



Issue date: February 23, 2008

UPFRONT**LOS TIGRES DEL ZUNE****Microsoft Dips Into Regional Mexican**

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In an unusual branding move between a digital retailer and a regional Mexican act, Los Tigres del Norte is launching its new album on Fonovisa, "Raíces," in partnership with Zune and MSN Latino.

The campaign running up to the album's March 4 release has the norteño icon advertising its exclusive track for Zune, "Llorarás," in radio spots in New York and Los Angeles. The band has been heavily featured across Zune Marketplace this month and will get similar treatment on MSN Latino as its artist of the month for March. Video interviews with the group will be placed on MSN Latino's home page and entertainment and sports channels, with links to purchase the album.

The company's most aggressive bid for the Latin market thus far has been its Wisin & Yandel-branded device, released around the reggaetón duo's November album. The Tigres promotion, though on a smaller scale, is part of a more aggressive effort by the company to corner a relatively untapped Latin digital sales market.

Digital albums made up just 1.6% of all Latin albums sold in 2007, according to Nielsen SoundScan, compared with digital's 10.4% share of overall album sales.

But within days of the beta-launch of Zune Social—the site that allows users to sample music for sale and recommend tracks to others—Los Tigres logged more than 100,000 streams, according to Peggy Dold, international VP for regional Mexican market-share leader Univision Music Group.

"It was pretty astonishing to all of us," she says. "We know that our younger consumers are in the digital space. They're not massive, but they're there and they're growing."

Zune's market research revealed that even though young Latinos like urban and pop music, regional Mexican music kept coming up "as a way to identify with their culture," Zune cultural marketing senior manager Javier Farfan says.

Though Univision Music Group has made exclusive content available to digital retailers in the past, the MSN Latino partnership offered additional exposure for Los Tigres' sales and touring markets in Mexico, Latin America and Spain, Dold says.

She adds that for regional Mexican artists, the label and digital retailers, "it is necessary to collaborate at this stage to lead and to invite these consumers to consume their music in a different way than they have historically."

Los Tigres leader Jorge Hernandez says his audience has "a little ways to go" in terms of adopting digital sales, but that the partnership should help—and expose Los Tigres' music to fans of other genres.