LA City Council honors classic, if not controversial, Mexican band

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Musical group Banda El Recodo pose in the press room during the 11th annual Latin Grammy Awards in 2010.

Councilman Jose Huizar has asked the Los Angeles City Council to recognize a Mexican big band at its Friday meeting. He wants to recognize Banda El Recodo that for years has been known as the mother of all bandas.

Banda music is best known for its fusion of European trumpets, clarinets, and tubas, with other styles in the Mexican state of Sinaloa. Banda El Recodo has upheld the tradition more than any other.

El Recodo has spanned the decades with a healthy fan base, and in 1995 took a turn for the modern after its founder Cruz Lizarraga died.

Now their songs include narco corrido lyrics that glorify the legions of drug dealers also from the state of Sinaloa. Banda El Recodo’s narco corridos aren’t the most graphic. "It’s a band that has sung narco corridos but it’s also distanced itself from narco corridos," said San Diego State University scholar Juan Carlos Ramirez Pimienta. The band's playing a lot more love ballads now sung by a new boyish singer. The band still uses drug trafficker imagery in some videos, Ramirez Pimienta said.

Huizar's office says Banda El Recodo deserves the L.A. City Hall recognition because of its tours around the world as cultural ambassadors, L.A.'s large Mexican population, and because they'll be at a big banda concert at the Coliseum in October. The band's narco corridos music, Huizar's office said, reflect Mexico's current troubles, just like gangster rap has documented inner city life in this country.

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