

Case Study



J Balvin

Pioneering Latin Music

Trailblazing, Medellín-born, Colombian artist J Balvin has pioneered Latin music's explosion onto the global stage.

Working in partnership with his record label and manager, Balvin has captured a global audience with his unique sound, both through his solo releases and a string of high-profile collaborations with artists such as Cardi B, Beyoncé and Justin Bieber – all whilst staying true to his Latin roots.

Angel Kaminsky, Executive Vice President, Latin America & Iberian Peninsula, Universal Music, explains how the relationship began: "I first met J Balvin in 2012. I travelled to Bogotá to meet this artist who was big in Colombia and was also starting to create a big buzz in the rest of the region.

"I was immediately struck by his creativity, his artistic ability and his impeccable work ethic. He's such a genuine person and this translates to his music and even to the vibes he passes on to other artists and, of course, to his fans."

Working closely as co-managers in partnership with Balvin's manager, Rebeca León, Kaminsky describes the strategic process behind Balvin's shift from local favourite to global star: "At first, there was a focus on breaking him in Latin America, Iberia and the US Latin market. We accomplished this with his hit singles *Y Vamos* and *6 AM* in 2014 and 2015.

"The next step was to push the project on a global scale. This started with lead single *Ginza* [from Balvin's

fourth album, *Energía*, released in 2016], and materialized with *Mi Gente* [released in 2017 and appearing on 2018 album *Vibras*]."

It was an approach that proved massively successful, pushing Balvin to new heights and huge international success. In June 2018, Balvin became the most listened to artist globally on Spotify, and in September he became the first Latin artist to reach one billion streams on Apple Music. This accolade was followed two months later by a Latin GRAMMY in the Best Urban Album category for *Vibras*.

Kaminsky points to Balvin's work ethic and strong sense of self as an artist as key factors in his success: "He sets his own rules, he knows what he wants. He always says, 'Believe me. I know where I'm going.' and I say, 'Okay, we'll follow you.'

"He leads with artistic and creative direction and we help him to realise both his short term and long-term objectives; we provide him with an array of information from data and analytics to collaboration opportunities, but at the end of the day it's his vision and his instincts that drive us."

This attitude is reflected in Balvin's decision to fly the flag for his mother-tongue by continuing to sing in Spanish, despite offers of high-profile

English language-based collaborations.

"There's so much that makes J Balvin special", says Kaminsky. "He really has a vision to take the genre global without the need to sing in English. He's committed to being a global artist while staying close to his roots. I believe he has accomplished this and much, much more."



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