

THE ROUGH GUIDE to

Cuban Street Party



Imagine a dream where Cubans from all parts of the globe join in with lovers of Latin music and culture everywhere to celebrate unity (without cares or politics), to party down on the perfect tropical Caribbean street where the widest array of Cuban music imaginable is playing on the sound system. There would be plenty of sun, tempered by the shade of swaying palm trees, simple pastel-painted houses and the lull of a fresh sea breeze. Imagine a blue stone cobbled street filled with happy people swirling to the beat. Maybe there is also an open fire hydrant for the kids to play in, with yellow taxi cabs blocking off the ends of the street, the rumble of a subway, and some skyscrapers in the background. Conga, clave and guiro set the pace, mingling with honking horns and crashing waves on the shore, while roast pork, hotdogs and apple pie, black beans and white rice scent the air.

An impossible fantasy you say: you can't mix the USA with the Caribbean, but it really does not matter where this is; it's merely a concept. What with the years of issues and problems separating the Cuban people from each other, this dream seems a silly exercise in futile wishful thinking.

But the human spirit prevails and there is always hope for the future. With this in mind, we bring together a Cuban street party of the mind, where music new and old, made on the island, in Miami and New York, Europe and Canada, can all come together in one joyous DJ set. It's not a fantasy; it happens every night in the best clubs, every day on someone's home stereo, even on the radio sometimes. Labels like Ahí-Namá and Pimienta have brought contemporary Cuban music to the USA against great odds. In Europe, Cuban music has been in heavy rotation at various discerning

labels for decades, and Canada is nourishing a healthy Cuban music scene, as well. Good music is food for the soul, so who cares where it is made and by whom, so long as it is fit for your Cuban street party!

YUMURÍ Y SUS HERMANOS – Moisés Valle, aka Yumurí, has been entertaining Cuban audiences on the island since 1987, and internationally since 1994. After heating up Elio Revé's orchestra in 1988 (where Revé gave him the name 'Yumurí', because he came from the Yumurí Valley), Valle had several hits with the orchestra until he went solo in 1992. The new band was christened Los Hermanos [The Brothers], because Yumurí was joined by three of his four siblings, the most famous being the virtuoso flautist Orlando 'Maraca' Valle, who also arranged many of their tunes. The song 'Acaramelao' (literally

'caramelized', i.e. something that has been sweetened), recorded in La Habana as part of the *Tiene Bilongo* album in 2001, is a funky salsa number dripping with juice like a freshly squeezed stalk of sugar cane.

MARACA – Orlando 'Maraca' Valle, Yumurí's younger brother, is an award-winning multi-instrumentalist who is equally comfortable in the worlds of dance and jazz, having played with jazz artists Bobby Carcasses and Emiliano Salvador, as well as the fusion group Irakere. He formed his own group Otra Vision in the mid-1990s, winning awards and recording the noted Latin jazz album *Havana Calling* for Qbadisc/BMG in 1996. Maraca's music, more than that of his brother Yumurí, seeks to fuse the intensity of Cuba's avant-garde jazz with the best dance traditions of the island and the USA. 'Castígala' ('Punish

Rum, tobacco and Afro-Latin rhythms

Cuban Street Party

riotous Cuban grooves
both old and new



Her') is a great example of what's hot on the contemporary Cuban dance scene, being a timba/reggaeton/rap hybrid that makes you shake your hips, and raise your eyebrows at its complexity as well.

ADALBERTO ÁLVAREZ Y SU SON – Adalberto 'El Caballero Del Son' Álvarez is one of the most important Cuban composers and bandleaders of the last twenty years, and has had a huge influence on non-Cuban salsa with his innovative arrangements and popular compositions, such as 'A Bayamo En Un Coche'. Founding his first group Son 14 in Santiago in 1978, Álvarez then left for Havana in 1984, forming Adalberto Álvarez Y Su Son. What makes Adalberto so fabulous is his seamless bridging of traditional son structures with New York salsa and contemporary Cuban sounds like timba. While 'Mientes', with its

romantic lyrics and up, crisp high-gloss sound, could fit in with any Marc Anthony or Victor Manuelle mega-hit in a typical pop salsa DJ set, there is something uniquely Cuban about the texture and timbre of the brass and vocals.

TERESA GARCÍA CATURLA – Known for her long tenure with the female group Cuarteto D'Aida (where she sang with Omara Portuondo, among others), as well as her exciting contributions to Juan Pablo Torres' marathon *Estrellas De Areíto* sessions in 1980, it is hard to believe that the 2003 album *Llegó Teté* is the fiery *sonera's* first solo album. In addition to leading the Cuarteto since 1973, Teresa 'La Pachanguera' ('The Party Girl!') has found time to sing with the Afro-Cuban All Stars, travel the world as a vocalist and *chekere* percussionist, and record her own sizzling son album for the Pimienta label. *Llegó Teté* ('Teté' is

short for 'Teresa' – the title means 'Teté has arrived'!) is an infectious party jam, and sports some bright punchy salsa brass and *coro* parts. A real treat is the jazzy alto sax solo at the end, courtesy of Gemán Velazco.

BAMBOLEO – Since its inception in 1995, Bamboleo has emerged as Havana's hottest *timba* group and has quickly earned a worldwide reputation for its dynamic original sound and visual presence. The fourteen-piece band is led by pianist and arranger Lazaro Valdés and currently features four fantastic singers: Vannia Borges, Yordamis Megret, Alejandro Borreo and Jorge David. The group first came together when Valdés decided he wanted to venture out on his own after having played with such notable figures as Bobby Carcasses and Pachito Alonso. Because of Lazaro's funky piano *tumbaos*, the distinctive

vocal interplay, R&B and rap flavourings, and the band's hard-driving cowbell and trombones, Bamboleo is in a category apart from other contemporary Cuban music groups. Haila Mompie was the original female lead vocalist and is the voice of 'Yo No Me Parezco A Nadie', the crowning achievement of their 1997 eponymous masterpiece. The charismatic Mompie left the group that year to pursue a solo career.

BARBARITO TORRES – With this foremost *guajira* player of the *laud*, we switch from urban to country style traditional Cuban music. 'Guajiro' is both a descriptive name for a person – usually an agrarian peasant, from the countryside – and a style of acoustic roots music based in the rural regions of Cuba. The *laud* is a Spanish version of the lute and sounds like a cross between the *tres* guitar and a mandolin. Torres is well-known

Yumuri

Sierra Maestra

Celia Cruz & Johnny Pacheco

La Lupe



now for his thrilling contributions to the Buena Vista Social Club and Afro-Cuban All Stars albums, but has had a long distinguished career prior to his 'discovery' by Ry Cooder. This tune is a cover of the classic by the pianist Lili Martínez, and comes from Torres' Grammy-nominated second Stateside release.

SIERRA MAESTRA – One of Cuba's leading son groups, Sierra Maestra are largely responsible for the style's revival. This track is taken from the Riverboat Records album *Son: Soul Of A Nation*, which pays homage to the great writers of the past, such as Ignacio Piñero, Níco Saquito, Beny Moré, Manuel Corona, Bola de Nieve and Arsenio Rodríguez, selecting lesser-known classics alongside legendary tunes. Though their previous four albums were recorded in Europe, fittingly this one saw their return to Havana, where they recorded in an old state studio.

CELIA CRUZ & JOHNNY PACHECO – From the Cuban countryside we move to the Pan-Latin urban 'Barrio' – a neighbourhood that may be seen by some as a ghetto, but for most Latinos it has a more positive identity: the place where *La Gente*, the people, live, raise families and party in the street when they can. Celia Cruz, the international voice of Cuban music, and Fania Records, the Motown of salsa, were at the height of their powers in 1975 when she recorded this infectious ode to Latin *carnaval* with maestro Johnny Pacheco on their *Tremendo Caché* album. There is a certain spine-tingling quality to the meshing of Celia's incredible African voice with

the all-star *coro* of Justo Betancourt, Roberto Torres and Pacheco, the whole thing synchronized to Papo Lucca's trance-inducing piano.

ROBERTO TORRES – Along with Johnny Pacheco, Ramón 'Monguito El Unico' Quian, Alfredo 'Chocolate' Armenteros, Ernest 'Chico' Alvarez and others, Roberto Torres has been responsible for keeping traditional forms of Cuban music alive in the States after the Cuban revolution, with his work as vocalist, percussionist, composer, producer and co-founder of Guajiro/SAR Records. Before helping set up the aforementioned label, Torres recorded several fine albums with Sonora Matancera and Orchestra Broadway, and later on his own for Mericana/Salsoul. Without straying from his roots, Torres proves with 'En Casa De Mi Compay' that classic hard Nuyorican salsa is not so very far from its Cuban origins, the *guaracha*, *son* and mambo. This amazing party tune does not reach three minutes, but packs all the wallop of his later marathon-length recordings on SAR.

LA LUPE – No Cuban party mix would be complete without a song by 'La Yiyiyi' (Lupe Victoria Yolí Raymond), the island's most fiery import, who died in tragic obscurity, but not without leaving her indelible mark on the US Latin scene of the 1960s and 1970s. Interestingly enough, it took Puerto Rican griot composer Catalino 'Tite' Curet Alonso, on their 1974 collaboration *Un Encuentro Con La Lupe*, to get her out of the Nuyorican groove and record the most traditional-sounding Cuban son of her career, 'Sin Maíz'. Most well-known for her emotion-drenched boleros, double-time

frenetic mambos and funky boogaloos, La Lupe also recorded Latin music from every country as well as rock, but aside from the odd folkloric rumba or Santería track, her collaboration with 'Tite' Curet remains arguably her most lasting testament to her beloved homeland and the rural roots of the music.

LINDA LEIDA – Less well-known, but no less important, Afro-Cuban diva Linda Leida recorded several fine records in the 1970s and 1980s for the SAR, TR, Caimán and Sacodis labels before being tragically murdered in the mid-1980s. She is also remembered for her vocal contributions in the 1960s to the Willie Rosario Orchestra and La Sonora Matancera. 'A Comer Chicharrón' ('Let's Eat Sausage') from 1979 is both a *double entendre* party song and a traditional son *montuno* from the Oriente region that serves as a deep homage to eating traditional food and celebrating with family and friends. As with all SAR releases, the band has plenty of time to stretch out over the extended course of its more than six minutes (featuring a tasty solo from the venerable pianist Lino Frías), and for this reason it is a delight for both the ears and the feet.

CHICO ALVAREZ & THE PALOMONTE AFRO-CUBAN BIG BAND – Stepping it up a bit is this brand-new rendition of Tite Curet's composition, 'El Indio Caonabo', a companion song to Curet's earlier hit 'Anacaona', made famous by Cheo Feliciano. Both tunes tell the story of two historical Taíno Indian figures, the powerful princess Anacaona and her brave husband

Caonabo, who are iconic resistance figures recognized for their bravery in dealing with the European invaders to their Caribbean island of Hispaniola (Dominican Republic/Haiti). Both figures are seen as primordial founders of the two island nations, and their tragic love story and brave insurgency inspired Curet to sing their praises. Alvarez worked on the arrangements with the incomparable Paquito Pastor (an unsung Nuyorican piano hero). Keeping the music exciting, Alvarez then inserted a *yezé* interlude that features Santería chants and *batá* drums, pointing to the importance of both Amerindian and African elements in constructing a Caribbean identity.

EDWIN BONILLA & JESÚS 'EL NIÑO' PÉREZ – Lest we not forget one of Cuba's most exciting orchestral traditions, the *charanga*, we have here a prime example of innovation and tradition in the album *Tirando Pa' Charanga*. The *charanga's* origins in Haiti are well-known, as are the innovations of Enrique Jorrín and famous orchestras like América, Aragón and Broadway, spawning crazes like the cha-cha-cha and *pachanga*. Brainchild of two musical giants, multi-instrumentalist, arranger and vocalist Jesús 'El Niño' Pérez from Cuba and hot percussionist/producer Edwin Bonilla from Puerto Rico, 'Angóa' updates that classic orchestra sound because it features a seamless rap section and exceptionally hard percussion. Angóa was a famous black dancer in La Habana immortalized in song by Aragon and Joe Cuba. El Niño is no stranger to updating and mixing genres, something he has

done on several stellar albums by African singer Ricardo Lemvo.

ECHO A MANO FEAT ROBERTO LINARES BROWN, ERNESTO BROOKS & COREY PAUL – Roberto Linares Brown is a young Afro-Cuban multi-instrumentalist best known for his work as a pianist for Azúcar Negra in the 1990s and more recently as keyboardist and arranger for Adalberto Alvarez Y Su Son. He has toured internationally and is now completing a solo album inspired by the Nuyorican sounds of Willie Colón as well as son Cubano. While working abroad on this project, he recently paired up with the production team of the Marin Brothers, and, joined by Cuban rapper Ernesto Brooks and Trinidadian toaster Corey Paul, formed the rap/salsa/reggae group in question. On the downtempo tropical hip-hop tune 'La Barbara' (i.e. 'The Best' – as in 'she thinks

she's hot, but she's not!'), live organic sounds contrast nicely with urban beats and ragamuffin rapping to give the listener the best of both worlds: *el barrio y el monte* (city and country). That is what the Cuban street party of the mind is all about: moving forward without forgetting your roots.

Pablo Ellicott Yglesias (DJ Bongohead) is a Cuban-American graphic designer, artist, DJ, percussionist and writer. His book Cocinando: 50 Years of Latin Album Cover Art was published in 2005 by Princeton Architectural Press. He has written for Latin Beat, Hispanic and Wax Poetics. In 2006, he curated the Latin album cover exhibit ¡Viva La Música! at Exit Art Gallery, NYC, featured during the Seventh Annual Latin Grammy Awards. He also is a guest curator for the exhibit 'American Sabor' at the Experience Music Project museum in Seattle, WA.

Thank You

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Chico Alvarez



Jesús 'El Niño' Pérez



Edwin Bonilla



Echo A Mano



- 01 **YUMURÍ Y SUS HERMANOS** Acaramelao
from the album TIENE BILONGO (CDB240)
(Moisés Yumurí Valle) pub Bis Music (p) & (c) 2002 Bis Music.
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- 02 **MARACA** Castígalá
from the album TREMENDA RUMBA! (AHI-1034)
(Orlando Valle and Ammiel Castellanos) pub Ahi-Nama Music.
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- 03 **ADALBERTO ÁLVAREZ Y SU SON** Mientes
from the album JUGANDO CON CANDELA
(Adalberto Álvarez) pub Pimienta Records (c) 2003 Pimienta
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www.pimientarecords.com
- 04 **TERESA GARCÍA CATURLA** Llegó Teté
from the album LLEGÓ TETÉ (CDB264)
(Germán Velazco) pub Bis Music (p) & (c) 2003 Bis Music.
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- 05 **BAMBOLEO** Yo No Me Parezo A Nadie
from the album ÑO GUE BUENO ESTA (1013-2)
(Leonél Limonta) pub Ahi-Nama Music. Licensed from
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- 06 **BARBARITO TORRES** Mi Son
from the album BARBARITO TORRES
(Barbarito Torres) pub Pimienta Records (c) 2003 Pimienta
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- 07 **SIERRA MAESTRA** Pa' Quien Un Pollito
(Version Libre)
from the album SON: SOUL OF A NATION (TUGCD1039)
(trad arr Eduardo Himely, brass arr Yelfris C. Valdés) Copyright
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- 08 **CELIA CRUZ & JOHNNY PACHECO**
Tres Dias De Carnaval
from the album TREMENDO CACHÉ/CELIA
& JOHNNY (VSCD-37)
(Carlos Estrada; arr Louie Ramirez) pub Fania Music (BMI) admin.
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Lagoon Drive, Suite 230, Miami, FL 33126. Used by Permission.
- 09 **ROBERTO TORRES** En Casa Di Mi Compay
from the album EL CASTIGADOR
(Roberto Torres) pub Trina Jill Music/Sony/ATV Music (p) 1970
Salsoul Records. Licensed from Bethlehem Music Co Inc.
- 10 **LA LUPE** Sin Maíz
from the album UN ENCUENTRO CON LA LUPE/LA LUPE
(C. Curet Alonso) pub Morro Music. (c) Emusica Records, LLC. 5757
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- 11 **LINDA LEIDA** A Comer Chicharrón
from the album CON SABOR A MONTUNO (SAR1005)
(Angel Romero) pub Sar (p) & (c) 1991 Sar Productions.
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- 12 **CHICO ALVAREZ & THE PALOMONTE**
AFRO-CUBAN BIG BAND El Indio Caonabo
ALBUM UNRELEASED
(Catalino Curet Alonso; arr Paquito Pastor and Chico Alvarez) pub
LAM (Latin American Music) represented by Harry Fox.
Licensed from Chico Alvarez
- 13 **EDWIN BONILLA & JESÚS**
'EL NIÑO' PÉREZ Angóa
from the album TIRANDO PA' CHARANGA (SAR001093)
(Edwin Bonilla/Jesús Pérez) pub Sar/Guajiro.
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- 14 **ECHO A MANO FEAT ROBERTO LINARES**
BROWN, ERNESTO BROOKS & COREY PAUL
La Barbara
from the album ECHO A MANO
(Marin Brothers/Roberto Linares Brown) pub Socan.
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