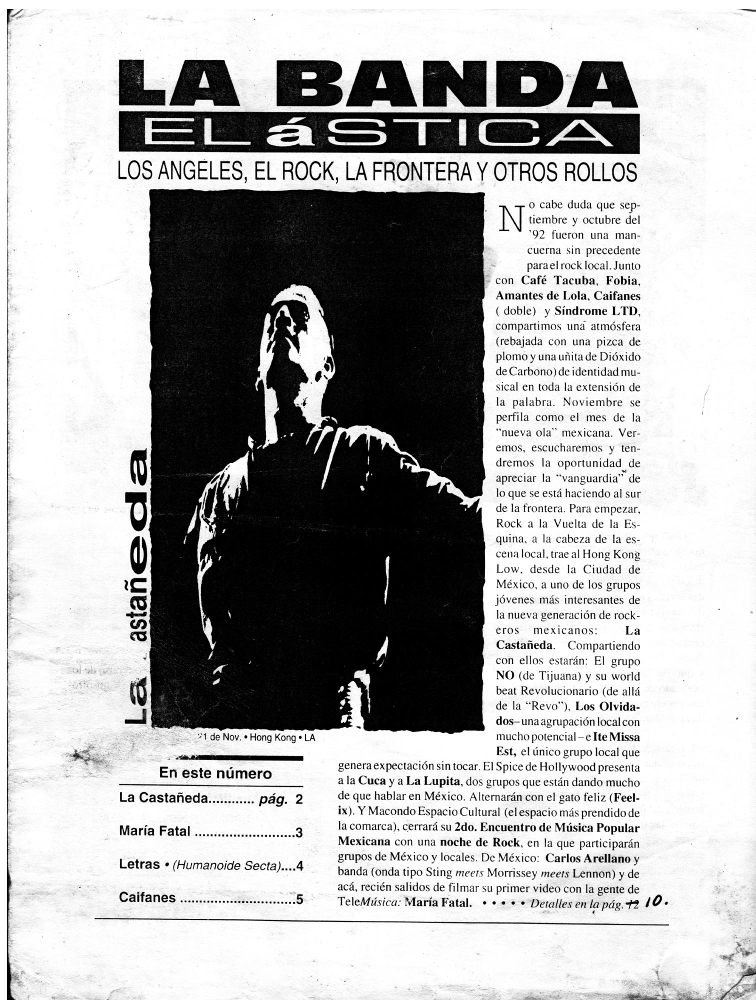
JORGE N. LEAL

“Seremos capaces de pensar por nuestra cuenta” (We’re capable of thinking on our own): 1990s Immigrant Los Angeles and Latin American Intellectual and Publishing Traditions



LA BANDA
ELáSTICA
LOS ANGELES, EL ROCK, LA FRONTERA Y OTROS ROLLOS

La astañeda

21 de Nov. • Hong Kong • LA

No cabe duda que septiembre y octubre del ’92 fueron una mancuerna sin precedente para el rock local. Junto con **Café Tacuba**, **Fobia**, **Amantes de Lola**, **Caifanes** (doble) y **Síndrome LTD**, compartimos una atmósfera (rebajada con una pizca de plomo y una uñita de Dióxido de Carbono) de identidad musical en toda la extensión de la palabra. Noviembre se perfila como el mes de la “nueva ola” mexicana. Veremos, escucharemos y tendremos la oportunidad de apreciar la “vanguardia” de lo que se está haciendo al sur de la frontera. Para empezar, Rock a la Vuelta de la Esquina, a la cabeza de la escena local, trae al Hong Kong Low, desde la Ciudad de México, a uno de los grupos jóvenes más interesantes de la nueva generación de rockeros mexicanos: **La Castañeda**. Compartiendo con ellos estarán: El grupo **NO** (de Tijuana) y su world beat Revolucionario (de allá de la “Revo”), **Los Olvidados**– una agrupación local con mucho potencial – e **Ite Missa Est,** el único grupo local que genera expectación sin tocar. El Spice de Hollywood presenta a la **Cuca** y a **La Lupita**, dos grupos que están dando mucho de que hablar en México. Alternarán con el gato feliz (**Feelix**). Y Macondo Espacio Cultural (el espacio más prendido de la comarca), cerrará su **2do. Encuentro de Música Popular Mexicana** con una **noche de Rock**, en la que participarán grupos de México y locales. De México: **Carlos Arellano** y banda (onda tipo Sting *meets* Morrissey *meets* Lennon) y de acá, recién salidos de filmar su primer video con la gente de Tele*Música:* **María Fatal.** • • • • • *Detalles en la pág.* ~~12~~ 10.

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Figure 1. Cover of *La Banda Elástica* Magazine. Issue 4, Volume 1. November 1992. The original subheading of this publication included the different locations and themes covered in the publication: Los Ángeles, El Rock (Rock music), La Frontera (The borderlands), y Otros Rollos (and other matters). From the personal collection of the author.

JORGE N. LEAL is Assistant Professor of Mexican American/Latinx History at the University of California, Riverside. He is currently working on a book that examines how Latinx youth culture participants have reshaped the Southern California urban space and advocate for more expansive notions of belonging in transnational Latinx communities. Dr. Leal is also the curator of The Rock Archivo LÁ, a public scholarship project that collects and shares Latinx music cultures ephemera.

This article analyzes the emergence of publications printed in Spanish, Spanglish, and English that emerged as part of the "Rock Angelino" music scene in 1990s Southern California.

I posit that the creators of these publications served as organic intellectuals within the Rock Angelino scene while also participating in a broader pan-Latin American transnational circuit of independent publications. The Latina/o writers and designers of these publications were in their late teens or early twenties, yet they drew from earlier artistic, intellectual, and printing traditions to create a transnational pan-Latina/o identity. As Latinas/os living transnational realities in Los Angeles, they chronicled their daily lives and struggles against marginalization and xenophobia in the pages of these magazines while also asserting both their dignity and belonging in both Los Angeles and Latin America.

The writers, musicians, and readers I define as Rock Angelino organic intellectuals understood themselves to be part of the Rock en Español genre that had emerged in Latin America in earlier decades, but they also were engaged in creating their own style in Los Angeles. I employ Antonio Gramsci's concept of "organic intellectual"—the nontraditionally educated thinkers and artists who formulate and spread ideologies and cultural expressions of nonhegemonic groups—to conceive how these writers, graphic designers, and photographers created and shared the counter-hegemonic narratives in the pages of these publications. Their communications empowered their Latina/o audiences during an anti-immigrant political and social era in California.

The young Latina/o immigrants and U.S.-born Latinas/os who were part of the Rock Angelino collectivities also sought to be part of vigorous intellectual and artistic expressions that demanded democratic societies in Latin America. Hence, L.A.-based organic intellectuals within Rock Angelino created publications in which they circulated information about Latin American bands and chronicles of their lived experiences as migrants in the United States. They found inspiration in oppositional countercultural magazines and zines printed in Mexico City, Tijuana, and other Spanish-speaking metropolises. These publications championed novel literary genres, reviewed post-modern art, and proposed the emerging new "Rock Mexicano" as a cultural expression of dissent from the authoritarian politics of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI).

In Mexico, the PRI exercised an almost absolute monopoly of power, extending state control over the media and almost completely eliminating dissenting voices in mass media; however, throughout the 1970s and 1980s in South America, several countries were ruled by military

dictatorships that violently persecuted those people they perceived as dissenters from their regimes. Many Latin American migrants who arrived in Los Angeles in the 1980s and early 1990s drew from Latin American writings, songs from the "Nueva Canción," and films from Spain's La Movida, using these tools from their intellectual toolboxes to make sense of their new environment and remain connected with the more democratic political and oppositional cultural expressions.

For young Latina/o migrants involved in Rock Angelino, the music and writings originating from Latin America helped them make sense of their presence in Los Angeles and the United States at a moment of racial strife between the Black community and the city's police agencies, which exploded in the Los Angeles rebellion—the riots of 1992. In addition, California nativist groups employed the state's electoral propositions to attack the rising California Latina/o population. In 1994, Proposition 187 was placed on the ballot; it sought to deny most public services to unauthorized immigrants. This xenophobic campaign gained impetus as Governor Pete Wilson embraced anti-immigrant rhetoric to shore up votes in his successful re-election campaign. Wilson's immigrant-bashing electoral strategy persuaded the California electorate to approve Proposition 187 in the fall 1994 election, leading to a highly charged anti-immigrant sociopolitical environment that weighed heavily on immigrants without legal status.

For Latina/o immigrants who lived in Los Angeles in the 1990s, regardless of whether they held legal status or not, the mention of "illegal immigrants" was a clear dog whistle targeting them. In the wake of xenophobic attacks, these immigrants drew from Latin American oppositional political traditions and their growing knowledge of historical U.S. civil rights movements to advocate for their civil rights in the United States.

This article first traces the transnational print culture genealogy of the oppositional or countercultural publications that emerged in the 1980s in Mexico and how they informed and influenced Latina/o migrants in Southern California to create their own publications in the early to mid-1990s—such as *La Banda Elástica*, *La Neta, Frontera, Al Borde*, and many others. It will then present brief biographical information about some of the writers who collaborated in these publications and their diverse migrant trajectories. This section is followed by an analysis of some of the articles and a discussion between writers and readers on their migrant experiences, as well as transnational political commentary.

This essay will demonstrate that in addition to writings about Rock en Español, film, and the arts, the pages of these publications also served as a forum for Los Angeles Latinas/os to narrate their experiences as

immigrants in the United States, assert their dignity, and showcase their creativity. Furthermore, L.A.-based Latina/o organic intellectuals who published their texts in these magazines (or zines), drew on the intellectual lineages of Mexican and Latin American oppositional culture to assert their right to freedom of expression and transnational political dissent. Through their publications and writings, they created what I call "hemispheric print counterpublics," which facilitated circulation of cultural expressions and helped shape transnational political and cultural identities, thus, inserting 1990s Los Angeles Spanish-language print culture into the longer historical genealogy of Latin American print cultures.

A Genealogy of the Rock Angelino Print Culture

Concurrent to the emergence of the first Rock Angelino bands in the late 1980s, Rock Angelino participants began to read and circulate magazines that originated from what has been defined as the Mexican counterculture. These magazines, published in Mexico City, included *La Banda RockEra,* focused on rock and roll; *La Regla Rota*, oriented more to the art scene; and its successor, *La Pus moderna*. For its part, *La Línea Quebrada/The Broken Line* was a product of the burgeoning Tijuana intelligentsia. In the 1980s, the distribution of magazines and newspapers was heavily controlled by Mexican government agencies. Nonetheless, the publishers and readers of these independent publications ingeniously devised distribution networks to circulate them throughout Mexico, Latin America, and the United States via postal mail and other informal methods. For example, writers made periodic visits to sell the publications or leave a few issues on consignment at independently owned bookstores. Each publication catered to distinctive, but at times overlapping, audiences. For instance, *La Banda RockEra* aimed to be a rather conventional music magazine in the mold of American publications like *Rolling Stone* or *Spin*. The *La Banda RockEra* articles, on the other hand, offered critiques of the music genre as being marginalized by the Mexican government. *La Banda RockEra* counted on a sizable readership among Mexican rock followers in Los Angeles, who were able to obtain a constant supply of issues.

La Pus moderna and *La Línea Quebrada/The Broken Line* were publications that deeply influenced aspiring writers and creators based in Los Angeles. *La Regla Rota* and *La Pus moderna* were published by a group of young artists, photographers, and art critics. *La Regla Rota* was published from 1984 to 1987; *La Pus moderna* led a longer and more stable publishing cycle from 1989 until 1996. Art historian Olivier Debroise defines these publications as ambitious and chaotic,

attempting to be all of the following: "rock magazine[s], comics book[s], photographic portfolio, vehicle[s] of gossip, instrument[s] for visual arts critiques, laboratory/[ies] of literary experimentation, and grenade launcher[s] of the hypothetical new Mexican left … [*La Regla Roja/La Pus moderna*] were dissenting, irritating, malicious, *pocha*, arbitrary, and deeply critical of the mechanisms of the art and its institutions." The content in these magazines reflected an editorial line in explicit opposition to the official line of the Mexican corporatist state that supported nationalist artwork.

La Pus moderna commonly featured articles and photo essays on emerging Mexico City rock bands that came to the forefront of the Mexican rock scene at the beginning of the 1990s. This alliance between countercultural "anti-official" publications such as *La Banda RockEra* and *La Pus moderna* and emerging Mexican rock bands proved crucial in bringing attention to the genre because musicians and fans associated with rock and roll had long been subjected to near complete exclusion from the airwaves and pages of Mexican media.

From its inception as a youth music genre, the rebellious nature of rock and roll and its possible effects on politically radicalizing Mexican youth baffled the Mexican state. In the wake of two large student protests, the Tlatelolco in 1968 and the Corpus Christi in 1971, both brutally repressed by government, the Luis Echeverría administration ordered media companies—many of which depended on funds from state advertising—to banish rock and roll from their airwaves, and eliminate its images from magazine pages. These student manifestations were not directly associated with rock and roll, but the PRI-led government perceived rock and roll as a countercultural movement that it feared could develop into a formidable ideological threat. Radio programmers and venue operators faced fines, revocation of operating licenses, and even temporary imprisonment for attempting to play rock and roll on the radio or stage a rock concert. Thus, rock music was pushed toward Mexico City's most marginalized barrios on the outskirts of the nation's capital.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña, a self-defined "post-Mexican" performer, was also a contributor for *La Regla Rota* and *La Pus moderna*. Gómez-Peña gained international recognition for his provocative performances on cultural hybridity and themes related to the U.S.-Mexico border, which earned him a MacArthur fellowship in 1991. Previously, Gómez-Peña had been active on the Tijuana/San Diego border throughout the 1980s. Based on the reach and impact of publications like *La Regla Rota* on the cultural scene in Mexico, Gómez-Peña decided to publish *La Línea Quebrada/The Broken Line* in Tijuana in 1986. Gómez-Peña understood *La Línea Quebrada* as a Tijuana twin publication of *La*

Regla Rota and sought to "restore the fragile axis of thought between Mexico City and Aztlán." According to Gómez-Peña, throughout the 1980s, "the relationship between Mexicans and Chicanos was marked by fear and resentment."

To showcase Mexico-U.S. border aesthetics, *La Línea Quebrada/The Broken Line* offered images and essays on conceptual art, Latin American poetry, and Chicano pop culture. Reflecting on the publication and its reach, Gómez-Peña stated: "Despite the fact that we only published 1,000 copies per issue, we managed to become important players at the table of negotiations of border culture, at the time strictly controlled by academia. Our sloppy distribution actually helped to create an aura of countercultural inaccessibility ... people would photocopy it and pass it around. Intellectual groups from both countries continually expressed solidarity with us ... the impulse behind this project was to find new and surprising ways to distribute important ideas with the minimum of resources and from an independent perspective." The ad hoc distribution of these publications made it possible for issues of *La Pus moderna* and *La Banda RockEra,* among others, to reach Southern California.

Rock Angelino participants diligently sought issues of these alternative, noncommercial magazines, despite the lack of established distribution networks, which limited their availability in Southern California. Several participants said they subscribed to magazines such as Mexico's *La Pus moderna, La Banda RockEra*, and others published in Argentina and other Latin American countries via postal mail. Some of these publications also were available sporadically in bookstores in downtown Los Angeles or mom-and-pop stores in the city of Huntington Park. These publications became models for Rock Angelino participants as they began to create their own self-edited publications in the form of fanzines or zines, which first became popular in the 1960s counterculture and proliferated rather rapidly in the wake of punk rock in the 1970s and 1980s. Typically, zines are noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines that the creators produced and distributed on their own.

Embodying punk rock's do-it-yourself publishing ethos, *El Acordeón* appeared in Spring 1990, becoming a sort of Angelino sibling of *La Pus moderna* and *La Línea Quebrada*. In similar fashion to the Mexican publications, *El Acordeón* attracted emerging musicians, graphic designers, and writers. Its name, *El Acordeón* (the accordion), was a nod to its austere but ingenious design and materials. To maximize printing space and reduce reproduction costs, the publication consisted of several photocopied sheets of paper folded in the form of

an accordion. *El Acordeón* was distributed mainly at rock concerts throughout Southern California.

El Acordeón was originally founded by graphic designer Emilio Morales from Mexico City; Maria Madrigal, a Chicana photographer raised in Chicago; and Jorge Infante, an immigrant from the northeast Mexican city of Tampico, who also founded the band Los Olvidados. In addition to Morales, Madrigal, and Infante, *El Acordeón* included two prominent emerging rock critics with connections to *La Pus moderna* and *La Línea Quebrada:* Enrique Blanc and Octavio Hernández-Díaz. Blanc was a Mexican writer and radio host who split his time between his native Guadalajara and Los Angeles. Hernández-Diaz, on the other hand, was based in Tijuana after migrating from Mexico City. In Tijuana, Hernández-Diaz had become a concert producer, radio host, and cultural critic for several Tijuana and Mexico City publications. Because he was close to Southern California, Hernández-Diaz would frequently visit LA to join the other *El Acordeón* co-creators. During these visits, Blanc and Hernández Díaz, along with the LA-based *El Acordeón* team, attended concerts; afterward, they would moonlight in the LA suburbs, writing, designing, and photocopying the publication. Southern California became the junction where LA-based writers met with Latin American authors to exchange albums, collaborate on articles about the burgeoning Rock en Español music genre, and share notes on the divergent experiences of being visitors or immigrants in Los Angeles.

By 1992, *El Acordeón's* popularity compelled the founders to abandon the zine layout and transition to a more established magazine format that included color and glossy pages. The revamped publication featured a new name: *La Banda Elástica*, or "the elastic band." The name alluded to the Spanish word for band or music group, *banda,* but its slang also connoted "la banda," a group of friends defined as rockeros, or rock and roll devotees. However, it also subverted the rigidity of the rockero term with the addition of "Elástica" (Elastic). With the new name, Morales and Madrigal, the co-publishers of the magazine, along with the first group of editors and contributors, intended to demonstrate the elasticity of the genre and the expansiveness of their coverage.

As *La Banda Elástica* established itself as a regular publication and gained readers, it also enlisted a diverse set of collaborators based in LA. Among them were Uruguayan journalist Enrique Lopetegui and Argentinean radio host Natalie Stawsky. The editorial stances of Lopetegui and Stawsky were strikingly different. Lopetegui leaned toward covering bands from both Los Angeles and Latin America that fused classic rock and roll with Latin American sounds. In his writings, Lopetegui also added a nuanced sociopolitical commentary. On the

other hand, Stawsky—who defined herself as an anarchist—discussed punk and hardcore bands, and more radical politics. Nonetheless, taken together, their writings provided deeper emphasis on cultural expressions that originated in Montevideo and Buenos Aires.

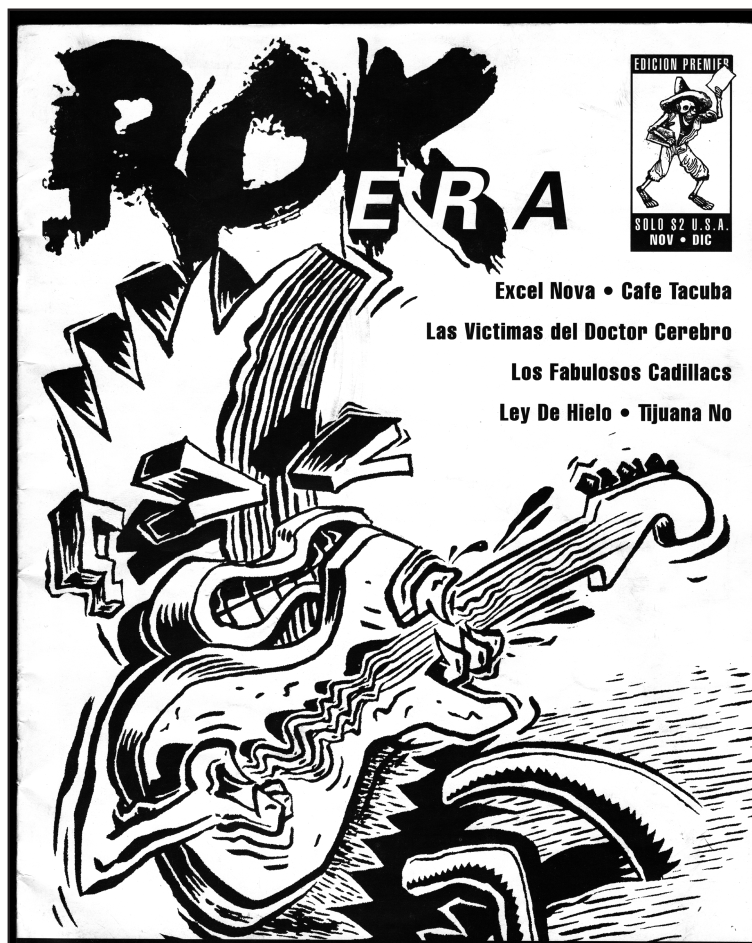
The first issues of *La Banda Elástica* in 1992 were distributed at rock shows, which were organized specifically to celebrate the launch of each issue. María Fatal, Los Olvidados, and other Rock Angelino bands performed at these events, which took place at different "ephemeral forums" around Southern California. This method of distributing the magazine during music concerts was akin to the "happenings" organized by the editors of *La Regla Rota* and *La Pus moderna* when presenting new issues of these publications in Mexico City in the 1980s. They frequently hosted magazine launch events in unconventional venues (akin to the Los Angeles "ephemeral forums"), such as Bar 9, Mexico City's most notorious gay bar in the 1980s, which police often raided.

The constant publication of *La Banda Elástica* issues encouraged other writers and creators within the Rock Angelino community to develop their own publications. For example, *La Neta Magazine* appeared in the hands of Rock Angelino scenesters in 1994. *La Neta's* design and editorial line followed the mold of Mexico's *La Banda RockEra* and was purposely designed using crude copy-and-paste text to signify its Mexico City working class origins. Written mainly by Sergio "Lavis" Peralta, *La Neta* (the street slang term for "The Truth") provided biting commentary about both L.A. and Latin American bands. *La Neta* articles were tinged with class-based slights toward the more Rock en Español popular bands. In the *La Neta* articles, these established acts were derided as "fresas" (urban middle class) as opposed to the rock urbano adherents, who understood themselves as more working class and originally from the Mexico City periphery. Similarly, *RokEra* magazine appeared in 1994, led by two graphic designers based in San Pedro, California. Its articles were mostly written in Spanish and centered on L.A. and Latin American bands. Nonetheless, the comics written and drawn by the publishers distinguished *RokEra* from the other Rock Angelino publications.

In time, *La Banda Elástica* broadened its focus from L.A. to include articles and reviews on bands and albums coming out of different cities in Latin America. In the second half of the 1990s, *La Banda Elástica* became one of the most renowned Rock en Español magazines, not only in the United States but also in Latin America, where it was distributed in major cities. The publication went from a circulation of more than one hundred in its early days in 1991 to more than 20,000 by 1999. By 1995, the U.S. mainstream music magazine *Spin* listed *La Banda Elástica* in its "Future of Rock" list. In the wake of the popularity and

Figure 2. Cover of *La Neta* zine. Issue #2 November 1994. This issue published in November references the "día de los muertos" (day of the dead) holiday, commemorated in Mexico by featuring "calaveras" (skeletons) and recently deceased acquaintances of the editors. From the Personal Collection of Sergio "Lavis" Peralta.

Figure 3. Cover of *ROKera* Magazine. Inaugural Issue, November–December 1994. From the personal collection of the author.



success of *La Banda Elástica*, other publications with Rock en Español themes sprang out of Los Angeles, such as *Retila* (1994–1997) and *Al Borde*, which began publication in the summer of 1997. These publications were also exclusively Spanish language; they gained regional distribution and focused on well-known Latin American acts while reserving some space for L.A. bands and Southern California concert reviews.

In tandem with an increase in Spanish-language print culture focused on Latina/o youth culture in Southern California, the mid-1990s also saw the emergence of several English-language publications focusing on similar themes. Paralleling the emergence of *La Banda Elástica*, an English-language magazine, *Frontera*, began publication in 1995. The magazine began as a class project by two Chicana/o students at the University of California at Berkeley, Yvette C. Doss and Martin Albornoz, who soon moved their operation to L.A. to reach a larger audience of English-speaking Latinas/os. In time, *Frontera* found a

niche among readers who aspired to read about pop culture produced by U.S. Latinas/os, as well as music (primarily Rock en Español), films, and literature being created in Latin America. *Frontera* was distributed nationally in the United States and, at its height, produced more than 30,000 issues per edition until its final issue in 2000.

By the mid-1990s, English-language publications such as the *LosAngeles Times, L.A. Weekly, Billboard,* and others approached *La Banda Elástica*'s collaborators Blanc and Lopetegui to write about contemporary Latin American music. Along with the appearance of *Frontera*, this interest of mainstream publications in having cultural critics write about Latin American cultural production denoted the emerging popularity and attention that "Latino" music genres were gathering in Southern California. This trend can also be understood as an increased valorization for Latina/o cultural production, particularly music, film, and books created either in Latin America or by Latinas/os in the United States.

Figure 4. Cover of *Frontera* Magazine. Fall 1998. Featuring Zack de la Rocha, front man of the band Rage Against the Machine. From the personal collection of the author.

Inside the Pages: Ponderings on Music and the Immigrant Experiences

In the first *La Banda Elástica* issues, most articles centered on Latin American and L.A.-based bands and album reviews. Its pages also featured fiction pieces, satirical cartoons, and insightful day-in-the-life chronicles of young immigrants who were part of the emerging Rock Angelino scene as musicians or fans. For instance, Fernando Ramírez, the singer for the Rock Angelino band María Fatal, was an occasional *La Banda Elástica* contributor.

In his articles, Ramírez broached the contentious topic of Latina/o participation as looters during the 1992 Los Angeles riots that had occurred a year before publication of his piece. In this essay, he gives an overview of the historical contributions that immigrants have made to the United States to push back against anti-immigrant tropes espoused by some U.S.-born Latinas/os. "When we hear a prejudiced person, who has been born here, say that we [immigrants] just came to steal jobs, to take part in social disturbances, to loot, to sell drugs and to live off welfare ... it fills us with rage and impotence ... let me tell you that we did not come to live off welfare. This is because even if we are illegal, we have dignity, pride ... we prefer to work, and if there's no work, we create ourselves work [to survive]." Ramirez ends by condemning the xenophobia directed at immigrants: "Before saying this type of nonsense [sic], go read a history book. Once you find out what we have done for the country. You will eat your words and you will tolerate us, for what we all are: human beings!" These lines by Ramírez contested the

Figure 5. Cover of *La Banda Elástica* Magazine. Issue 1. Volume 3. February 1995. As a listing of the topics included in this particular issue, this cover connects the music from different cities in the U.S. and Latin America. Archives of the Chicano/a-Latino/a Student Resource Center. California State University, Los Angeles.

vilification of Latina/o immigrants taking part in the looting during the 1992 riots and highlighted the often-tense interactions between Latin American immigrants and later generations of U.S.-born Latinas/os.

The intricate relationships between Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants, and other Latina/o immigrants discussed in the pages of *La Banda Elástica* can be read as part of the long and fraught history of intraethnic relations within ethnic Mexican communities. At the same time, although these conflicts and tensions were being discussed within the pages of the magazine, *La Banda Elástica* articles made it clear that there was also collaboration and common ground among Latina/o immigrants and U.S.-born Latinas/os in creating the magazine and as part of the Rock Angelino scene.

In turn, *La Banda Elástica* readers engaged with the writers through letters. The *La Banda Elástica* section "Cartas Marcadas" (marked letters)—probably in allusion to a famous song by Argentinian singer Andrés Calamaro—featured the publication of several letters in each issue. These writers addressed their lives as immigrants in Southern California. Saúl Pelayo who lived in Maywood—a city within the southeast L.A. County region—stated that "he was from Guadajalajara [sic], [a] rockero, and an illegal worker that sought to support his family." Pelayo indicated that he was looking to join a band, preferably a "heavy metal" act. Nonetheless, he was open to be part of any Rock en Español band if the songs performed served to "manifest our new reality, our environment, and what we left behind. Where we want to return, but we might never be able to do so." Pelayo's message was melancholic, yearning for his homeland, yet simultaneously seeking to become part of the Angelino rock scene. Conversely, Hugo Orán, who wrote from the southeastern L.A. County city of Baldwin Park, also conveyed delight in being able to read a Rock en Español magazine, having previously expressed feeling "uncommunicated" with "true fans of the [Rock en Español] movement." Orán declared himself a follower of hardcore punk bands, such as Eskorbuto from Spain and Síndrome del Punk from Mexico. He listened to these bands because they "represent the proletarian class of Mexico and the world, not that crap of music that [is listened to here the United States]." He ended his letter by declaring that "all rockeros are one society," regardless of which Mexican state they came from, thus calling on *rockeros* to leave aside regional rivalry in favor of unity among Mexican immigrants. Discussions of migrants' everyday lives were not reserved solely to personal interactions with other Latinas/os in L.A.; they also involved the often-feared encounters with police and immigration enforcement agents. A section entitled "Voces en silencio" (voices in silence) centered on songs and poetry from readers and musicians. Often these works

portrayed fraught interactions with police agents. For instance, poet Efraín Hernández published an incisive piece in a 1993 issue about his time living in South Central L.A., "Last night in the street that I live . . . I was part of the celebration, where the police were the guests of dishonor. They danced the dance of the batons in a maddening tempo, that was marked by the helicopters. God, like always forgot about us. This is South Central. An underworld ... that assures us we are the forgotten. From here, Disneyland, peace, and innocence are the same distance to any direction." Hernández's lines incisively portray the over-policing of Latinas/os and Black South Central residents in the aftermath 1992 Los Angeles riots. Moreover, he presents South Central as far away from the idyllic Southern California landmark of Disneyland. Hernández compares the geographic distance to the wholesome amusement park to how distant and remote "peace and innocence" are for South Central residents due to their racial, ethnic, and class identities.

Aside from discussing their mistreatment at the hands of L.A. law enforcement officers, *La Banda Elástica* contributors also shared direct-action strategies on how to deal with the police. Natalie Stawsky penned a detailed article on what to expect and how to deal with police encounters, particularly for those in the United States without legal authorized status. The piece was likely informed by Stawsky's coming of age at the end of the Argentinian dictatorship and against the backdrop of Argentina's "Dirty War" between 1976 and 1983, during which the military and other state police forces arrested, "disappeared," and killed thousands of people. Everyday Argentinians had a deep suspicion of dealing with the police, whom they saw as an extension of the military, as demonstrated in Stawsky's article.

The Rock Angelino print culture remained productive and vibrant throughout the 1990s. However, the effervescence of that music scene waned as the first decade of the twenty-first century arrived. Many of the publications had to contend with transformations in the publishing landscape, larger companies' acquisitions of smaller publications, and the shift from print to digital.

Such is the case of *Al Borde.* Founded by a Venezuelan couple, writer Alicia Monsalve and music producer Edgar Ochoa, *Al Borde* was the Rock Angelino publication that endured the longest as a regular printed newspaper, publishing from 1997 to 2009. During the first decade of the 2000s, *Al Borde* defined itself as a "Latin Alternative" music publication that also featured Latin American film, fashion, and other youth-related topics. In 2001, *Al Borde* merged with *El Clasificado*, a larger publishing company that specialized in a weekly Spanish-language publication geared toward an older demographic.

With this business arrangement, *Al Borde* gained a circulation of more than 32,000 copies; by 2005, it claimed to have a total readership of 86,000 per issue. However, *Al Borde* ended its biweekly print edition in 2009 and moved to a digital model; it continues to be updated intermittently in this format.

La Neta and *La Banda Elástica* remained independent and continued to be published in print intermittently throughout the first years of the 2000s. By the mid-2000s, their editors found printing costs unsustainable amid the emergence of internet-only publications, and *La Banda Elástica* became an exclusively online magazine. As of 2022, the magazine continues to actively publish articles online.

Conclusion: Bridging the Past with a New Genealogy of Latina/o Print Culture

Rock Angelino publications should be understood as part of a long lineage of self-produced publications—albeit of remarkably different historical eras—created by ethnic Mexicans and Latinas/os in L.A. One example is from the pueblo of Los Angeles in the aftermath of the Mexican American War; *El Clamor Público* was the first Spanish-language newspaper in California, which circulated after the American occupation in the nineteenth century. Founded by nineteen-year-old Francisco Ramírez, *El Clamor Público* offered counter-arguments to Anglo-Saxon rule. Also, at the turn of the twentieth century, the Flores Magón brothers published *Regeneración*, a bilingual anarchist publication produced by the Mexican Liberal Party, which counted on a multinational cadre of collaborators, many of them also in their early adult years. For the second part of the twentieth century, *La Raza* magazine, produced by a dedicated group of first-generation Chicana and Chicano college students, emerged as the chronicler of the 1960s and 1970s Chicano movement.

The organic intellectuals writing in Rock Angelino publications inserted themselves into L.A. culture through their writings at a moment when their presence was put into question by nativist politicians. Their writings countered tropes in the predominant American culture that defined immigrants as uneducated and low-paid laborers. Instead, the Rock Angelino organic intellectuals announced themselves and their readers as cultural and intellectual producers who drew on their extended Latin American intellectual roots to make sense of their immigrant reality and assert their presence, belonging, and political thinking. In the process, these publications became the first drafts of a new historical genealogy of struggle beyond nation states—hemispheric

print counterpublics. In this genealogy, Latina/o writers in the late twentieth century presented themselves as discerning, defiant, and resourceful cultural producers who were part of both the Latin American circuit of ideas and the American metropolis.

ENDNOTES

1. A note on terminology: I employ the term Latina/o, which includes both the predominantly ethnic Mexican population and people from other Latin American countries in Southern California. Because this study examines the late twentieth century, it does not employ Latinx, the gender-neutral term that gained currency in the 2010s, as the term was not employed during the period analyzed.
2. David Forgacs, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, eds. *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Cultural Writings*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 8.
3. The lyrics of the nueva canción canon were socially conscious, in solidarity with leftist political movements, and embodied a pan-Latin American identity that projected onto the listening audiences. The la nueva canción was popular throughout the Americas, and its Chilean performers were among the most sought after. They became one of the most public voices against the military dictatorship led by Augusto Pinochet, which overthrew the socialist-leaning government of Salvador Allende in 1973. Victor Jara, one of the genre's most popular singers, was arrested and killed days after the military coup. Groups like Quilapayun and Inti-Illimani fled into exile in Europe, where they continued recording and performing. For more on the political content of La Nueva Canción, see: Jedrek Mularski, *Music, Politics, and Nationalism in Latin America: Chile During the Cold War Era*, (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2014). La Movida can be understood as a cultural freedom moment that occurred in Spain after the death of Francisco Franco, who had ruled the country for 35 years and imposed a strict conservative political and social regime. For more extensive essays that examine various facets of La Movida, see: Francisco Fernández de Alba et al., *Toward a Cultural Archive of La Movida: Back to the Future*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013).
4. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo argues that the message set forth by the authors of Proposition 187 embodied the fear and threat of a permanent and socioeconomic ascendant Mexican/Latina/o community. Hence, the Prop. 187 campaign was less about curtailing access to social and public services to unauthorized immigrants and more about refusing to allow Latina/o immigrants and their US-born children to become permanent and equal members of U.S. society. See: Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, "Women and Children First," *Socialist Review* 25, no. 169 (1995): 130–158.
5. The concept of hemispheric print counterpublics builds on Maylei Blackwell's conception of counterpublics. She argues that the print cultures (newspapers, pamphlets, memos, and poems, among other printed material) generated by Chicana feminist organizations in the 1970s constituted "Chicana Counterpublics," in which parallel discursive arenas were created by those excluded from dominant discourses. See: Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 133–134.
6. Eric Zolov traces the emergence of Mexico's counterculture to the mid-1960s, when young Mexican rock and roll fans of all socioeconomic classes challenged

traditional values and the cultural nationalism of the one-party state under the PRI. The PRI dealt ruthlessly with student dissent during the 1968 student movement and persecuted participants and creators within the 1960s Mexican counterculture. Rock and roll and other dissenting and oppositional music and artistic expressions went underground in Mexico, eventually reflourishing in the 1980s. See: Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

7. Although not primarily focused on counterculture publications, Chappell Lawson has examined the conditions and factors that led to the emergence of a robust independent media and political liberalization in Mexico in the 1990s and early aughts. See: Chappell Lawson. *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 80–92.
8. In the recollections of the period discussed, fervent fans of the genre—Alma Díaz, Yvonne Gómez, and Flora Rae Tapia—discuss finding magazines in bookstores in Huntington Park. Díaz, Gómez, and Tapia interview by author, 2016.
9. At the onset of the rock Angelino scene, these bands played different rock and rock genres. The bands and fans commonly divided themselves into two camps. One was the "alternativos," who mirrored the fashion used by alternative rock fans of the 1990s but not necessarily the sound of the grunge bands popular at the beginning of the decade. The urbanos were the other group—they consisted of many fans and groups adhering to the music style and the aesthetic of "Rock urbano," which refers to a blues and hard-rock variant of the music popular with working-class youth in Mexico City.
10. "De la malevolencia como una estrategia," in "La era de la discrepancia: arte y cultura en México 1968–1997," eds. Olivier Debroise, and Cuauhtémoc Medina (México: UNAM y Editorial Turner-México, 2007), 324. For a detailed analysis of the reconfiguration of the Mexican arts scene in the late twentieth century on the margins of institutionalization, and La Pus moderna's role as a publication oppositional to state-supported publications, see: Debroise and Medina, La era de la discrepancia; also, Carl Good, "Dreaming on the Pyramid: Responses to Globalism in Mexican Visual Culture," *Discourse* 23, no. 2 (2001): 44–60; 54.
11. The June 10, 1971 student protest march ended with more than 25 students dead at the hands of undercover state agents, called halcones. It was seen as a further instance of the Mexican government's intolerance of any type of dissent, particularly from student-led protests. See: Kate Doyle, "The Corpus Christi Massacre: Mexico's Attack on its Student Movement, June 10, 1971." The National Security Archive. June 10, 2003. Accessed March 14, 2018.
12. For more on the censorship enacted by the Mexican government in the 1960s and 1970s toward rock and roll. See: Zolov, 55–60; Zolov, "La Onda Chicana: Mexico's Forgotten Rock Counterculture," in *Rockin' las Américas: The Global Politics of Rock in Latin/o America*, ed. by Deborah Pacini Hernandez, Eric Zolov, and Hector Fernandez-l'Hoeste, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 22–42.
13. Guillermo Gómez Peña is the author of several books that detail and analyze the theoretical foundations of his performances based on his "post-Mexican" identity. He defines post-Mexican in relation to his own experience as an artist living and performing on the U.S. side of the border and interacting with Chicanas/os and other U.S.-based Latinas/os. Gómez-Peña thus began to define himself as a developing a post-Mexican identity, as he belongs to the group of millions of Mexicans who live and exist outside of the territory of the Mexican nation/state, primarily in the United States. He argues that his post-Mexican experience is based on the "de-Mexicanization" and the Chicanization of his cultural markers, such as language, that led a more expansive identity incorporating elements from the African American, Asian American, and other cultures from Latin America, thus forging an enhanced Mexican hybrid identity as post-Mexican. See: Guillermo

Gómez-Peña, *Warrior for Gringostroika: Essays, Performance Texts, and Poetry*, (St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1993); Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Ethno-Techno: Writings on Performance, Activism, and Pedagogy (New York: Routledge, 2005).
14. Guillermo Goméz-Peña, "A Binational Performance Pilgrimage," in *Artes plásticas en la frontera México/Estados Unidos*, Vol. 3, ed., Harry Polkinhorn, (Mexicali, BC: UABC, 1991), 66.
15. In his essay, Goméz-Peña discusses what he perceived as the importance and legacy of "La Línea Quebrada/The Broken Line" in his quest to develop a "definition of border aesthetics" and a better understanding of the Chicano, Tijuana, and Mexico City intelligentsias among each other (51–72).
16. Interview with Díaz, Gómez, and Tapia. Audio interview by author, 2016.
17. For more on the definition and origins of the Youth Cultures fanzine, particularly on the punk scene, see: Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*, (Portland: Microcosm Publishing, 2014). For more on the production of zines in Mexico, see: Tony Mitchell, "Subcultural Citizenship in El Chopo, Mexico City," in *Informal Urban Street Markets: International Perspectives*, eds., Clifton Evers and Kirsten Seale (2014), 62–73.
18. Although Enrique Blanc met the other collaborators by chance at a Los Angeles concert, at the time of his initial involvement with *El Acordeón* and *La Banda Elástica*, he was already a published writer and radio host in Guadalajara, Mexico and would spend some time in the year at Rancho Cucamonga to visit family members. After the mid-nineties, Blanc's visits to Southern California diminished. Nonetheless, he continued his prolific writing career in Mexico, publishing several fiction books. In addition, he authored several books focused on Mexico's most well-known bands, such as Molotov, Julieta Venegas, and Café Tacuba. See: Enrique Blanc, *Puro power Mexicano: conversaciones con Molotov*, (Madrid: Iberautor, 2003); Julieta Venegas, and Enrique Blanc, *De mis pasos: conversaciones con Julieta Venegas*, (Zaragoza: Zona de Obras, 2007); and Enrique Blanc, *Café Tacvba: bailando por nuestra cuenta*, (México, DF: Planeta Editorial, 2016).
19. Following his stint as one of *La Banda Elástica* editors, Hernández-Díaz remained involved in number of publications in Southern California, among them another rock en español-themed magazine called *Retila*. In 1999, he helped establish *La Vibra*, a youth- and music-oriented weekly supplement of La Opinión. He sporadically continued to write and publish in several Los Angeles outlets. Until his death in 2015, Hernández-Diaz was recognized as one of Tijuana's foremost music critics. He published two books. See: *Tijuana-Mesopotamia: crónicas y otros latidos* (Tijuana, BC: XVI Ayuntamiento de Tijuana, IMAC, 2000); and *Cornucopia: periodismo sonoro y anexas*, (Tijuana, BC: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2012).
20. Jorge Infante, interview by author, audio recording, Fontana, CA, June 4, 2017.
21. In the 1990s, Stawsky co-hosted a music show on radio station KPFK, a leftist community radio station that was part of the Pacifica network. Stawsky became a radio host for MTV Latino in the second part of the 1990s.
22. These music preferences are apparent in their writings and interviews in *La Banda Elástica* published in the May 1994, August 1994, November 1994, and February 1995 issues. See: Archive of the Chicana/o, Latina/o Student Resource Center. California State University, Los Angeles. Uncatalogued.
23. I define "ephemeral forums" as temporary and improvised spaces that participants in L.A. youth culture created and used in the absence of formal commercial musical and leisure venues. These ephemeral forums drew on the tradition of the do-it-yourself ethos of American punk rock and merged it with the fringe sites known as "Hoyos Funky" that arose in the marginalized neighborhoods of Mexico City. See: Jorge N. Leal, "Mapping Ephemeral Music Forums in Latina/o Los Angeles," *California History* 97, no. 2 (2020): 124–127.

24. Debroise, 2007, 323.
25. *La Neta* continued to be published until 1999. *RokEra* was published by Rogelio Mejia and José Velasquez. It is unclear when *RokEra* stopped publishing.
26. The circulation numbers of *La Banda Elástica* were included in several trade publications, such as *Benn's Media*, a reference resource intended for media, public relations, and marketing professionals. See: *Benn's Media* 1997 Vol. 3: World, (Tonbridge: Miller Freeman, 1999), 425.
27. Carolina González, "The Future of Rock," *Spin*, (November 1995): 96.
28. As a more established publishing enterprise than *La Banda Elástica*, *Frontera Magazine* positioned itself as "the first national culture magazine to focus on U.S. Hispanics/Latinos ages 18 to 34," and aimed to publish six issues per year. *Frontera* gained a sizable readership and influence among college-educated Latina/os during its five-year existence. For a description of how *Frontera Magazine* was described to prospective public and college libraries buyers, see: Salvador Güereña, and Vivian M. Pisano, eds. *Latino Periodicals: A Selection Guide*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998), 33.
29. Fernando Ramírez, "Vámos a California," *La Banda Elástica* 2, no. 8, (May 1993).
30. In his work, David G. Gutiérrez provides an analysis on the tensions that have always existed between American-born Mexicans and foreign-born Mexicans. See: David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).
31. Efraín Hernández, "Voces en silencio," *La Banda Elástica* 2, no. 8 (May 1993).
32. Natalie Stawsky, "Que hacer si te topas con la policía," *La Banda Elástica* 3, no. 1 (February 1995), 14.
33. This information is drawn from a 2005 press release published by El Clasificado, the company that acquired *Al Borde*, on winning a prize at the National Association of Hispanic Publications Hispanic (NAHP). See: María Elena Aguilar, "*Al Borde* wins 'Outstanding Hispanic Publication' in its class at the 2005 NAHP Convention," Al Borde Legacy, July 17, 2008, https://www.alborde.com/ab-legacy/al-borde-wins-outstanding-hispanic-publication-in-its-class-at-the-2005-nahp-convention.
34. For a concise examination on *El Clamor Público*, see: Nicolás Kanellos."'*El Clamor Público*': Resisting the American Empire," *California History* 84, no. 2 (2006): 10–18; see also: Paul Bryan Gray, *A Clamor for Equality: The Emergence and Exile of Californio Activist Francisco P. Ramírez*, (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2012).
35. For a discussion on how the Flores Magón brothers and collaborators employed Regeneración to transcend national boundaries between Mexico and the United States to effectively criticize state power, see: Shelley Streeby, Radical Sensations: World Movements, Violence, and Visual Culture (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013). Also see Devra Anne Weber, "Wobblies of the Partido Liberal Mexicano: Reenvisioning Internationalist and Transnational Movements Through Mexican Lenses," *Pacific Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (2016): 188–226.
36. A valuable resource on *La Raza* magazine will be an upcoming exhibit catalog, which will present essays that examine different aspects of the publication's role within the Chicano Movement. See: Amy Scott, Luis Garza, and Colin Gunckel, eds., *La Raza*, (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2017).

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