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Cuba Rebelión: Underground Music in Havana



ABSTRACT: *Cuba Rebelión: Underground Music in Havana* (2008) is billed as a “documentary about the musical underground of Cuba, and their struggle against the present regime.” The trailer describes “an underground scene of young musicians who, despite their creative suppression and censorship, have the courage to make a statement.” This article questions this characterization of contemporary underground music in Havana, analyzing the relationship between Cuban underground musicians and the state, with a focus on hip hop, rock, and reggaetón. It sheds light on media censorship, but also illustrates opportunities provided to underground musicians by state cultural institutions and digital technology. Censorship is an important trope, but in reality most musicians are free to record, distribute, and perform their music. It is arguably in the underground music economy that greater contestation lies.



keywords: Cuba; censorship; underground music; hip hop; digital technology

RESUMEN: *Cuba Rebelión: Underground Music in Havana* (2008) es anunciado como un “documental sobre el underground musical de Cuba y su lucha contra el régimen actual.” El tráiler describe “una escena underground de músicos jóvenes quienes, a pesar de su represión creativa y de censura, tienen el valor de prestar declaración.” Este artículo cuestiona esta caracterización de la música underground contemporánea en La Habana. En él se analiza la relación entre los músicos underground cubanos y el estado, centrándose en el hip hop, el rock y el reggaetón. Así mismo, se ilumina el tema de la censura en los medios de comunicación, pero también se ilustra las oportunidades que les ofrece a los músicos underground las instituciones culturales estatales y la tecnología digital. La censura es un tropo importante, pero en realidad a la gran mayoría de los músicos se les permite grabar, distribuir y cantar su música. Podría decirse que es en la economía musical underground donde se presentan las mayores controversias.



palabras clave: Cuba; censura; música underground; hip hop; tecnología digital



Cuba Rebelión: Underground Music in Havana (2008) by Alessio Cuomo and Sander de Nooij is, according to the production company Flattraqs, a “documentary about the musical underground of Cuba, and their struggle against the present regime.” The film’s trailer describes “an underground

scene of young musicians who, despite their creative suppression and censorship, have the courage to make a statement." The word "scene" is somewhat misleading, however, since the three groups featured have little in common, either musically or politically. Porno Para Ricardo (PPR) is the most politically controversial and outspoken rock group in Cuba: singer Gorki Águila has spent time in prison (on drug charges), the band has been barred from performing since 2005, and band members have been repeatedly harassed by police and state security. When I met Qva Libre, however, they stressed their non-political nature and distanced themselves from PPR; the struggle they described was to insert themselves into Cuba's rigid, creaking cultural bureaucracy by joining a state music agency. Escape perform the film's oppositional-sounding eponymous title song, but they were incorporated into the state-sponsored Cuban Rock Agency shortly after the documentary was filmed, hardly suggesting a straightforward struggle against the regime.

Underground is one of the most over-used and under-analyzed words in discussions of Cuban popular music. Elsewhere I tackle its relationship to the notions of alternative and commercial (Baker 2012); here I will examine the idea that Cuban underground music is suppressed or censored and constitutes a "struggle against the present regime," exploring the relationship between underground musicians and the state over the last few years.² My primary focus will be on hip hop, though rock and reggaetón are also part of my story.³ My inclusion of reggaetón may raise a few eyebrows, since underground is usually taken to signify an ideology that is directly opposed to the materialism and hedonism of reggaetón. Yet lines are not so clearly drawn in Havana: while self-styled underground rappers enjoy the backing of state cultural institutions and the sponsorship of Red Bull and Havana Club, leading reggaetón artists Elvis Manuel and El Micha found national fame with no support from the Cuban music industry, media, cultural organizations, or commercial enterprises.⁴

While there has been some discussion of the censorship of popular music during earlier periods of the revolution, such as the *quinquenio gris* (gray period) from 1971–76 (see Moore 2006, 148–53), studies of more recent popular music (e.g., Perna 2005; Moore 2006; Borges-Triana 2009) bear out Robin Moore's (2006, 15) contention that Cuban censorship is a subject that is difficult to investigate and little documented.⁵ With the combination of a more liberal cultural climate since the 1990s and the popularization of digital technology in the 2000s leading to significant changes in the working conditions and practices of Cuban musicians, this subject is ripe for revision and further study. The topic of censorship and underground music demands particular attention, because the *trope* of censorship is so

important to identity construction by underground musicians. With little academic activity in this area, the field has been left open to *Cuba Rebelión*, which has defined the terms of the debate to a significant degree yet presents a black-and-white picture that covers up as much as it reveals. For these reasons, rather than attempting a broad-brush analysis of artistic censorship under the Cuban Revolution, I aim to examine critically the discourse and realities of censorship in contemporary underground music scenes in Havana. An “outlaw” image has considerable appeal to underground artists and film makers, yet how much censorship and struggle is reality and how much self-promoting myth?

I do not set out to deny the existence or the importance of censorship. It is common knowledge that the Cuban state controls the dissemination of information in various ways, and there are de jure restrictions on freedom of expression in the Cuban constitution.⁶ Many cases of the censorship of activists and journalists have been documented by reputable international organizations.⁷ What interests me and, in my view, merits further discussion is that de jure restrictions are rarely if ever applied to underground musicians, and that the vast majority of such musicians do not face the kinds of repression experienced by political activists; in fact, they receive a certain amount of support from the state and work in conditions of greater freedom than the makers of *Cuba Rebelión* suggest.

Critics of the Cuban government tend to see censorship everywhere and to overstate the power and the limiting function of the state in the field of culture, extrapolating from fields in which control may be greater, but the arts provide a considerable gray area between the poles of absolute freedom of speech and total silencing. In reality, openings exist, in conjunction with—as well as in opposition to—the state; most artists face constraints of some kind, but they are not silenced, and many are subject to a contradictory mix of support and restriction. I am interested in focusing on what has been possible as well as what has not. I will therefore devote considerable attention to the controversial yet successful rappers Los Aldeanos and much less to the cause célèbre of PPR, the extreme pole of Cuban popular music and a unique phenomenon about which much ink has already been spilt.⁸ I seek not to provide a balanced view but rather to re-balance a field of discussion that, like *Cuba Rebelión*, has devoted much more attention to struggles than to strategies, and to PPR than to other artists. In my view, it is unsurprising that groups with challenging discourses have had little presence in the mainstream media and on prestigious concert stages; what is surprising, and worth exploring further, is that Los Aldeanos have had a presence at all—they have been given radio, TV, and major concert opportunities, while continuing to build their fame on the trope of censorship.



FIGURE 1. Los Aldeanos: "True to Your Courage and Your Ideas."

PHOTO COURTESY OF M. RIVIÈRE, EMETRECE PRODUCTIONS.

My intention is not to play down the real challenges faced by musicians, but to tease out some of the more contradictory aspects of the story that tend to be drowned out by the discourses of struggle and suppression that are part of the self-construction of the underground and the armoury of documentary makers and government critics.

Many would argue that the existence of excessive restrictions within legislation—even if they are not often applied—has a "chilling effect" on free speech, and it has reportedly fostered a "climate of fear" in the arena of political activism ("Restrictions on Freedom of Expression in Cuba" 2010, 2), yet my research suggests that such a view is not relevant to any significant degree to underground music in Havana today. Los Aldeanos are typical of contemporary underground hip hop in their direct criticism

of the Cuban state; their musical output shows no evidence of fear or a chilling effect, nor any sign that artistic creativity is constrained.⁹ Furthermore, despite the threatening articles in the constitution, there has been no systematic silencing of such voices or imposition of heavy penalties on artists. The most notorious cases of censorship in the *timba* (Cuban salsa) and hip hop scenes in the last 20 years, involving the artists La Charanga Habanera, Papá Humbertico, and Los Aldeanos (see Perna 2005 and Baker 2011), all led to performance bans for a number of months. However, the artists concerned soon picked up where they left off, and in many ways they came back stronger, with their reputations enhanced. While hardly something to celebrate, sanctions have been sufficiently infrequent and weak in nature that they inspire little fear in artists. Indeed, any chilling effect associated with the possibility of punishment is more than counteracted by a "heating effect": academic and presenter Mario Masvidal talks of the "halo" around controversial musicians in Cuba¹⁰ and since an "edgy" reputation

can bolster the identity and career of popular musicians, some would argue that the existence of censorship encourages contestation in music as much as restraining it. My aim is, thus, to examine the notions of underground and censorship, illuminating some of the multiple, and at times contradictory, discourses and realities in which they are embedded, and also to shed light on an unstudied but increasingly significant facet of the Cuban cultural sphere—the underground music economy.

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Censorship, the Media, and Digital Technology

Imani Perry (2004, 202) defines underground hip hop as consisting of “artists not signed by major record labels or not receiving much mainstream radio play.” If limited presence in the mass media is the main criterion, then most Cuban rap, reggaetón, and rock groups should be considered underground. The media, and particularly TV, are widely considered to be among the most conservative branches of the Cuban state; individual radio and TV program directors wield considerable power, and most have little time for urban music of foreign inspiration. Many TV directors are concerned with the visual aspect of such music: black faces, striking hairstyles, American clothes, and tattoos do not fit with the images they wish to project. The racism of Cuban TV is an open secret. One hip hop manager told me that she, rather than the group she represents, tended to be invited to appear on TV because of her fairer skin; the only rapper to establish a niche on TV is Edgar González of *Doble Filo*, a presenter of “*Cuerda Viva*” and Cuba’s longest-established white rapper. In “*Negro Cubano*,” Soandres del Río of *Hermanos de Causa* renames the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television (ICRT) “the Cuban Institute of Racism and Television.” Blackness and “extravagant” appearances are slightly less of a concern on the radio, where rap has had more of a presence. Nevertheless, rap, along with reggaetón and rock, has been given relatively little airtime compared to more “acceptable” Cuban genres.

During hip hop’s boom years (1995–2003), most rappers struggled to get their message out beyond the scene. Difficulty in passing from a live public of hundreds to a virtual public of thousands was a defining feature of rap in Havana. With Internet access extremely limited, digital technology as the preserve of the very few, and a negligible internal music market, TV and radio exposure was of prime importance, and the conservative stance of the media ensured that, *pace* Alan West-Durán (2004, 17), rap was far from being “every Cuban’s CNN.” This restricted media space, along with limited interest from Cuban record labels, was typically perceived by musicians as justification of their self-definition as underground. Martin

Cloonan (2003, 19) argues that “attempts to *prevent* popular music from becoming a mass medium are paradigmatic examples of its censorship,” and a line was indeed drawn connecting underground with censorship.

However, the recent expansion of digital technology has altered the landscape significantly, transforming the production and dissemination of music: artists’ dependence on the mainstream media has been dramatically reduced and controversial figures such as Los Aldeanos and Elvis Manuel have managed to create sizeable, mass-mediated public spheres through independent means. The example of timba in the late 1990s, where artists considered the exclusion of their songs from the radio a catastrophe (Perna 2005, 90–3), is barely relevant to underground scenes a decade later, where the memory stick trumps the radio. Censorship is a very different matter in the digital age, which was late to arrive in Cuba. As Bián Rodríguez of Los Aldeanos raps defiantly in “Declaración”: “To stop this completely/ You’d have to decommission every computer.” Censoring the hand-to-hand distribution of digital information is virtually impossible, and there have been no attempts to control the circulation of MP3s. When I spoke to Vice-Minister of Culture Fernando Rojas, he admitted that state control of the musical public sphere had declined dramatically in the last few years. It is, thus, a moot question whether the Cuban state is today attempting to prevent music from becoming a mass medium; but it is clear that the rising importance of digital technology at the expense of the mass media—long the focal point of cultural control—means that the issue of censorship looks very different in 2010 than in 2000, and that the equation of underground with censored is more problematic.

Openings are not just the result of technological changes. In Cuba, as in other late socialist contexts such as China (Wang 2009), the focus of censorship on mass mediation leaves spaces of freedom at the level of individual expression and live performance. Most underground artists can perform in small clubs and venues, and many have appeared on one of Havana’s larger stages such as El Salón Rosado de la Tropical. Indeed, cultural institutions such as the Asociación Hermanos Saíz (AHS)—the cultural wing of the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (Union of Young Communists, UJC)—and the Instituto Cubano de la Música (ICM) have provided a considerable amount of support for alternative and underground musicians, as discussed below. This is a distinctive feature of the Havana music scene: underground musicians are not just permitted to perform but often provided with the wherewithal to do so (performance spaces, equipment, even promotion). The description of *Cuba Rebelión* as showing “the painful reality of musicians who are not allowed to express themselves publicly” is therefore misleading.¹¹ Indeed, Escape and Qva Libre appear in the film performing at concerts in large state-run venues. Qva Libre’s webpage is hosted by Maxim Rock, home of the Cuban Rock Agency, and the group’s

biography is extensive, showing no lack of officially sanctioned opportunities: a report on the AHS website in mid-2010 showed the group busy performing in prestigious venues, appearing on TV, and preparing a national tour.¹² Escape's webpage boasts that the group has appeared at most of the major rock venues and festivals in Cuba (an impressively long list follows), has featured on a variety of radio and TV programs, and has won a Cuban TV award for one of its music videos.

Thanks to these spaces of greater freedom, even controversial underground artists like Elvis Manuel and Los Aldeanos could be heard expressing themselves publicly across Havana in 2007–8. Despite the fact that Elvis Manuel's crude lyrics offended the ears of half the city, and Los Aldeanos were temporarily banned from one venue or another at various times and even appeared on a state blacklist, they performed regularly in small commercial venues and their recordings boomed out from stereo systems on every other street. Los Aldeanos became the busiest rap group in Cuba without softening their tone; they were even invited by Pablo Milanés in August, 2008, to perform at an official concert at the Tribuna Antiimperialista, a huge open-air stage on the seafront that is Havana's most high-profile performance space. Their *peñas* (club nights) took place in state-run clubs and were occasionally announced on the radio; they were hardly a close-kept secret.

Given the level of activity of these artists, it appears that the government adopted a pragmatic (if ineffective) strategy of containment, minimizing the presence of controversial artists in the mainstream media and major venues but allowing them to continue at a lower level of official exposure unless they stepped seriously out of line. Robin Moore (2006, 131) calls this approach "lowered frequency," an apt term for the decades that he analyzes but one that needs revision in the light of the expansion of digital technology and the consequent ubiquity of the music of Elvis Manuel and Los Aldeanos, the most controversial yet best known exponents of reggaetón and rap in 2007–8.

Since underground musicians have found it easier to get support from cultural institutions than from the media or record industry, they have often found themselves suspended between insider and outsider status, between state support and censorship, "underground" and "overground." Any close assessment of the Havana underground exposes a contradictory cultural panorama. Artists may be simultaneously promoted by a liberal cultural institution and censored by another, more conservative branch of the state. Censorship may be localized, with many decisions made on a case-by-case basis by individual venue managers and radio or TV directors (see Cloonan 2003, 19). For all the *de jure* restrictions on freedom of expression, the *de facto* ones are usually quite different, and considerably less dramatic: on the rare occasions that censorship does occur, it almost invariably

takes the form of an artist arriving at a venue to be told either that she/he cannot perform or that the show has been cancelled. While this is quite a serious impediment to a performing artist, it does not compare to the experiences of political activists and journalists documented by international human rights organizations or to the penalties enshrined in the constitution. Indeed, given the high level of criticism in some underground lyrics, particularly in hip hop, underground music might be considered a realm of comparative freedom in Cuba. As control is generally exercised not by “the regime” but by lower-level administrators with whom musicians often negotiate directly, music that is banned in one venue may be permitted in another, and artists may reappear at the same venue after an unofficial “cooling-off period.”³ Censorship is thus rarely blanket or uniform, and is usually focused on preventing the most problematic music from reaching the largest live audiences rather than on disrupting artists’ efforts to disseminate their music within their scene.

The portrayal of underground musicians struggling against “the regime” elides many nuances: not just that the state collaborates with underground artists, but also that artists struggle with each other. As Gorki Águila explains in *Cuba Rebelión*: “Everyone says to me, ‘what you’re doing is brilliant . . . very good.’ But no one invites us to perform. No one.” Aldo Rodríguez of Los Aldeanos claimed: “the enemy is sometimes found among artists themselves, who grass you up and hold you back. That causes constant problems” (García Freyre 2009). Many amateur rap artists see professional groups in the Agencia Cubana de Rap (Cuban Rap Agency, ACR) and La FabriK (organizers of the hip hop symposium) as occupying an exclusionary role. In 2010, the ACR (now run by hip hoppers themselves) was allegedly impeding efforts by the AHS to allow more amateur rappers to turn professional. One amateur group, Clan Completo, staged a symbolic protest against what they termed an “internal blockade” within the hip hop scene by storming the mic at an official, closed-doors event in mid-2008 (see Baker 2011). Clan Completo had been allowed to produce its own concert at the Havana AHS headquarters, La Madriguera, and yet saw itself as excluded from events organized by professional rappers. In this case, the state provided an opportunity for one of the more extremist rap groups while mainstream artists “censored” the same group for its iconoclastic style, in order to protect the perceived gains that the hip hop scene had made over many years of negotiation with the state. Leading rappers are often on selection committees that decide who performs at major events, and they thus have opportunities to exclude groups perceived as too controversial.

Underground artists censor not only each other but also themselves. Because underground is both a positively evaluated ideology within hip hop—a sign of “realness”—and a negatively experienced exclusion, external and

internal factors often reinforce each other. An older rapper described the underground as “ghetto-izing itself” in recent years, and two radio presenters told me they had tried to open up spaces for underground rap only to be shunned by artists themselves. These presenters felt that rap’s limited media presence was partly a question of choice, and that greater exposure would be possible if artists made more effort. The concept of underground depends on the idea of external oppression, the construction of identity through resistance, and the pursuit of unachievable goals (see Maxwell 2003, 158–63), so efforts are not always made to reduce the tensions with the media that undeniably exist; with some artists keen to promote themselves as too hard-line for the media, self-marginalization and “internal blockades” undermine a polarized view of state and musicians locked in struggle.

Even when overt censorship does occur, it sometimes appears in ambiguous garb. Concerts are cancelled due to “technical difficulties,” microphones stop working, or the lights go out in mid-performance; Los Aldeanos complained that their microphones were turned down during their performance at the Tribuna Antiimperialista. Without doubt, such problems are indeed sometimes the result of deliberate interference. However, since censorship is an important trope in underground music, there is an incentive to seize on every impediment as evidence of conspiracy. In reality, there are frequent power-cuts and technical problems with aging audio equipment in Havana. The eleventh-hour cancellation of the 2004 hip hop festival was widely interpreted as an act of censorship; nevertheless, the reason given—that Hurricane Charley had caused extensive material damage the previous night—was not mere government propaganda. It was rescheduled three months later, suggesting more than a simple attempt to silence rappers. Paranoia feeds the search for evidence of government conspiracy, making the true extent of censorship hard to measure.

Given the gulf between *de jure* and *de facto* restrictions and the ambiguity of the latter, censorship is, to a degree, in the eye of the beholder. Reggaetón artists told me about a crusade against their music: limits on the number of reggaetón tracks allowed on TV or the radio, the closure of music agencies to any more reggaetón groups. Reggaetón’s detractors, however, focused on its omnipresence, claiming that reggaetón was so much more widespread than rap because the government was promoting it, preferring people to shake their asses than use their brains. What looked like censorship to a *reguetonero* looked like promotion to a rapper.

Censorship is often produced as the blanket explanation for rap’s failure to achieve mass exposure in Cuba, for example, yet there is no clear reason to assume that decisions by Cuban record labels were primarily political rather than economic. Even in socialist economies the music industry runs according to business models (Szemere 2001, 11–12), and this is particularly

true in late socialist contexts. Jeroen de Kloet (2003) illustrates the economic factors behind supposed censorship of Chinese rock music. Cuban executives may simply have seen rap, rightly or wrongly, as lacking in profit potential, and the lack of small independent labels limited the willingness to take risks. Particularly in light of the restructuring of Cuban arts industries along more capitalist lines since the Special Period (the economic crisis precipitated by the fall of the Soviet Union), shifting from a subsidies model to self-financing (Whitfield 2008, 88), the idea that rap has been marginalized solely for political reasons needs treating with caution, especially in an increasingly market-driven context.

There is also the question of unrealistic expectations, perhaps the result of limited information about underground music in other countries. I often heard the word censorship paired with complaints such as “we’re not allowed on TV” or “we’re not given any promotion,” as though such things were normal for underground musicians. Harry Belafonte, one of Cuban hip hop’s biggest fans, told leading rappers not to expect, or even seek, exposure in the mainstream media, arguing that hip hop began and flourished without it: “I think that talking about not being on TV is politically ingenuous or immature, or you haven’t done your homework properly” (“Encuentro entre amigos” n.d., 22).¹⁴ Rappers Las Krudas (“Respirando desde dentro” n.d., 26) talk about the obstacles, closed doors, and lack of spaces, all of which are undeniably true; yet they have appeared in print, on the radio, in regular live performances, even on TV, all courtesy of the state. They make challenging music: stylistically uncompromising, politically radical, Afro-centric, pro-lesbian rap. This kind of music does not get significant exposure in the mainstream media anywhere in the world. Indeed, one might argue that non-commercial, leftfield music of this kind receives more state support in Cuba than in most countries. As Miklós Haraszti (1988, 83) noted in relation to socialist Hungary: “The relationship between art’s inherently uneconomical nature and its ‘liberation’ under socialism is self-evident. Socialism’s intellectual life offers protection to a long list of uneconomical enterprises.”

Cuban underground musicians are quick to cry foul, but their artistic situation is in some respects quite typical for underground musicians around the world (with the important exception of their lack of Internet access), and in other respects better than typical. Most underground musicians around the globe expect to produce and distribute their music independently; although a lack of resources makes this process difficult in Cuba, it is misleading to suggest they are regularly derailed by the state. In reality, most Cuban musicians produce and distribute their music freely, and there is evidence that the state helps this process (via the AHS) as much as hindering it. Arguably, the marginal position of most underground music

reflects not so much censorship as the fact that it is a minority interest in Cuba. The fame of underground artists like Candyman, Elvis Manuel, and Los Aldeanos, all of whom became stars with little or no official promotion, somewhat undermines the claims of obstacles to success. Cuban musicians do of course face obstacles, but it is worth noting that two of the three groups in *Cuba Rebelión* pinpoint bureaucracy as the major hurdle—an aggravation, to be sure, but since it is a systemic problem across the Cuban state (and indeed in many other countries), it would be hard to argue that it represents a form of creative suppression aimed specifically at underground artists in response to their music.

Censorship is thus a very blunt, monolithic term for a rather more nuanced reality. Since the underground badge is worn with pride, it is unsurprising that the discourse of exclusion does not match up in every way to reality. In her study of rock in communist Eastern Europe, Jolanta Pekacz (1994) distinguishes between the official ideology of rock musicians (resistance to the establishment) and their operative ideology, which was one of dependence and symbiosis. She argues that there was in fact little serious effort to control rock: "Opinions, often repeated in the West, about severe restrictions aimed at rock music in the former Soviet bloc for political reasons, and about the state's alleged heavy-handed persecution of rock musicians came directly from the assumption of the totalitarian character of socialist reality and reflect another facet of rock mythology" (*ibid.*, 45). Her call to analyze this mythology rather than feed it may be salutary in the Cuban context.

Like Qva Libre and Escape, virtually all the well-known underground rap groups have had some exposure in the state media. Underground hip hop has had a consistent (if low-key) presence on the radio through specialist programs and also general shows like "A Propósito"; several hip hop promoters, intermediaries, and artists, including Ariel Fernández, Williams Figueredo, Roberto Zurbano, Lourdes Suárez, and Cuentas Claras, have worked as radio presenters (on "La Esquina de Rap") or even created their own rap shows ("Microfonazo" and "Kun kun pa"). When I switched on the radio for "La Esquina de Rap" for the first time during my 2008 visit, I heard an entire program dedicated to Los Aldeanos, the controversial poster boys of underground rap. TV is more restrictive, but underground groups like Anónimo Consejo, Las Krudas, and El Cartel have appeared on the small screen. Even Los Aldeanos have performed on the program "Cuerda Viva," as part of their prize for winning the award for best rap demo in 2008. They presented the following year's award to Doble Filo—who performed with Qva Libre as their backing band—at a huge televised event at PabExpo. This perfectly illustrates the gray area that underground music occupies even in relation to the conservative mass media: there is

no question that its media presence has been small, but sympathetic program directors and presenters have created spaces that complicate sweeping statements about suppression.

A combination of persistence and ingenuity on the part of artists, negotiations with cultural officials, and a policy of containment rather than silencing on the part of the state, opens up routes for underground music. Anti-Castro sentiments and the high-profile case of Gorki Águila lead some to paint Cuba's cultural climate as totalitarian, but Gorki's case is exceptional. Freedom of expression, while subject to serious limits on paper, exists in practice to a greater degree than many commentators (and even the constitution) allow, and not just in recordings that circulate underground: the degree of contestation in live hip hop performances in state cultural institutions would be eye-opening for anyone who believes that Cubans always bite their tongues in public. Furthermore, censorship itself is not a taboo topic: it is discussed openly by hip hoppers in several documentaries. I do not want to downplay the power of the state—the experiences of PPR are a clear reminder of the limits on freedom of expression—but rather emphasize that no other artists have received that level of repression in recent years, and that many critical voices have thrived in the complex climate of state support and restriction. Clearly, tensions and constraints are part of musical life in Havana; but the space for underground music in the city, and the role of the state in permitting and often even enabling it, should not be underestimated.

One of the most influential models of socialist state censorship, Haraszti's (1988) "velvet prison," has been critiqued by Jeroen de Kloet (2003) in relation to turn-of-the-millennium China, and many of his points are applicable to the Cuban case, suggesting certain commonalities between late socialist societies. De Kloet claims that "censorship is more a playground than a political battlefield," one in which "cats and mice play a game in which the cats do not care to enforce the rules seriously, while the mice want to avoid them as much as possible" (*ibid.*, 182). This view of censorship through the lens of tactics and negotiations, of the artist as neither fully a victim nor fully an accomplice, is more useful to Cuban popular music of the last decade than the more negative vision of the interface between art and politics presented by Haraszti or *Cuba Rebelión*. Underground musicians do not just resist or capitulate; they engage dynamically with the state, continually testing the limits. The reality is not one of simple domination and resistance but more of a game in which the participants are always pushing for more territory yet wary of total victory. State cultural officials are aware that heavy-handedness may be counterproductive—this was certainly the view expressed to me by Fernando Rojas, Vice-Minister of Culture—while artists who gain too many concessions from the state may lose their oppositional cachet. Censorship is a game that may be useful for

underground artists. Los Aldeanos and Gorki Águila have achieved international renown through their defiant stances and rebellious identities, and an international career beckons the former. De Kloet argues that “censorship of rock in China can be interpreted as both restrictive and productive. It confines rock while at the same time creating a space for it” (*ibid.*, 183). His view of the relationship between the state and artists as dialectical and symbiotic rather than top-down, with elements of partnership as well as opposition, characterized by tensions that may be productive as well as destructive, enforced in inconsistent and localized ways, chimes with much of what has taken place in Cuba since the 1990s.

Censorship certainly has a serious face; but—somewhat surprisingly—it can also be a source of enjoyment or amusement, mirroring de Kloet’s metaphors of a playground and a game. Former AHS hip hop promoter Ariel Fernández told me about all the struggles he had had with cultural officials in Havana but then concluded “to be quite honest, I enjoyed the fight.” The rappers in the documentary *Pa’lante* joke about getting thrown in jail for saying the wrong thing and laugh heartily about it to the camera. Aldo told me about a concert at Almendares during which the audience started calling for Los Aldeanos. They were banned from performing at the venue at that time, so the DJ put on a recording of one of their songs and they climbed up to the stage and waved their arms along to the music, keeping their mouths firmly closed but openly mocking their censorship. Aldo also laughed about a recent interview on a radio show: he claimed that the interviewer would ask him a question and then silently pull faces at him to try to stop him from answering it properly. To Aldo, censorship was as much a source of amusement as concern; de Kloet’s “cat and mouse” image seems highly appropriate here.

Amusement is not limited to artists, and they are not the only mice. Williams Figueredo, presenter of “La Esquina de Rap,” told me with great merriment about the time that he played Aldo’s song “Retrato Hablado” on his radio show. The song begins by building up a “spoken portrait” (i.e., police description) of an unnamed suspect who is accused of a range of social crimes: the menacing tone, word play, and Aldo’s reputation as a political firebrand stoke the listener’s expectation that the target is going to be Fidel. Figueredo laughed as he told me about his director’s face as the song’s introduction unfolded live on air for the first time: the director, a stickler for political rules, looked increasingly ashen and started making frantic signs to cut the song, while Williams held him off, telling him to wait. Just as the tension became unbearable, the suspect was revealed: consumerism. Here, the “cat and mouse” game was played within the state, between two employees of a radio station.

The situation of underground musicians in Havana is thus less restrictive than might be supposed, and censorship is notably porous. Cloonan

(2003, 17–18) identifies three levels of music censorship: prior restraint, restriction, and suppression. Yet all these types of censorship have been undermined by digital technology. While tactics of prior restraint and restriction—such as refusing to sign artists and banning records from the radio—may be a serious business for a commercially oriented group (Perna 2005, 90–3), they are in fact much less relevant to the sphere of underground music. Media restriction might therefore be considered a fairly weak form of censorship with respect to underground musicians in the digital age. Indeed, it may be as much a help as a hindrance: the success of Los Aldeanos has been founded on the cachet of media exclusion, and such exclusion could hardly be said to have been a major brake on the dissemination of their music. Would Los Aldeanos be more popular if they appeared on TV every day? Leonardo Acosta (2008, 18) suggests that reggaetón's success has in fact been boosted by its restriction by the media. If not being given a free run of the media qualifies as censorship, then Los Aldeanos are censored; but one might argue that with 20 odd demos circulating freely in Havana, they have not been creatively suppressed, nor has the government prevented their music from becoming a mass medium. The combination of digital technology and sympathetic low-level officials in cultural institutions allows most underground musicians to produce and distribute their music freely and perform regularly. Qva Libre and Escape's mixture of a busy performance schedule, occasional media appearances, and continual bureaucratic struggles are much more representative of underground music in Havana than PPR's extreme stance and experiences, pointing to a much more ambiguous picture than *Cuba Rebelión's* "creative suppression and censorship."

The Underground and the State

The term underground suggests a number of dichotomies. In *Cuba Rebelión*, this is articulated as underground versus the regime, while Szemere (2001) frames the relationship of underground culture to the state in socialist Hungary in terms of recalcitrance, force, and compulsion. But in the light of de Kloet's conception of censorship as a form of dialectics, such a binarized view of domination and resistance is hard to sustain in a late socialist context, particularly in the case of hip hop, which shares considerable ideological terrain with the Cuban Revolution (Baker 2011). The exclusionary policies of the media may separate artists and the state, but underground music depends on the state for ideological justification. This was the case in the former USSR and Soviet bloc, where the partial disintegration of underground rock scenes that accompanied the collapse of state socialism illustrated the relationship of "symbiotic inequality" (Cushman 1995) in which the underground was held together by the state (Szemere

2001; de Kloet 2003, 169). Most Cuban underground artists perform in state-owned venues, whether commercial (clubs) or non-commercial (such as La Madriguera or Parque Almendares), usually using state-owned equipment. Leading underground groups such as Escape (rock) and Anónimo Consejo (rap) are employed by state music agencies. Most significantly, many are members of the AHS and therefore linked to its parent body, the UJC.

The AHS is a distinctive feature of Havana's underground music scenes: a state-backed organization that plays a significant and specific role in supporting underground culture. In Havana, underground, rather than simply reflecting opposition to the state, also points to alternative tendencies within the state apparatus and their links to critical (yet often ideologically sympathetic) voices outside of it. This was dramatized by the foundation of the ACR in 2002, creating a split between the commercially oriented agency and the non-commercial, alternative-minded AHS. Commercial and underground ideologies in hip hop are thus enshrined in separate state-backed organizations, and their representatives have sometimes come into conflict.

The liminal space occupied by underground music is exemplified by La Madriguera, the headquarters of the Havana branch of the AHS, which

FIGURE 2. *Entrance to La Madriguera. PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR.*



has played a significant role in supporting underground culture at a time of increasing commercialization of popular music in the city. To hear pungent social critique at a rap concert at the state-run La Madriguera is to experience the complex, overlapping, and symbiotic relationship that underground music has with the dominant culture. I was impressed by the leeway for underground musicians at La Madriguera, and I sought to comprehend how such contestatory words and actions were sanctioned within a state-run venue.

My understanding was enhanced by interviews with several cultural promoters who have worked at La Madriguera having emerged from within their respective music scenes. Williams Figueredo was a rap promoter at the city AHS headquarters from 2002 to 2005 and has subsequently presented the radio program "La Esquina de Rap." He described himself as *fajao con la espada en la mano* (battling with sword in hand): he struggled against media conservatism to create space for underground rappers on radio programs, but he also fought with the national directorship of the AHS, based half a mile away in the Pabellón Cuba. He defended underground rappers and argued with the leadership until they accepted his proposals. He identified strongly with La Madriguera, and sometimes even slept there; "this is my space and I'm going to defend it," he told me. While the space was shaped by national cultural policies, the projects that took place there were, in Figueredo's eyes, largely independent, making it a genuine home for underground culture.

Jorge Enrique Rodríguez took over from Figueredo at La Madriguera. He drew a distinction between the city branch of the AHS and the national body, accusing the latter of becoming too close to the centers of power, an institution rather than the association it was supposed to be. He criticized the national directorship for its abandonment of the hip hop festival in 2005 and its broader failure to understand hip hop; in contrast, he was proud of La Madriguera, which he saw as a "real" hip hop space where the culture was promoted properly. He thus worked for the AHS but also apart from it. He saw La Madriguera as his turf and a place where he could put his own ideas into practice, while keeping the national body at arm's length. His pride in his AHS "home" was mirrored by his criticism of the ACR for organizing peñas in more exclusive (commercial) venues. For him, La Madriguera was a true underground space, its connection to the UJC notwithstanding.

Rock promoter Carlos Michael Hernández, aka "El Puro" (who appears in *Cuba Rebelión*), repeatedly underlined his personal connection to the city AHS headquarters in an interview with Laura García.¹⁵ He began attending concerts at La Madriguera when he was young and subsequently worked there. He and his co-workers had been fighting against recent neglect by the national AHS and the UJC, which had seen the venue close for a year,

and against attempts to move the city AHS headquarters to make way for a heritage project. He told García “we love this place, we have a sense of ownership, we’re trying to fight for it because we know what it represents for the alternative movement of the city.”

If La Madriguera is an alternative space, as these promoters claim, to what is it an alternative? To other branches of the state, such as other cultural institutions and the media. There is no contradiction in the idea of an alternative space within the state’s purview unless we regard the state as monolithic, a view that is hard to sustain in Cuba. Cultural policy varies between different state institutions as well as within them. All of these AHS promoters suggested that the city branch was staunchly defending underground music in the face of the neglect or misunderstanding of the national organization. They saw the AHS as a champion of alternative, amateur, grassroots culture within the rapidly commercializing wider cultural scene, yet also saw La Madriguera’s relationship to the national AHS in a similar light. If the AHS is the alternative face of Cuban cultural politics, then La Madriguera is the alternative face of the AHS.

Locales like La Madriguera, the Almendares amphitheater, and the Casa de la Cultura in Alamar are small state institutions that occupy something of an underground role within the Cuban cultural sphere and provide regular opportunities to non-mainstream musicians, in part because many of the promoters working there have been closely connected to underground scenes. Variations within cultural policy are often related to particular performance spaces and the cultural officials who work there. “Struggling against the regime” blurs the fragmentation within the sphere of state institutions that means that while underground artists may struggle to perform in one venue they are given a helping hand in another. Just as promotion is localized, so in many cases is censorship: circumventing it is sometimes just a case of finding another venue with a more sympathetic person in charge. Thus the Foucauldian scenario presented above, of artists policing themselves and each other, is leavened by considerable room for individual agency within the purview of the state. If concern about overstepping an invisible and ever-shifting line conditions some to censorship, the delegation of much control to low-level functionaries means that personal contacts, tastes, and sympathies—and even financial incentives—often come into play, ensuring that for every door that is inexplicably closed, another one opens, and that thriving underground scenes continue to exist in Havana.

There are multiple layers of state bureaucracy between the top levels of the government and underground artists, making any reduction of this relationship to “musicians versus the regime” overly simplistic. National cultural policy may be filtered through the national AHS, from there to promoters at La Madriguera, and from there to artists, and at each stage there is potential for collaboration or conflict. Aldo Rodríguez told Laura García

that his relationship with the AHS was good: "They are part of the institutions above, but the people who are actually there, in direct contact with us, treated us really well." Asked about the new AHS president, he replied: "It's all the same to me. For me, they're all the same, because we don't come into contact or deal with them. We deal with the people lower down, the promoters, designers, etc." (García Freyre 2009). As Haraszti (1988, 78–79) wrote: "In our eyes the state represents not a monolithic body of rules but rather a live network of lobbies. We play with it, we know how to use it, and we have allies and enemies at the controls." Indeed, Aldo is captured in mid-freestyle in *Cuba Rebelión* stating that if he were president, he would reopen La Madriguera (this was filmed during the year that the venue was closed), to which the audience responds with a cheer; clearly the promoters' identification with this space is shared by many hip hoppers. The personalization of cultural politics and the presence of sympathetic officials at the lower levels of the cultural bureaucracy mean that musicians are not necessarily driven by cynicism in their dealings with state organizations.

If alliances may be forged at the lowest levels, usually with individuals, conflicts can occur higher up: all the Madriguera promoters spoke of their struggles with the national AHS hierarchy, and Carlos "El Puro," in the *Cuba Rebelión* trailer, sympathizes with artists over the question of censorship, saying "we too have to deal with that." The relationship between underground culture and the AHS is not, therefore, seamless: Carlos "El Puro" revealed in his interview with Laura García that, while he made strenuous efforts on behalf of underground music to fight against state neglect, he was also in the position of having to censor the most extreme artists—in particular, PPR—in order to have any chance of keeping La Madriguera afloat. AHS employees are thus in an ambiguous position in the middle, siding sometimes with musicians and sometimes with higher reaches of the state. We might then view the underground music scenes, La Madriguera, and the national AHS as a Venn diagram, in which the aims of each group overlap but are not coterminous, each group struggles with the others but also cooperates, and underground musicians are simultaneously supported, ignored, and censored by the state.

The existence of underground scenes may be evidence of gaps between state and society, yet it also tells us something about the particular characteristics of the Cuban state itself. On the one hand, underground music, like the broader "second economy" in which it is embedded (Henken 2005, 372), is evidence of the divisions and discontinuities within the state. On the other, given its revolutionary stance and its antagonistic relationship with the United States, the Cuban state itself might be conceived of as underground in a global context, which might explain why it offers a distinctive space for underground culture within its aegis. The term underground

is closely linked to those of rebellion and revolution, which are central to the state's discourse. As Fidel approvingly told Ignacio Ramonet (2008, 85), "radical revolutionary parties are often born in the underground"; this is a term, then, that is not necessarily inimical to the revolution, and even falls within the discursive purview of the state.

This is the irony of the *Flattracks* film, one apparently missed by its makers: its title song, Escape's "Cuba Rebelión," hardly epitomizes ideological opposition to the revolutionary project when it is performed by a state-employed group whose work is disseminated by official media outlets like the newspaper *Juventud Rebelde* (Rebellious Youth) and *Tele Rebelde* (Rebel TV). A telling moment in the trailer occurs when Escape's song is edited so as to emerge from Gorki Águila's statement "I'm never going to subscribe to the shitty ideology of this country": this transition implies an underlying unity between Gorki's words and Escape's song, a bond of struggle against the regime, and yet it is a deeply ironic moment, given that rebellion is the ideology of the country. There is thus a world of difference between PPR's rejection and Escape's rebellion. Escape's director, Alejandro Padrón, declared that he was not going to have problems as a result of the song's lyrics: "It's all a matter of interpretation. I maintain that the song says that the Cuban people are tired of the North American blockade and its laws which encourage illegal immigration. . . . We are as patriotic as anyone" (Vicent 2005). The rebellious language of underground music is also the revolutionary language of the Cuban state, and this ambiguity works in favor of many musicians, allowing them to work inside and outside official norms at the same time—as evidenced by Escape appearing in a film about musicians "struggling against the regime" while simultaneously accepting the state's stamp of approval in the form of membership of the exclusive Cuban Rock Agency. At the level of discourse as well as institutional structures, then, many underground musicians operate simultaneously within and against the state.

The underground is also enabled in a practical sense by the socialist state, beyond simply providing venues and equipment. Socialist systems exclude most underground musicians from formal economic structures via strict professional regulations while simultaneously providing the conditions for their artistic activity (Cushman 1995). The strong welfare state, free health and education, and subsidy of basic necessities reduce economic and practical pressures and thus actually free up individuals to pursue careers as underground musicians. Artists have existential, if not political, freedom, since state subsidies allow them to dedicate themselves to music and to their subculture to a degree that would be the envy of many underground musicians in the capitalist world (Szemere 2001, 14). As Ariel Fernández, one of the architects of the Havana hip hop scene, told

an audience at Lehigh University in April 2008, “we were young, black people trying to do something positive with our lives, trying to occupy our time, because we didn’t have to pay bills in Cuba.” Many of the Cuban hip hoppers who have moved overseas in recent years have come to realize that economic necessity in capitalist countries imposes its own kind of restrictions on artistic activity, mirroring the loss of existential freedom that accompanied the newly gained political freedom with the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Cushman 1995). Since the market is a powerful controlling force and “the majority of censorship is *economic*, which forces artists to work day jobs to stay alive, and prevents them from creating freely, let alone acquiring the equipment to work with and the space to work in” (D. Marsh, quoted in Cloonan 2003, 21), then a socialist state like Cuba in fact provides a relatively conducive climate for underground music.

One take on this symbiotic relationship between dominant and underground cultures would be to perceive their interdependence as exemplifying the way in which resistance or criticism simply serves to reinforce the power of the state, which prefers engagement to silence (Loomba 1998, 50; Žižek 2007). According to this structuralist view, states create spaces for dissent as part of their self-legitimation: the underground would then be understood as a function of the state, necessary for its continued power, rather than evidence of a genuine challenge. I am inclined to take a less totalizing approach, however, and see the thriving underground also as evidence of the limitations and fractures of state power in Cuba, and as the result of divergent and contradictory opinions that are a constituent part of the Cuban social, political, and cultural landscape. While “safety valve” explanations are commonplace, they do not suffice, as they locate agency too high up the political hierarchy. Political control is focused on the media and large venues, leaving responsibility in smaller locales to low-level officials who are often, as in the case of the three figures mentioned above, members of the scenes for which they have responsibility, not faceless bureaucrats. At La Madriguera, neglect from on high in recent years has been countered by such music promoters, liminal figures who are part of both the state and the underground and who have struggled to create spaces within the orbit of the state, seeking a line between too much state involvement (control) and too little (lack of funds). They have tended to be more open to “difficult” rap than the national AHS or the ACR, for example; they allowed the controversial collectives La Comisión Depuradora and Clan Completo, who were shunned by the ACR, to put on concerts in 2007, two years after the national body had abandoned its support of the annual rap festival. If top-down support for underground culture in the form of cultural policy could be analyzed through the lens provided by Žižek, the

bottom-up, personalized activity of intermediary figures points rather to the permeability of the state-society boundary.

Given the alliances between hip hop and the state, both ideological and practical, it may be in the sphere of reggaetón, surprisingly, where underground carries more of a contestatory charge, even if (paradoxically) it is framed in resolutely apolitical terms. Underground reggaetón, with its broad focus on hedonism and materialism, occupies a distinctly more antagonistic position than rap in respect to official socialist ideologies. Accordingly, artists like Elvis Manuel and El Micha, though not silenced by the state, have been given none of the small-scale official assistance that many rappers and rockers have received: in 2007–8, there were no radio spots for these artists to promote their work, no underground reggaetón concerts at La Madriguera, no magazine interviews, no AHS-backed foreign exchanges. While resistive discourses are much more prevalent in rap and rock than in reggaetón, it is only the last of these genres that has been excluded from the AHS in Havana and that does not have its own dedicated music agency. *Reguetoneros'* relationship with state organizations reflects not so much rappers' and rockers' official ideology of opposition or their operational ideology of negotiation and dependence as a state of disengagement: El Micha declared that "my lyrics speak about what young people are living, without getting into politics or anything like that, because that's got nothing to do with me" (Israel 2009), and reguetoneros generally limit themselves to practical discussions with commercial music venues. The greater degree of concern shown by Cuban cultural officials over reggaetón compared to rap—explicitly articulated to me by Fernando Rojas—seems to support Žižek's assertion that such silence and withdrawal from the political arena is more oppositional and more disturbing to the state than critical dialogue. Yet the ubiquity of Elvis Manuel's music in 2007 was a highly audible reminder of the limits of the power of the state, which can no longer control the diffusion of recorded music, even a genre that upsets Cuba's cultural leadership.

The Underground Music Economy

I first made my way to Champion Records in Old Havana during a summer rainstorm, weaving between potholes, puddles, and dogs. I ducked through a doorway and came out in a large colonial patio, once grand, now almost derelict. A broad, chipped stairway disappeared upwards into the gloom. The patio was open to the sky and rapidly filling up with water. Using a broken brick as a stepping-stone, I launched myself across the impromptu lake and crashed through an ancient metal grille into a space the size of a large cupboard.

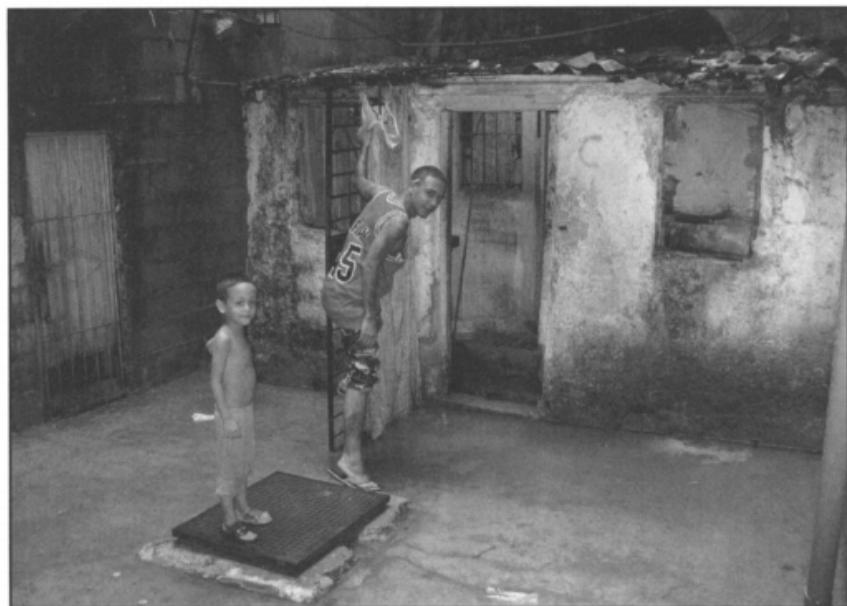


FIGURE 3. Rapper El Enano on his way into Champion Records.

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR.

Studios like Champion Records and Papá Humbertico's Real 70 are key nodes in the informal music economy and the places where various facets of the underground coalesce: spatial, musical, economic. The boom of underground music in the 2000s has rested on the opening up of new avenues for musicians to record, reproduce, and distribute their music. Underground musicians have benefited enormously from the expanded availability of digital technology and the development of a network of home studios alongside the state-owned and private-but-officially-sanctioned studios that have traditionally controlled music production in Havana. The creation of music in such underground spaces is matched by informal distribution practices. Reggaetón's expansion in Havana took place via the hand-to-hand distribution and sale of pirated CDs, stimulated by the explosion of the genre in public spaces via informal street parties (*bonches*) and the speakers of bicycle-taxis (*bicitaxis*) (Baker 2009). Since there is virtually no market for original CDs in Cuba, even the most successful artists often bypass the formal song or record release altogether and deal directly with pirated CD producers—*quemadores* (burners)—who create compilations and sell them on the streets.

The music of underground hip hop artists, too, is disseminated primarily outside Cuba's formal music economy. In the late 1990s, interest from



FIGURE 4. *Champion Records*. PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR.

overseas opened up alternatives for underground rappers who struggled for space in the national media. As Cuban rap gained international cachet, foreigners started to appear at concerts, providing underground rappers with a market for their home-produced CDs. Imitating strategies from the informal economy, above all the extraction of hard currency from tourists, rappers disengaged their activities from the control and legal provisions of the state and created an underground market for underground rap. In more recent years, as Cuban rap's popularity waned and with it the numbers of tourist consumers, artists had to rethink their strategy. In 2008, Los Aldeanos were promoting a *mercorap* (rap market) via their weekly club night, where artists were invited to launch their new demos.¹⁶ While the spaces for live performance have become smaller since the early 2000s, with few live performances witnessed by more than a hundred people, the number of rappers with access to home music production and recording facilities has increased markedly, and most now have demos available for sale. By mid-2010, Los Aldeanos had still never recorded in a professional studio, released an album on a record label, or used the Internet, yet their 20 odd self-produced demo CDs were being consumed across Cuba and the Spanish-speaking world, illustrating the effectiveness of their underground distribution networks and marketing strategy.¹⁷ In recent years, they have



FIGURE 5. *Papá Humbertico in his studio, Real 70.* PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR.

produced music faster and reached a wider public than the “official” ACR groups backed by the state; they have outflanked the previous generation of rappers who took a more institutional route.

Although Cuban rock has a smaller overseas fan-base than hip hop, PPR have gained international fame and support because of their radical political stance: this has facilitated the promotion of the group and sale of its CDs via websites hosted overseas, thereby circumventing the blanket ban on the group’s exposure within Cuba and further underlining the Cuban underground as a transnational space. With local access tightly controlled and slow connection speeds, the Internet has played a very small role in the diffusion of underground music within Cuba, but it has boosted the popularity of Cuban underground music on a global level, drawing in foreign visitors to the Havana scene, promoting and selling underground music, and laying the foundations for overseas engagements.

While what I describe here would be utterly unremarkable in most countries around the world, it is a new and significant departure in a society that has had a centrally planned socialist economy for half a century. Skirting on the edges of legality, it represents a ground-breaking attempt to disassociate music production and distribution from the formal, state-controlled economy and provide income for amateur musicians outside of the strict

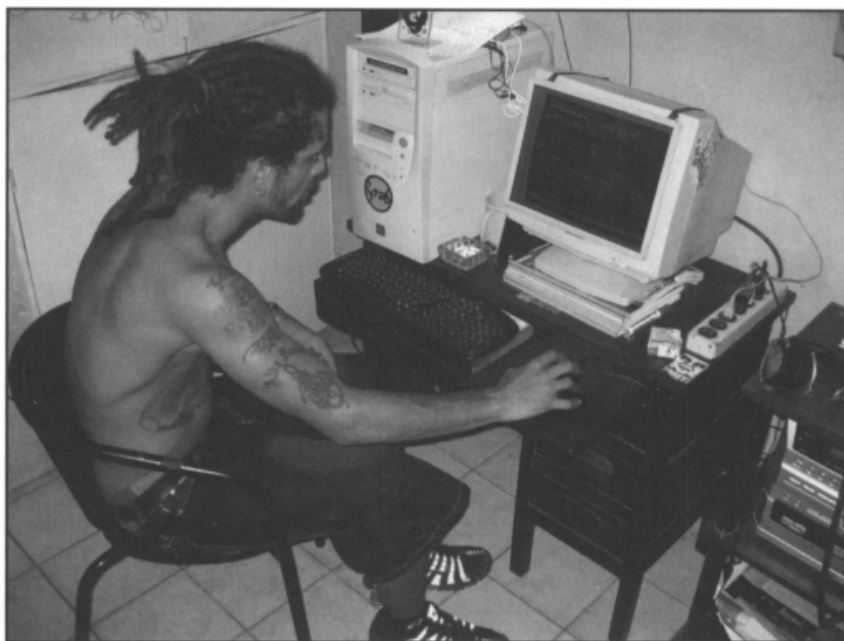


FIGURE 6. *Aldo Rodríguez producing music at home. PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR.*

professional structures that have governed Cuba's musical life for decades. The expansion of access to digital technology has undermined government control of cultural production and opened up new spaces for politically or aesthetically challenging music. Live performance, however, is a different matter: musicians are obliged to negotiate with official venues, as there are no meaningful private performance spaces in Cuba.

Elvis Manuel, who provided the soundtrack to the streets of Havana in 2007, was a particularly intriguing figure and something of a paradox: I heard his music everywhere and saw him perform in well-known venues, yet he had no recording deal, was excluded from the media for his sexualized lyrics, and was not part of a music agency. How was it that his profile was so high when, officially speaking, he did not exist? On the one hand, his fame (or notoriety) reflected the strength of underground channels of production and dissemination; on the other, his ability to make a living pointed to a viable underground music economy.

All paid musical employment is supposed to be channeled through the state music agencies, so joining an agency has traditionally been the minimum requirement for establishing a career in music. Musicians who push at the limits of acceptability are unlikely to be taken on by an agency; unable to take legal musical employment, they therefore have to engage with the

underground economy in order to make any money. Music venues, which have increasingly functioned as capitalist-style commercial enterprises in Havana since the Special Period, want to attract audiences, so they sometimes hire popular underground artists—but under the table. One way to do this is for the venue officially to hire a professional group, which features on the publicity and is paid a small fee but never actually appears. The rest of the fee is divided up by the artist(s) and anyone else involved in the deal, such as the venue manager and staff and the government inspector who is supposed to ensure that amateur artists are not paid to perform. In a variation on this theme, the rock group X told me that a couple of their members had belonged to a group called Y that was registered as professional but no longer existed, so when they did paid gigs they had Y in tiny letters on the poster and X as “amateur invitees” in large type. In other cases, artists have a regular club night which is only publicized by word of mouth. One well-known reguetonero had a weekly gig at a club a stone’s throw from Havana’s Capitol Building for at least eighteen months, but it was never advertised and there was no poster outside the club. Similarly, a well-known amateur rap group secured a weekly night in a small club. The group’s popularity ensured that the venue was always full, even though the night was not publicized—and the fact that it was not advertised meant that, officially, it did not take place, ergo most of the money generated did not exist. This situation suited everyone: the staff and rappers took their cut of the invisible earnings, the latter in spite of their amateur status, and the audience was able to see their favorite group on a weekly basis.

Underground is thus a way of working as well as a musical and ideological term, pointing toward an unofficial music economy that bypasses the rigidity of Cuba’s music industry and professional structures, and allows amateur artists to survive and in some cases prosper outside the purview of the state. The underground music economy is a microcosm of the informal economy that has flourished on the borders of the state in recent years (Henken 2003, 2005; Ritter 2005), though while most participants in this economy try to keep a low profile, underground reguetoneros like Candyman, Elvis Manuel, and El Micha have brought this aspect of urban society out into the open with a boom.

The development of an underground music economy is a radical departure from the ways that culture has been produced in Cuba over the last fifty years, and it is pushing at economic and political boundaries in novel ways. As Ajay Heble (2003, 240) remarks, alternative sociopolitical visions are often “realized most powerfully and most innovatively not in the content of the music itself, but . . . in the way in which the music is produced, distributed, and promoted.” Indeed, Los Aldeanos’ mercorap, which used to take place *al doble* (illicitly, on the side) in a state-run club, is itself a significant statement; the economic transactions around their club night were

distinctly counter-cultural, in some ways as challenging as the lyrics on the CDs being sold. Although lyrics are the most obvious source of musical contestation, they are also where most ambiguity may be found, because of the linguistic overlap between the Cuban Revolution and youthful rebellion. It may therefore be in the realm of musical sounds themselves (Baker 2012) and the music economy that challenge is more significant.

The underground music economy has produced winners and losers. By 2008 a paradoxical situation had emerged within the rap scene. The creation of the ACR was supposed to take the promotion of leading, professional rap groups to the next level, allowing them to benefit more fully from their art, while amateur, underground rappers were by definition excluded from the commercial music industry. Yet the reality turned out to be more complex. Since the ACR rappers were professional artists, their performances had to be arranged with a formal contract and paid at official rates; with rap increasingly under the shadow of reggaetón, music venues were often reluctant to hire expensive acts of doubtful popular appeal, with all the official procedures that entailed. It was easier to make informal arrangements with amateur musicians, who could be paid a much smaller fee under the table or would even perform for free, simply glad for the opportunity. The venue thus saved on both paperwork and outlay.

The result was that in mid-2008, leading underground rap artists were performing much more regularly in Havana than the ACR groups. Government attempts to regulate the hip hop economy had had the (presumably unintended) effect of restricting opportunities for “official” groups and opening up spaces, if illicit ones, for the underground. In addition, joining the ACR compromised rappers’ resistant identity: while they continued to be almost as marginalized by the media as before, they lost the obvious right to the underground tag and thus suffered the trials of curtailed exposure without enjoying any of its benefits. To add insult to injury, the ACR was months behind on its salary payments in mid-2008, whereas top underground artists were making money under the table from performing, selling CDs, and producing instrumentals. When the first rappers turned professional, they would often invite amateur groups to perform with them as guests. More recently, the roles have been reversed: in 2008, ACR rappers Anónimo Consejo, former lords of the Havana underground, were reliant on occasional guest spots at peñas run by amateur hip hoppers. One professional rapper told me that it was hard to perform in Havana because Los Aldeanos were running most of the peñas. Professional, state-employed rappers were thus casting covetous looks at the underground.

In his study of rock music during the final years of the Soviet Union, Thomas Cushman (1993, 27) argues that the shift toward a free-market cultural model did not entail greater freedom for musicians: “the replacement of political control of culture by the commodification of culture represents

the substitution of one form of constraint on human expression for another." In Cuban hip hop, two of the most important developments of the last decade have been the creation of the ACR in 2002 and the rise of Los Aldeanos from 2003, and it is interesting to note how the fortunes of ACR groups such as Obsesión and Anónimo Consejo have dipped (at least with respect to their popularity among young Cubans) while the "outsiders" Los Aldeanos have become the biggest stars of the genre. The political control that Los Aldeanos have faced may have been more dramatic than the commodification of hip hop via the ACR, but it has been less effective as a form of constraint.

In 2007–8, the agency system was widely viewed as a bureaucratic headache by those inside it and outside it, so a considerable amount of musical activity bypassed it. This explains the fact that, while some amateur musicians, such as Qva Libre, wanted to formalize their position by joining an agency, others have moved in the opposite direction. One musician I met, who was producing music at a computer in his house, had given up working as a percussionist with world-famous salsa groups because so much of his income had been swallowed up by his agency and taxes. Working at home for cash as a reggaetón producer suited him better: he is an example of the musical *cuentapropistas* (self-employed) who have blossomed in Havana in recent years. The restrictions of the formal music economy had persuaded this successful musician to choose to go underground. For all that underground artists may be subject to various forms of marginalization or censorship, the underground can also serve as a place of relative freedom, independence, and entrepreneurship, a space of escape from an ossified, exclusionary system (see Szemere 2001, 30), its distance and relative invisibility from the "overground" allowing its inhabitants to bypass some of the stricter rules of Cuban society.

The prevalence of underground music in Havana thus depends on the fact that, as one of my contacts put it, every music venue has its "irregularities"; underground music may generate enough money to persuade lower-level state employees to ignore the laws and policies dictated by the upper levels of the state bureaucracy and to pay off anyone who might be tempted to intervene. Negotiation between artists and the managers of individual venues may be enough to counter cultural policy generated from "above." In such cases, the employees at a music venue effectively run an informal business within a legal one.¹⁸ Personal connections allow spaces to be forged at the edges of state power, though here—in contrast to La Madriguera—it is money rather than ideological sympathy that is the motivating factor, hence more discretion is required. The underground depends not so much on an ideological breach between state and society as on an economic breach between the state and its employees, who are often prepared to bend the rules in order to supplement their meager salaries.

The underground can thus be viewed in two ways: as a legal alternative to the mainstream music economy, exemplified by the AHS and its music promoters; and as an illicit alternative or underside, using state spaces and resources, but on the side. In both cases, the state plays a role as enabler, whether knowingly or not. A significant part of the musical underground depends on underground behaviors by state employees and takes place literally on the state's territory, using state resources.

This is an important corrective to the vision of "artistic public spheres" articulated by Sujatha Fernandes (2006). Fernandes, too, locates cultural contestation within the state apparatus, but her vision of accommodation and negotiation between artists and the state is too top-down for contemporary underground music scenes. She argues that "the Cuban leadership . . . sought to create spaces for critical discussion within the arts" (*ibid.*, 40–1) to maintain its hegemony; however, the underground hip hop scene—one of her central topics—developed from the bottom up, emerging from alliances between artists, promoters, and low-level cultural officials. In recent years, it is these minor figures—"those down below", in Aldo's words, not "the institutions above"—who have been responsible for the creation and maintenance of cultural spaces, whether legally (in cultural institutions like La Madriguera and Almendares) or in the gray economy (in commercial clubs). The promoters at La Madriguera continued to put on hip hop concerts long after their parent organization, the AHS, had pulled out of the hip hop festival; they fought to reopen the venue when it closed due to neglect by the AHS and UJC leadership. Spaces for critical discussion were thus created and maintained by individual minor functionaries, not by the Cuban leadership. The fact that so much artistic production in recent years has taken place underground or outside the view of officialdom—whether in a virtual space (through digital technology) or in the informal economy—further illustrates that Fernandes's top-down model of the arts places too much power in the hands of the top echelons of government. State spaces, resources, and employees are involved, but the cutting edge of negotiations lies at the lower reaches of the institutional hierarchy and, often, out of view of the top.

Conclusions

To characterize underground musicians as "struggling against the regime" is thus to simplify a more complex reality in which underground scenes, although in a certain state of tension with official institutions, are also enabled in various ways by the state. What makes the Cuban case distinctive is not that underground musicians are partially marginalized (by the media, music industry, or state), since this occurs to a greater or lesser extent in most parts of the world, but rather two key issues: first, in contrast to

most countries, the example of underground musicians in Cuba reveals considerable de facto freedom of speech in a state with significant de jure limits; and second, the underground has a contradictory relationship with the state, which has provided equipment, spaces, performing opportunities, and also the social and economic conditions that have allowed young people to devote so much time to their art. Ultimately, it makes more sense to view the underground not just as something external and in opposition to the state, but also as internal, part of a productive dialectic within it. Underground music points to alternative facets of the state—alternative institutions like the AHS, and alternative figures within them who support underground culture—and to alliances as well as struggles.

The case of Porno Para Ricardo is an extreme example: it is both significant, as a prominent symbol of state censorship, and yet insignificant, in that it does not represent the experiences of the vast majority of underground musicians in Havana. *Cuba Rebelión* takes PPR as emblematic, but this is far from the case. Qva Libre and Escape are much more representative of underground music in Havana, and they have little or nothing in common with PPR's struggle against the regime. The makers seem to have been blinded by Gorki's daredevil attitude and charisma, and the film is edited in such a way as to pull the other groups into PPR's orbit. In reality, however, PPR are not part of any scene, since they have not been able to perform live for years, and, as Gorki himself says, they receive little support from other artists; as an anarchic punk group, their relationship with the heavy-metal-dominated rock scene (exemplified by Escape) has often been conflictive, and in interviews they regularly point out their distance from other Cuban rockers.

While PPR are perhaps Cuba's best known underground musicians in the international sphere, thanks to the prominent press reactions to Gorki's imprisonment, I would argue that the trajectory of Los Aldeanos is more revealing of underground music in Havana in recent years: they have become known as the most politically radical rappers on the island, yet they are members of the AHS, are heard on the radio, and won a prize on a national TV show, resulting in a performance to a packed house at the Pabellón Cuba, an official exhibition building in the heart of upmarket Vedado. In 2008, they performed to an audience of many thousands at the Tribuna Antiimperialista. They claim, with some justification, to be censored, yet since it is an important part of their underground identity and, ironically, a pillar of their success, this claim should be analyzed rather than taken at face value.

I would therefore like to conclude by examining briefly Los Aldeanos' career during the eighteen months from April 2009 to September 2010, for it speaks volumes about the issues of censorship and state power.¹⁹ In mid-2009, after a series of controversial appearances in the international media, Los Aldeanos were blacklisted by music venues in Havana. Unable

to perform, they responded not by softening their line but by releasing their two hardest-hitting albums to date, *Nos Achicharraron* and *¡Viva Cuba Libre!* At the start of 2010, after some eight months in the wilderness, Los Aldeanos received the backing of the AHS, opening the doors to a comeback. The duo's international representative, Melisa Rivière, and the AHS employee and hip hop supporter Jorge Enrique Rodríguez arranged for Los Aldeanos to perform at an event at La Madriguera in January 2010 and then to put on their own concert at the Acapulco Theater in April, in both cases to sell-out audiences. At the latter, they opened their show with the song "Censurado" (censored), in front of an audience of over a thousand at an important state-run venue, the concert having been organized and cleared with higher authorities by a branch of the UJC.

The complexities and contradictions of Los Aldeanos' position (and their underground identity) continued to manifest themselves for the rest of the summer. In August, along with Qva Libre, they headlined at the Rotilla Festival: this event, a three-day festival of (mainly electronic) underground music on a beach outside Havana, is run "independently" by the production company Matraka, yet it receives support from the state and attracted some 14,000 fans in 2010—a clear sign that underground culture is not suppressed today. More significantly, Los Aldeanos were allowed to leave Cuba for the first time: they appeared at the Exit Festival in Serbia in July, Interrapción in Spain in September, and in their own concert in Miami in November, with further overseas performances in the pipeline. And yet, Jorge Rodríguez reported on June 25 that Los Aldeanos had been prevented from performing on three separate, recent occasions in Havana.²⁰ This report is revealing in several respects and it illustrates the inconsistency of censorship. The fact that the crux of the article is phrased as a question rather than a statement—"are Los Aldeanos censored?"—points to the uncertainties even of those at the heart of the cultural scene; and Rodríguez launches a polemic about censorship under his own name, criticizing other branches of the state for their narrow-mindedness, a significant move by a figure close to the heart of a Cuban state organization. The struggle of underground music is here being waged within the state, and in full view.

Critics of the Cuban government often talk about a "climate of fear" within the cultural sphere, yet Rodríguez's intervention shows nothing of the sort. Similarly, Los Aldeanos have been taking an ever more outspoken line since being blacklisted in mid-2009, and have increasingly taken to defying the government to stop them. In the song "La bandera de tu alma," Aldo raps:

What do you want to say to me? Come on, I'm waiting,
I don't give a f*** about your power,
What the hell are you going to do to me?

His partner Bián asks in the eponymous song:

Do you think at this point I'm afraid of your persecution?
 I'm making a revolution inside your revolution,
 I'm the guy who shat on every institution
 And forced you to put it on television.

Neither rapper looks particularly afraid in *Revolution*, a hard-hitting documentary about Los Aldeanos that won several prizes at an official film festival in 2010 and was screened in two Havana cinemas. Los Aldeanos set out their views without pulling any punches, and although Bián claims “this will stop the day they want it to,” his easy laugh suggests more confidence than fear. He seems to believe that Los Aldeanos will be OK, and indeed, by the time the film was screened their comeback was underway, and within a few months the international bookings were pouring in.

These recent developments recall de Kloet's cat-and-mouse game. Los Aldeanos undeniably suffered censorship in 2009–10, and yet they also benefited from those restrictions: their fame mushroomed at the same time. The kind of censorship that the duo faced in 2009 was aggravating, but it did not silence them or stop them from working. Reducing their performances from two or three peñas a week to the occasional clandestine show arguably worked in their favour; hearing them live suddenly became a huge deal. In mid-2009, rumours would spread around Havana that Los Aldeanos were going to perform an illicit set at such-and-such a location, and crowds would gather in anticipation. The demand to hear them in concert after their eight-month ban was extraordinary: the Acapulco Theater concert sold out in minutes, fake tickets were changing hands outside the venue for ten times their face value, and hundreds of ticketless fans gathered out on the street in the hopes of finding a way in. In 2010, Los Aldeanos seemed to have found a productive balance of freedom and restraint—enough freedom to ensure their voices were heard across Cuba and beyond, enough restraint to guarantee their rebel status.

In an article on the renowned Cuban blogger Yoani Sánchez, Salim Lamrani (2009) writes of the “business of dissent”—in other words, the prestige, prizes, or economic rewards that may accrue to those taking a critical stance in Cuba. Los Aldeanos, like Sánchez and PPR, have built an international reputation on the idea that they are fighting against censorship, yet their work, like Sánchez's, continues to pour forth into the public realm and their stock rises ever higher. Los Aldeanos have suffered for their art, without question, and have shown courage and persistence in the face of difficulties, but they have also benefited from this suffering in terms of their cultural capital, and with foreign producers and promoters hovering, it seems highly likely that they will soon start to convert this capital into

cash. As the rock group Buena Fe sang: “there’s an artist hoping to be censored so that he can become famous.”²¹ Censorship can be good business.

The game of cat and mouse is still in progress and it is too early to declare a winner, but at the time of writing, Los Aldeanos’ decision to stand up to the Cuban government seems to have given them, at least temporarily, the upper hand. The duo hardened their line in the face of censorship, and the government seems to have backed down. It is too early to tell whether this state of affairs will last and whether it signals a broader turning point in cultural policy, but the signs are intriguing. Both Los Aldeanos and Gorki Águila have been allowed to travel to Miami in 2010. Withholding permission for musicians to travel overseas has often been seen as one of the state’s key strategies of control. Los Aldeanos still face local frustrations, but their overseas travels suggest a loosening of constraints. They have produced some of the most politically challenging Cuban music of the last fifty years, yet far from being silenced, in 2010 they gave large-scale public performances at home and abroad. In 2009 while they were banned from performing, their music and videos continued to pour forth and were consumed more widely than ever. With the MP3 as the new weapon of choice, the tactic of “lowering the frequency” of critical artists is now more or less obsolete. The recent history of Los Aldeanos shows Cuban cultural policy under strain and manifesting multiple contradictions, as the group simultaneously faces increased restrictions and enjoys increased opportunities, and as such contradictions are increasingly aired and critiqued in public.

It is of course possible that Los Aldeanos gained permission to travel abroad by deciding or agreeing to soften their critical line: their public, televised pronouncements on arrival at Miami airport suggested an attempt to lower the level of controversy, and Melisa Rivière (2010, 238) reports that the duo’s most recent album, *D’Finny Flowww*, is much less politicized and controversial than their two previous releases. At the time of this writing, it is difficult to know whether Los Aldeanos are simply exploring new artistic avenues or whether they have made an implicit or explicit deal with the Cuban authorities in return for the freedom to travel. Even if the latter turns out to be true, the duo’s experiences reveal something much more complex and interesting than “creative suppression and censorship,” since they have criticized the government quite openly, bringing them national and international fame and, as a consequence, leverage for negotiation. Indeed, if anything seems likely to curb Los Aldeanos’ political edge, it is the group’s expanding commercial ambitions and resulting negotiations with the international music industry. In its first seven years, the duo produced twenty albums of incendiary political commentary under the supposed suppression and censorship of the Cuban government; it remains to be seen whether they will they retain the same degree of radicalism as their focus shifts increasingly to the international sphere.

Does the state still ultimately hold all the power? Yes and no. In one sense, Bián Rodríguez is correct that “this will stop the day they want it to”—and yet his outspokenness and demeanour in *Revolution* imply that he believes otherwise. Los Aldeanos are now among the most famous musicians in Cuba, and they have the support of the AHS. Indeed, I have it on good authority that the AHS’s decision to back the duo in early 2010 stemmed partly from the argument that it would be more advantageous for the institution to support these popular figures than to reject them and risk alienating a large segment of Cuban youth. Furthermore, the duo’s comeback coincided with the hunger strike of jailed dissident Orlando Zapata Tamayo; with the world’s eyes focused on Cuba and questions of human rights, it was argued that the last thing the country needed was a furore over artistic censorship. Silencing the duo would be a very risky strategy on the part of the government, and Los Aldeanos and the AHS seem to know it.

Coda

After seeing the trailer for *Cuba Rebelión* in 2007, I spoke to PPR and Qva Libre in Havana. They had not seen the trailer and were vague about the documentary; they remembered being filmed but said they had little idea what it was for. Qva Libre looked disconcerted when I revealed the film’s title and even more so when I said they would be appearing alongside PPR, which was apparently news to them. I therefore wonder whether Frank, Qva Libre’s singer at the time, is aware that a portion of his *Cuba Rebelión* interview is being reused, along with other segments of the film, and once again alongside the broadsides of the hyper-controversial Gorki Águila, in Amnesty International’s 2010 video “Freedom of Expression in Cuba,” the description of which begins “Cuba’s repressive legal system has created a climate of fear among journalists, dissidents and activists, putting them at risk of arbitrary arrest and harassment by the authorities.”²²

This statement may be true in some spheres, but it is very questionable whether it is illustrated by underground music in Havana, as I hope to have shown. *Cuba Rebelión* is an appealing but ultimately misleading portrayal of underground music, and it is concerning that its misconceptions have been picked up and inserted into the wider debate about human rights in Cuba, by an organization as prestigious as Amnesty International no less. Freemuse, another respected organization concerned with freedom of expression, has also taken up the *Cuba Rebelión* line, arguing that the film is “a powerful portrayal of how to break with a political system that not only exists on a institutional level, but also regulates the people’s very way of thinking and being.”²³ Yet the majority of underground musicians demonstrate neither regulated thinking nor a break with the system. If this is the view from impartial and circumspect sources, it is little

surprise that many responses to the film are less measured: the website www.cubaunderground.com claims that “the documentary offers a clear vision of how the regime censors, abuses, and crushes anyone who does not agree one hundred percent with the dictatorship,” despite the fact that the film—for all its partial vision—clearly shows no such thing.²⁴ Since *Cuba Rebelión* is having an impact on wider discussions of music censorship, it is all the more important to examine the film critically and to analyze the realities and myths of underground music in Havana.

Notes

1. <http://flattrags.com>.
2. This article is based on numerous extended research trips to Havana from 2003–10 and dozens of interviews and conversations with underground musicians. My thanks to Louise Finer for legal information and editorial assistance and to Melisa Rivière for several insights on recent developments in Havana hip hop.
3. On the broader context of hip hop and reggaetón in Havana, see Baker 2011.
4. My analysis of Elvis Manuel and El Micha is based on research carried out in 2007–8. Manuel subsequently died while trying to leave Cuba illegally by boat, while El Micha has gone on to more mainstream success.
5. Moore’s own contribution, though useful, is limited to four pages (2006, 101–5); Perna provides interesting details of the censorship of La Charanga Habanera in 1997, but his wider comments are confined to three pages (2005, 90–3).
6. See, for example, articles 39d (“there is freedom of artistic creation as long as its content is not contrary to the Revolution”), 62, and the public order offences under Title IV, many of which could in theory be applied to musical production or performance.
7. See, for example, “Restrictions on Freedom of Expression in Cuba” 2010 and the 2000 report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (<http://www.cidh.oas.org/annualrep/2000eng/chap.4c.htm>).
8. There are many articles on the Internet about PPR; for a more academic approach, see the work of Laura García Freyre.
9. Since the duo has a repertoire of more than 200 songs, the list of possible examples is almost endless: to take just two, Bián Rodríguez’s song “La Naranja se Picó,” clearly directed at the Cuban leadership, culminates with the line “you’re a bunch of bastards and this country is a prison”; and Aldo Rodríguez’s “La Bandera de tu alma” makes numerous stinging criticisms of the (blue-clad) police, concluding that “the day that Cubans say ‘enough’ and come out in force/there will be deaths here and a river of blue blood will flow.” Both regularly say that their *comandante* (head of state) is Camilo Cienfuegos, a revolutionary leader who died in 1959, rather than either of the Castro brothers.
10. <http://freemuse.synkron.com/sw16482.asp>.
11. <http://www.coldsun.eu/>.
12. See <http://www.maximrock.com/2009/10/23/bio-qva-libre/> and http://www.ahs.cu/secciones-principales/musica/noticias/qva_libre_no_rompe_sus_suenos.html.

13. For example, Los Aldeanos have long had a troubled relationship with the Almendares venue, yet I have seen them perform there on several occasions.
14. Belafonte encountered Cuban hip hop on a trip to Havana in 1999, and went on to meet with leading hip hoppers and proselytize this music to Fidel Castro (see Baker 2011).
15. I am very grateful to Laura García for kindly sharing this interview with me.
16. Aldo described the mercorap to me as a “clandestine CD market,” yet he promoted it on the radio show “La Esquina de Rap,” suggesting that he was not too serious about keeping it hidden.
17. Publicity on the Internet is usually provided by foreign sympathizers: <http://emetreceprouductions.wordpress.com> and <http://hiphopcuba.com> are two foreign-managed portals that have promoted Cuban hip hop and primarily Los Aldeanos.
18. This is common in other sectors of the economy; see for example Ted Henken’s (2003, 353) visit to the state-run Corona cigar factory.
19. Further details can be found in Baker 2011.
20. <http://hiphopcuba.com/en/noticias/la-aldea/los-aldeanos-y-la-censura.html>.
21. De Kloet (2003, 183) relates that one Chinese punk group was disappointed not to be censored, since it had hoped that censorship would lead to fame and legitimate its rebellious image.
22. <https://adam.amnesty.org/asset-bank/action/viewAsset?id=106065&index=19&total=136&categoryId=680&categoryTypeId=1&collection=Video&sortAttributeId=0&sortDescending=false>.
23. <http://www.freemuse.org/sw28926.asp>.
24. <http://www.cubaunderground.com/novedades/jcuba-rebelion>.

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