

# buenos aires

# Compass goes indie

Compass proves that there is plenty of room for indie rock on the dance floor and offers salvation from the punch punchi wasteland.

TEXT: SHAWN REYNALDO

The Buenos Aires hype machine has been running on overdrive for a few years now, luring travelers from around the globe. Although things like tango, beef and architecture get top billing, an important component of Buenos Aires (at least the Buenos Aires being marketed to the world) is the city's nightlife. With countless boliches where the dance floor doesn't get moving until 2am and the revelry often continues past dawn, anyone in search of a non-stop party has been told that Buenos Aires will not disappoint. How could it? Every night of the week there are multiple spots where punchi punchi is blaring and beautiful people frolic until the sun comes up. People can dance the night away with the gente bien and of course, their model girlfriends.

Unfortunately, this scenario leaves many out in the cold. Not surprisingly, not everyone is willing to fork out 30 pesos for a night of DJs spinning generic eurodance music while surrounded by drunken foreigners looking to get crazy. In the face of these high-end, high-gloss club nights, a few parties have sprung up around the city looking to do something different. Back in January, Buenos Aires saw the launch of Compass, a new Friday night party devoted to independent pop and rock music. The night features a mix of live bands and DJs more likely to spin something from The Strokes, LCD Soundsystem, The Rapture or Belle and Sebastian than the latest punchi punchi anthem. If you don't recognize those bands or the even more obscure ones the DJs are likely to play, that's the idea. Compass is a clear departure from the average Buenos Aires club experience. Wicked recently got in touch with Compass promoter Andii Diesiséis of eh! Music and picked his brain about this new breed of club night.


"The objective of Compass is to fill a void in the scene," says Andii. Like many people outside the mainstream club circuit, he is not pleased the current state of musical affairs. "In Buenos Aires, electronic music was sold as the only option for the dance floor and a lot of people bought into that. Those that didn't dedicated themselves to remaining permanently in the 70's and 80's without worrying about what is happening now. With Compass we intend to break with this concept."

Every Friday night at Niceto Club, resident DJs Fabian Delamónica and DJs Pareja bring the Compass dance floor to life with an eclectic mix of the latest indie sounds, most of which are imported from around the globe. However, the local indie scene gets plenty of representation as Compass also features live performances. Past live acts have included bands like Brian Storming, Bicicletas, Los Alamos, Rosario Bléfari, Diosque and many more. The night isn't limited to one room, as the Phonorama crew also hosts DJs and stripped-down live performances in Niceto Club's cozy Lado B. The Phonorama gang also make a point of hosting what they call "No-DJs," usually journalists or musicians given the opportunity to get out of their element and spin the music they like without an obligation to the dance floor. Juliana Gattas of Miranda! recently took a turn as a No-DJ, showing that even national pop stars enjoy a turn behind the decks.

In a city where the local music scene is still reeling from the aftermath of the Crogmañon fire, Compass is doing something different just by providing a place for local bands to play. Andii Diesiséis says that after the fire, "almost none of the little bars and clubs survived. All of them turned into something mainstream because of all the legal requirements. Dance clubs and live shows were seen as "at risk" activities. Although the concept of a strong indie scene is already well entrenched in cities around the world, Andii admits, "the independent music scene in Buenos Aires is still forming." He continues, "however, the public response to Compass shows that there is a real potential for the scene to grow."

While Buenos Aires continues to develop an indie culture of its own, the rest of the world provides Compass with plenty of material to keep the dance floor moving. Andii cites the Spanish music scene as a major inspiration and admits to tracking international artists and trends via several foreign magazines and internet resources. Add in the time spent listening to new music and going to shows here in Buenos Aires and their devotion to independent music becomes abundantly clear.

The devotion seems to be paying off, as droves of people have been heading to Compass every Friday night. The crowd is an unusual mix of the usual boliche types along with folks not often seen in Buenos Aires nightclubs - rockers and arty scenesters. However, these new faces are no big surprise, as Andii explains, "right now there aren't many options for them besides shows before midnight or house parties." This eclecticism is something celebrated at Compass, as the promoters have no intention of forming a closed, insular scene. Andii elaborates, "the idea is not to build a specialized audience."

 Compass takes places every Friday night at Niceto Club, Niceto Vega 5510. Check them out online at [compass2007.blogspot.com](http://compass2007.blogspot.com) for more information and a schedule of upcoming performances.