



## MALA RODRÍGUEZ Malamarismo

Machete Music

Mala Rodríguez is a Spanish rapper (from Andalucía)

who hasn't really gotten the attention she deserves in America—until now. Newly signed to top reggaeton label Machete Music, she has made the most self-assured, consistently entertaining album of her career. In the past, she incorporated flamenco guitars and rhythms into her music, but this time around, the beats are more overtly synthetic, mimicking tracks by American producers like Swizz Beatz or Mannie Fresh with handclaps and thick oozing bass lines. Her delivery has also progressed, shifting between relaxed, sultry femininity and an almost shocking energy. When she invites a guest into her world—as with Julieta Venegas on “Tiempo Pa Pensá,” (“Time To Think”) or Tego Calderón on “Enfermo” (“Sickness”)—she’s gracious but still in total control; nobody outshines Mala in her house. The market for non-reggaeton Latin hip-hop is small, but if anybody’s gonna break out of the pack, Mala Rodríguez could definitely be the one.

—PHIL FREEMAN

**You have some guests on this album—Julieta Venegas on “Tiempo Pa Pensá” and Tego Calderón on “Enfermo.” How was it working with them?**

With Julieta everything went really smooth. She is a really nice person and I learned a lot when she visited the studio; it was a real pleasure for me to work with her.

I met Tego years ago in Puerto Rico. We have had the intention to work together for a long time since he invited me to a show in San Juan, which I refused because I didn't really know him and wouldn't go on my own. After that, we tried to do a track together many times, and it finally happened in Puerto Rico at Playback Studios. It was amazing! First we recorded with his musicians, then with a beat I brought from Barcelona. He put the pressure on me with that track; he has a lot of charisma, he's sincere and he puts his heart into what he does. It was a great experience to work with him.

## Q&A with MALA RODRIGUEZ



**Your album is on Machete Music, a well-known reggaeton label, but you make straight hip-hop. Did they pressure you to go in a reggaeton direction?**

Well, it looks like everybody's advice is to do reggaeton, which still makes money, but I believe it's hard enough to be oneself, so why make it even more complicated trying to be something you're not? I want people to like me for what I do. I've never been an opportunist.

**You recently guested on “Mala Suerte Con El 13” on Calle 13's latest album *Residente O Visitante*. What was that like?**

We got in touch and thought it would be a great idea to work together. We recorded in Miami after talking through Skype a few times. I showed Residente some of my lyrics and was clear about what he wanted to do. Things went very smoothly in the studio—we laughed a lot. Residente says exactly what he thinks, which is very brave in these politically correct days.



## BEBO VALDÉS Featuring The Legendary Vocalists

Malanga Music

Bebo Valdés defected in 1960, vowing never to return until democracy was installed. He kept his word, settling in Europe and not recording again until the mid-'90s (by which time his son Chucho, who stayed in Cuba, had long since become a formidable Latin piano innovator himself). This collection features recordings of varying fidelity that Valdés made shortly before his self-imposed exile. Exploiting a contractual loophole that allowed him to record instrumentals exclusively for the Decca label, Valdés ostensibly served as accompanist to various well-known Cuban vocalists on these boleros, rumbas and guarachas. Among the more prominent names are future Buena Vista Social Clubbers Pio Leyva and Omara Portuondo, but some of the more exhilarating tracks come from the flamboyant Celeste Mendoza, the versatile “Guapachá” Boreclá and the passionate Pacho Alonso. Without a doubt, though, it's Valdés's masterful piano work that is the glue: melodically and rhythmically he's on the money—a “band member” any Cuban vocalist would welcome.

—JEFF TAMARKIN