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Lido Pimienta

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NEWS

Meet The First-Time GRAMMY Nominee: Lido Pimienta Summoned All Her Creative & Artistic Powers On 'Miss Colombia'

Recently, Lido Pimienta spoke to GRAMMY.com from her studio in Canada about her 'Miss Colombia' GRAMMY nomination, aspiring to be

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Lido Pimienta's *La Papessa*, the independently released sophomore album that launched the Colombian-born, Canada-based artist into the spotlight, wasn't meant to be a record at all. A mix of experimental synth, cumbia rhythms and ritualistic vocals, with **themes** of colonization and abuse, it was meant to be a casual artistic project she made with friends.

"I didn't take it extremely seriously," she tells GRAMMY.com from her art studio in Canada. But listeners did: In 2017, it was the **first** Spanish-language album to receive Canada's **Polaris Prize**, a coveted award for the country's most distinct and promising artists, including **Arcade Fire**, **Kaytranada**, and **Feist**. Since then, she has gone from an "**under the radar**" artist to one to watch.

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But her true magic manifested when she placed meaningful intention into *La Papessa's* follow-up: *Miss Colombia*. The sequel arrived in the spring of 2020 on ANTI-, inspired by a 2015 blunder in which Steve Harvey **crowned** the wrong Miss Universe. *Miss Colombia* is like a healing wound for Pimienta. It tackles anti-Blackness—especially on "Pelo Cucu," which highlights how much the Latinx community subjects itself to European standards of beauty. But Black and indigenous empowerment shines through in the music: Throughout the album, Afro-Colombian and indigenous sounds braid together as one, and the result is a mesmerizing assemblage of sounds a listener will feel in their bones.

production quality only highlights Pimienta's resourcefulness. Almost a year later, the album continues to ensnare new fans. In 2020, the album earned both a GRAMMY nomination, for Best Latin Rock Or Alternative Album, and a Latin GRAMMY nomination, for Best Alternative Music Album.

With her newfound recognition, she hopes more money will come her way for her future projects. "I just think that I need to get more money. That's it. I feel like I'm at this point in my career where I hope whoever is watching is ready to invest," she says. "I know that I'm good at it, I know that I'm fantastic; I know that my voice is great; I know I'm a little cute. I know all of these things and I'm ready for it."

GRAMMY.com caught up with Lido Pimienta over Zoom at her studio in Canada about her GRAMMY nomination, aspiring to be [Enya](#) and what she's doing outside of music.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

How are you doing during this weird time?

I'm making all kinds of art. All kinds of new music. I'm listening to a lot of music I wouldn't necessarily be listening to, even six months ago. I'm exploring a lot of things that don't have to do with me. I've been trying to use time [to the fullest] and trying to not let this situation get in the middle of my creativity.

I'm here all the time. This is where I live. This is my art studio and I'm making stuff and I have a little seat for my daughter and she makes a mess and I'm loving it. I watch "[Ru Paul's] Drag Race" and I make art. It's been my therapy. It's been my escape and it's been my way of keeping my juices flowing.

What music are you listening to? And who's your favorite "Drag Race" performer?

trying to understand why she's so popular. Why does she resonate so much? Why is she this cult-like figure? She's really strange to me. I was listening to Enya [recently], and I was like, "I'm really obsessed with this white Catholic."

I think about it, and maybe I want to be her. Maybe I'm the one who wants to live in a castle and I want to appear through the decades and still be relevant with my very soft music that only a small population of the world can understand. That's been interesting.

But then, of course, I need my "Drag Race." I don't know what's on this season, Season 13. From the UK, I love Lawrence Chaney. From the Gringo one, it's between Gottmik and Kandy Muse. Kandy because of her personality and what they represent, and Gottmik because of her style.

Here's the thing I really respect about you: you critique things and you have a lens that a lot of people who aren't white and privileged don't know of. But you're also very honest. I think how you spoke about Enya really speaks to that, how we're all complex.

I don't know any other way to be. I also feel like I don't really have the pressure of hiding my true self like I feel a lot of people that are in the music industry have. They have to guard themselves and be a vessel for songs that don't actually have their own point of view.

I don't have that pressure, luckily. I can be fat. I can get wrinkles. I can show off cellulite. This is not about the way that I look. It's really about what I think. It amplifies, elevates, solidifies and verifies everything that I am. I am what you see is what you get.

What is something in music that makes you light up?

Traditional Afro-Colombian music. That's it. When I made up "Totó la Momposina," it was a huge deal to me.

One day, I was asked to do Petrona Martínez's portrait. That's an honor for me. It's like meeting Celia Cruz, rest in power. Sexteto Tabalá, that's the stuff where I'm like, I can't wait to go to Colombia and start recording them because I want to produce their next album.

Even the traditional Peruvian music, my heart is racing just thinking about it. To me, that's proper. That's real, that's transcendental, that's beyond pop and all that stuff.

I take it you never thought you'd be nominated for both a Latin GRAMMY and a GRAMMY during a pandemic.

Yeah. With or without the pandemic, I did not anticipate that plot twist. Let me tell you, I'm pretty sure the day of the Latin GRAMMYs, I was making fun of the award show in my own Lido Pimienta way when I was like, "Wait, I'm pretty sure the GRAMMYs are like Miss Universe for musicians."

The inspiration for Miss Colombia came from the infamous 2015 Miss Universe [pageant] when Steve Harvey messed up and gave the crown to Miss Colombia and then took it away and gave it to [the actual winner] Miss Philippines. I was [like], "This is hilarious! The Latin GRAMMYs are like Miss Colombia." I guess I'll save the joke for another year when I'm not nominated.

Then, gosh. Here we go again with the gringo GRAMMYs. Then, at that point, I was kind of like, what do you mean only one nomination? Where are the other ones? I'm like, it's okay. Because now, it's like, you can be nominated for this huge award and you

woman, I actually don't have to show off my body and I'm still getting nominated.

[But] I don't think I'm going to win for this. The people that I'm going against are too popular.

You never know!

I'm very curious about the next record. I'm challenging myself. It's a fun game now.

One thing about your album is that you made it on a budget. You didn't have a lot of money. How did you make it work?

I'm resourceful. I do a lot of it myself. I feel like a lot of the albums that make it to huge platforms and are very, very popular have a lot of money behind them because they [are the product of the top producers, the top engineers working in a top studio.

Working in a top studio can cost what I used for my [whole] album just in a day. It's basic math, really. I would love to work with the top engineer in the world or the top producer in the world. [But] it might sound cheesy to me, and I might not need that.

A few months ago, this art studio was my music studio. I had been working on these songs since 2015. I went to Chile, I went to Colombia. My process is different because it really is all me. These are my songs. I don't fish for songs at those writing camps or stuff like that. It's me.

I feel like that's how I'm able to manage it because I write everything myself. What I would like is more budget for my videos, because I'm a visual artist and I feel like all of my videos so far are only scratching the surface.

I'm the one who critiques my work the most because I'm the only one who matters. I don't care if people like it or don't like it, [but] it's wild to me to see how far Miss Colombia has gone. When I really think about it, it's like, I made it in my house. I don't have a hundred thousand dollars to make it.

lot of people in the pandemic. It's a huge honor and it kept me excited, and I know that I don't have to compromise my art. It all comes down to that [and] it shows that I am a good businesswoman.

In your *The Road To Miss Colombia* documentary, you talk about how at some point, you had these rose-colored glasses when looking at Colombia and the album is you taking off those glasses. What is your relationship to your culture now?

It's the same as always. I feel very much at home and welcome in my territory, in my community. Once I step out of my circle and I go into a Colombia mainstream, people will think I'm weird. People will think I'm so strange.

But this thing about Colombia is that we're infatuated with the idea that we're a colony. People are very proud that they'll have one percent Spaniard in them. Closeness, affiliation and relatability to whiteness— a.k.a. the Spaniard in them—makes people feel like they are making it.

One of the owners of [my] school—I forget her name, maybe because I blocked it so much—[was] this white Colombian. I remember her grabbing me and telling me, "Why are you in this classroom, Black child? Why are you in here? You're going to steal from us." I'm wearing my uniform. I'm obviously a student in this school. She was so bothered that I was taking space.

You remember these things and then, you're like, yeah, Colombia is messed up. But the redeemable qualities, it all lies in that we are Black and that we're indigenous. If we didn't

When you grow up like that and then, you move to a country like Canada, you relive those moments. But now you're an adult and now you're able to vocalize and understand where the hatred is coming from. Now, you actually have the maturity and in my case, personality to clap back.

That's where I live. That's my existence. It's like, that's my resistance. I use humor as my coping mechanism. I'm well-read and all that stuff. I'm a critical thinker.

Some of the things you coped with as a child, you're still coping with as an adult. That is a lot to carry. How do you deal with all that?

Art. That's it. Art and my children. I don't have a lot of friends, but the friends that I have are fantastic. I just want to make stuff. I'm constantly creating. I have so many dreams, and hopes and plans.

I know that certain people in this world who were born and granted suffering on many levels. The way that I have to experience it, I have to understand that the universe gave me this suffering, but also equipped me with strength, and wit, and intelligence.

I'm learning how to not dwell. I'm learning how to resist and push forward because I know who I am. After I die, I'm 100% convinced that people will write about me and people will write about my art. My art is going to live longer than my physical body. My children are going to be living off of my name for year-to-year.

That's the legacy that I'm building now. When I think about that and I think about this trauma and all that stuff, I know that it only gets better and that I'm real.

Does it comfort you at all that you are creating space not only for people who don't fit the European standard of beauty but also with the music you make? You use

I don't even think that I'm creating anything for anyone other than myself. For whoever sees themselves in me, I feel like I'm setting a precedent that you don't really have to subscribe to the tropes of Latinidad in music.

I'm honestly like, I'm just bored. You know what I mean? It's like, really? Those two making another song? Oh, the other three are making—oh, wow! You know what I'm saying?

It all comes down to what people like. If the majority of people like serious, arty music, then I would be where they are. But that's not even what we're doing here. I get a song in my head, I sing it out loud. If I sing it still after a week, then I record that. It's as simple as that.

I don't think about who's going to listen to it. I don't think where they're going to listen to it. I don't think about if it's going to get released on a CD or vinyl, I don't think about any of that in the process of creation. It's just creation. That's it—hope you like it.

In the meantime, I'm home washing my sheets because my daughter peed on my bed, which actually happened three minutes ago.

On *Miss Colombia*, you recorded yourself and produced a lot of those songs. I know on your last album, you didn't get to do any of that. What did it mean to you to be able to do that?

I also did it on my last album. We had many more cooks because La Papessa was an

that would go with these illustrations I made that were inspired by the Tarot and the High Priestess [card.]

It was like an art project; I was new to Toronto and I made these new friends. We were hitting record and jamming. I didn't really take it extremely seriously. Then, I went to Chile and I started working on Miss Colombia, an album that I actually was like, "You know what? I'm going to get serious" ... Then, I come back and they're like, "We're going to shortlist it for the Polaris Prize in Canada."

I couldn't believe it because I was like, "Is this a prank? That album is a joke." But [now], I have to own it. The songs are real. I talk about a lot of real stuff. The production could be better, but it's very unique. It's very experimental. It's different points of view.

So, yeah, I was glad they gave me that recognition. It gave me the impulse and the motivation to write more music that more consciously and with more intention. Here, we have Miss Colombia and here I am not going on tour, so I'm working on new material.

What shifted that mindset from more fun and playful to intentional?

When I realized that I could work from home and still make a living, and a single mom to a boy that only has me, that I'm the only one that takes care of him. People were interested in booking me for shows and I realized that I could make money from that, I said, "Well, I don't want to feel like I'm cheating people. I want to do really good work," because I'm an artist and I did it. So, Miss Colombia was the summoning of all of my powers but doing them in a very intentional, serious way, giving a character, a purpose whether the character was me or whoever sees themselves in me coming up a beginning, a middle, and an end.

What's next for you? What else are you working on?

TV, which is going to be really fun. Also, I'm writing an album for an artist, Julie and I'm singing a bunch of songs for other people in North America. Just another day in the life.

Do you have anything else to share about the next album? What the inspirations and sound might be?

People are going to say that I'm the Caribbean Enya.

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