

PERFORMING SONGWRITER MAGAZINE Praises Louie Miranda with a 'Do It Yourself (DIY) Salute'



PERFORMING SONGWRITER

DIY Salute
Louie Miranda
By Mare Wakefield



He's not a purple dinosaur. He doesn't dress up in a giant bird costume or dance around with puppets. Yet there's something about Louie Miranda that kids really love.

For the past 10 years, the New York-based artist has been garnering awards and rave reviews for his unique style of family-oriented, educational music. His weightlifter's build and gruff voice might intimidate parents at first, but kids quickly respond to Miranda's intricate chord changes and rhythms, hungry for music that speaks to them, yet isn't dumbed-down or stripped of complexity.

"Music is a universal language," says Miranda. "People respond to rhythm and melody, and ultimately discover the lyrics and the content." Miranda's musical compositions are built around his belief that young listeners can comprehend involved harmonic textures, allowing for the integration of minor and dissonant sounds. "This structure gives the child an opportunity to experience a wider range of emotions," he explains. "My songs address environmental and social issues, and teach Spanish. I also encourage families to discuss the music together."

Though he's been a musician for more than 30 years, Miranda wasn't always a family

entertainer. In 1995, he was at a self-described turning point in his career—working as an independent producer for Capitol Records, teaching guitar at Adelphi University and playing at New York clubs. Miranda met his future partner, Joy Suarez, at a jazz club. Suarez had been working in education for many years and had the idea to incorporate music into her teaching strategies.

“A light bulb went off,” says Miranda. “I had been fooling around with this Middle Eastern melody in my head, and I played it for Joy, who in turn created lyrics about a camel.” And the idea for Miranda’s first children’s music release, *Animal Mix*, was born.

Miranda is now celebrating the simultaneous release of his fifth and sixth independent CDs, *Fiesta Latina* and *Yellow Checker Taxi Jazz Guitar*. The first features covers of the Latin-American folk tunes “Guantanamera” and “La Bamba,” as well as original tunes with bilingual lyrics. Guiros and maracas abound, and the entire record has a festive, Latin flavor. Highlights include “The Counting Song,” which teaches kids to count in Spanish and English, and the charming “Coqui” written in Spanglish—a mixture of Spanish and English. “I went to the refrigerator, got a container of leche, I sat down at la mesa with a cup of chocolate muy caliente,” Miranda sings over an Afro-Cuban beat. *Yellow Checker* is equally merry. “I’m a Latin from Manhattan, I can play anything / But man this guitar makes me swing,” Miranda croons in the title track, an ode to his checkered guitar. Highlights also include “Eddie Ate Donuts,” which teaches kids the tuning of the guitar strings (EADGBE) in the country swing chorus, “Eddie ate donuts, good boy Eddie.” Kids will be so entranced by the soulful chords and catchy melodies that they won’t even realize they’re learning.

“The challenge is to stay fresh,” says Miranda, who practices for hours each day and attends workshops and seminars. “The great classical guitarist Frederick Hand once said to me, ‘If you work hard at your craft and develop it to the fullest, people will listen and remember.’ I have aspired to integrate these words of wisdom into every aspect of my professional life.”

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