

GRAMMY
SPECIAL



Music

LATIN

BY AYALA BEN-YEHUDA

Fighting To Be Heard

Fulano Is Only Indie Latin Pop Grammy Nominee

Scan the list of Latin nominees for this year's Grammy Awards, and you'll find it hews closely to those vying for Latin Grammys last fall—with some exceptions.

Though differing eligibility periods explain most of the discrepancies, this year's Grammy slate does yield some notable candidates.

One is Fulano, a Cuban-born, New York-bred and now Miami-based singer/songwriter, whose hyphens give some sense of the eclectic influences on his album "Individual."

The self-released set, which blends touches of pop, electronic and folk, is nominated in the best Latin pop category along with Obie Bermúdez's "Lo Que Trajo El Barco," Julieta Venegas' "Limón Y Sal," Marco Antonio Solís' "Trazos De Mi Alma 2" and Ricardo Arjona's "Adentro," which won the male pop vocal Latin Grammy in November.

Fulano, whose real name is Elsten Torres, admits he's a dark horse, but says it's great just to be nominated. In his case, he actually means it.

"I was totally shocked," he says. "Of the five nominees, I'm the one independent artist. I think I had big support from all my friends and colleagues in the music business."

Torres says his work is informed as much by Cuban son and trova as it is by U2 and Elvis Costello. Nearly half the songs on his album are in English.

Torres was nominated for a song of the year Latin Grammy in 2005 for his work on Bermúdez's track "Todo El Año." His former band Fulano De Tal was signed to BMG years ago. Torres' solo album was co-produced by ex-bandmate Brendan Buckley, who is now Shakira's drummer.

This year, that superstar from Colombia is up for best pop collaboration with vocals for the ubiquitous "Hips Don't Lie" with Wyclef Jean.

It's not the first time a Latin artist, or even a primarily Spanish-language singer, has been nominated in the category. Ricky Martin's duet with Christina Aguilera, "Nobody Wants to Be Lonely," was nominated in 2002, while Gloria Estefan and 'N Sync's "Music of My Heart" lost to Santana and Rob Thomas' "Smooth" in 2000.

FULANO is Cuban-born, New York-bred and Miami-based—and all those hyphens show up in his music.

