



A Different Beat *Jonathan Trotter '07 is building a reggaeton following in Latin America.*

Jonathan Trotter '07 seems to be full of contradictions. He's from Tobacoville, yet can talk at length about Puerto Rican literature. He's 23 years old, but sports 1920s-inspired fashion. He's a white man who grew up speaking English and dreaming of being a professional tennis player, but he's gaining Latin America's attention as a musician who performs mainly in Spanish.

"Originality, for me, is very important," says Trotter, who goes by the stage name Jon Pálido, using a last name that means *pale* in Spanish. It pays homage to one of the most unique things about Trotter: He writes and performs his own reggaeton songs, a musical style that melds hip-hop beats with Latin and reggae rhythms. The genre first gained popularity in Latin America in the 1990s and has slowly spread in the U.S. Trotter has performed in Indiana, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina and Texas as well as Nicaragua and Ecuador.

"I don't know very many people who are not Latino by birth or by heritage that are doing this sort of music," says Taylor Roberts '96, Trotter's Raleigh-based pro-

ducer and recording engineer. But instead of turning his race into a marketing gimmick, Trotter's talent is what people know first, Roberts says. "If a lot of people end up hearing this music," he says, "I don't think a lot of them would realize he's not Latin American."

Trotter has always been attracted to Latin American cultures, he says. When he was 17, he worked at his father's ice business alongside Latino workers and began picking up Spanish. And when he came to NC State, he studied Spanish language and literature and spent a semester in Puerto Rico studying its history, art and literature. Then, about three years ago, he participated in a three-week medical mission trip to Ecuador. He was there, in part, to translate for the group, but he also wanted to connect with the country's people. He'd always loved music, so he created some tracks, though he'd never written or performed reggaeton before.

"Three songs turned into four," he says. "Four songs turned into five." Pretty soon, he had a whole album. He made 1,000 copies and handed them all out for free on Ecuadorian streets and in stores. He per-

formed reggaeton for the first time during this trip, including at a show attended by about 3,000 people who heard about his music from his CD and word of mouth. Christian themes infused those first songs. "The music that I do is clean," he says. "That's important to me. It's not to degrade women or to promote drugs. . . . If you've got a gift that you can use to make this world a worse place or make this world a better place, there's no contest."

His success has been limited so far. He waits tables in Raleigh at night and spends his days working on another set of songs. He'll release the singles at first through his MySpace page, which has received more than 7,000 views since it loaded last September. He also hopes his style and music will attract a major record label soon. "The music has been something that's just taken off, not something I really planned on," he says. "You have to go out on a limb sometimes and go for it."

—Angie Newsome

To hear some of Trotter's music, visit www.myspace.com/elprofedespanghish.