



SAUNA CALIENTE:

Hybridity in the performance persona of Cuban DJ Norlan working in Finland

Norlan Leygonier Santana, born in 1977 in the San Miguel Del Padrón borough of Havana, Cuba, visited Finland for the first time in 2004 while on tour with the rap duo Alto Voltaje. At the time, Norlan was with fellow rapper Alexander Pérez Hernández, as Alto Voltaje, signed to the rap agency of the Cuban state (Agencia Cubana de Rap) and intimately involved in Havana's significant hip hop movement. Following the tour, Norlan moved to Finland in 2005, and acquired the epithet "El Misionario" (the missionary), referring to his ambition to promote "Latin" music in his new country of residence.

Since then, Norlan has worked in Finland actively as a performing and a recording artist, a DJ and a club promoter, merging different musical styles, both in his own music and his DJ sets. In his recordings, stylistically associated mostly with the Spanish Caribbean *reggaeton* genre, Norlan has included lyrical and musical references to the Latin-American carnival tradition (Masivo Music International 2013a), Finnish rock icons *Popeda* (Masivo Music International 2013b), and the recent Ghanaian "Azonto" dance (Norlan El Misionario 2014), creating, as this study will show, a distinctive blend of subversive club music. This fusion of styles can also be heard in Norlan's DJ sets and particularly in the *Sauna Caliente* (hot sauna) club concept he has hosted since 2008, which will be the focus

of this study. According to the Sauna Caliente event pages on Facebook (2015c), the “music policy” includes “dancehall - reggaeton - hip hop - sexy r’n’b – soca - caribbean, latin & afro vibes”.

Considering the melange of musical styles, cultural references and discourses regarding aesthetic categories, the work of Norlan presents a unique case for investigating the widely debated concept of hybridity. Several recent studies on the globalization of music have been critical towards the use of hybridity as a musical label. As ethnomusicologist Timothy D. Taylor (2007: 141, 143) suggests, the widespread use of hybridity as a descriptor of “cross-cultural encounters” has meant the term has also increasingly come to be used a prescriptor and a marketing term. According to Taylor (2007: 140–141), traditional discourses about how the music industry labels music from other places for Western listeners as pure and authentic, have to some degree become replaced by metaphors of hybridity as a new kind of authenticity. Similarly anthropologist Carol Silverman (2014: 191) notes how the fashionable use of the concept of hybridity is problematic in its vagueness and has caused it to lose its “political mooring”. At the same time, as postcolonial linguists Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman (2007: 11) maintain, as a theoretical concept, the “power in hybridity is its ability to question what appears natural and complete, to problematize naturalized boundaries”. Although also widely criticized and debated (see for example Acheraiou 2011: 105–120) one of the theories of hybridity that “has dominated postcolonial and cultural studies” (Acheraiou 2011: 90) is postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of the “third space”. For Bhabha (1994), cultural symbols are not fixed, but can be reread, translated and displaced. This requires that a dominant cultural authority is contested, which enables the opening of a “third space”, making “the structure of meaning and reference” an “ambivalent process” (Bhabha 1994: 37).

In this study, hybridity is used as a critical concept following largely Bhabha’s theorization. It should be noted that Norlan is not explicitly defining his work as transcultural or hybrid. Rather, I am investigating how exotifications are used to construct hybridity on a discursive and performative level in Norlan’s work. The main research question is, thus, how are formations of hybridity in Norlan’s work positioned against essentialist discourses of music as authentic, genuine and connected to specific locations and traditions? This question is studied with reference to Norlan’s Sauna Caliente recording, music video and club concept.

The multi-medium case of *Sauna Caliente* provides insight into the hybridity of DJ practices and the reflexive process in which Norlan moves between club promotion, DJing, and working as a recording artist. In the first half of this article, I will focus on constructions of hybridity, drawing on essentialized ideas of the “North” and the “Tropics” in the “*Sauna Caliente*” song and music video. The song can be considered to have “framed” (Bateson 1972; Bauman 1975) Norlan’s work, meaning that it has instructed audiences how to understand his subsequent performances. As such, in the latter half of the article, I will discuss the *Sauna Caliente* club concept, as a manifestation of a similar hybridity with particular attention to promotional strategies, the musical repertoire and the performance form of the events.

The concept of performance will provide an overall methodological framing of this study. Following performance scholar Philip Auslander’s (2004) methodological approach, all empirical material will be regarded as elements that construct Norlan’s “performance persona”. As Auslander (2004: 11) maintains, a musician’s persona is not only constructed through live or recorded performance, but also through visual images and publicity materials, interviews, press coverage, collectibles, and other and media. This material, in this study consisting of newspaper articles, online discussions and promotional material, is in accordance with Auslander’s (2004) method, analysed with relation to socio-cultural and genre norms that inform Norlan’s performances and influence his reception among audiences. As such, I will throughout the study refer to discourses and conventions from the different musical cultures that relate to Norlan’s hybridity as a performer. Since Norlan is identifying as an ambassador of “Latin” music in his work, I am drawing particularly on studies about Cuban and Latin-American music to contextualize the analysis. Most of the empirical material was gathered in the spring and summer of 2015, when I also observed two of Norlan’s performances and conducted a face-to-face interview with Norlan and his wife Satu Leygonier-Santana, who also works as his manager. The interview was later followed up with additional questions via e-mail.

I will throughout the study use the term “Latin-America” to refer to all music from the Spanish Caribbean, Central America and South America. In popular discourse and much of my empirical material, the term “Latin” is used to describe music or other cultural elements from Latin-America and its diaspora, as well

as Spain and Portugal, which is also how I apply it in this study. Although the term “Latino” is often used to denote U.S. residents of Latin-American heritage, in much of my material this term is used to denote an individual anywhere in the world of any gender with some degree of Latin-American ancestry, which is the meaning I will also adhere to. Subsequently, I will use the term U.S. Latino, for respective United States residents.

Contextualizing the study

Before proceeding with the analysis of the Sauna Caliente music and concept, a brief contextualization of this study in terms of Latin-American music in Finland is needed. Apart from some studies on salsa (see for example Bendrup 2011; Hosokawa 2002; Román-Velázquez 1999), there has not been much research conducted on Latin-American music outside Spanish speaking communities. This is true also for Finland, where most research on Latin-American music has focused on the tango. In his sixteen page overview of “Latin-American Music in Finland”, musicologist Alfonso Padilla (1998a; see also 1998b) dedicates five pages to the tango, whereas no other single genre, style or region is discussed for more than a page. This balance reflects not only the impact that tango has had on Finnish music, but also the scholarly focus when it comes to Latin music in Finland. When popular music from Latin-America is discussed in Finnish music historiography, writers tend to be concerned with how directly the music has been mediated to Finland and the accuracy of the representations of the music. What is often left out of the equation, is the “cross-pollination” (Marcuzzi 2013: 124) of music in the Americas.

Padilla (1998a: 11) for instance, suggests that Cuban music reached Finland in the 1930s via the United States and singles out Louis Armstrong’s recording of “The Peanut Vendor” as the “first internationally recognized Cuban composition. By solely acknowledging the popularity of Armstrong’s traditional jazz version of the composition in this context, Padilla seems to hint at an inauthenticity in the first Cuban music that reached Finland. Although Cuban elements in U.S. American recordings have at times been nothing more than “banal garnish” (Roberts 1999: 80), Padilla’s simplification implies that U.S. versions cannot be

representative of these styles. Also, “The Peanut Vendor” was already extremely popular before Armstrong’s recording from 1931 – the composition is more often associated with Cuban orchestra leader Don Azpiazzú, who even toured Europe in 1932. Azpiazzú’s recording of the composition from 1930 stayed on bestseller charts until June the following year in the United States and also spread to Europe early on via its English publisher (Roberts 1999: 76–99, 213–214). Ethnomusicologist and record producer John Storm Roberts (1999: 77–78) does not mention Armstrong’s version in his history of Latin music in the U.S., but notes that Azpiazzú’s “El Macinero”, as the “The Peanut Vendor” was called in Spanish, was “an authentically Cuban piece” that became a national hit despite the record companies initially fearing that it would be too strange for U.S. Americans.

Similarly, popular music historian Vesa Kurkela (2003: 379) notes, without going into any detail, but referring apparently at least to the mambo, that Latin-American dances in the mid-1950s became known in Finland mostly through “their U.S. American hit versions”. This can be somewhat misleading, considering, as Ramón Versage Agudelo (2013: 231–233) describes, how musicians with backgrounds in both Cuban music and jazz made the Palladium in New York the center of mambo in the early 1950s and how mambo for most listeners was synonymous with the music of Pérez Prado, a Cuban pianist that recorded for a U.S. record company in Mexico City. Solely referring to U.S. versions as “hits” in a discussion about Latin-American music obscures the complexities and reflexive process of musical movement in the Americas.

Both examples above position a presumed original music from Latin-America against its U.S. versions. But, as George Torres (2013: xvii) writes in his introduction to an encyclopaedia of Latin-American popular music, the influence of the Latin-American diaspora, especially in the United States, must be considered when we discuss “so-called Latin music”. Literary scholar Michael Eldridge (2002: 622) goes even further in his essay on Calypso, where he writes that “The Tropics *are* New York” (original italics); the “two places have become virtually interchangeable”. As such, to understand the genre conventions that inform Norlan’s performance persona, we need to consider the musical dialogue between the Spanish Caribbean and the U.S. This dialogue is particularly significant with relation to reggaeton, which is the genre that Norlan mostly associates with.

When Norlan started his career as a rap artist in Cuba in the 1990s, the government introduced the “Special Period in a time of Peace”, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The loss of Soviet trade and support had a severe impact on Cuba, forcing the government to retreat from everyday economic activity, introducing a dual currency system that led to severe economic decline and a “cleaved society”, as Ariana Hernandez-Reguant (2009) notes in her introduction to an anthology on the topic. During the “Special Period”, when resources were scarce and unevenly distributed, hip-hop emerged as a response to the widespread despair. It became an important form of expression especially for Afro-Cubans, who throughout the revolutionary period had been systematically disregarded by the state (Fernandes 2006: 85–134). According to Sujatha Fernandes (2006: 86), because of its societal influence, hip-hop was also absorbed into the hegemonic strategies of the political elite, although the transnational networks of Cuban rap prevented a wholesale “co-optation by the state”. Hip hop remained significant in Cuba until the early noughties, but coinciding with Norlan’s relocation to Finland in 2005 was the increasing popularity of reggaeton in the Spanish Caribbean and its diaspora, including Cuba, where it was adopted by several “leading figures in the rap scene”, among which musicologist Geoffrey Baker (2011:154) includes Alto Voltaje and Norlan.

As ethnomusicologist Wayne Marshall (2009: 22) explains, the public narrative of reggaeton locates the genesis of the music in Panama – with Jamaica, New York and Puerto Rico as other significant sites in the genre’s genealogy. Somewhat simplified, reggaeton can be said to merge Jamaican dancehall reggae idioms, mediated via Panama, with U.S. hip-hop aesthetics. In Puerto Rico, ties to the U.S. mainland and its industry enabled the revolutionizing of reggaeton’s appeal, elevating the music, according to historian Philip Samponaro (2009: 489, 491), as the “defining music of Latino youth culture, displacing salsa, which previously held the distinction for thirty years”. Reggaeton’s sonically most recognizable trait is the 3 + 3 + 2 polyrhythm pattern, sometimes referred to as “Dem Bow”, named after Jamaican singer Shabba Rank’s (1990) recording that provided one of the blueprints for the rhythm, along with its “specific drum timbres” (Marshall 2009: 39).

The rise of reggaeton to global consciousness was spurred by substantial developments in the Latin music industry in the United States – dealing mostly

with the industry coming to grips, “conceptually and structurally”, with the heterogeneity of the U.S. Latino audience (Pacini Hernandez 2010: 154). Some of the more significant changes include the emergence of Miami as the new capital of the Spanish-language entertainment industry and its “ability to project Latin music to the world” and the mainstream radio stations adaptation of a new “Hispanic” and “urban” (hurban) format (Pacini Hernandez 2010: 142–162). As anthropologist and Latino studies scholar Deborah Pacini Hernandez (2010: 161) notes, mainstream English speaking audiences in the U.S. were now for the first time “since the mambo craze in the 1940s” gravitating to a music “whose Spanish lyrics they might not understand”.

Norlan’s adaptation of the “missionary” title was timely, as he came to personify in Finland this new “Latin boom” represented by reggaeton. Norlan’s first solo album, entitled *El Misionario* (2007), signals his gradual shift from hip-hop towards reggaeton. The album contains both straightforward “hip-hop beats”, as well as 3 + 3 + 2 reggaeton rhythms. Interestingly, however, the album lacks entirely the “Dem Bow” drum timbres used in most reggaeton productions of the time, suggesting that Norlan was still heavily rooted in the hip-hop tradition. A more direct sonic reference to reggaeton is heard on the subsequent “Sauna Caliente” (2008) single that broke Norlan into the Finnish mainstream, peaking at number two on the official Finnish pop chart in 2008 (IFPI 2015). Although the song’s tempo (125 bpm) is faster than an average reggaeton song, the drum pattern, with its clearly recognizable “Dem Bow” timbres, adheres to a typical reggaeton rhythm.

As Norlan explains to me in an e-mail (Leygonier Santana 2016), for him the switch to reggaeton was about wanting to “pioneer” new music; “In Cuba, I was a pioneer of Hip hop and in Finland I became the pioneer of Reggaeton”. The switch to reggaeton has, however, also some more far-reaching ideological implications. Whereas hip-hop in Cuba in the beginning of the “Special Period” was considered a socially committed and critical movement, its relevance declined in conjunction with the decline of socialist ideologies in the beginning of the new millennium (Baker 2011: 154–168). According to Baker (ibid.), reggaeton came to represent the materialist desires of a new generation who had not experienced socialism before the “special period”, and were only familiar with the “harsh new world”. Although reggaeton as a genre is not explicitly political, Baker (2011:

162–164) implies that its hedonism can be understood as a metaphorical revolt against law and order and an antithesis of culture, brought about by the crisis of socialism. As Baker (2011: 164) summarizes:

I would argue that the shift in Cuba from protest music (rap) to postprotest music (reggaeton) relates to a broader swing in the new millennium away from a politicized national culture of socialist ideology, collectivity, and self-sacrifice and toward one increasingly centered on pleasure, the reassertion of individuality, and self-fulfillment.

This change also informs Norlan's music, which I will now more carefully examine with specific regards to formations of hybridity in the "Sauna Caliente" recording and music video.

The "Sauna Caliente" recording and music video

"Sauna Caliente" was originally introduced as part of Norlan's participation in *Ourvision* – a song contest organised by the International Cultural Centre Caisa, a branch of the City of Helsinki Cultural Office. Caisa lists as one of its objectives to develop a diversified city by "encouraging the independent [sic] original practice of new ethnic minority cultures whilst integrating them into a Finnish [sic] society and giving out information on Finland" (Caisa 2015). According to the *Ourvision* rules, as explained by music and urban studies scholar Giacomo Bottà (2009: 174), contestants must be "immigrants or of immigrant background and permanently residing in Finland". As Bottà notes (2009: 177), remarkably, the 2008 *Ourvision* final displaying "multicultural talents" within popular music in Finland, was organized in "a temple of classical music", the Finlandia hall. Norlan's appearance in the final, accessible on YouTube (Sampomedia 2008), shows the artist performing in a sauna bathrobe, holding, apart from the microphone, a jewellery-decorated sauna ladle, which has since then become an important prop in his promotional material. Together with his band on stage, which includes a DJ, a baritone saxophonist, a drummer and a conga player, towards the end of the clip Norlan performs a choreographed dance utilizing a sauna bath birch leaf

whisk – the same choreography that is later seen in the official music video for the song (MASSIVE Helsinki 2008).

I maintain that “Sauna Caliente” introduced Norlan, not just as an Afro-Cuban artist in Finland, but as a musician seeking to merge these two cultures. In his description of the third space as a site of hybridity, Bhabha (1994: 36) emphasizes “differences” in cultures, as opposed to “diversity” or “multiculturalism” which operates under the domain of a dominant culture. For Bhabha (1994: 36), equality between the cultures, represented as cultural difference is a prerequisite for hybridity. As Norlan sings in “Sauna Caliente”, “dos culturas en mi adentro” (two cultures inside me), suggesting a merger on an equal level, rather than an ambivalent “diversity” (Bhabha 1994). However, apart from the Cuban flag occasionally appearing in the background of the music video, specific Cuban associations in “Sauna Caliente” are few. Rather, the use of a non-specific Spanish accent and vocabulary, as opposed to the notoriously hard to understand Cuban Spanish, and the incorporation of the “pan-Latin” (Marshall 2009: 61) reggaeton formula, positions Norlan as a more universal “Latin” musician. This is heard also in an ornamented acoustic guitar, associated stereotypically with Spanish flamenco, that drops in and out of the mix throughout the recording rather prominently, adding another generic “Latin tinge” (Roberts 1999) to the recording. The video also features a flamenco dancer in a long red dress incorporating a hand fan into her choreography.

Whereas reggaeton, with its significant hip-hop aesthetic, would, for a Finnish audience during the time of the release of “Sauna Caliente”, presumably not be associated with Latin-America, stereotypical Spanish cultural elements are added to emphasize the “Latin” character of the song. This is not a new strategy – it has been used by several reggaeton artists, as Marshall, Rivera & Pacini Hernandez (2009: 8) note, with relation to bachata and merengue, among other styles. An additional level of generalization presents the fact that, apart from the flamenco dancer, the video includes several other dance styles, which on the basis of the dancers’ attire and movement can be identified to represent such diverse styles as reggaeton, Bollywood, dancehall, hip-hop, and what the viewer is ostensibly expected to recognize as a form of African dance. The different dances represented on the video should also be understood in the context of *Ourvision*, where the song was initially introduced, as a reference to the “multicultural-

ity” that the contest represents, positioning Norlan, in conjunction with the other dance cultures, as a generic “exotic” *Other* in the Finnish context. Following Bhabha (1994: 33–34), here Norlan’s “Latin” culture appears to be positioned as diversity under the authority of Finnish culture, implying a boundary between them and, as such, denying the emergence of an actual “third space”. At the same time, by not presenting the idea of a pure Cuban culture, but performing a fluid “Latin” culture, Norlan can also adapt the music to fit Finnish conditions. As such, it is also possible to understand an equality among the hybrid cultures in “Sauna Caliente”, which I will expand on with relation to how Finnishness is represented in the song.

Finnishness in “Sauna Caliente”

By solely examining the lyrics of the song, the concept of the sauna is described with a typical Finnish innocence of a subject matter that via its association with nudity could be understood to be more sexual. According to a general (mis)conception; “nudity is natural for Finns” (Mykkänen 2013), as they have a tradition of bathing in mixed sex saunas with friends, family and strangers. Although a recent survey commissioned by the Helsingin Sanomat newspaper (Mykkänen 2013) suggests that less than half of the population agree with this statement, the discourse of a non-sexual sauna is still prevalent in Finland. This attitude is also represented in “Sauna Caliente”, where the sauna is mostly referred to as a place of relaxation – “donde relajás tu” (where you relax), enjoyment – “donde lo gozas tu” (where you enjoy yourself) and sweating – “donde más sudas tu” (where you sweat more).

The lyrics should, however, not be studied in isolation from other elements of the recording. In her study on salsa musicians in London, communication scholar Patria Roman-Velázquez (1999: 123–125) notes that, although a “Latin music identity” can be established by the use of Spanish language, which evidently also applies to Norlan, for a non-Spanish speaking audience “gestures and movement” are important “signs through which people understand the music”. Roman-Velázquez (1999: 125) goes on to explain how an understanding of musical and visual codes for this non-Spanish speaking audience is encouraged by tour-

ing musicians and videos. As a large part of the audience in Finland will not understand the lyrics of song, other, non-textual, elements become more significant.

References to sauna in the song acquire a different meaning when they are examined as part of the music video. I argue that in conjunction with the music video, the concept of sauna becomes more sexualized than the lyrics by themselves suggest. Throughout the video, we see scantily clad women dancing and sweating against a changing backdrop with smoke, steam or fire and, most notably, a spinning sauna stove. The camera zooms in occasionally on the dancers hip and bust areas, albeit with less exhibitionism and objectification than in several hip hop videos from the time, occasionally only displaying the dark silhouette of the dancer. Nevertheless, in a Finnish context, the heat of the sauna becomes equated with the “hot” Latinness of the music and the sexualized bodies appearing in the video. This is emphasized also by the incorporation of a sauna whisk (a bundle of small branches of fresh birch) into the dancers’ hip gyrating choreography, already witnessed in Norlan’s performance in the *Ourvision* final. Similarly, the Finnish expression heard in the chorus of the song, “anna mulle löyly” (give me the sauna heat), redirects the standard sauna practice of throwing water on the stove’s stones to generate steam, towards the person making the request. In the context of the video, the connotation is that Norlan is requesting the women in the video to “heat him up”. The lyrics also remind us of Daddy Yankee’s song “Gasolina” (2005), a recording that helped popularize reggaeton among a broader audience, where a female voice in the chorus utters “dame más gasolina” (give me more gasoline). Among the number of interpretations by audiences, Daddy Yankee’s “suggestive - - metaphor” (Marshall 2009: 20) has also been proposed to include sexual connotations.

As the discussion above suggests, “Sauna Caliente” not only references reggaeton in terms of style, but merges its “hedonism” (Baker 2011: 162) with the Finnish cultural symbol of the sauna, which subsequently also adopts ideologies associated with the genre. For a more in-depth examination of this setting, it is appropriate here to turn to postcolonial theorist Edward Said’s (2003) concept of “Orientalism” and the related notions of “Tropicalism” (Aparicio & Chávez-Silverman 1997) and “Borealism” (Kjartansdóttir & Schram 2013). In discussing how Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the “Orient”, is accepted in the Western consciousness, Said (2003: 1–9) emphasizes how this knowledge

about the Other is contrasted with the idea of a European identity. The Other is constructed as the opposite of the self, with contrasting (often negative) features. Aparicio & Chávez-Silverman (1997: 1) introduce the concept of “Tropicalism” as a theoretical equivalent to Orientalism for representations of a *Latinidad*. Although the dancers in “Sauna Caliente” are not all represented as Latino, the representations follow a “tropicalized” discourse of “hyper-eroticized” (Chávez-Silverman 1997: 101) Latinos. Reinforcing Said’s (2003) argument that contrasting features are projected onto the Other, the Finnish non-sexual sauna becomes sexualized in its tropicalized version.

Interestingly, “Sauna Caliente” with its “tropicalized” depiction of the sauna, was around the time of its release, to my knowledge, the only sauna-related song to enter the Finnish pop charts, a fact that did not go unnoticed by the media. At the height of the song’s success, Norlan was featured in a number of newspapers, many of them picking up on the peculiar combination of the Finnish sauna in a Latin genre. In a cover story for the *Metro* newspaper, the front-page headline introduces Norlan as a “Sauna-crazy Cuban” (Fiilin 2008). In the photos for the article, Norlan is wearing a sauna bathrobe, holding up his decorated sauna ladle under the heading “Norlan’s sauna steam has bling-bling” (Fiilin 2008). Another article in the weekly *NYT* supplement of *Helsingin Sanomat*, the biggest newspaper in Finland, Norlan is quoted describing how one is supposed to embrace the heat of the sauna with dignity no matter how hot it is (Similä 2009). The article, published with the title “The hottest hit of the summer” (Similä 2009), establishes that, interestingly, perhaps the only hit song in praise of the sauna has been made by a Cuban, and questions whether the lewd dance performance his music is associated with will sit well with Finns.

Following Said’s (2003) descriptions of Orientalism, Icelandic scholars Kjartansdóttir & Schram (2013: 65) use the concept of “Borealism” for assumed ideas about a “wild” North. As historian Peter Davidson (2005) has demonstrated, the North has historically been associated with extreme conditions, wild nature and mad behavior to go with it. I would argue that the sauna is in several ways a manifestation of Borealism via its association with nudity and nature, the extreme heat and the toughness one ostensibly needs to endure it. By portraying Norlan as a sauna loving Cuban, while questioning the lewd sexuality his music is associated with, we identify in the articles above simultaneously discourses of

both Tropicalism and Borealism. The subtext is that Norlan might be a strange foreigner from an exotic location, but Finns are also exotic in their own way.

As both the “Tropics” and the “North” are exoticized, the cultures are also depicted as equal, which, according to Bhabha (1994), is a precondition for hybridity. Norlan is not just introducing Latin music to a new audience, putting it up for display where it is seen to exist outside Finnish society. When he integrates the sauna into his music, Norlan reinterprets this cultural symbol and, more importantly, influences Finnish culture as the symbol here receives new meanings. He is adding new elements into Finnish culture and compelling listeners to change their ideas about their own society. If this change were to occur in just one direction, and Norlan would merely be holding up an image of his “Latin” music for Finnish listeners, he would still be operating under the regime of a dominant culture. Following Bhabha (1994: 37), here “symbols of culture” do not have a “primordial unity or fixity”, they are reread and translated in both directions.

The Sauna Caliente club concept

With this background in mind, we can turn to examining the Sauna Caliente club concept. Before participating in the *Ourvision* contest, Norlan had together with his wife Satu already organized a club night called Club Urban Latino (CUL!) twice at the beginning of 2008. When the “Sauna Caliente” song was on its way to becoming a hit, they decided to make it the name of their regular club night, launching the first Sauna Caliente club on Valentine’s Day in February 2008, appropriately in a venue called Cuba Café in central Helsinki (Leygonier Santana & Leygonier 2015; Satuley 2008). The “Sauna Caliente” recording and music video not only provided the club concept its name, but the aesthetics of the video also heavily influenced the club’s visual image, with the addition of a heart with reference to Valentine’s Day. The steaming barbwire-covered heart logo, with a woman’s stocking-covered legs sticking out from behind it, has been used as an identifier of the Sauna Caliente events since then. This visual influence is a demonstration of the shared ideology behind the song and the club concept. In what follows, I will discuss Norlan’s performance persona represented in the Sauna Caliente club concept.

In the Facebook (2015a) profile page of Sauna Caliente, the club concept is described as “Finlands Nro 1. Exotic Urban Party”. I want to here specifically pay attention to the categories “exotic” and “urban”. Although the term “urban” has become a universal musical category, also with regards to Latin-American genres, it is rarely explicitly used to define the programming of a club concept in Finland as DJ culture is in itself considered an “urban” phenomenon. Similarly, Norlan positions himself ambiguously within a broader category of “exotism”, as we have already witnessed in the analysis of the “Sauna Caliente” music video. As ethnomusicologist Johannes Brusila (2003: 143) notes, although Latin-American popular music forms its own marketing category in the United States, the same music in Europe is often included in the category “world music”. As such, a useful theoretical point of reference in decoding the meaning behind the categories of “urban” and “exotic” is Brusila’s (2003) discussion about the concepts of “tradition” and “locality” as they have been used in discourses about “world music”.

According to Brusila (2003: 89), the concept of tradition has come to signify a key feature in discourses about world music. The rhetoric here is that in comparison to the “modernized” West, which has lost touch with tradition and nature, a more authentic and living musical tradition can be found outside the West in “the vital culture of the Other” (Brusila 2003: 89–93). Related to the idea of tradition is the concept of “locality”. As Brusila (2003: 163) notes, world music is often described as something different than the dislocated music produced simply for profit by a transnational music industry. In world music discourse, a connection to place is often emphasized, suggesting that the music “originates in a local community, as opposed to the industry” (Brusila 2003: 163).

A Cuban artist defining his music as “exotic” evokes some apparent discourses of tradition related to Cuba’s trade embargo and the presumed cultural isolation it caused. These discourses are epitomized in the “retro phenomenon” of Buena Vista Social Club (BVSC), which caused the whole world to assume musical time in Cuba “stopped in the 50s” (Baker 2011: 2). According to law scholar Tanya Katerí Hernández (2002), the BVSC narrative effectively portrays Afro-Cuban *son* music as a forgotten tradition, sheltered from the international music industry, until it was discovered by American guitarist Ry Cooder. Although stylistically the music of BVSC would most likely fall outside Sauna Caliente’s music policy, a discursive affinity with the group was manufactured when BVSC

performed in Norlan's hometown of Turku in April 2015. Ostensibly without actual organizational collaboration with the promoters for the BVSC concert, Norlan and Satu executed a promotional plan where they advertised the concert as part of a larger group of events under the label "MEGA LATIN CARIBBEAN WEEKEND" (Facebook 2015d). The other events under the heading were clubs and dance workshops organized by Norlan and Satu, including a Sauna Caliente event the night of the BVSC concert. In the digital poster for the "MEGA LATIN" weekend, the well-known BVSC album cover of singer Ibrahim Ferrer in what the viewer is expected to recognize as a street in Havana with old cars parked on the side of the road, is placed next to the Sauna Caliente heart logo.

Because of the trade embargo, the BVSC narrative has played well in the United States' popular imagination, where Cuban musicians have been disregarded, as Pacini Hernandez (2010) reminds us, since the Latin music boom of the 1940s and 1950s. However, although at the height of their success BVSC attracted large audiences in Finland and performed for 22000 people at the Pori Jazz festival in 2000 (Huida 2000), it was by no means the only contact with Cuban musicians in Finland in the post-revolutionary period. In fact, according to popular discourse, Finland has had an exceptionally close musical affinity with Cuba. In his history of Cuban music Finnish Latin music historian Pertti Luhtala (1997) constructs strong links between the countries, even declaring that Finns have an exceptional ability to perform Latin music. While such claims can be questioned, it is true that several Cuban and U.S. Cuban artists, such as Celia Cruz, Tito Puente, Los Van Van and NG La Banda, performed in Finland in the 1970s and 1980s at the "Talvikarnevaalit" (Winter carnival) festival organized annually at the Hesperia hotel in Helsinki (Padilla 1998a: 12). Also, Finnish *Love Records* recorded and released, among recordings by other Cuban artists, an album with singer Omara Portuondo in 1975 (*Omara Portuondo & Martin Rojas*), two decades before the singer gained wider recognition as part of the BVSC collective. Padilla (1998a: 15–16) suggests that the political and cultural solidarity movement in the 1970s was an important channel in spreading Latin-American music in Finland. As such, although the Cuban "exotic" does not have the same "lost world" (Baker 2011: 3) associations in the Finnish context, the historical link with carnival and political solidarity positions the music as something different than how the world music industry portrays a "dislocated" (Brusila 2003: 163) profit-motivated music industry of the West.

If we regard the notion of the “exotic” as representing tradition and locality, there are also parallels we can draw with popular music scholar Sarah Cohen’s (1994) description of the importance of locality in rock music. As Cohen (1994: 118) suggests, artists linked to a particular place are identified as real people with roots, integrity and honesty as opposed to glitzy pop stars that represent commerce and marketing strategies. Although the “exotic” in the description of Sauna Caliente does not refer to a singular locality or tradition, Norlan appears to be perceived as an authentic representative of a global “exotic”, because of his Cuban background. As Satu says in our interview, when they launched the Sauna Caliente club, they experienced it to be important for audiences that Norlan was Latino, “it was also like a [source of] pride for them that there is somebody Latino, ‘cause at that time when Norlan started, there were not [many Latino DJs in Finland]” (Leygonier Santana & Leygonier 2015). This attitude is also represented on the Salsa.fi discussion board, a central forum for Latin music aficionados in Finland. When Norlan and Satu were about to launch Club Urban Latino, the predecessor of Sauna Caliente, one user suspected that because Norlan, as a Cuban artist, is hosting the club, “we can all expect a really excellent, authentic and well-made Latin-live-club-thing” (Elinah 2007).

According to Brusila (2003: 167), in discourses of world music, a location linked with a particular artist is not necessarily based on the origin of the artist, but on preconceived exoticized associations. In other words, as Brusila suggests, ideas of a locality follow what Said (2003: 54–55) calls an “imaginative geography”, dramatizing distance and difference in order to intensify a sense of self. As Norlan (Leygonier Santana 2016) writes in our e-mail interview, to him, the “exotic” represents something “new” and “interesting”. According to Norlan (Leygonier Santana 2016), when they started Sauna Caliente in Finland, it was “truly” something “exotic for most of our crowd and in general to [F]innish people”. The “exotic” is, as such, defined precisely as the opposite of the dominant Finnish culture – as an imaginative new and interesting Other, with evident connotations of “Tropicalism” (Aparicio & Chávez-Silverman 1997).

However, at this point, we should bear in mind that in the Sauna Caliente club concept, the “exotic” is paired with the term “urban” – a concept that for Norlan and Satu appears to have associations with the mainstream. As Satu (Leygonier Santana & Leygonier 2015) explains to me, one of the reasons for launching Sau-

na Caliente was to “get the mainstream people” and introduce them to “Latin music”. Norlan and Satu have, apart from Sauna Caliente, organized a variety of clubs, several of them more explicitly and uniformly associated with “Latin” and Spanish Caribbean genres. According to Satu (Leygonier Santana & Leygonier 2015), “Sauna Caliente was the first club where we were actually able to combine urban and Latin together”. Again, drawing on Brusila (2003) as a theoretical reference point, we find similar descriptions in the discourse of world music. Brusila (2003: 100) notes in his study about Zimbabwean artists entering a “world music market” in Europe that they often described their music as “modern traditional”. According to Brusila (2003:996–107), the somewhat paradoxical expression has its explanation in the artists’ need to express the existence of a long tradition, while simultaneously maintaining that the music has relevance today. Through the expression, artists seek to satisfy the “audience’s demand for both novelty and familiarity” (Brusila 2003: 122). In order to understand how the demand for familiarity is met for audiences, the terms “exotic” and “urban” require closer scrutiny in relation to the musical repertoire heard at the Sauna Caliente club.

The musical repertoire and Norlan’s DJing

In April 2015, I attended two Sauna Caliente events with the objective to observe Norlan’s performance and to survey the events’ musical repertoire. The first of these events took place on Saturday 17 April at the *Miami* nightclub in Tampere, and the second on Saturday 24 April at the *Monkey* nightclub in Turku. Both events followed a similar formula and adhered to the opening hours set by Finnish legislation, meaning that the music ended, and the bar stopped serving drinks at 3:30 a.m. after which guests gradually made their way out. The Tampere event started one hour earlier at 10:00 p.m., and differed from the Turku event also in that there was another DJ (Cliff) sharing the booth with Norlan, albeit apparently with less performance time. Both clubs had, apart from the main floor where Norlan performed, another separate room, which could be accessed with the same ticket. This smaller room was in Tampere dedicated to “100% Afrobeats” (Facebook 2015b), and in Turku to House and mainstream Electronic Dance Music, although it was not mentioned in the Sauna Caliente promotional material.

At both events, I made a note of almost all the songs played in the club. The variety of musical styles was, indeed, wide, as the promotional information for the club declares. The musical styles that dominated the playlists included dancehall, hip-hop, merengue, Nigerian pop, r&b, reggaeton, soca and trap. However, a majority of the songs could be categorised as Top 40, meaning they were songs I associate with the very top of the charts, performed by artists based in the United States, and most likely familiar to a majority of the clubbers. Also, most of the songs were sung in English – with Spanish an almost equal second. Other languages represented were Arabic, French, Finnish, Igbo, Hindi, Portuguese, Swedish, Yoruba, as well as creolized Nigerian and Caribbean English – which I categorize here separately from “standard” English, because, as Marshall (2011: 50) notes regarding Jamaican English, for monolingual English speakers, it as incomprehensible as Spanish.

As such, the urban in the description of the Sauna Caliente club concept can certainly be equated with familiarity, if we follow a dual categorization, where the “exotic” is interpreted to include genres and styles not represented in the mainstream. As a musical category, however, the concept of urban has mostly been associated with African-American hip-hop, which after the Top 40 category, was the most represented style at the Sauna Caliente events, with 2 Chainz, 50 Cent and Jay-Z some of the regularly played artists. As hip-hop researcher Tricia Rose (2008: 20, 44, 45) suggests, the term “urban” has been used almost as a “euphemism for black music genres and markets” due to large black inner city populations produced by a history of housing segregation and urban renewal policies, also resulting in severe social disorder. Against this background, we are also reminded of Paul Gilroy’s (1993: 99) discussion of race as a perceived community, and a discourse of black cultures as forms of “local expression”. According to Gilroy (1993 99:), this racialized discourse of authenticity has been a “notable presence in the marketing of black folk cultural forms to white audiences”. The urban in Sauna Caliente, can, as such, be considered a way to frame the familiar mainstream to be part of African-American musical culture, maintaining an aura of authenticity despite its commercial aspirations.

The division here is, however, not a simply binary between the urban and the exotic. The categories intersect in various ways in the musical repertoire and, in fact, most of the Top 40 songs in Norlan’s set-list were by artists of Latin-American

or Caribbean heritage – the most frequently played artist being Pitbull, born in Miami to Cuban expatriates. Other popular artists of Caribbean heritage included Jennifer Lopez, Rihanna and Sean Kingston. It should also be noted that songs in Spanish and Caribbean genres, such as reggaeton and Jamaican dancehall, together comprise a larger part of the repertoire than Top 40 or hip-hop. The urban is, as such, here not only equated with African-American culture, but could also be perceived to reflect recent demographical changes and the Latin-American influx in the United States. As Pacini Hernandez (2014: 1044) notes, the aesthetic boundaries between “urban African American” and “urban Latino” styles have been destabilized by several U.S. Latino artists, with only language remaining the crucial distinction. In her study on Dominican racial identity in New York, Pacini Hernandez (2014) notes that dark-skinned Dominicans are not comfortable assuming the African-American identity, which is ascribed to them. The Latino presence has through its racial ambiguity come to problematize the traditional binary categorization of black and white in the United States (Pacini Hernandez 2014).

Although to equate the “urban” with African American hip-hop culture, thus, would be a simplification, Norlan (Leygonier Santana & Leygonier 2015) does emphasize the importance of his background as a rapper for his work as a DJ and a club promoter. In fact, at the first Sauna Caliente events, Norlan did not perform as a DJ. His role was, according to the promotional text for the first Sauna Caliente event, “THE HOST” (Satu Leygonier 2007, original capitals). This unequivocally associates the events with Norlan’s performance persona, emphasizing his agency and his responsibility for the concept. But also, in practice, this means that Norlan is drawing on his experience as an “MC” or master of ceremonies (Leygonier Santana & Leygonier 2015) and communicates with the audience during the events through a microphone – commenting on the music, the audience and performance space in various ways. At the events I observed, this often included short interjections on top of the recorded music, mostly in English, but also with a few sporadic Spanish expressions. Frequently heard interjections included “everybody, como dice!” (what do you say!), “through your hands up”, “everybody let’s go!” – to which the audience often responded by raising their hands and/or cheering.

As I have discussed elsewhere, this kind of communication with the audience socializes a club event and can contribute to the construction of a sense of

community among the audience members (Ramstedt 2016). According to Satu (Leygonier Santana & Leygonier 2015), this performance form was new for salsa followers in Finland when they first launched the Sauna Caliente concept, and people would often come to the events just to observe Norlan's showmanship. At the same time, Satu (Leygonier Santana & Leygonier 2015) recognizes that audiences familiar with the Jamaican dancehall tradition of live hosting over the recorded music, knew and appreciated Norlan's performance style. Norlan and Satu have since the first events also sought to build stronger affiliations with Jamaican dancehall culture by organizing an annual dancehall dance contest and by including more dancehall in the repertoire.

This association with reggae and dancehall culture also links Norlan to a history of important expatriate musical activities in Finland. As Mashaire (2009) notes, reggae events as a form of club culture, were in the 1980s and 1990s an important meeting place for immigrants of different backgrounds, especially in the capital of Helsinki. Although many immigrants came from places with no significant reggae or night club culture, they embraced these cultures in Finland as part of a collective black identity (Mashaire 2009: 165). A large part of the audience at the Sauna Caliente events are non-white, and it could be argued that the club serves as a space where people of other than native Finnish background can celebrate their own identity. Norlan has also in an interview publically suggested that it is important for him to represent Finland as "international and multicultural" (Uuden Musiikin Kilpailu 2015). The "urban exotic" description could, as such, also be understood as an inclusive term that incorporates ambiguously all non-white clubbers in the community Norlan seeks to create.

However, although Norlan's performance concept is open to different ethnicities, we should not hastily equate the physical space of the club with Bhabha's (1994) spatial metaphor of a "third space". Merely having a diverse crowd, does not make the club environment a hybrid space. As cultural geographer Julia Lossau (2009: 69–70) reminds us, there is a danger of misreading Bhabha's "third space" as a spatial unit, as a "bounded space - - located next to or between other spaces". The Sauna Caliente events are limited in time and space and, although clubbers may actively seek "an altered state of consciousness" (Thorn-ton 1995:97), when they exit the event, spatially and temporally, they are again

subjected to the public consciousness and culture of the outside world. As such, both conceptually and in practice, merely visiting the space in itself does not constitute a process of hybridity. According to Childs' & Williams' (1997: 142) reading of Bhabha's concept, the hybrid tertiary space exists in the "ever-increasing gap between the 'writing' and 'reading' of a proposition, between its production and consumption". As such, although the club space in itself does not constitute such a gap, Norlan can through the performance persona constructed with relation to the Sauna Caliente events, contribute to (re)writing a proposed Finnish culture, as we have already seen with the "Sauna Caliente" recording and music video.

Norlan's goals to instigate change have also moved beyond the promotion of Latin-American music in Finland. Although he started as an "ambassador" of Latin music, the purpose of his work later changed from merely promoting music to promoting a "message of joy and positivity" (Leygonier Santana & Leygonier 2016). As Norlan notes, a lot of people in Finland have vitamin D deficiency and get depressed in the darkness. But more important than vitamin D, according to Norlan, is spreading a positive attitude and message. His work is not just about singing and dancing – when people decide to give him their time, it is important for Norlan that they leave in a positive mood. Norlan explains in our interview how he understands that everybody has problems, and although he cannot solve them, he can try to bring a smile to their lives. This positive attitude is visible in Norlan's behaviour in the club, where I noticed how warmheartedly he greets everybody, friends and fans, who come up to the DJ booth to talk to him. He never seemed too busy in the midst of his DJing to acknowledge people, although as DJ scholar Ed Montano (2010: 412) notes, DJs who use laptops can occasionally look "like they are 'checking their emails'". Norlan was not even using headphones regularly to help him cue the next song in his mix, a usual convention in DJ practice. Rather he appeared to be more engaged in contact with the audience, making his short announcements on the microphone. As Satu summarizes in the end of our interview, "when he says Latin ambassador, it's all those things together, his personality, positivity, Latin music and everything - -" (Leygonier Santana & Leygonier 2015).

Concluding discussion

I have sought with this study to shed some light on the complexities of musical movement and hybridity, as “Latin music” travels across the globe to reach an audience in Finland. Whereas historiographies of Latin-American music in Finland have tended to neglect the cross-pollination of music in the Americas, this study demonstrates the significance that the musical dialogue between the Spanish Caribbean and the U.S. has even as the music travels outside Spanish speaking communities. Following Auslander’s (2004) methodology, I have analysed the “performance persona” of Afro-Cuban DJ Norlan with emphasis on the genre conventions and socio-cultural norms that inform his performances and influence the music’s reception among audiences.

I have paid particular attention to Norlan’s “Sauna Caliente” recording, music video and club concept. In the “Sauna Caliente” recording and music video, I have identified exoticizing discourses of both the “Tropics” and the “North”. However, the song also problematizes naturalized boundaries between cultures and creates new meanings around the Finnish cultural symbol of the sauna, compelling listeners to rethink their culture. Following postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha (1994), it could be argued that the “Sauna Caliente” recording and music video construct a “third space” in that they open up a space between the reading and the writing of the cultures involved.

As the “Sauna Caliente” song introduced Norlan to a broader audience in Finland, it can be considered to have framed his subsequent work and instructed audiences how to understand his performance persona. The Sauna Caliente club concept draws on the aesthetics of the music video for the song, and, as such, also implies a conceptual affinity in terms of the blend of musical cultures. Through the strategic use of the concepts of “exotic” and “urban” as descriptions for the club, Norlan and his manager wife Satu aim to introduce “Latin” music to a mainstream club audience in Finland. “Latin” music is rendered familiar via its association with the U.S. mainstream, but also authentic as a representation a new form of urban culture. Positioning the club as “urban”, also emphasizes Norlan’s background as a rapper and foregrounds his verbal commentary during the club events. Rather than focusing on strict DJ practices, Norlan seeks through this performance style to create a welcoming atmosphere among the audience

members and create an inclusive atmosphere where immigrant identities can be celebrated. Although we would be mistaken to understand the club space in itself as a hybrid “third space” (Bhabha 1994), Norlan has the potential to instigate change through Sauna Caliente club concept.

Even though the concepts of “urban” and “exotic”, provide vague descriptions of the Sauna Caliente club concept, rather than stylistic categorisations, they can be considered to conceptually position Sauna Caliente within Finnish club culture. As Taylor (2007: 160) suggests, in emphasizing the “evanescent nature of culture”, Bhabha’s concept of the “third space” can help avoid categorisations. According to Taylor (2007: 160), “naming reifies” and implies fixed, clearly defined cultural borders. Although the musical repertoire under the label “exotic” positions Sauna Caliente as something Other than the Finnish culture of the Self, it does not define any particular culture, but leaves room for interpretations and Norlan’s ultimate message of joy and positivity.

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