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Latin Notes: Band's eclectic — beyond that, categorizing it is a bit difficult

[By Hector Saldaña](#)- Express-News

Monte Negro defies easy categorization. They're not suck-ups, either.

The brash, young Los Angeles rock band's polished bilingual sound ranges from pop-punk (“The Part of Me You've Thrown Away”) to reggae (“Give Me Love”) to dreamy Cure-style songs (“Pena Colectiva”).

Unfortunately, one won't find Monte Negro's great hooks on mainstream radio. College radio programmers have been somewhat kinder. But the band doesn't worry about that.

“I only see the people react to the music, which makes me very happy,” said lead singer Kinski Rodriguez about the view from the stage.

Monte Negro play the Warehouse Music Venue on Saturday.

“People that like our songs, and identify with the songs, are people that are very open-minded,” said Rodriguez.

The eclectic rock act is rounded out with Rodriguez's brother Rodax on bass, Xavier Lopez on drums and guitarist Jason Li Shing. They avoid the Latino rock tag as much as they can.

“I believe in eclecticism very, very strongly,” said Rodriguez. “I listen to so many types of music that I'm just a sponge. Different things work for me. I just listen to it without prejudice. I listen to Hank Williams one day, and I listen to Dylan and then I listen to electronica the next day. It just depends on my mood.”

Rodriguez slammed radio tastemakers as “lazy and comfortable.”

“I'm not that interested in the resistance,” he said. “I'm more interested in the people that do get it versus people that don't get it. People that don't get it are just going to put it down. But we are doing something new. It's an honest extension of who we are.”

And of what they aren't, adds Rodriguez. Guitarist Li Shing is not Latino.

“Jason is the one that has the most problems with the Latin label. It's dangerous. If you're second generation or third generation what does that mean?” said Rodriguez.


However, the singer is a fan of the Texas Latin rock movement that includes groups such as Del Castillo, Vallejo and others.

“There's a rich tradition of that bilingualism,” said Rodriguez. “We're open-minded. I listen to Castillo and to Vallejo. It's not like we live in this bubble.”

Monte Negro, which has been together seven years, has new management and is promoting a new five-song EP, “Fugitives of Pleasure.” It's adventurous and experimental (verses in English, choruses in Spanish). The new single is “Loco Por Tu Amor.”

“It's a departure, a little more adventurous, a little more exciting,” he said. “It's a maturity of sound that comes from playing live and going out on the road.”

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