

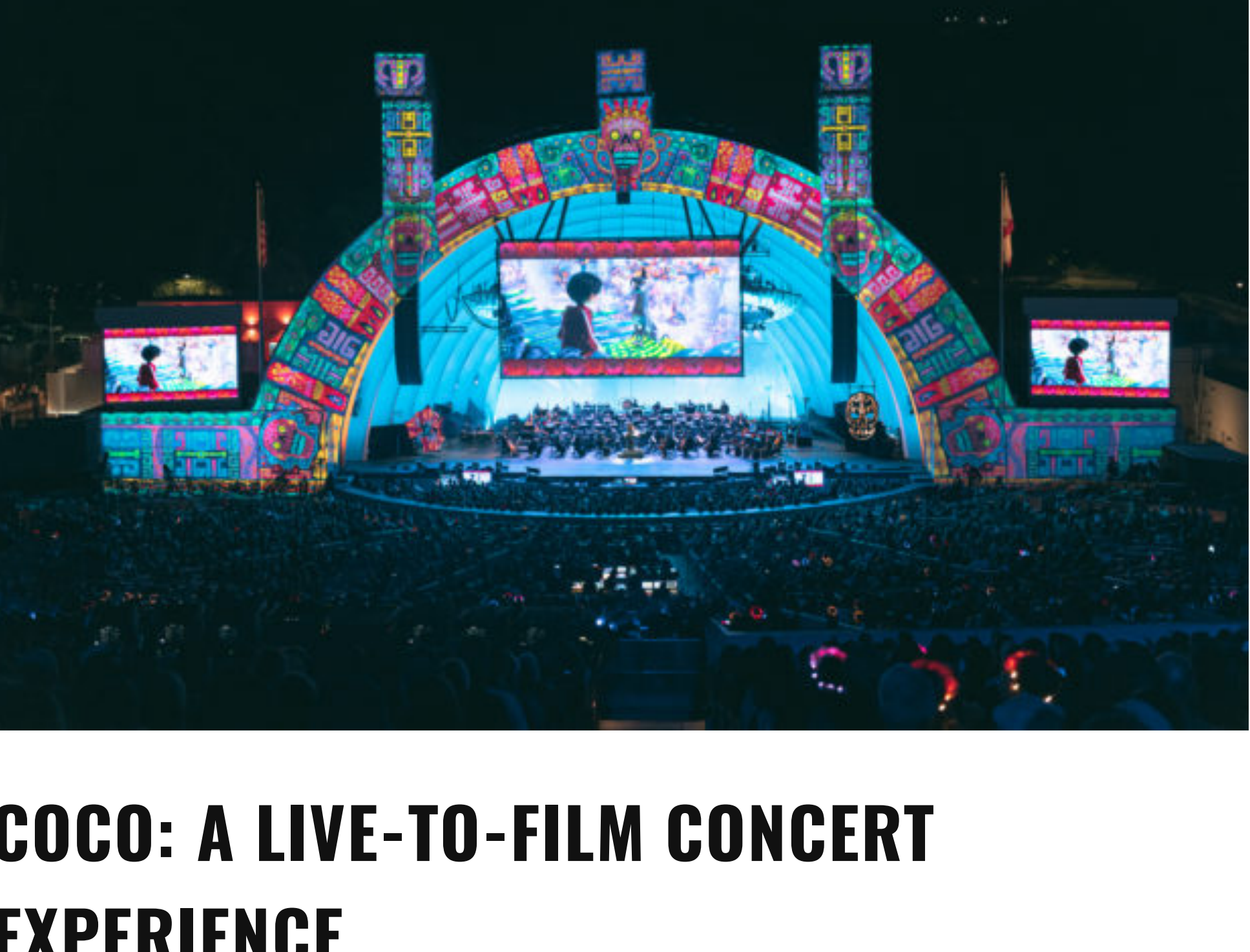
# MUSIC CONNECTION

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## COCO: A LIVE-TO-FILM CONCERT EXPERIENCE

LATEST, PHOTO BLOG SHOW REVIEWS, REVIEWS / NOVEMBER 20, 2019 / BY MIGUEL COSTA

Over the course of the past several decades, the city of Los Angeles has become a beautiful depiction of Mexican artistry and Chicano music. So when Disney Concerts teamed up with Live Nation for the "live-to-film" presentation of Coco, a decorated cast of Latino singers and actors ascended upon the Hollywood Bowl to commence a musical celebration of the critically acclaimed film.

On Nov. 8, Felipe Fernández del Paso brought Coco to life using a live orchestra and thematic décor inspired by Día de los Muertos (Day of the Day). The director's live interpretation of the first-ever Disney/Pixar film based on Latino culture was heavily enriched with modern art, regional Mexican music, Mariachi music, contemporary pop and passionate "Gritos" from several of the audience members throughout the evening. Coco live in concert was also enhanced by cartoon visuals and the emotional storytelling of its co-hosts, Eva Longoria and Benjamin Bratt. To Felipe Fernández del Paso, the involvement of these two Hollywood icons proved to be very crucial in the unveiling of this live music experience. "Eva and Benjamin are leading internationally renowned artists and they are also well known in the US Latino community for their strong advocacy for equity and inclusion on behalf of Mexican, Mexican American and Latino artists and industry professionals... Given their leadership and artistry we were thrilled when they accepted our invitation to lead this special evening."



With the cinematic version of Coco playing on the giant projector of the Hollywood Bowl, Sarah Hicks conducted live music from the film, scene by scene, with the help of a symphony. Many of the featured guests who graced the stage for a live performance actually played a role in the film and/or participated in the original motion picture soundtrack. Natalie Jiménez swayed on the performance deck with elegance as she sang "La Zandunga" with the accompaniment of ballet Folklorico (Mexican Folk) dancers. Rudy Mancuso sprinkled a little love in the air with his Spanish guitar as he sang "Everyone Knows Juanita."



My favorite moment of the night came when a child actor by the name of Alex Gonzales walked out into the middle of the stage and just stood there in complete silence...He wasn't nervous. He didn't seem to be jittery or overwhelmed by the moment...in fact, he appeared to be perfectly poised...but nevertheless, he just stood there dressed in a red hoodie, wearing black and white "Sugar Skull" makeup as the film continued to play on the movie screen right above him. The 15-year-old performer took his sweet little time before he addressed the crowd...making us wait in anticipation for him to say something...anything for goodness sake...and then...as the murmur of the crowd slowly began to fizzle out, he greeted all of the attendees with a fantastic "Grito" shout before singing a cheerful rendition of "Un Poco Loco." His happy go lucky charisma was so endearing to the audience that many of the attendees began to cheer him on with spirited claps and joyful "Grito" shouts of their own. On the flip side, when Alanna Ubach joined Sarah Hicks on stage for a performance of "La Llorona," her theatrical aura loomed over the platform as if she were about to perform a tear-jerking monologue on Broadway. I felt like she was dancing all over my emotional spectrum. Her act was a great balance of innocent fun, fear, expressiveness and the kind of pain that we all need to feel sometimes. She walked that line very well.

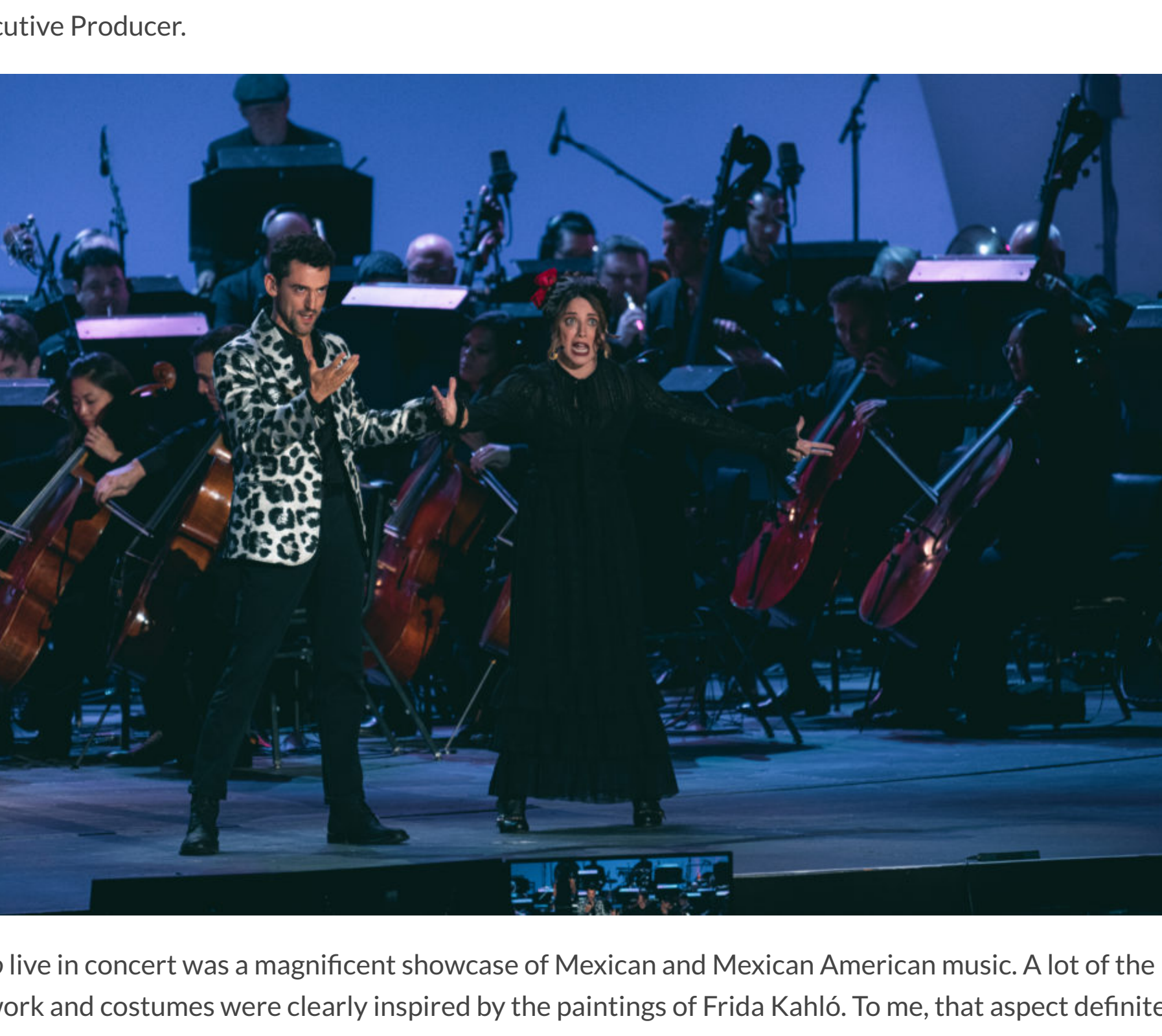


The film ended on the big screen with the main character, Miguel Rivera, and his Abuelita "Coco" bridging the emotional gap between the members of the Rivera family. The song "Remember Me" literally became the saving grace of their kinship. When the two characters sang this song together in one of the final scenes, it was like watching a beacon of strength and remembrance, as a spectator at the Hollywood Bowl. And on that cathartic note, the live cast reconvened on stage to perform the Grande Finale. This climactic spectacle was ignited by an appearance from the iconic singer simply known as Miguel. Not only is he a Mexican-American from Los Angeles, but he is arguably the most successful R&B singer of Latino descent ever. So when he sang "Remember Me" with Natalia Jiménez, it immediately changed the mood throughout the arena—from one of reflective remembrance to blissfulness. Their performance kicked off a melody of songs by Jamie Camil, Carlos Rivera and Alanna Ubach. The closing curtain reached its fantastic conclusion with the entire cast singing "Cielito Lindo."

Unlike the small preview of a live Coco musical experience at D23 in Anaheim during the year 2017, this live music concert was a full show and it was held at an outdoor coliseum in the heart of Los Angeles County. Hence, the scenery throughout the entire venue resembled more of a cultural atmosphere similar to the Day of the Dead celebrations on Olvera Street (in Downtown Los Angeles) and the Hollywood Forever Cemetery. This Coco live-in-concert was an epic display. According to the show's Executive Producer (and General Manager of Disney Concerts), it was always intended to be an authentic experience for the people. "The Hollywood Bowl production was one of the most complex presentations of live concert experiences we've produced, blending live performance with a film screening which required precise timing and technical expertise and artistry," said Chip McLean.



Attending this show allowed to me experience the personality of this culture in a fascinatingly new light. It also gave me the chance to witness the extreme attention to detail that goes into creating a film that is based on the music and heritage of a specific ethnic group. The impactful words of the co-hosts, Eva Longoria and Benjamin Bratt, made me appreciate all the lives and deaths of the legendary Latinos in music who paved the way for such an extravagant event to take place. In the true spirit of their message, Meg Ross at Disney "is already looking into more ways to build a long-lasting legacy for the Coco live-to-film music experience." We have heard from many in the Mexican and Mexican American community that this film has become part of their identity—people feel that this isn't just any movie, it's their movie. It represents their culture in such a loving and respectful way. All to say that we know this Coco live-to-film experience has an audience and we're exploring ways to extend its magic," said the event's Executive Producer.

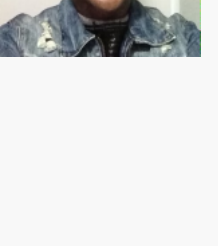


Coco live in concert was a magnificent showcase of Mexican and Mexican American music. A lot of the costumes and costumes were clearly inspired by the paintings of Frida Kahlo. To me, that aspect definitely made the viewpoints of this show just as aesthetically pleasing as the live music itself. I sincerely hope that I am fortunate enough to share in this concert experience for many years to come.

Photos by Davey Carlson

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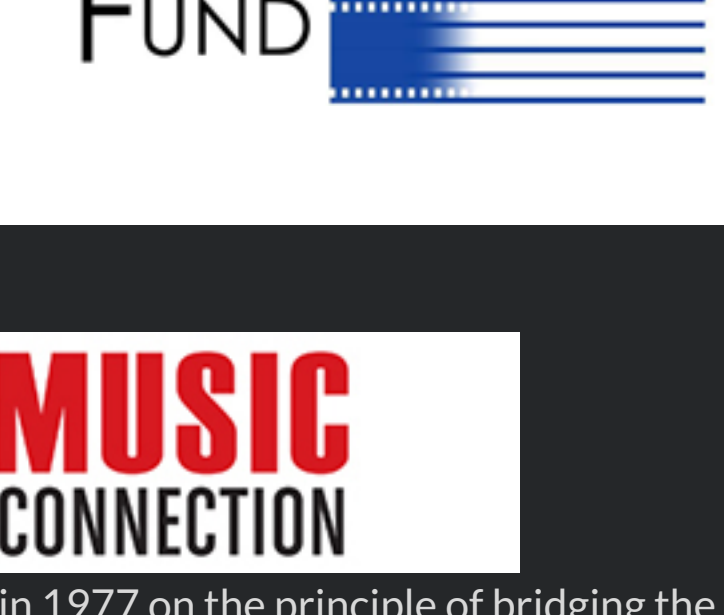


**Miguel Costa**

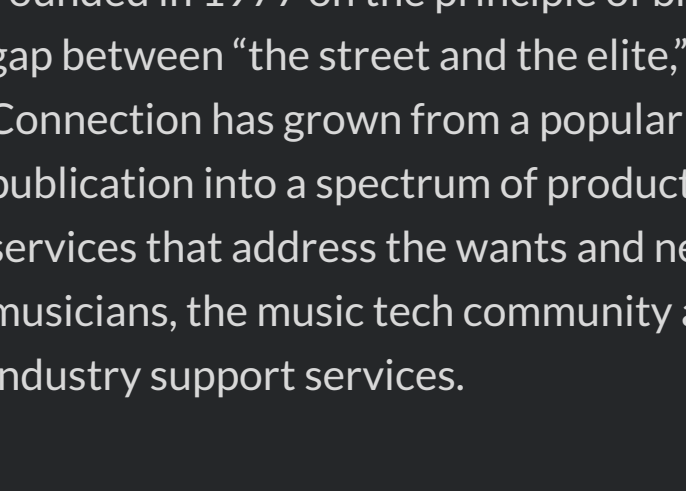
Miguel Costa is a writer and photographer with Music Connection. His tenure with the national magazine has allowed him to augment his passion for journalism, reporting and discovering new music. Miguel's articles span the genres of hard rock, hip-hop, R&B, Soul music, indie pop, punk rock, reggaeton, Latin rock, jazz and more. He thoroughly enjoys covering live events for recording artists who are signed to major record labels. As a journalist, Miguel looks forward to writing many more stories, while expanding upon his content and subject matter.

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