Brazilians Ride Latin Pop Wave: Songs in Latin America's other major language -- Portuguese -- are on the rise.

ON DEC, 18, 2017, THE Brazilian singer Anitta set a record that went unnoticed in most of the English-speaking world. In just 12 hours, her brassy baile-funk single "Vai Malandra" became the first Brazilian song to debut on Spotify's Viral Global 50 chart. Soon, there will be more: Baile funk, which Brazilians simply call funk, is the latest strain of Latin American pop zipping toward global ubiquity.

Eight songs by Brazilian artists appeared on YouTube's Global Top 100 chart in mid-January, including two by Anitta; a pair by MC Kevinho, who single-handedly racked up 3.3 billion views on YouTube in 2017; and another by MC Fioti, whose "Bum Bum Tarn 7am" was remixed by Future and counts over a half-billion views. Sandra Jimenez, head of Latin American music at YouTube and Google Play, calls 2017 "the year Brazilian talents broke the language barrier."

The phenomeno 1 tracks the rise of Latin music in 2017, when listening grew 110 percent on Spotify (hip-hop grew 74 percent) and 45 of the top 100 YouTube music videos were by Latin artists. Most sang or rapped in Spanish, but the same factors that helped them blow up -- dance-craze-inspiring clips and a streaming boom throughout Latin America -- have also affected Portuguese-speaking Brazil. The country comes in third globally in total YouTube watch time, the highest-ranking in Latin America by a hefty margin.

Propelled by streaming along with other global subgenres -- Afrotrap from Paris, Latin trap centered in Puerto Rico, Sound Cloud rap from Florida -- Brazilian funk once resembled Miami bass, a high-velocity, low-end-heavy strand of electro-rap. Today's most popular exports come from Sao Paulo, sounding "minimal, boiled down into this skeletal form," says Uproot Andy.
a DJ who co-founded the La:in dance party Que Bajo?! in New York. There is usually just one melodic riff -- a squiggly trill on horn, synth or guitar -- joined with a light, highly syncopated drum pattern scooting at around 130 beats per minute. "It's very hypnotic," says Íñigo Zabala, president of Warner Music Latin America & Iberia, which signed MC Fioti and MC Lan last summer. "Simplicity is sometimes one of the most difficult things to achieve."

Funk MCs often rap parts of their songs a cappella, letting their tongue-twisting rhyme patterns serve as both rhythm and melody. "These new vocal approaches are the freshest thing in music," says Mike Caren, CEO of Warner Music Group's Artist Partner Group/Artist Publishing Group. Universal Brazil, meanwhile, is working on more mainstream collaborations, and Tropkillaz, the duo that helped craft "Vai Malandra," are working with Aloe Blacc and Major Lazer. YouTube's Jimenez says Daddy Yankee recently told her: "I have to go to Brazil."

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-Mike Caren. WMG

Anitta (left) and MC Zaac in the video for "Vai Malandra."

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