

Reggaeton - for the hip-hop Latina!

By Ylda Nunez

More live salsa events now include REGGAETON, along with traditional salsa. This may or may not be an attractive addition for the “old time” salsa fan and dancer. For the promoter, however, it’s a great way to draw new people and the younger generations to the salsa venue!

“Maintain the tradition” is an often heard term for pleas from old-time salsa and mambo artists and dancers to keep the tradition of their genre alive. But, could they ever visualize that it would take bringing a non-salsa/mambo genre under the same roof to achieve that plea?

Hip Hop has long been the choice of music for the younger generation. Although the salsa craze is alive and well, it has regrettably not paralleled the worldwide mass appeal in number of fans of other genres, such as Hip Hop, Rap, Pop, Rock, Country & Western, Reggae, Jazz, or even Oldies but Goodies music for that matter.

Most salsa promoters’ goal has always been to “sell the youth to salsa”. With the rapid popularity growth of Reggaeton this idea may perhaps now become a reality. Recent experiences prove that if one announces combined Salsa and Reggaeton events under one roof the youth will show up!

But, what is “Reggaeton?”

Like Hip Hop music, Reggaeton primarily applies to youths. The same issues and lyrics which have made Hip Hop so popular can be heard in Reggaeton music: Unfairness, love, passion, cheating, misunderstandings, sex, drugs, crime, violence, and racism make up parts of the menu of song subjects. Reggaeton has also become a very popular music to dance to.

The name “Reggaeton” is adopted from the popular Jamaican Reggae music. The dance beat of Reggae has influenced the Reggaeton’s dance beat. The basic rhythms of Reggae have been carried into the Reggaeton style.

Back in time, large amounts of immigrants from Jamaica had settled in Panama to help build and maintain the Panama Canal. The Jamaicans brought their popular Reggae music along. In the mid-1970’s the first Panama produced Reggae recordings followed.

Soon thereafter, Panamanian artists began to perform Rap music, based on the new immigrants’ Reggae and Jamaican dance-hall Rap music.

In the 1990’s the Reggae craze hit Puerto Rico big time. Rap music was already well established on the island, as among the rest of the youth world. Puerto Rican Hip Hopsters soon began creating music, incorporating the ingredients

with a mixture of Hip Hop and Reggae, and their own traditional Bomba, Plena and even Salsa.

The Reggaeton dancing's style is often referred to as "perreo", which means "doggie". The word stems from a Reggaeton dance move, which expresses a sexual position.

From its origin in Panama to its further development, creation and explosive popularity in Puerto Rico, Reggaeton soon traveled across borders, to Columbia and the other Latin countries. From there the popularity has reached new heights in the United States and other parts of the world.

Several Reggaeton artists have since emerged and quickly become the superstars of the genre, including Tego Calderon and Don Omar.

Whether the Reggaeton + Salsa concept keeps up its promising possibilities in terms of drawing massive amounts of youth to salsa remains to be seen. However, if the marriage continues as a love-at-first-sight phenomenon, and if the seven-year itch doesn't destroy the marriage, then... maybe it's a marriage for the long term?