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GenEc DVD Review

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"Fulanito: Greatest Video Hits" (Cutting Records)

For those of you who may not follow developments in popular Latin music, Fulanito is a group of Dominican-Americans from New York who emerged in 1997 with a unique combination of the traditional and the up-to-date.

Their first hit - and to my mind, still their finest achievement - was a record called "Guallando", which combined the older, accordion-driven style of Dominican merengue music known as perico ripiao with rap/hip-hop vocals. Merengue is known for its very speedy dance tempo and (originally) accordion and/or (in the more commercial merengue of recent decades) saxophone riffs that circle and swirl around the melody line. The band's mash-up of not just merengue rhythms with hip-hop elements, but specifically accordion-led merengue was a stroke of genius which caught fire throughout the Latin music world and made them near-instant international superstars.

The music video for "Guallando" is here, along with a number of other videos by the group, culled from five CD's recorded between 1997 and 2004. The group's star began to fade around that time, but they have since returned to the spotlight, which no doubt encouraged the release of this collection. About half the songs feature the accordion, played usually by Arsenio de la Rosa (their original producer's father), and those are among the most distinctive tracks heard here. Other songs employ elements of bachata, reggaeton, salsa, and other current Latin pop styles, all combined with both solo and interactive, call-and-response, group-rap, in a style that's as fresh as it is lively.

As with so many music videos, there's a lot of visual emphasis on sexy girls in bikinis, which many people may find off-putting. I notice that even my college-age students have tired of the amount of emphasis on physical attributes in music video, but Fulanito only occasionally cross the line into the sort of obscenity that has given music video a bad name. I would consider much of this as racy, rather than pornographic. The worst offender is "Take It Off", the lyrics of which (In English) consist largely of a repetition of the title phrase, which becomes highly annoying before long. Many people may find the cock-fighting scene in "Pecho a Pechuga" more upsetting than the title, which is bad enough. On the other hand, "Asi Es Que Vivo Yo" is a rather imaginative production which

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