

**Client:** Thompson Miami Beach  
**Date:** November 10, 2015  
**Outlet:** Miami New Times  
**Unique Visitors Monthly:** 478,571

**MIAMI**  
**New Times**

## TWIN SHADOW ON HIS DOMINICAN HERITAGE AND EMBRACING CRITICISM



Twin Shadow: "*¡Dominicano!*"

*Courtesy of Jorian Weiner*

By the sound of it, George Lewis Jr. has just woken up. He's on the West Coast, meaning the relatively early scheduled interview might be cutting into his sleep.

"You also have to listen to the bad things people have to say and not take it too seriously."

<http://www.miaminewtimes.com/music/twin-shadow-on-his-dominican-heritage-and-embracing-criticism-8038672>

"Hey, what's up?" he says after a long sigh. It's not that Lewis is being rude. For the next 15 minutes, he really does his best to be engaged even though the sleepiness can be heard in his voice.

But you can't fault him for being drowsy. He's a busy man. In his relatively short career as **Twin Shadow**, his electropop project, Lewis has released three albums, two of which were met with nearly universal critical acclaim. He also recently wrapped up his 32-date Night Rally Tour, which is more impressive when you consider the fact that he survived a pretty serious tour-bus accident in Colorado that left his hand badly injured and in need of reconstructive surgery in April.

However, where Twin Shadow really stands out is that here's a Latino — Dominican-American, no less — who's releasing the kind of music often associated with white male musicians. And while Dominicans in popular music aren't exactly a rare thing, they are often relegated to making bachata, merengue, reggaeton, or hip-hop. Lewis, whose father is Jewish-American and mother is Dominican, says his upbringing is perhaps what has led to his career — one that's sought inspiration from new wave and indie-pop sounds.

"I don't feel superconnected [to the Dominican Republic] because I didn't grow up there — I was born there," he says. "Although my keyboard player thinks my guitar playing sounds like bachata, and that might be true, because that was the music that was playing in my house when I grew up."

It's not that Lewis seems ashamed of his Dominican heritage. Indeed, when I share with him the fact that I'm also Dominican-American, he quips back, "*¡Dominicano!*"

"What's interesting is that I more so want the attitude and the vibe being Dominican to kind of get into my music — not necessarily stylistically. You know, being Dominican yourself, that even if you don't relate, you do appreciate some of the values and humor. I think the humor of the Dominican people is amazing. I think the attitude of *el tigre* is an important thing to have — it's the rock 'n' roll side."

Lewis says that although he wasn't raised there, lately he finds himself more and more drawn to the country. Part of it has to do with his parents' move back to the island and his frequent trips to see them. During those visits, he says, he hopes to learn more about the different styles of Dominican music and perhaps integrate them into his sound somehow. (I jokingly suggest he could start an experimental bachata-pop movement in the United States.)

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Still, how those trips will influence Lewis' projects going forward is uncertain, but he's currently basking in the glow of his 2015 release, *Eclipse*. The album is his bona fide attempt at Top 40 status, with more polished production and arena-sized sing-along choruses. It's also his first album for a major label, Warner Music. Those lofty ambitions might have cost him his critics'-darling status — with several noting that the album is full of potential but gets lost in a sea of convoluted ideas. However, Lewis says he isn't worrying too much about the naysayers.

"This record was met with both people not being very warm to it but also [people] being very excited about it. I think I've experienced both sides of the spectrum, and I think I've enjoyed them both equally. You can't always just listen to good things; you also have to listen to the bad things people have to say and not take it too seriously."

He adds that when people perhaps don't connect to his work, it sometimes helps him learn more about his audience — what they want and expect. He's fully aware that with any new album, the possibility of losing old fans and earning new ones is always there.

However, Lewis acknowledges that although his goal is to make music he's happy with, he also wants to ensure he connects with his fans.

"If there wasn't an audience there, I'd just be a painter instead."

*Thompson Miami Beach One Year Anniversary with Twin Shadow. 8 p.m. Thursday, November 12, at the Thompson Miami Beach, 4041 Collins Ave., Miami Beach; 786-605-4041; thompsonhotels.com. Free with RSVP to eventstmb@thompsonhotels.com. Ages 21 and up.*