

# Berklee

## Berklee at the 2010 Latin Grammys

By [Berklee Office of Communications](#)

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Producers Rodrigo Cuevas '05 and Gael Hedding '05 take home their first Latin Grammy Awards at the 11th annual ceremony.

PHOTO BY GERRIT KINKEL

At the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas November 11, slot machines rang, patrons drank cocktails, colorful ads lined the walls, and the carpeted hallway seemed to go on forever. But it was clear this wasn't a normal Vegas weekend. Arriving guests kissed on the cheek, people seemed to know each other, and though they traveled from different countries, everyone spoke a common language: music—which brought them all together to celebrate the 11th annual [Latin Grammy Awards](#).

The categories represented were as diverse as the artists themselves. Berklee alumni appeared on the nominations list in a variety of fields from rock to classical, pop to jazz, urban to religious, and alternative to regional Latin.

Berklee alumnus Gerrit Kinkel—recording engineer on the Arturo Sandoval album *A Time for Love*, which won the award for Best Instrumental Album and was nominated for Best Engineered Album—spoke with some of those alumni after the event. They generously shared their insights and opinions about Latin music, industry trends, their relationship with the college, and advice for students.

[Read about Berklee's 2010 Latin Grammy winners.](#)

- **Rodrigo Cuevas '05** and **Gael Hedding '05** took home their first trophy for producing Best Tango Album winner *De Corazón a Corazón Mariachi Tango* by Aida Cuevas.
- **Benny Faccone '78** engineered and mixed Album of the Year-winner *Mientes* by the band Camila.
- **Gavin Lurssen '91** won Best Engineered Album for his mastering of *Distinto*, performed by Diego Torres.
- **Tommy Torres '94**, a songwriter and producer, worked with Alejandro Sanz on Best Male Pop Vocal Album winner *Paraíso Express*.
- **Miguel Zenón '98** was nominated for best Latin Jazz Album.

### On what makes Latin music unique

**Benny Faccone:** Over the years Latin music has tried to become close [to] and embrace American music, but there is definitely a difference. Lyrics and distinctive rhythms are, for example, extremely important in this genre. The crossover between the styles, I'd say, is that more and more Americans like listening to Latin songs and artists.

**Tommy Torres:** Latin music feels different to me, because culturally we have our diversities: We kiss on the cheek when greeting a friend, we like spicy food, we dance at close range, etc. Knowing and "getting" all the nuances of those differences is what makes a work of art connect—or not—with an audience. When making an album for the American market, the mindset changes and the Latin element becomes just a flavor in an otherwise American production. Artists and producers will deny the fact, but that's the way I've seen it happen time after time.

**Rodrigo Cuevas:** Latin music absolutely has its own sound, with an idiosyncrasy and culture of its own. I believe that the quality, passion, and love you put into a project will be eternal. Therefore other audiences can appreciate and enjoy it, even if they don't speak or understand the same language. We must remember music is a universal language.

### On the Latin music industry

**Gael Hedding:** Today the recording industry is getting out of a long-lasting crisis and coming back to its beginnings where there were no rules and set paradigms. This is why diversity, innovation, and the pursuit of quality in the work is what pays off the most.

**Torres:** It is not the easiest time for engineers, producers, and instrumentalists in Latin music, but it certainly seems to be a much more creative and open-minded time. Since artists are actually making the major investment in their own recordings now, they have more freedom to do what they feel and not what the labels ask. Personally, I like this new "democracy" of making records.

### On Berklee's influence on their careers

**Gavin Lurssen:** I would tell prospective students this: Immerse yourselves in a diverse music community as deeply as you can. Make sure to be open in your thinking and always keep your ears open.

**Miguel Zenón:** People like [drummer] Antonio Sanchez and [trumpeter] Avishai Cohen I met while studying at the college. Ensembles, jam sessions, recitals, and the opportunity to meet, interact, and learn from so many musicians from all over the world was actually my favorite thing about Berklee.

**Torres:** Sometimes I engineered, sometimes I sang, sometimes I played guitar, other times I produced. . . pretty much what I still do now! I think Berklee empowered me to think I could be good at many things.

**Hedding:** These are interesting times in the music business that require adaptation, multitasking, and innovation, etc. I can't think of a better place to develop and enhance these skills than Berklee. The coolest thing is that everywhere I go I bump into people from the college, and this gives me a sense of being part of a big family that is constantly evolving and is there for you when you need it.

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