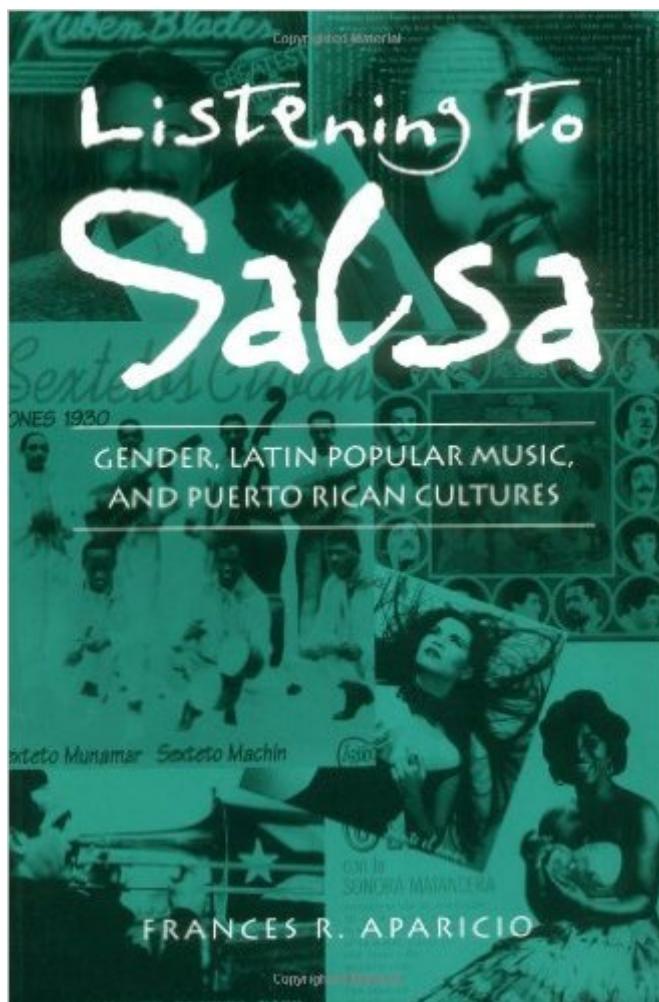


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Listening To Salsa: Gender, Latin Popular Music, And Puerto Rican Cultures (Music/Culture)



Synopsis

For Anglos, the pulsing beats of salsa, merengue, and bolero are a compelling expression of Latino/a culture, but few outsiders comprehend the music's implications in larger social terms. Frances R. Aparicio places this music in context by combining the approaches of musicology and sociology with literary, cultural, Latino, and women's studies. She offers a detailed genealogy of Afro-Caribbean music in Puerto Rico, comparing it to selected Puerto Rican literary texts, then looks both at how Latinos/as in the US have used salsa to reaffirm their cultural identities and how Anglos have eroticized and depoliticized it in their adaptations. Aparicio's detailed examination of lyrics shows how these songs articulate issues of gender, desire, and conflict, and her interviews with Latinas/os reveal how they listen to salsa and the meanings they find in it. What results is a comprehensive view "that deploys both musical and literary texts as equally significant cultural voices in exploring larger questions about the power of discourse, gender relations, intercultural desire, race, ethnicity, and class."

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Customer Reviews

I strongly disagree with the other reviewers. Some research was done in writing this book, but the writer lacks in depth knowledge of salsa culture. Also too much analysis is drawn from other genres such as the bolero, danza and plena and the conclusions applied to salsa too liberally. The author is happy to mention that black innovators Ismael Rivera and Cortijo they pushed black Puerto Rican

culture into every household in the island. But rather than rejoice in this success, she destroys it by commenting that the contributions of light skinned latinos have "whitewashed" and diluted the music. Tito Puente, Ismael Miranda, Hector Lavoe and even the non-hispanic Larry Harlow were all light skinned innovators in the hard salsa scene of the 60s and 70s. Her second point of contention is the relationship in which salsa music deals with and portrays women. As the vast majority of musicians, singers and songwriters are men, it should be no surprise that salsa offers a mostly male point of view. But it is problematic that she chose to use a study of a Tex-Mex nightclub to make inferences about salsa when those genres never come together, and Mexican culture differs significantly from the Puerto Rican she focuses. Finally these two lines join together into a conclusion about Puerto Rican males and their view of women in relationships, white as wives, black as prostitute lovers. And hence she goes on to explain that in salsa lyrics when they sing about "mi negrita" or "mi mulata", all they are talking about is their prostitute lovers. The problem is that all salseros, including her black heroes, use those terms.

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