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Diestra plots its own direction

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Naming their new album *Sin Direccion* -- Spanish for *without direction* -- seems odd, considering the two brothers who make up Diestra appear to know exactly where they're headed. In an attempt to avoid being "too traditional," brothers Luis and Ricardo Bonilla brought with them from Venezuela a mixed bag of salsa, rock, percussion-based dance music, electronica and flamenco.

The album is a passionate blend, contrasting upbeat rhythms with some fairly wrenching lyrics. Titles like "Deje Que Me Lleve el Mundo" (Let the World Take Me Away), "La Tierra de Nadie" (Nobody's Land) and "When It Rains No More" are hardly conducive to fiesta time. But listeners might be too busy dancing to notice the words. *Sin Direccion* includes a remix and a club mix of the title track, giving some indication of the variety in their stage show. "We like to stretch out when we play live," says Luis, explaining that the show differs from one night to the next. "It's really important to have the right percussionist," adds Ricardo.

Describing themselves as "very democratic," the brothers also have launched an active Web campaign for exposure, making all their songs freely available on the MP3 site. Ricardo notes more than 15,000 hits so far.

The media and major record labels sat up and took notice when Diestra won a national "Best of Latin Music" award, beating 900 other artists. McDonald's sponsored the contest, allowing the winners to film a video that subsequently ran as a commercial on the Univision television network, which has the largest Hispanic audience in the world. The brothers, who plan a move to Miami in the near future, release their record on their own after turning down two of the majors. "We stick to our guns," says Ricardo.

Diestra plays Smith's Olde Bar Thurs., Dec. 6.