¡Latin Jazz!

a radio documentary
by Roger González
¡LATIN JAZZ!
A SYNCRETIC JOURNEY
From Spain, Cuba, the United States and back.

(RADIO DOCUMENTARY & EXEGESIS)

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Abstract

The creative work, ¡Latin Jazz! is a 50 minute radio documentary to be broadcast on ABC Classic FM. It looks at the evolution of Latin jazz from Spain, Cuba and the United States. It examines the social effects on the style and specifically on the syncretic movement between the countries. The documentary traces my travel to Madrid, Spain and looks at Latin jazz through a deconstruction of the style, musical examples and interviews with prominent artists. Artists interviewed were Chano Domínguez, a Spanish flamenco jazz pianist, Bobby Martínez an American saxophonist, Alain Pérez a Cuban bassist and Pepe Rivero a Cuban pianist.

The exegesis supports the radio documentary by examining the style in more depth, and is broken into three main sections. First it traces the historical relationship that occurred through the *Ida y Vuelta* (To and Fro), the similarities and influences through the *habanera*, the *decima* and the religion of *Santería*. This is followed by specific musical elements within Latin jazz such as instrumentation, clave, harmony and improvisation, whilst the third section looks at the influences of the new syncretic movement back to Spain.

Key Words

Music, Latin jazz, rhythm, cross-cultural, Spain, Cuba, USA, percussion, clave.
Preface

As a 15 year old, looking through a record store in Barcelona, I was drawn to the cover art on Paquito D’Rivera’s *Tico Tico* (1989). It was 1997, and my affinity for Latin jazz was born.

![Fig. 1 Cover art from Paquito D'Rivera's album Tico Tico](D'Rivera 1989)

Being a percussionist studying both orchestral and Afro-Cuban percussion, the rhythmic drive of the music intrigued me. At that time, Paquito d’Rivera’s virtuosic playing simply seemed Latin in style. I began to fully appreciate this album when I experienced Latin jazz first hand.

In 2001, I travelled to Havana, Cuba, to study traditional Afro-Cuban percussion and specialise on congas. Adel González (percussionist with Irakere) showed me that there was more to Latin music than met the eye. The prevailing salsa style in the Hispanic world can be compared to Western Pop music, however a more interesting and demanding style became apparent, that of Latin jazz.
I saw Latin jazz as Afro-Cuban percussion with jazz harmonies. However, like many styles, the more one scratches the surface, the more fulfilment one finds.

During my stay, the Havana Latin jazz Festival was held. Here, I first saw Alain Pérez using the Flamenco *cajón* in his group. I saw Irakere and Chucho Valdés play and was fortunate to meet them, along with other eminent Latin jazz musicians. Based on a brief phone conversation with Alain, I decided to move to Spain and continue studying under his guidance. During this time I would focus on Latin jazz, and spent almost three years in Madrid, learning, meeting and playing with prominent musicians. I was witness to the new fusion styles that emerged.

**The fork in the road**

I decided I wanted to study this music which had a complex and intricate history. To understand what was occurring today, I felt one must research the history and the influences which were occurring from Cuba, the United States and Spain. It was also important to be aware that all these styles emerged from the same African root.

I was particularly interested in looking at this fusion, as I am a Spanish Australian having lived between both countries and brought up with a mixture of cultures. Because of this, I have an interest in cultural fusion, specifically within Latin music. As a Latin percussionist, I felt I was in a unique position to research this topic.

I set about researching and interviewing important Latin jazz musicians, and trying to introduce others to the nature of Latin jazz. I felt that the best way to demonstrate this was to allow the music to speak for itself, via a radio documentary that endeavours to introduce the listener to Latin jazz, and that allows me to further understand the style for myself.
In 2006, I returned to Madrid and interviewed Alain Pérez, Bobby Martínez, Pepe Rivero and Chano Domínguez. Alain Pérez is a young Cuban bassist, who has played with Chucho Valdés, Jerry González and Paco de Lucía. He is an emerging artist who has won the Sociedad General de Autores y Editores (SGAE - Spanish society of Authors Composers and Publishers) competition for Latin jazz, and is at the forefront of the new fusions in Latin jazz.

Bobby Martínez is an American jazz saxophonist with Cuban parents and Spanish grandparents. He is the cousin of Jerry González and has played with artists such as Dexter Gordon, Paquito d'Rivera, Walfredo de los Reyes, Cachao, Miami Sound Machine and Paco de Lucía. Bobby is an eminent musician within Latin jazz, and has been living in Madrid since 1996.

Pepe Rivero is a young Cuban pianist, originally from Manzanillo. He immigrated to Spain and has played with artists such as Isaac Delgado, Celia Cruz, and Paquito D’Rivera. He has toured internationally playing Latin jazz, and he is an important source of historical knowledge.

Chano Domínguez, is a Spanish pianist from Cadiz, Andalucía. At the forefront of Flamenco jazz, he has shaped the direction of new Latin jazz. He is a point of reference for many musicians and has played with Enrique Morente, Paco de Lucía, Michel Camilo, Paquito D’Rivera, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Jorge Pardo and Carles Benavent.
By interviewing these artists, I wanted to study the syncretic relationship of the music as it moved between Cuba, the United States and Spain. This approach is distinct from other musicological studies that focus solely on the musical and social relationship between Cuba and the United States and largely bypass the influence now in Spain. Previously, Flamenco jazz has been largely overlooked or the link to Latin jazz has not been associated. This can be seen by the lack of information or references to Flamenco in such books as Caliente! The History of Latin jazz (Delannoy 2000), Latin jazz (Leymarie 2003b), Cuban Fire: The story of salsa and Latin jazz (Leymarie 2003a), and the Latin Tinge (Roberts 1979). This study shall attempt to look at Spain’s role within Latin jazz. Through historical and current links, my research shall look at what appears to be a gap in knowledge, whilst attempting to strengthen musical links previously researched.

This work is the culmination of seven years of study. What I learned through this experience has not only answered many questions, but also left me asking many more. My research ultimately focuses on syncretic movement, and looks at a selection of musical constructs that help the understanding of Latin jazz.
Introduction

Latin jazz music is a diverse combination of styles. It combines hard-hitting rhythmic grooves, coupled with complex jazz harmonies and Spanish influences to create a genre that is unique, exciting and innovative. This work examines this complexity through my research as a musician in this field, and explores the roots and musical evolution of the style. The study aims to privilege the voices and music of musicians who make Latin jazz and builds upon my own understandings as a percussionist to find evidence of these qualitative observations.

The research is presented as a radio documentary that explores the history of Latin jazz, the constructs of the genre and the social developments that have informed the style. Through the artists’ voices and music, the radio documentary tells the story of Latin jazz’s evolution as a form, building upon my own skills and knowledge as a performer.

La Ida y Vuelta

Latin jazz is an art form that was created through the cross pollination of cultures (Delannoy 2000; Leymarie 2003a; Roberts 1999; Trueba et al. 2001; Uribe 1996). This melting pot arose from its inception in three influential locations: Africa, Spain and Cuba. In the early 20th century it emerged in the United States. It is intriguing that traditional elements from hundreds of years ago still exist and form the backbone of this musical style.

Through my research I discover the central characteristics of the style, and demonstrate the importance of the Spanish influence. Moreover, my research suggests that the cross pollination at the root of this style continues—only this time from Cuba and the United States to Spain.
This concept of sharing ideas, and fusion specifically between Spain and the New World is called the *Ida y Vuelta* (To and Fro). My research attempts to show specific elements of musical progression due to social, cultural and migratory movements both at its inception and today. This process of syncretism (Merriam 1964) is an important concept in understanding how music grows and changes, as music is reinterpreted in new contexts by new generations. As Merriam states:

> Syncretism is specifically that process through which two or more cultures are blended together; this involves both changes of value and of form.

(Merriam 1964, p. 314)

This blending occurs through the exchange of ideas, especially if the cultures already have common characteristics (Merriam 1964). Syncretic movement can be seen from the past in the *Ida y Vuelta* as well as in modern fusions.

**Form**

The radio documentary’s aim is to transfer knowledge and give a basic understanding of Latin jazz. It seeks to give its audience the concept of syncretic movement as well as the basic constructs and social influences on Latin jazz. In addition, the use of the radio documentary incorporates audio examples of music and musicians to illustrate my argument in a dynamic and auditory setting more appropriate to the musical context than the static medium of plain text.

The exegesis’ aim is to add additional knowledge, and supporting elements which are either beyond the documentary’s scope, or more appropriately covered in the written or notated/graphic format. A study of the fusion between Spanish, Cuban and American music is a broadly scoped task so I have chosen to focus my research on specific elements within Latin jazz. These elements are broken into three main areas which are covered in the three chapters of the exegesis.
Chapter One covers the historical syncretic movement between Spain and the New World. It looks at this movement through the influences of the poetic form of décima, the religion of Santería, and the rhythmic influence of the habanera. I chose these examples as they demonstrate how the music has evolved with the core essence intact.

Chapter Two covers specific musical constructs within Latin jazz, such as harmonic influences, the importance of rhythm, the Cuban clave and its relationship to other claves, and other musical traits essential to Latin jazz.

Chapter Three examines historical influences on the syncretic movement through social influences such as the Periodo Especial (Special Period), Cuban migration to Spain, and the new fusion occurring in Spain.
Methodology

In 2006, I went to Madrid, Spain and interviewed Alain Peréz, Pepe Rivero, Bobby Martínez and Chano Domínguez to map out the social and cultural history of Latin jazz. The main aims were to deconstruct the essence and evolution of Latin jazz, and to create a documentary where the story is told through the artists’ own words and music.

The methodology used in this research incorporates ethnomusicological approaches and draws upon musical analysis through empirical methods, notational analysis of rhythmic structures and interviewing influential Latin jazz performers (See for example: Appendices i - iv: Interview Transcriptions and Translations and Appendix ix: Rhythm Section Examples). The work seeks to demonstrate and identify the qualities of the syncretic development within the music and to understand the artists’ personal and musical development within this style. The exegesis will focus on extrapolating the historical research undertaken for this work, whilst comparing the modern styles and their relationship with each other.

Ethnomusicology: confusion within the methodology

The definition of ethnomusicology is dynamically evolving, and it is now generally thought of as the comparative study of the musics of the world and of music as an aspect of culture and society (Kottak 2003). However, in the 1950s there was much confusion within this field of research as it had just come to prominence. Jaap Kunst had coined the term ethnomusicology, and his definition was that it mainly dealt with music and musical instruments of all non-Europeans. This view was to encompass the so-called primitive peoples and the civilized Eastern nations (Rhodes 1956). Bruno Nettl then went on to refine this definition stating that ethnomusicology is the study of the music outside the Western civilization (Nettl 1964).
Recognition of the value of studying the origins of music has only very recently re-emerged. Historically ethnomusicologists dealt with the theories of the origin of music, which were thought to be observable in the music of contemporary so-called “primitive” peoples (Merriam 1960). This view was developed more seriously towards studying the social and cognitive aspects of music and through ethical ways of engaging with the understanding of how sound and society interact.

During the 1970s, Fredric Lieberman suggested that ethnomusicology was still undefined and that ideally there was no difference between musicology and ethnomusicology (Lieberman 1976). However, these two paradigms are distinguished by their emphases: ethnomusicology focuses on the social aspects of music, whilst musicology emphasises the dissection of music using a more analytical framework. Kunst defended his term of ethnomusicology as it more accurately described the previous term of “comparative musicology” (Hood 1971), a direct translation of the German vergleichende Musikwissenschaft that was being used previous to 1950.

Ethnomusicology can now be viewed as focusing on the study of differences within music of the world and their cultural influences on society. This is much more relevant to my study and allows me to look at the syncretic movement occurring within this style.

**Collection of sociological data**

The particular emphasis of this study’s interview data will be strongly based within the ethnographic tradition. I extracted meaningful data to demonstrate the evolution of Latin jazz through a combination of musical and social examples.
Using Jorgensen’s approach through a participant observation case study (Jorgensen 1989), I have looked at how Latin jazz has developed in the artist's own practice and explored this through analysis of other practitioners and their music. I am interested in exploring influences that have created these fusions, both through the musical heritage of the artists' homeland, and their personal encounters within the music (Appendices i - iv: Interview Transcriptions and Translations).

**Ethnographic techniques for data collection**

As part of my data collection strategies, I engaged in ethnographic fieldwork. Fieldwork is the gathering of recordings and the first-hand experience of the musical life (Nettl 1956) or, in turn, being the participant observer.

With today's technology, and the possibility of collecting oral histories, recording and documenting traditional music has never been so easy or convenient. Systems that analyse recordings and facilitate transcriptions have become commonplace, whilst inexpensive recording equipment that is not invasive allows the researcher to collect a great deal of data, such as live performances or jam sessions, for later analysis.

The observation of musical phenomena as a participant observer (Jorgensen 1989) is important in this kind of study, especially in the field of Latin jazz where improvisation plays a large role. Observing the interaction of musicians, how they work and how they implement differing styles in a fusion, allows us to analyse how the genre has progressed, and will evolve in the future. The role of participant observer affords me an embodied perspective and allows me to know where to look and who to ask. Furthermore it provides a privileged perspective in my relationship with participants that allows for a shared understanding not possible from an objective observer.
As Jorgensen (1989) states, through participation, the researcher can experience and view interactions of people as an insider. These interactions in Latin jazz are complex, diverse and difficult to unravel if the researcher does not have the in-depth understanding that comes from being a musician in this field. The researcher’s depth of understanding and practical expertise can also aid in creating rapport with artists. Once there is a mutual respect, artists allow themselves to open up, be it in interviews, or rehearsals. The researcher then has a privileged view of the music, as humans behave differently if they feel they are being studied (Jorgensen 1989).

**Participant Observation: My account**

During my research in Spain, I observed the musicians in many contexts. However I did not solely base my research on this one trip, but from previous experiences or participant observations. Before interviewing each artist I wanted to observe their music making, to give me a better grounding in the interviews conducted. This was done in three stages.

**Lessons**
**Rehearsals**
**Concerts: both participating and observing**

Percussion lessons with Adel González in Cuba, eventually lead me to living in Spain. In Spain I learnt off Alain Pérez, who taught me more about the Latin jazz style. Throughout this period I took notes on all the classes. I would attend rehearsals and concerts where I met other musicians. Eventually I ended up playing with Alain Pérez and Pepe Rivero in concerts and jam sessions, such as those held at the Café Berlin and Cardamomo in Madrid.
These jam sessions were essential in seeing the fusion that was occurring between the styles. Latin, Jazz and Flamenco artists jammed together in a natural way. In addition to learning Afro-Cuban percussion, I also had lessons with Israel “Piraña” Suarez, who was the Cajón player for Paco de Lucia and Chano Domínguez.

This opened up my understanding of flamenco, and I began to understand the complexities and similarities between the styles. I did not limit my observation to these artists. I also saw Bobby Martínez in concert with Paquito d’Rivera, I met and conversed with Bebo Valdés after a concert he held in Madrid, and had previously met his son Chucho Valdés, at the Havana Latin Jazz Festival. These are a snippet of hundreds of different concerts I attended during my travels.

By immersing myself, in the styles, seeing concerts, talking with important figures and playing Latin jazz concerts with these artists I conducted participant observation. This participant observation was to such a degree that I was personally involved in the music making.

**Analysis of musical data**

The framework for analysis of collected musical data will focus on the rhythmic structures, modal tonalities and differing instrumental integration. The tracing of common links and the evolution of traditional instruments and the hybridising of their function are of most interest. This evolution can be seen in relation to congas. A long-established convention has been to have one player per drum whereas now one player may be playing up to five or six congas at once. An increased emphasis on solos has raised the importance of the melodic aspect of the drums. More drums result in more notes and more notes equate to more ideas that the player can express musically.
Interviewing

As the final product of my thesis is a radio documentary, the principal form of data collection was by interviewing subjects using a semi-structured interview. This method allows the security of a structured interview, but with the freedom to further probe issues that may arise from the informant. The interviewee can seek clarification and elaborate on the answers given (May 2002). Additional interviewing techniques and methods can be found through Lindlof and Taylor (2002), and Goudy and Potter (1975-1976). All four interviews were conducted in Madrid, Spain with the transcriptions and translations given in appendices i - iv.

Questions and topics for semi-structured interviews:

1. History and cultural influences:
   - Ida and Vuelta.
   - Importance of Santería / Batá.
   - How did Jazz influence Cuba?
   - The connection between New Orleans, Contradanza Francés and Habanera and the return to Spain.
   - What is the difference between the Latin jazz from Cuba and that from Spain?
   - Cuban influence in Flamenco, the new Ida and Vuelta.
   - Reason for coming to Spain.
   - Madrid being a melting pot for Latin jazz.
   - Periodo Especial, what is was and what it meant in terms of musical freedom and opportunity.
   - The connection between Cuban and Spanish music and what is it?

2. Musical constructs:
   - What is Latin Jazz?
• What differentiates Latin Jazz to Salsa and why focus on Latin Jazz?
• Importance of Clave and what is Clave.
• Syncopation being introduced into danzón by Cachao.
• Importance of the bass line. Talk about the typical bass line created by Cachao, and why it is so important. It’s relation to the clave.
• Introduction of drums into Cuban music previously only used in religious practices.
• Importance of Rumba coming out of Santeria.
• The importance of percussion within Latin Jazz.
• Why is it that Jazz can meld seamlessly with Cuban Music and Rhythms and Flamenco styles?
• Influx of Percussionists, Chano Pozo, Patato Valdes, Mongo Santamaria, Ray Barretto etc.
• Improvisation.

3. Discovering more about the influence of the greats!
• Father of Latin jazz, Mario Bauzá.
• The meeting of Dizzy and Chano Pozo through Mario Bauzá.
• References to Jazz from the past, Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo, the wave of artists from the 70’s, but where is Latin Jazz now, and where is it headed?

4. Personal experiences of interviewees, influences, and background:
• First encounter with Jazz.
• First encounter with Flamenco.
• First encounter with Cuban.
• Working with Chucho Valdés, his interest in traditional Santeria music.
• Working with Jerry González, and Paco de Lucía and the experience.
Paco de Lucía, Enrique Morente, powerhouses of Flamenco, how does a Cuban bassist enter playing with these musicians.

These questions have been framed taking into account other works focusing on Latin Jazz, Jazz and Flamenco. Works from Leymarie (2003a, 2003b), and Roberts (1999) that look at the historical emergence and syncretism within Latin Jazz in Cuba and the United States. As outlined in the exegesis, authors such as Nuñez and Linares (Nuñez & Linares 1998a, 1998b) that specifically look at the syncretism between Spain and Cuba but also personal accounts from musicians both recorded and through participant observation.

The important constructs within the style, clave and rhythm come from years of learning Afro-Cuban percussion and the understanding of these core elements within Latin jazz. This participant observation, by learning and playing with these artists has in turn been an influence on the topics and questions asked. My observations included elements such as the movement of musicians to Spain, creating a new syncretism. I myself had moved to Madrid in 2001, and I was interested in understanding their rationale in doing so.

However, my questioning had evolved dynamically depending on what I had learnt and uncovered within the available literature. I had a basic structure for my documentary that influenced the topics covered. The questions asked were based on participant observation, empirical evidence, my vision for the documentary and topics I felt were important based on this research.
Content of questioning and its construction

The questions’ content and the construction of the interview are also important. As Oppenheim states (1992):

The function of a question in an interview schedule or questionnaire is to elicit a particular communication. We hope that our respondents have certain information, ideas or attitudes on the subject of our enquiry, and we want to get these from them with a minimum of distortion.

(Oppenheim 1992, p. 121)

Like any musical genre, Latin jazz extends far beyond merely notes on a page. The Latin jazz style is both informed and intertwined with each nation’s social development. For this reason, the questioning undertaken attempts to look at how Latin jazz affects musicians and in turn is effected by religion and other cultural influences.

Music that forms an integral part of the social fabric of a nation, that creates one of the largest export markets within its economy (such is the case with Cuba) and is seen with strong national pride can be examined through an emphasis on social concepts and evolutions through its people and artists (Appendix viii: A Selection of Influential Latin Jazz Artists).

Part of my focus was on the historical aspects of the genre, and whether the participants actively seek to involve and fuse different styles. I posed questions that asked of their personal experiences, their musical experiences and what they have learnt from other musicians (Appendices i - iv: Interview Transcriptions and Translations).
There is a fine line between successful interviewing and not being able to extract the appropriate information. The subject, the rapport we establish, and the preparation of the interviewer affects the results. However, if this is achieved successfully, the other important element that needs to be addressed is the physical collection of data.

In addition, the transcription and translation of the interviews is challenging and the aim is always to capture their core argument. In Spanish, a word might have different meanings, so one cannot necessarily translate word for word, but rather must look at the context of what has been said (Oppenheim 1992). The transcriptions, translation and analysis of these interviews was labour intensive, but essential to create the documentary (Appendices i - iv: Interview Transcriptions and Translations).

**Recording process**

For the collection of data I used a minidisc recorder with a Rode NTG-2 shotgun condenser microphone with the initial data being analysed and mixed on the road with an Apple iBook. Additional field recordings to further introduce sound scapes into the production were recorded with Binaural stereo in ear microphones, coupled with sound effect CD's. The program used to produce the radio documentary was Logic Studio 8 (Appendix vii: Working screen from Logic Pro).

**Research focus**

The concept of musical syncretism that underpins this research seems to indicate that the rhythmic foundations are likely to be drawn together naturally. As Merriam states, the merging of culturally similar musics is more likely to occur (Merriam 1964). Therefore, my research examines how the music has evolved culturally and through social influences. It shall look at deconstructing the musical building blocks that are fundamental to each region and their antecedents.
Literature Review: Finding my feet

Ethnographic studies have been undertaken in Cuba, the United States and Spain as early as the 16th century. For instance, in the 16th century, Francisco de Salinas (Myers 1993) collected folk songs from the Salamanca region and illustrated direct links from the 14th century Catalan *Llibre Vermell* (Red Book) of Montserrat and the Arab tune ‘Qalbi bi qalbi’ within them. The fusion of music is inevitable, as traditional music changes by responding to social and cultural movements (Blum, Bohlman & Neuman 1991). An example of this follows the invasion of the Moors into Spain. In the Andalusian region in particular, a fusion of cultures began resulting in what we now know as Flamenco.

Due to the direct influence of styles from four continents, Latin jazz has an enormous geographical and historical scope. Its history spans centuries of migration and syncretism, and many discrete styles that each comprise of a myriad of sub-genres. For such a broad topic, one would expect a large body of literature examining Latin jazz’s history and evolution. However, compared to other genres Latin jazz appears to have less written about it specifically whilst it is mentioned in other more generalised studies.

Literature written on Latin jazz, is mostly in Spanish and my research has benefited from my fluent Spanish skills and access to these sources. Whilst in Spain I had access to the library of the SGAE that aims to promote Hispanic music. Their publishing arm, *Fundación Autor* has published works that further investigate the musical and social relationship within the Hispanic world.

Like many ‘living musics’ I discovered that much of the musical knowledge is transferred through the players, rather than documented in academic or ethnomusicological / sociological studies. What has been written in these circles are works dedicated to specific genres. Their focus is on a particular style such as Cuban, Jazz or Flamenco, or perhaps a link between two of
these. Most commonly the relationships between Cuba and the United States, but they rarely bring into focus the links between all three. Within the confines of this study I found little written material available about the movement back to Spain, and the Latin jazz that is practiced there now.

Specific work written on the early permutations of this genre include Ortiz's in-depth analysis of Afro-Cuban instruments published in the 1950s, Los Instrumentos de la Música Afrocubana. This monumental work fills five volumes, and focuses solely on instruments that have been used in Cuba and their historical context. Additionally, Ortiz's study of African influences within folkloric Cuban music, La Africanía de la Música Folklórica de Cuba (1950), focuses on the specific relationship of the African Culture within Cuban music.

Following Ortiz' work is Carpentier's La Música en Cuba (The Music in Cuba) (1946) which was first published in 1946. As Henken states, Carpentier's basic thesis is that between 1920 and 1940, the entire vast history and innumerable genres of music in Cuba converged through the crystallisation of Son into a national musical style (Henken 2006). This period of music evolved into Latin jazz.

Fernandez continues this process in From Afro-Cuban rhythms to Latin jazz (2006). He looks at how Cuban musicians have helped shape jazz and American popular music, with a particular emphasis on the African diaspora.

From the Spanish perspective, García Martínez's El Jazz en España 1919 - 1996 (1996), looks at the Jazz tradition during the Spanish Fascist regime and its emergence through democracy. Whilst the relatively recent Burns documentary, Jazz (2000), looks at the subject of North American Jazz in depth, but significantly bypasses the Afro-Cuban or Spanish element within the genre.
The real challenge for this study has been to find literature that focuses specifically on the genre of Latin jazz. Chediak (1998) does signpost important figures within the genre, but does not deal with the influences between the cultures. Additional work from American, Cuban and Spanish authors has helped to establish a firm foundation of this style. From the United States there are authors such as John Storm Roberts (1999), Scott Yanow (2000), Raul Fernandez (2006), Luc Dellanoy (2000) and Isabelle Leymarie. In part, the work of Spaniards Francisco Nuñez (Nuñez & Linares 1998a, 1998b), and Fernando Trueba (2001), whilst María Teresa Linares (Nuñez & Linares 1998a, 1998b), and Leonardo Acosta (2003) in Cuba have also contributed to the knowledge of this genre.

Roberts outlines an assessment on the cultural impact on the US from Hispanic styles. He begins to explore and uncover the Spanish and Cuban influence within North America. In his work, The Latin Tinge (Roberts 1979), he looks at the Cuban role in the birth of Jazz, the influence of Jazz during the development of traditional Son Cuban Music, through to the modern Latin jazz styles during the 1970s.

Scott Yanow further explores the link between Cuba and the United States in his listening companion Afro-Cuban Jazz (Yanow 2000). Yanow is a noted jazz journalist, having previously focused on American jazz. The work Afro-Cuban Jazz is valuable as it reviews recordings of Latin jazz. Yanow (2008) admits that the most difficult part of writing the book in 2000 was the lack of books on the subject, but this gap in research is gradually being addressed.

Authors such as Dellanoy (2000), and Leymarie (2003) further explore this connection between Cuba and the United States during the 20th century. These works however, do not encompass the full phenomenon of the lday Vuelta. They speak of the influence from Africa, and the Spanish but they largely bypass the significance of the Vuelta back to Spain.
For example, in Dellanoy’s *Caliente! A history of Latin jazz* (2000) he mentions Flamenco jazz for five pages and chooses to focus the majority of his 400 page book to the link between Cuba and the United States. In Leymarie’s book *Latin jazz* (2003a) she chooses to mention the Spanish tinge in Latin jazz, but only dedicates one paragraph to Latin jazz in Europe, and in this paragraph, Spain is not mentioned. This shows that some academics do not associate Flamenco Jazz as Latin jazz, a link that I pursue in this work.

The SGAE (Sociedad General de Autores y Editores) saw this gap and commissioned the work *La Ida y Vuelta* (1998), which unravels the original interactions between Spain and Cuba, the effect Spain had on Cuba and vice versa. Núñez’s claim that the *habanera* is the cornerstone of Flamenco music brings the style and the depth of interaction into new light. However this book focuses on the colonial links between Spain and Cuba and not specifically on Latin jazz.

Trueba’s (2001) film, *Calle 54*, examines this commonality of Latin within Latin jazz, and the film’s popularity has begun to open Latin jazz to a larger audience. Trueba chooses to display a collection of performances that showcase different styles within Latin jazz, and examines various points of its evolution with artists who can claim to form major milestones of the genre. Included in the DVD is a documentary that looks into the styles and collaborations in more depth through interviews with the artists. However, it is not a scholarly work, nor does it intend to be. Instead, the documentary bases itself largely on the first hand account of the artists, and their experiences. Nevertheless the impact of the approach demonstrates the effectiveness of combining interview and musical analysis, as opposed to written books.

The film has led to further collaborations. Since its release Latin jazz has continued to mature, and in part, I looked into the cultural aspects and the reasons why many musicians are moving to Spain and forming a stronger foundation and fusion between Flamenco, Jazz and Cuban music.
My work looks into bringing another perspective into this genre, taking into account work previously researched and collated, this in turn enhancing my knowledge foundation, whilst imparting a portion of this subject in a new medium. The work’s aim is to distil what Latin jazz is to a new audience, such as young people, radio listeners or podcasters that have not encountered this style. Through the radio documentary I hope to break it down into examples that the listener can understand.

The research also has implications for my own artistic practice, building upon my original knowledge base and allowing me to explore new fusions with greater confidence and understanding.

**The Radio Documentary genre**

With the multitude of multimedia formats, one might consider the radio documentary a genre set in the margins of modern broadcasting. The introduction of television could have relegated radio, but it did not. Instead, it has endured and adapted with digital radio and podcasts expanding the genre. It is easier today to listen to radio, not only in ones local area, but radio from around the world. Whilst the format is evolving, the process of reporting and producing a radio documentary is largely unchanged (Kern 2008). The aim is the same, to convey a story and to engage an audience.

A radio documentary gives the chance to tell a story in more depth. Audio should add to the story (Chantler & Stewart 2003). It should enhance the argument, with longer features having the benefit of being allowed to be more creative, using sound effect, music as well as speech (Chantler & Stewart 2003).
The nature of my work, discussing Latin jazz, suits the radio documentary format. The frustration that I have previously encountered was that the written word does not accurately express emotions, or the sense of what the music sounds like Latin jazz. Having the music played, bypasses this problem. The ability to explain Latin jazz through the voice of the artists and to punctuate their points through musical examples makes an audio presentation an ideal choice.

However, to create a successful radio documentary, one must understand traits that work in this genre.

**Structure and pacing**

To engage an audience over 50 mins, it is important to maintain a pace and structure, that informs the audience whilst engaging them. A good documentary allows the story to unfold in front of the listener (Stephen 2001).

A compelling, character-rich story with the common thread of Latin jazz is what I was after. The aim was to engage the audience through the narrative of musician’s words, perspectives and their music. A technique that if done well, helps the flow of the whole work (Stephen 2001). Each topic covered was broken into sections, with musical examples specifically chosen.

Most sections were 5 minutes in length, transitioning into the next topic. Topics needed to be succinct as the intention of this documentary was not to be comprehensive in all areas of Latin jazz as this would be impossible within the 50 minute time frame. Rather, it aimed to introduce new listeners to Latin jazz, cover essential points within the style and to demonstrate syncretism through music and personal accounts. The use of music conveyed the information in a more direct manner.
Throughout my work, I have endeavoured to have a structure and pacing which is crucial to engage an audience. I wanted to describe Latin jazz and its elements through the voice of the artists, and through their music. I also wanted to give a sense of space, and location to convey the syncretic movement of the style.

Wherever possible, the editing and fluidity of the work was to give a sense of conversation between the artists. Statements independently made, reinforcing points and explaining Latin jazz. Musical examples were carefully chosen to exemplify the point or to give space within the work. Likewise, sound effects were used to transport the listener to different locations, times in history and maintaining continuity. Examples of this can be heard with the opening soundscape depicting the old docks in Cuba, juxtaposed with Latin jazz. Soundscapes along with narrative were used to help the transition to the present day and to introduce the musicians.

As Kern states, it is reporting with your ears (Kern 2008).

The right sound – the whine of an air raid siren in wartime, the echoes in a building abandoned because of a chemical spill, the roar of the trading pit in Chicago – can substitute for dozens or hundreds of words, and can be as descriptive and evocative as a photograph.

(Kern 2008, p. 3)

This technique is essential within radio documentaries.

**It has to tell a story**

The narrative, or the art of storytelling is at the heart of all documentaries. This is because, without a story with tension, leading us to the next chapter or topic, the audience quickly switches off. This concept was important within the creation of my work. As Davis Isay states, Radio documentaries are a form of storytelling (Ludtke 2001).
For example, the introduction lays the bed of what is to come. The specifics of rhythm, melody and the music’s construction introduce the characters within the music, however the underlying narrative is that of the musicians. Their interactions with these characters give way to their own personal story, of fusion and migration. The end result being the fusion of Latin jazz. At the end of the documentary, the tension is released when the listener is rewarded with long music examples covering all that had been discussed previously. Although this is an academic work, the creativity and use of editing, and the choice musical examples were examined in great depth.
Chapter 1: Cultural, social and syncretic evolution towards Latin jazz

In the beginning…

“I study what came before so I know where to go”

Andy González (Singer 1983, p. 183)

In Latin jazz, there is a strong relationship not only between Cuba and the United States, but also Spain and Africa. This led me to the phenomenon of La Ida y Vuelta.

Throughout this chapter, I shall look at the syncretic phenomenon of the Ida y Vuelta, and specifically three elements that have had a lasting effect on this genre. I chose the literary form of the Décima, the religious and musical inclusion of Santería, and the form and influence of the habanera style. There are many historical elements that have influenced Latin jazz, however I believe that through these examples I can begin to demonstrate the interconnectivity between the cultures, the enduring influence through musical traits that still exists in this music, and the influence between the cultures that one would not automatically associate.

The original Ida y Vuelta: Spanish influence on Cuba

Cuba’s location has given it a strategic importance, both commercially through its sugar production and as a transit point to other destinations in the New World. This in turn meant that Cubans were presented with many influences from the travellers who visited (Rivero 2006). As Hill states, there was a true multiethnic Cuban culture during the first 250 years of Spanish rule. Spanish Creoles, enslaved Indians, West Africans, free people or runaways from these groups, intermixed at the level of work, sex and marriage (Hill 1998).
Spanish migration to Cuba at different points in history, along with the African slave trade that was needed for the Cuban sugar industry, created an African influence on Spanish-Cuban music. This can be found in the typical rhythmic patterns, and in common use of call-and-response melodic patterns. These early musical styles were well established in the 18th century. However, the roots of modern Cuban music are found in the 19th century (Hill 1998). Having said this, modern Cuban music still maintains musical traits from these early influences.

These influences range from musical instruments introduced into the island, language, and musical forms. Most importantly, there is the rhythmic link that is the basis and influence for Cuban music, American Jazz and Spanish Flamenco.

**Décima**

The structure and form of a song that has greatly influenced the style of Rumba Flamenco and in turn Latin jazz is the décima. The décima is a poetic composition, and as its name implies, the décima has ten stanzas (Herrera-Sobek 1996). The melodies can change, but the imperative aspect of the décima is its poetic form. In this section I shall focus on the structure and syncretic movement of the décima.

The earliest record of this style was in the 6th century. Ibero-Muslim poets used them in the 11th and 12th centuries and by the 15th century the style was widespread throughout the kingdom of Castille (Pasmanick 1997), now modern Spain.

The décima style flourished throughout Spain, especially in rural areas, as it was easy to put to music. It was due to this that poets in Andalusia and the Canary Islands quickly appropriated the form (Pasmanick 1997). This is important as the Spanish slave trade passed through these ports (Scelle 1910), once again imposing its influence.
Pasmanick also corroborates this, stating that African Cubans could have known of the *décima* very early on. The first Africans brought to Cuba were not taken directly from Africa, but via Seville, where they were probably immersed in the Hispano-Moorish culture of that Andalusian city (Pasmanick 1997).

Vicente Espinel then formalised the *décima* as a literary genre in the 16th century. This is why the form is sometimes referred to as *espinela*. The *décima* soon travelled throughout Cuba and the New World and is now still popular in the countries and territories where the Spanish influence extended (Herrera-Sobek 1996).

The form has a few variants, however one of the earliest forms consists of an ABBA ACCD DC form.

Pasmanick provides an example of one of the earliest forms of *décima* in the table reproduced below. The English companion piece is on the right, and is not a literal translation, but rather translated with the structure and rhythm of the *décima* in mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hace tiempo que quisiera</td>
<td>For a long time I've been wanting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>una décima cantar</td>
<td>a fine <em>décima</em> to sing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>en la rumba y gozar</td>
<td>in the <em>rumba</em> and to bring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>su cadencia placentera</td>
<td>its cadence so pure and haunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>que proviene de la era</td>
<td>its structure, complex and daunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>de Calderon de la Barca</td>
<td>from Iberia's golden age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>y que luego se embarca</td>
<td>on the farm and on the stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>al gran mundo pan-hispano</td>
<td>wherever Spanish is spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>donde se hable el castellano</td>
<td><em>décima</em> still reigns unbroken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>la espinela es monarca</td>
<td>on the tongue and on the page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coro: Que la vida es sueno, y los sueños suenos son</td>
<td>Chorus: Life is but a dream, and dreams are dreams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Pasmanick 1997, p. 254)
The décima form is especially present in Rumba due to its rhythmic stresses as explained by Pasmanick.

Its inherently rhythmic pattern of stressed syllables and pairs of rhymes repeated unequally yet regularly is a linguistic emulation of the continuo parts of the Rumba. In this way an arcane poetic or literary device becomes another rhythmic element in the Rumba gestalt.

(Pasmanick 1997, p. 254)

The main form in which the décima is used is in the punto cubano. The punto cubano is described by Manuel as one of the core links between Cuba and Spain, due to its distinctive singing verses, predominately in the décima style, with standardised melodic and accompanying patterns. The punto cubano continued to then influence the Spanish zarzuela theatre in the late 1800s (Manuel 2004).

By its nature, the décima also created a framework where improvisation could emerge, and the verb décimar means to improvise décimas (Pasmanick 1997).

This form remains relatively unchanged and is still used today. It remains a constant link between the early Ida y Vuelta, and is a demonstration of the strong intertwining between these countries at their earliest crossroads.
Santería

One of the cultural influences that impose itself onto Latin jazz is that of the religion of Santería. As a religious movement Santería travelled from West Africa with the Yoruba people, established itself in Cuba and eventually to New York (Cornelius 1999). The Yoruba religion evolved parallel to that of the Roman Catholic Church. With over 1000 orishas (Santería deities) or gods (Delannoy 2000), the African gods were syncretised with Catholic saints (Hill 1998).

This was allowed by the Catholic church as Cornelius describes; “rather than try to destroy traditional beliefs, the church embraced the stance whereby the traditional religion would be allowed to continue and gradually become influenced by Christian teachings” (Cornelius 1999, p. 12).

This syncretism was important with certain saints and orishas merging their traits. In other instances, it was actually in the interest of the Africans to camouflage the orishas as saints, so that the church would not interfere with their true religious practices (Cornelius 1999).

In relation to Latin jazz, the importance of percussionists comes to the fore, through the secular batá drumming from the Santería tradition. Batá drumming is played with three double-headed hourglass shaped drums. The drums are called Okónkolo, Itólele and Iyá. Traditional Batá can be played with three drummers only or with an additional vocal part (Ortiz 1950). Within Batá, there are countless permutations and it is not the aim of this work to analyse them all. However, the importance is the fact that percussionists with the Santería tradition influenced Latin jazz, and the style itself continues the syncretic movement from Africa to the United States.
This can be seen as the secular batá drumming from the *Santería* tradition was prominent in New York between 1955 and 1959. It included important musicians within Latin jazz such as Frank “Machito” Grillo (creator of the Afro-Cubans, one of the first Afro-Cuban jazz bands) (Chediak 1998) and Mario Bauzá (credited with creating Afro-Cuban jazz) (Chediak 1998). Bauzá was the musician that introduced Dizzy Gillespie to Afro-Cuban drummer Chano Pozo (Vega 1995) in 1946 (Delannoy 2000) which is what many perceived as the inception of modern Latin jazz. However, as Washburne concluded, “it would be more accurate to state that they reintroduced and revitalized” (Washburne 1997) the Latin connection.

During the late 1950s, there was a great influx of Afro-Cuban drummers such as Chano Pozo, Mongo Santamaria and Patato Valdés. However, as Cornelius states, the deeper intricacies of batá drumming in New York are thanks to Julio Collazo and Francisco Aguabella (Cornelius 1999). As Julio Collazo describes in an interview to Marta Vega, the musicians from Cuba were surrounded by *Santería* practice, so this influence was brought to New York city, along with the “philosophy, belief system and rituals” (Vega 1995). The influence of the *Santería* movement continues to this day, with artists such as Jerry González and Chucho Valdés incorporating rhythms and traditional orisha influences in their music.

Chucho Valdés is particularly interested in the heritage of traditional Cuban music, having studied the evolution from Africa through the secular music of *Santería*. He fuses Jazz with traditional Rumba styles and African elements, all of which can be clearly heard. An example of this folkloric style can be heard on his record *Yemayá* (Valdés & Grupo Irakere 1998). In it, Valdés demonstrates his virtuosic attributes on the keyboard, demonstrating a style that is jazz with a strong traditional Latin base. The music and arrangements are complex, disciplined but swinging hard.
Puerto Rican New Yorker (New Yorican), Jerry González also has a strong view of fusing traditional music from sacred Batá drumming and develops this by incorporating the traditional with bop. Using four percussionists, Jerry emphasises the rhythmic roots and fusion with bebop on his Obatálá record (González & Band 1989). Chants sung in African pay homage to the orishas, and clearly demonstrate the link from the African heritage, whilst utilising modern jazz instrumentation to create the fusion of Latin jazz.

**Habanera**

One of the defining influences, Nuñez suggests that the habanera has shaped a great part of Hispano-American and European music (1998b). Through the habanera, we can begin to see the Fro between Cuba and Spain. As Nuñez states, the habanera is omnipresent within Flamenco (1998b). There are many facets of the habanera, amongst them the previously mentioned décima. However, the backbone of this rhythm that transcends all styles is that of the clave. In fact, in all of these styles the clave is the crucial element that binds them all together, for this reason the habanera is one of the focal points within the Ida y Vuelta.

The habanera clave is the forerunner and has influenced Cuban music, American jazz but also Spanish Flamenco, in a true point of mergence.

Habanera

Clave

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Fig. 2} & \quad (Orovio 1981, p. 237)
\end{align*}\]

The creation of the habanera is actually through a fusion of the French contradanse, popular during the 19th century. This musical style was adopted throughout Europe, with the Spanish calling it the contradanza and the English the countrydance (Nuñez & Linares 1998b).
This French influence emerged through Haitian migration, with the main migration occurring during the Haitian slave revolt of 1791 (Hill 1998).

As Hill explains, the emergence of this style is in Cuba.

When the Haitians arrived in Cuba around 1800, they brought with them a wide variety of musical styles. The French Creole estate owners were entertained by string orchestras called orquestas típicas. They played set dances, especially the contradanza, a version of the popular European quadrille. The contradanza, a couples dance, was the rage among the estate-owning class in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It consists of a series of separate dances, which are performed in turn by a group of male and female pairs. The enslaved people had their own version of this music called the tumba francesa.

(Hill 1998, p. 193)

The countrydance which is generally written in 6/8 was transformed into a binary form of 2/4 that created the habanera rhythm (Nuñez & Linares 1998b). Essentially, the rhythmic character changed through the Haitian assimilation for two reasons, the majority of the population were black, be they slaves or free citizens, and they liked to give their own flavour to the music. In effect, changing the rhythm as they heard it (Fernandez, N 1989). This created the “ritmo de tango” or habanera rhythm which is also essential within the andaluz tango, (Fernandez, N 1989) and is the precursor of the Argentine tango.
In Cuba, this style evolved as both the *orquestra típica* and the *tumba francesa* which influenced the *danzón* in the late 19th century (Hill 1998), whilst in Spain it remained in the *habanera* form. Its influence was largely on the port cities of Spain, due once again to the effect of the *Ida y Vuelta*. However, the *habanera* also evolved into many forms of Flamenco rhythms, for instance the *tanguillo* and *pasodoble* are direct descendents of the *habanera* (Nuñez & Linares 1998b). Mairena demonstrated an outline of various rhythmic evolutions within Flamenco as per the timeline following.

Like in Afro-Cuban music, in Flamenco there is a myriad of styles. It is not the intention of this exergesis to go into detail for each and every one of them. However, with the following example one can see the evolution of Flamenco and it’s relationship with Cuban styles and a direct relationship through the *Ida y Vuelta*. 
THE EVOLUTION OF THE
"IDA Y VUELTA" GENRES

SPANISH ROMANCE
XV and XVI Century

PUNTO OF
HAVANA

CUBAN TANGO

VARABI and
TRISTES

MILONGA

TANGO
AMILONGAO

FLAMENCO
GUAJIRA

FLAMENCO
MILONGA

VIDALITA

COLOMBIANAS
TIENTOS
MARIANAS
GARROTIN
FARRUCA
FLAMENCO
RUMBA

FRENCH COUNTRY DANCE
(XVIII Century)

SPANISH
COUNTRY DANCE
(CONTRADANZA)

FRANCO-AMERICAN
COUNTRY DANCE
(6/8)

HABANERA DANCE

HABANERA (XIX Century)

AMERICAN TANGO
(In Spain)

TANGO GADITANO

TANGO CUBANO

TANGO ZAPATEADO

CUBAN GUARACHA

TEATRO VERNACULO

RUMBITAS and GUAGUANCó

The first inception of the *habanera*’s influence into Spain, and for that matter into Europe, is during the mid 19th century where this rhythmic cell was the basis of the *American Tango* later known as the *Tango Gaditano*. This new style emerged when there were a lot of songs from the maritime tradition popular at the time (Nuñez & Linares 1998b).

Whilst it was emerging in Europe, the great majority of *habanera* songs spoke fondly of the relationship of Cuba and Spain. This continued through to the Flamenco style as can be seen in this example by Flamenco composer and singer Pepe Marchena. This verse was crossed with the *guajiras flamencas* style and is once more in the *décima* form, but this work is from the 20th century.

```
Es la mulata un terrón   The mulatto girl is a cube
de azucar canela hecho   of cinammon sugar
que arrimándoselo al pecho coming closer to the chest
quita el mal de corazón. taking away the heartache.
Ella vive con el don She lives with the gift
y a ningún hombre maltrata of not mistreating any man
y si la llaman ingrata and if someone calls her
es más dulce que la uva ungrateful
del azúcar que hay en Cuba she is sweeter than the sugar
la mejor es la mulata. of the grapes that are in Cuba
```

(Nuñez 1998b translated González 2008, p.198)
One of the most famous habanera’s is Yradier’s La Paloma (1860), composed after a visit to Cuba, and extremely popular in 19th century Spain and Latin America. His most recognised habanera to Western audiences is “El Arreglito”. Even though the composer died in obscurity, it is recognisable since Bizet used it in his famous Aria, “Habañera” from the opera Carmen. As Landormy explains, Bizet transcribed and arranged the work, which he found in an album published in 1864 under the titles “Chansons espagnoles del maestro Yradier” (Landormy & Rothwell 1926).

The influence between jazz and Spanish styles, specifically the habanera was studied by Elliot (1922).

In looking over some of this modern Spanish music one would be inclined to think that its authors were intimately acquainted with the intricacies of our rhythms, did we not soon realize that the shoe is on the other foot, that the Spanish folk-dances from which they drew their inspiration, of which more anon, have also in some unknown fashion strongly influenced our jazz.

The resemblance shows itself in many ways. Perhaps the most striking is the close resemblance of the triplet figure so familiar in the habanera, Tango, and other Spanish dances, to a typical syncopation. By making the first note of the triplet a sixteenth instead of an eighth and dotting the second note thus \[ \cdot \cdot \cdot \] we produce something that is jazz, but is very close to the Spanish. Inversely, we can Habanerize jazz.

(Elliott 1922, p. 414)

Jelly Roll Morton went as far as claiming that the Spanish tinge was the difference between jazz and ragtime.

In fact if you can’t manage to put tinges of Spanish in your tunes, you will never be able to get the right seasoning for jazz.

Jelly Roll Morton (Roberts 1999, p. 39)
This Latin tinge that Jelly Roll Morton was referring to was that of the habanera. It was the specific rhythm of the habanera that Jelly Roll Morton heard in early New Orleans Jazz. (O’Farrill 2005). This corroborates Elliot’s previous assertions.

Evidence suggests that the habanera style cultivated in Cuba, is a key influence on the inception of Jazz and Flamenco music (Brewer 1999; Elliott 1922; Fernandez, N 1989; Nuñez & Linares 1998b). The cultural heritage and percussive movement through Santeria emerge firstly through Cuban traditional music in the early 20th century. It subsequently becomes a direct influence into the North American Jazz scene. This is coupled with the Rumba style drumming influenced through the habanera and the strophic form of the decima style that outlines the majority of Rumba forms. Not only does this form influence Cuban Rumba, but it also defines Spanish verse and is a foundation stone of Iberian music.

**Many links draw together**

The three elements of Santería, Décima and the habanera all demonstrate a simple principle. Through syncretic movement, through cultures mixing and essentially networking an evolution of the music occurs. This is unavoidable, especially when cultures are similar and the musical influences derived from the same source.

This social movement through networks is an area which Newman, Watts and Strogatz (2002) are exploring in a mathematical to explain social movement, social interaction. In addition, Barabasi (2005) looks at this movement through the importance of hubs framework of networks. Spain, Cuba and the United States can be considered hubs, which would allow for the syncretic movement and evolution of Latin jazz.
The *Santería*, *Décima* and the *habanera* are only partial influences within Latin jazz, but through these examples one can see how syncretism occurs through the movement of African drums in the United States, that the *habanera* and its clave form a point of reference in jazz and flamenco music and that the poetic form of *Décima* still survives to this day.

Artists borrow elements from various styles to create their music today, and Latin jazz is a distillation of these styles. In the next chapter, I look at the components of Latin jazz, and important elements that have survived and show links that I argue is a new *Ida y Vuelta* that is occurring today.
Chapter 2: The common construct of Afro Cuban Jazz, Cubop, and Flamenco Jazz

What is Latin jazz?

“Es una mezcla de varios vocabularios que hace surgir una lengua nueva”.

“It’s a mixture of various vocabularies that creates a new language”.

Tío Pancho, writer. New York, June 1999

(Delannoy 2000, p. 400)

Each artist I interviewed had their own definition of Latin jazz. Domínguez’s definition elegantly links these various opinions together. For him Latin jazz is the expression of the musicians with this common language of Spanish. “It is the creative expression of Latin musicians” (Domínguez 2006, p. 81).

When one looks at Latin jazz as a creative expression of Latin musicians, it makes sense that the musicians will utilise elements familiar to them. It also makes sense that these styles can fuse easily due to their prior relationship and point of mergence, as covered briefly in the previous chapter.

These new fusions and the adaptability of the musicians have created a blurring of styles, as Chano Domínguez explains speaking specifically about his music:

I couldn’t tell you when Jazz begins and ends in Flamenco, or where Flamenco starts and ends in Jazz in my music. I think I am a bilingual musician, I am a musician that has been formed in two types of languages and in my case these two types of languages are more than merely fused, it’s inside me.

(Domínguez 2006, p. 94)
The question is, what are the elements that are so easily accessible to Latin jazz artists? Within this chapter I intend to look at specific common constructs that make up Latin jazz: the elements of the rhythm, bass, harmony, instrumentation and the importance of improvisation coupled with the core concept of clave. I want to look at how they work together, the mixture of instrumentation within the genre and to demonstrate the commonalities that allow for fusion.

**Rhythm**

“sin la seccion completa de percusiones afrocubanas no hay jazz latino, sino solamente un jazz con acompanamiento latino”.

“without the complete Afro-Cuban percussion section there is no Latin jazz, but only a jazz with latin accompaniment”.

Eddie Palmieri (Delannoy 2000, p. 20)

Both Palmieri and Martínez (2006) emphasise the importance of percussion in driving this genre. Its rhythmic complexity is a feature that allows percussionists to express themselves much more creatively than through other outlets. Within this style percussionists are given more freedom to be soloists. It is obvious that rhythm continues to be the bedrock upon which this style sits, but the importance is not solely on timekeeping. Musicians are expected to feel the rhythmic complexities more intimately than in other styles. They are expected to understand the clave, its relationship within the group and use it as their “rhythmic” time signature.

Previously in popular Cuban music, only small percussion was present (eg. clave, maracas). However, in 1936, Santos Ramírez introduced to the Son the larger conga, previously only reserved for Rumbas. Four years later Arsenio Rodriguez transformed the Son style by adding a conga, some trumpets and a piano to the traditional seven piece Son group (Delannoy 2000).
The fusion within Latin jazz has allowed the mixture of the drum kit, congas, and timbales along with other traditional instruments. However recently, perhaps due to economic reasons, the drum kit has incorporated many elements of the timbale player (saving on an additional musician), and the conga player uses not only one drum, but multiple drums, combining traditional rhythms into new rhythms that can be covered by one player (as opposed to a minimum of three players used in a traditional setting).

More recently, the use of other instrumentation not normally associated with these styles gives a new hybrid character, but at the same time enters the foray seamlessly. An example of this is the combination of Flamenco guitar, *cajón* with jazz trumpet, drumkit and Cuban percussion or piano. One commonality between all these instruments, and any player within Latin jazz is the core concept of clave.

**Clave**

To understand the clave’s importance, one must first define it. A barrier to understanding is the mystifying quality many musicians associate with it. For example, conguero Patato Valdés stated that “The clave can neither be given nor be bought. One is born with it, it is a question of feeling” (Leymarie 2003a, p. 37).

Clave literally means “key” in Spanish, and it is understood to mean the “key to the music”. This might be a coincidence, as Ortiz states that the word clave is most probably derived from the word *clavija* which is a small cylindrical piece of wood used in naval architecture (Ortiz 1952).
The typical instrument called the clave is two cylindrical pieces of wood hit together. The rhythms they play do not usually vary, and become the backbone of the music. There are many variants of clave, depending on the style of music. Certain claves work with certain rhythms, and the term clave is used broadly.

Ed Uribe speaks of the concept of the clave and its importance to many styles:

> The concept of Clave (both the rhythm and the instrument) has descended from generation to generation through various African cultures, and its influence can be found in all music where African culture has had a presence. It is present in the Spanish rhythms of the Flamenco styles, (predating any New World explorations by the Spanish), and in practically all Central and South American and Caribbean musical styles. Because the development of styles in the Caribbean and Latin America developed through the integration of the African and the Spanish, the clave’s significant presence is a given.

(Uribe 1996, p. 34)

There are many different claves but there are specific claves that are used more often in Latin jazz or the new emerging fusions in Spain.
Cuban Clave

Cuban music features numerous claves. Three specific, prominent claves in Cuba are the Son or 2-3 clave, the Rumba or 3-2 clave and the 6/8 clave that is linked with the evolution of these claves and those of the Flamenco claves.

The naming of 2-3 or 3-2 clave has been imposed by other cultures as they have looked to understand the construct of Latin music. As Uribe states, “traditionally speaking there is really no such thing as 3-2 or 2-3 clave.” (Uribe 1996), but rather Rumba or Son clave.

This description of 2-3 or 3-2 clave has been brought about through Western musicology, as it makes it easier to initially understand the clave and its relation to rhythms that lock into it. However in Cuba, simply Son or Rumba clave will suffice as the instruments lock into the clave rhythm, and in Spain or Cuba, it is not referred to as 2-3 or 3-2 as I discovered when I studied and played in Cuba and Spain.

In other words, the piece will only fit into the clave one way, and the difference between the two is the syncopation of the clave, that dictates the melody. For example the Son clave, does not have to start on the two side for it to be correct. It is the syncopation of the clave that determines melodic lines and rhythms that can be used. This can be seen in Figure 16 where the Son clave is indeed used, but starts on the “3” side, however the melodic line is relative to the clave.

Son or 2 – 3 clave

![Fig. 4](attachment:claves.png)
*Guaguancó or Rumba or 3 – 2 clave*

![Fig. 5](image1)

*Afro 6/8 Basic Bell Pattern*

![Fig. 6](image2)

*African Yoruba Clave*

![Fig. 7](image3)

The above examples illustrate that the clave is divided into two bars or sections. This creates an ebb and flow effect that gives momentum to the music. In the Son clave, two notes in one bar are followed by three notes on the alternate side (this is why it is called the 2-3 clave). The feeling created can be seen as a ying and yang effect. As Uribe states, the rhythms are phrased to sync with the clave (Uribe 1996).
Now, between the Son and Rumba claves, one can see the relationship between them and how they relate and evolve from each other.

![Afro Variants compared to Son and Rumba Clave](Uribe 1996, p. 37)

**Cinquillo**

The next step that one can see in the relationship is that of the Cinquillo. Cinquillo in Spanish means quintuplet. It is a form of clave that originates from Haitian folkloric music.

![Cinquillo](sic)

![Fig. 9 Cinquillo](Uribe 1996, p. 52)

The Cinquillo is not an exact quintuplet. However, as Uribe describes, if you stretch it whilst you play, it may sound like a quintuplet. The relationship between the clave and the Cinquillo is shown as we look at the Son clave, and its common traits with the Cinquillo.

![Son Clave compared to Cinquillo](Uribe 1996, p. 52)
**Flamenco Clave**

The final comparison comes from the observation of one particular clave rhythm within Flamenco: the *Bulería*. As we saw previously, there is a relationship between the 6/8 clave and the *Son* and *Rumba* claves. This was further compared to the *Cinquillo*, so essentially five hits are the common trait between them all.

However the Flamenco rhythms or *palos*, resulted from the cultural influence of Moorish habitation of Spain (Manuel, 1989). That in turn brought musical influences from the Arab style, and rhythmic elements from the West African drumming tradition.

The most dynamic of the rhythms within Flamenco is that of the *Bulería*. This clave is also used in *Soleá*, with the tempo being slower than *Bulería*.

![Bulería Clave](image1)

Fig. 11

However, to further confuse the situation when performed it usually starts on the accented beat 12.

![Bulería Clave](image2)

Fig. 12
It can also be notated with mixed metre. As Nuñez writes, this mixed metre denotes an Indian character (Nuñez & Linares 1998b).

![Fig. 13](McGill 2004, p. 17)

Once again we see the common trait of five accented beats. Domínguez also notices this connection.

I also see that the claves link together. The Cuban clave that is 2-3 (|••••|••••), is 5 hits right? Well the Flamenco claves are also 5 hits! For instance the *Bulería* clave has 5 hits (••••|••••) 1(23) 1(23) 1(2) 1(2). If you really begin to investigate and delve profoundly into the rhythms of each culture, you become aware that we are not that far apart from each other.

(Domínguez 2006, p. 85)

It may be suggested that if one stretches the clave slightly, similar to what occurred with the *Cinquillo*, one might see commonalities between the *Rumba* clave and the *Buleria* clave. As Domínguez states in the previous quote, the rhythms of each culture are not that far apart.

![Fig. 14](Afro 6/8 Clave compared with Rumba Clave compared with Buleria Clave)
Clave and Melody

The relationship between clave and percussion section makes more sense and is easier to see with interlocking grooves, in appendix ix. However, what is the relationship between the melody line and the clave? This is a question that is trickier to musicians, especially without the initial understanding of the clave.

As Martínez recounts,

I have on video Dexter Gordon trying to “blow” on a montuno with the Machito Orchestra, and he was going nuts ‘cos he couldn’t get into the syncopation.

(Martínez, B 2006, p. 173)

He continues talking about the clave, and the melody.

You can write it down, [but] you just need to know where it goes, because it depends on where it’s being played on the tune. How the tune goes, you know. There’s a place where it’s either 3-2 or 2-3, that’s where you’ve got to know how to figure it out. If you figure out that right you can feel it. When you are doing it right, you can feel it because it just flows with the rhythm.

(Martínez, B 2006, p. 178)
If it does not occur, you can “fall out of clave”. As Cuban musicologist Grenet states, to play out of clave:

Produce such a notorious discrepancy between the melody and the rhythm that it becomes unbearable to ears accustomed to our music.

Emilio Grenet (Roberts 1999, p. 4)

The melody needs to lock in with the clave. Uribe shows examples of this.

Notice how the phrasing of the melody changes to be in sync with the clave. Even if the clave is not played, it is inferred within the phrasing of the music.
**Percussion**

Now that we have a basic understanding of what clave is, we can see how the percussion and rhythm is vital within this style.

**Drum kit**

In jazz, the use of the drum kit is fundamental. Its use within Latin and Flamenco is a little trickier. The use of the drum kit in these styles means that the kit emulates rhythms from traditional instruments. In both these styles, the artist’s limb independence is essential as they can be expected to play a multitude of different parts in one fused version. These parts can be highly syncopated, and the player must draw from what the percussion plays to make it more authentic (Uribe 1996).

The use of the drum kit can be beneficial as the artist can infuse jazz, Latin or Flamenco elements easily on the same instrument, or in partnership with other percussion instruments.

**Congas**

The importance of the percussionist continues to revolve around the congas. In many respects, it is the driving force behind this music with influences from *Santería* coming to the fore, but it is an instrument that truly embodies the formation of Afro-Cuban jazz. Until the 1930s, it was always an instrument of the “*Rumba* of the streets” (Delannoy 2000, p. 154).

Congas have evolved, from having a group of three congueros playing traditional rhythms, to the modern setup of a single conguero playing three, four or even six drums. This set up fuses different rhythms played by many, to combined rhythms. Various drums allow for more melodic conga lines, whilst maintaining the economics of having less players.
This importance is also seen with the addition of a conga player to bebop, to combining the Afro Cuban rhythms with the jazz harmonies of bebop. Therefore, it is not surprising that influential conga players have always been at the fore of ground breaking Latin jazz groups. For a list of influential Latin jazz artists, including congueros see appendix viii.

**Flamenco Cajón**

The most prominent Flamenco percussion instrument, other than handclaps or castanets, is the *cajón*. Previously, there was no main percussive instrument apart from hand clapping, castanets and the *taconeo*, or the percussive element of the actual dancing (McGill 2004). One again, fusion has aided with the introduction of the *cajón*, which is now considered as another instrument forming part of the Flamenco family.

The original Cuban *cajón* ("box" in Spanish) was made from a packing crate, typically for transporting salted cod. Original Cuban *Rumba* rhythms were played on the Cuban *cajones* by dockworkers in their free time. Eventually, these boxes were replaced with congas, whilst the rhythms survived (Delannoy 2000). The tradition of boxes spread throughout South America, most noticeably in Peru.
The *cajón* that is used in Flamenco and new versions of Latin jazz originates from Peru. It is a simple instrument and consists of a thin piece of wood, loosely nailed to the front of the instrument. Jingles can be used inside, with variations using a guitar string as a snare giving the sound bite and resonance.

The *cajón* was introduced into Flamenco during the late seventies when a party was held at the Spanish Embassy in Lima. The renowned *cajón* player Caitro Soto was in attendance and offered a Peruvian *cajón* to Paco de Lucía as a gift. Lucía’s percussionist, Rubem Dantas adapted the instrument to Flamenco which up to that moment had been limited in its musical expression to the guitar, singing and dance (McGill 2004).

![Bulería](image)

*(Mercader 2001, p. 19)*

**Fig. 19 Example of the *Bulería* rhythm played on the *cajón***

Since the first recording of the *cajón* in Flamenco, Lucía’s “Solo quiero caminar”, the *cajón* as a Flamenco instrument has been completely adopted, as McGill states:

> The instrument has been very successful among Flamenco artists, causing the birth of a generation of new Flamencos who adopted the *cajón* as their instrument, as a new introduction to Flamenco music, from Peru, coming through Madrid, for the rest of the world.

*(McGill 2004, p. 15)*
Today, the Flamenco *cajón*, played alongside congas and drum kit fit well together. One example is González's *Piratas del Flamenco* (González 2004), fusing Cuban and Flamenco sounds. Alain Pérez also replaced the congas with the *cajón* when he played in the Havana Latin jazz festival in 2001. He explains his rationale for doing this:

> I wanted to change the congas for the *cajón*, normally you always use congas in Latin jazz, and I wanted to change it because Piraña (the *cajón* player) had the concepts of Cuban music, the claves, of the rhythms and the *cajón* gave me another texture, another *swing* and it worked, it was fresh and you have to exploit this.

(Pérez 2006b, p. 147)

Although the *cajón* is a relatively new instrument in the Flamenco world, it has become indispensable and continues to be used outside its traditional setting in the new Latin jazz.

**The syncopation of the Latin Bassline**

The cornerstone of Cuban Latin jazz is the rhythm section. The movement and syncopation that predominantly drives the music comes from the bass line. Bassist Alain Pérez explains the importance of the bass line:

> The first thing is that it makes everyone want to dance, it should make everyone want to dance, and well, the bass is like a drum, it’s like the congas. It’s like a drum but with more notes and has a close relationship to the congas; the rhythms are engrained with each other.

(Pérez 2006b, p. 140)

One of the milestones of the style, comes from the creation of the *danzón* bass line by Israel “Cachao” Lopez. In an interview, Cachao explains how they created a new modern style from the traditional rhythms of the time.
We have all these types of music that are part of roots, the contradance, the traditional rhythms and many, many others. My brother and I took all these traditional sounds and turned them around, and that’s how in 1937, we came up with the mambo.  

(Anonymous 2008)

The traditional bass line rhythm once again locks into the clave, and the entire rhythm section. The bass line pattern is remarkable not only for its silent (or tied) downbeat (giving syncopation), but also for the manner in which the final note of the bar anticipates the harmony of the following bar (Manuel 1985).

As Rivero states, the danzón is very similar to the habanera (Rivero 2006), an influence used by López, and once again tying the traditional rhythms together.

Danzón Bass

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Fig. 20} & \quad \text{(Uribe 1996, p. 185)}
\end{align*}
\]

This feeling and anticipation can be fused into Flamenco, with such examples as Pérez’s playing on the song Casa Bernardo on de Lucía’s album Cositas Buenas (de Lucía 2004).
**Improvisation**

Improvisation is integral to all the three styles. The concept or ability to improvise within these genres allows the music to develop much faster. Ideas progress faster and musicians from different backgrounds, improvising with each other, influence the music in a more fluid form.

The jam session has always been part of this music. However, as Dellanoy states, the true meeting of jazz with Afro-Cuban rhythms occurs through these famous *descargas* (jam sessions) organised by the musicians themselves (Delannoy 2000). The term *descarga* came from the “*descarga de ideas musicales*” or the “unloading of musical ideas” (Delannoy 2000).

Pepe Rivero talks of this point of mergence, specifically between Cuba and North America.

> In Cuba, Jazz had its own performers, that already played a sort of Jazz, to put a name to all this improvised music. Those who were learned knew the difference to play Cuban improvised music, is very different to play *swing* or *bebop* or another thing. There was a time that Cuba belonged to the United States, and there was also jazz by itself, and the big band was the type of orchestra that was most recognizable, such as *El Tropicana* of modern music that had a broad range of music, because both American and Cuban music was played.

(Rivero 2006, p. 209)

As recounted by Manolo Saavedra, the first jazz jam sessions in Havana occurred in the late 1930s. The Tropicana in Havana was the famous meeting point for many musicians to improvise. The band at the Tropicana was a veritable who’s who of Cuban Jazz musicians, with most notably Bebo Valdés on piano. His son, Chucho Valdés would recount the musicians that would go to their house, Tata Güines, Peruchín, *Cachao*,
Ernesto Lecuona and Kike Hernández with both Chucho and his father improvising together (Delannoy 2000).

The Sunday afternoon Jam Sessions at the Tropicana became so famous, that a jam session that was organised by Bebo Valdés was recorded in 1952. This was the first time that a Latin jam session was recorded for commercial release, and the original piece was called Con Poco Coco (Arteaga 2003). This was to be the start of a wave of sessions that were recorded for release in the United States in the late 1950s. For the first time, Cuban music was made to be listened to, not only to dance to (Delannoy 2000). This tradition of descargas continues in Madrid, as Domínguez describes.

I love that there are Jam Sessions here at Cardamomo, and Flamenco and Cuban musicians mix together and they go off!

(Domínguez 2006, p. 96)

The importance of improvisation has given musicians the language and tools to develop Latin jazz at an extraordinary rate.

**Harmony**

Latin, Jazz and Flamenco music are genres richly enveloped with modes. Not simply the traditional modes, but the inclusion of non-Western scales borrowed from Arab, Indian and African music (Strunk 2008). It is not my intention to dissect the modes or chordal progressions within Latin jazz, but rather bring into context the relationship between all three.

The biggest development within the harmonic structure was to occur at the same time Latin jazz was emerging in the United States. In the 1940s Bebop was emerging with pioneers such as Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk. As Porter states, Bebop included:
rapid tempos, dissonant chords and melodic lines, tritone and other chordal substitutions, extensive chromaticism, off-beat piano accompaniment ("comping"), walking bass lines, poly-rhythmic drumming, and, perhaps most important, a focused, improvised soloing on the front-line instruments.

(Porter 1999, p. 422)

This focus on fast tempos and rhythmic drumming allowed the relationship between Bebop and Latin jazz to flourish. However, it is the chordal substitutions, the use of non-traditional modes and focus on soloing that perhaps have influenced Latin jazz the most.

The fusion of styles can clearly be heard when comparing the bebop standard *Donna Lee* written by Miles Davis. Charlie Parker’s (1944) recording demonstrates the traditional bebop attributes, whereas Pastorius (1976) begins to meld the latin element playing the piece as a solo, accompanied by Don Alias on congas. Further fusion occurs in 2004 when González records *Donnalí* on the album *Los Piratas del Flamenco*, where he combines Flamenco *cajón*. The Spanish guitar provides the Spanish fusion that he was exploring at the time (González 2004). In 2006, the piece comes full circle with Pérez’ (2006a) version taking a modern Latin jazz approach with arranged horns, voices, and percussion section and extended artist solos.

Thelonious Monk also influenced Latin jazz a great deal. González (1989) dedicated a complete album to his work in *Rumba para Monk* and Domínguez (2003) consistently uses his work as inspiration. Domínguez goes into detail regarding Monk’s inspiration, and the ability for his music to assimilate within Flamenco styles.
I have always seen Monk as Flamenco in character. So much himself, when you see him, as his manner in playing. For me, Monk is very natural to hear him in *Bulería*. He is a musician, when he plays you hear turns, phrases, notes, that if you took them out of context and you grabbed them with Pro Tools, and we put them in *Bulería* style with palmas. It would be perfect. Perfect!

(Domínguez 2006, p. 93)

As Domínguez continued to explain, Monk’s tunes sound natural within Flamenco. They utilise elements that were very Flamenco in nature, specifically the use of the 4th and flat 5, which Domínguez describes as the “Flamenco turn” (2006, p. 94).

In terms of harmonic colour, the most syncretic of modes that spans pre-Moorish Spain, Arab modal musics, western common-practice tonality and Flamenco is the Phrygian mode (Manuel 1989). This use of modes, continued in jazz, with Miles Davis and John Coltrane pioneering modal jazz. Modal jazz uses musical modes (or characteristics of them) rather than chord progressions to dictate the harmonic framework. However, as outlined by Kernfeld, modal jazz rarely stayed within classical modes, using non-diatonic scales such as those of Spanish or Indian music (Kernfeld 2008). Davis’ performance of *Solea* from *Flamenco Sketches* clearly demonstrates the use of modes in this Spanish influenced work (Davis & Evans 1967).

This combination of harmony, rhythm and improvisation, as outlined in this chapter, give Latin jazz its core nature. These structural components are used and evolved even today.

Currently there is a new movement back to Spain, where these elements are now migrating and influencing the new styles of Latin jazz. This return to Spain, or the New Vuelta is what Chapter 3 shall discuss.
Chapter 3: The new return

“The good thing about Latin jazz is the same thing that happens with Jazz, it's a good art man. It can never die. Something that's good just never dies.”

Bobby Martínez (2006, p. 204)

When I travelled to Spain in 2006 there was a great deal of fusion between musicians from Spain, South America and the American jazz musicians. This could be due to fusions that were already occurring, due to the influence of Trueba’s *Calle 54*, or due to the necessity of musicians adapting to new work environments. Judging by the analysis and evidence from previous chapters, it can be suggested that the ease of this fusion is due to the intrinsic link between the music’s origins. Through my personal observations I feel that not only are the building blocks of the music important, but rather that there were many cultural characteristics that enabled the musicians to come together, almost organically.

I experienced this at the 2003 Galapagar Jazz Festival on the outskirts of Madrid. After the performances, artists did not leave immediately. Artists such as Niño Joselé, Israel “Piraña” Suaréz, Alain Pérez and Bebo Valdés, with a group comprised of gypsies, Cubans and the occasional Australian were playing *palmas*, singing, dancing and thoroughly enjoying an impromptu jam session. It was very organic, and it would seem that the cultural similarities contributed to this.
In terms of Flamenco jazz, this is predominately played by Andalusians, or Gypsies. The social gatherings in Andalusia, reminded me of the Cuban way of socialising and interacting. As Leblon describes, Andalusian Gypsies have a large tradition of hospitality, a particular gift of communication and persuasion with particular affinities with music and the sense of a party (López Ruiz 1999). Pérez mentions these cultural similarities between Andalusians and Cubans, and that it allows for better interaction (Pérez 2006b).

In this chapter, I shall be looking at the migration of the musicians, and their reasons behind their new movement to Spain.


**Links for Migration**

Previous migration has formed an intrinsic part of Cuban, and American culture. From the 1880s to the First World War more than 3 million Spaniards departed for foreign destinations. The majority of these emigrants settled in Latin America, and in 1914, Spaniards were the largest immigrant group in Cuba (Sánchez-Alonso 2000). The flux of Spanish migration in the early 20th century to Latin America as opposed to the United States, would appear to be based on the strength of old colonial links, a common language and cultural links (Sánchez-Alonso 2000).

Now in the 21st century, the migrational movement is reversed, but parallels can be found between these two phases of immigration. In 2006, the Spanish Department of Immigration released statistics showing that 40.2% of migration to Spain came from Latin America (*Anuario Estadístico de Inmigración*). There appears to be social, political and cultural factors that have influenced this. Rivero explains his feeling upon his arrival in Spain.

> You feel at home, because it is true that culturally it is very similar, even though we have our differences you feel very welcome, and here, we Cubans are much loved and it’s not because we are outgoing or funny, but because if you go back, in Cuba 90 percent of Cubans are descendents from the Spanish. Ask anyone that you see, a black guy and his great, great grandmother is Spanish or *Gallego*, and the same happens when the Spanish go to Cuba, they are much loved, and it’s not that foreigners aren’t welcome, but it’s because there is a cultural sentiment that the way to have fun is very similar.

(Rivero 2006, p. 224)
**Periodo Especial (Special Period)**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba went through what is known as the *Periodo Especial* or Special Period, an extended economic crisis that lasted close to a decade. The Special Period was also marked by greater surveillance by the state (Aguirre 2002).

A combination of this economic crisis and the influence of the Cuban communist regime was a factor in migration during this time. Musical education was also affected, with a focus on classical training structured like the old Soviet Union system (Rivero 2006). This was due to the state having a monopoly on the means of coercion by mass persuasion, including formal education (Turner 1996).

The strong foundation of classical musical education predates the communist rise to power, and can be seen from Mario Bauzá (classically trained on Oboe and Clarinet), Israel “Cachao” Lopez (orchestral double bass under the baton of Karajan, Stravinsky and Villa-Lobos), to Chucho Valdés, and Paquito d’Rivera (Chediak 1998). All these artists had strong classical training and all were integral in the formation of Latin jazz.

However, due to this monopoly on education, during the Special Period and before, there was no Latin jazz course. Rather, the state can be seen to influence the musicians during the Special Period, as Rivero explains.

> For classical music it was very good and if they saw you playing a *danzón* or a *tumbao* they could kick you out of school. Before you could have been expelled for playing Cuban music. It was classical music and that’s it.

(Rivero 2006, p. 207)
Migration to Spain

The constant touring that Cuban artists undertake, under the mantle of state run tours to the United States, Europe and the rest of the world, allows musicians to travel more freely than other Cubans. These tours made it easier to leave the country, and many people took advantage of this (Rivero 2006).

For Pepe Rivero, his migration was for professional reasons. He was playing with Isaac Delgado, one of the biggest artists in Cuba, but had reached a point where he wanted to continue to grow professionally, something that could not be achieved in his native Cuba.

Rivero grew up in Cuba during the Special Period. He explains how migration increased after the economic and social stresses of the Special Period.

The Special Period in Cuba, has generated a great deal of migration of many musicians. Much more than before, because before to tour a group outside of Cuba was very difficult. Now groups tour even though they are paid a pittance. People say, “I want to get out of here any way I can”.

(Rivero 2006, p. 220)

Dominguez has also noted this migration, specifically of Cuban musicians.

There are many Cubans here in Madrid and also in Barcelona. They come because they know that they have work here as musicians and they keep coming.

(Dominguez 2006, p. 96)
This migration, and the desire to travel to escape the dictatorship has resulted in many people using music as a means to leave. Groups would be created for touring, and auditions held, but later the musicians would not go. The organisers of the tours would put their families in the groups, and this was a way of leaving Cuba (Rivero 2006). Music was seen as a way to escape.

An earlier example of a Cuban musician migrating to Spain is that of Paquito d’Rivera. Co-founder of the group Irakere, D’Rivera was en route to Stockholm to commence Irakere’s 1980 European tour. Whilst they were transiting in Madrid, instead of boarding the connecting flight, D’Rivera literally ran down to customs and pleaded with them to let him stay as he had three days worth of visa. Once the customs officer realised that he was a Cuban, and that he was trying to enter the country to apply for political exile, he was allowed through and subsequently met with a fellow Cuban exile who helped him during those initial days. This was a difficult time for Paquito as he left behind a wife and child in Cuba (D’Rivera 2000).

By stark contrast, leading Latin jazz figure Chucho Valdés, co-founder of Irakere, decided to stay in Cuba. Even his father, Bebo Valdés who was influential in early Latin jazz and worked in the Tropicana, now lives in Sweden. Chucho is viewed as a national icon, being thrust forward as a symbol of national pride, as a musician that can achieve the extraordinary whilst wanting to remain in his native Cuba. However due to this, Chucho must live within the restrictions of the communist government.
As Paquito D’Rivera stated to Down Beat magazine:

> Being apolitical is already a political position. I think Chucho doesn’t agree with the Cuban government. But he’s a representative of the Cuban government, even if he’s doing it against his will. He wants to do his music and he doesn’t want to leave, and he has to follow the rules. That’s why I left. I didn’t want to follow those rules.

(Panken 2004)

It appears that the reasons for musicians migrating from Cuba to Spain, are different to artists such as Jerry González and Bobby Martínez. Their rationale for moving to Spain was to have a new experience and to enter within the European Jazz Scene, as Martínez explains.

> I decided to come to Europe, I wanted to get into the jazz scene in Europe cause a lot of friends of mine were telling me, “Hey man, you know, jazz is really happening here”, you know, and this and that. And since I am descended from Spaniards, I said what the hell, I am going to go to Spain.

(Martínez, B 2006, p. 171)

Since Fernando Trueba’s film, *Calle 54* in 2001, Jerry González has been a resident in Madrid. Once he moved to Spain, he began to delve more into the fusion with Spanish music. For Jerry his migration was in part, to explore new avenues, new ideas that culminated in the album *Los Piratas del Flamenco* (González 2004). This combination of Cuban and American Jazz musicians that are migrating to Spain, would suggest that this has become a new Vuelta.

During my interviews, I asked Chano Domínguez if he saw this new wave of migration as a new Vuelta.
Well yes, it’s true, I’ve never thought of it like that but it is another _Vuelta_, because the musicians come and bring new things with them, their understanding of their _tumbaos_ (rhythms), their claves and all this mixes with the people here and this is what creates the fusion.

(Domínguez 2006, p. 96)
**Full Circle**

Through spending time with these artists, and conversing through music and words, I have uncovered some of the ideas behind their music. I have gained an original perspective and found evidence supporting ideas that there was original syncretic movement between Spain, Cuba and the United States. The study of this movement, has lead me to the original concept of the return of syncretic movement to Spain, and what I have encountered could be seen to represent the current state of Latin jazz.

These interactions allow me to transfer and contribute to knowledge in a new, original manner, through a radio documentary. The creative work was ultimately intended to be broadcast, and on the 10th of August, 2008, it will be broadcast Australia wide on ABC Classic FM. Through this medium, which demonstrates the music, I have sought to contribute to the knowledge that is already present. The process of the documentary, the research, interviews, personal tuition, and the opportunity to perform with artists in Spain has allowed me to immerse myself in this style, and improve as a musician.

My research has been based on the foundation of participating, not only viewing from afar. Latin jazz is a live and vivid art form. An art form that I felt the need to immerse myself in a practical manner, to understand the fundamental concepts. Understanding its current state, allows me to further pursue its future development. As Martínez states, “something that’s good just never dies” (Martínez, B 2006, p. 204).
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Appendices

Appendix i: Interview with Chano Domínguez 21 March 2006 Translation

Roger González and Chano Domínguez

Roger González: What is Latin Jazz?

Chano Domínguez: I think that “What is Latin Jazz?” is a question that we could spend hours discussing. However for me, really I believe it can be resumed into something quite simple. That it is the expression of the musicians with this common language Spanish (Castillian), and it is the creative expression of Latin musicians.

The creative expression of Jazz has clearly impregnated all today’s music. I believe that Jazz is a music that is quasi corrosive. It has influenced all of
the music because it has a peculiarity to give, to open the doors for you to create with this (musical) language, in an instant. And this, the Latin musicians, we use it with our set of rhythms (claves) and with our roots. In other words, for me, from my perspective as a Latin musician born in Spain, in the south of Spain, with everything that that influences me, being born and brought up around all the Flamenco rhythms, like I have been brought up with them. For me, this is the most natural thing in the world.

But, I am a musician that loves improvisation, and this is what brought me to Jazz, improvisation. And this is what brought me closer to this music, to write in this language that I have thought indispensable for my music. But of course, my music is a Jazz, with Latin notions from this side of the Atlantic.

From the other side of the Atlantic you have musicians such as Jerry Gonzalez that have truly succeeded in capturing the essence of the rhythms and the claves of his origins with the formal structures of Jazz, the songs of 32 bars, the blues, the music of Monk. All this I believe is such a natural progression.

With Jazz, if Latin musicians play Jazz it shall be Latin Jazz. If it is played by an Anglo-Saxon it shall be British Jazz. If it is played by an African musician it shall be African Jazz because it is like what I said at the beginning, for me Jazz is a music that has impregnated all the music that is played today. From Flamenco, to Indian music, African music, Brazilian music, there is a heap of styles that have been nourished by Jazz.

**RG:** Many people, when they think of Latin Jazz, they think of the Afro Cuban base, and sitting on top is the Jazz harmonies. But it is much more than that no?

**CD:** Man, I think that it’s clear that it goes much further than that because I am a Jazz musician. I have always said this, even though many people insist
on defining me as a Flamenco pianist, I don’t think I am. What I am is a Jazz musician that uses the claves of my country. And I think that the claves from my country are so powerful that they also nourish Jazz in this way as well.

In other words, it has the peculiarity that on the surface it might not seem that it has much to do with the Jazz from the other side of the Atlantic. But I believe if we look deeper we realise that there is, in truth, many similarities with certain types of rhythms and structures of songs or common phrases in Flamenco and music created in the Caribbean that has been created in Cuba and in everything Afro Cuban.

**RG:** I would like to talk about the rhythms that are similar between Flamenco and Afro Cuban music a little bit later. But first, I wanted to ask you about percussion, the importance of percussion within Latin Jazz and within Flamenco?

**CD:** Well, I think that the percussion within Latin music and within Flamenco is indispensable. In other words, in Flamenco there are some rhythms, and there are some claves, which are not many, but afterwards they are used in a different form and this is what gives a rhythmic entity that is strong for each rhythm of Flamenco. This is indispensable in my music. For example, my music without the Flamenco claves would not be my music. It would not be recognisable. I mean the importance of the rhythms is the clave. So key that this is why it is called “key” (clave literally means key in Spanish).

What I mean to say is that if you do not have the clave, you have nothing. In other words, if you do not know how to create a musical idea on top of a rhythmic structure that gives you the support of all this, you won’t understand anything, because everything would all fall down around you.
Therefore, take note, it is not that it is important, it is absolutely vital!
Without the claves, we have nothing, I grab onto all the claves of my music. For instance, I grab onto the claves of the *alegría* from Cadiz, to the claves of the *Soleá*, to the claves of the *seguidilla*, to the claves of the *tangos*, to the claves of the *fandangos*, from all these rhythms I get an indispensable support so that I can later create structures that are as formal as the ones in *Jazz*, of 32 bars, or of the blues.

Because I am in love with the structure of the blues and I have used it a great deal in my music with the rhythms and the claves of Flamenco. I mean, I do a blues with *Bulería*, with *Soleá*, blues with *tanguillo*, and what I mean is that what gives me the support to be able to create everything is precisely the rhythm, therefore it is not that it is important, it is vital.

Even though later within the world of Flamenco, there are some styles that do not need “rhythm” between brackets. A fixed rhythm that can be styles that I love as well, that I usually record on my records. They can be the *granadina*, the *malagueña*, or the *mineras*, the *tarantas*. They are free styles when you learn them, and above all this is learnt when accompanying Flamenco singers.

You realise that they have a certain time. But it is a time that is stretched; it is a structure that is not subject to a stable subdivision, between the hits. But it does have a time, and this for me is also incredible, because when you see a Flamenco guitarist, and a Flamenco singer singing a *minera*, or a *granadina*, you understand that they are going to the limit. But there is a time that is breathed with the form of the singer, it is lengthened or shortened this melisma that they do. This for me is very interesting within Flamenco, because it is like going to the limit, but it is not the limit exactly.

I think that Flamenco has a spectrum of rhythmic blends that are very, very strong that are what supports my music above all. And that also, in the last few years, through the connection I have had from the musicians from the
other side of the Atlantic, I have done things which are livelier, which I love because I feel them in such a natural way. It is a case of now we are going to play a tango, or I start to play a Flamenco *Rumba* and I can groove along with the Cuban *Rumba*, or the Cuban *Son*. We are complete brothers there. There is the point of total inflexion in the songs that are 4 by 4.

Even the tanguillo from Cadiz, for example, has a lot to do with Afro Cuban music, with all the 6/8 and 12/8 Afro. Therefore, I also see that the claves link together. The Cuban clave that is 2-3 (\(\|\cdot\cdot*\cdot\cdot\|\|\cdot\cdot\cdot\cdot\cdot\|\)), is 5 hits right? Well the Flamenco claves are also 5 hits! For instance the *Bulería* clave has 5 hits (\(\|\cdot\cdot\cdot\cdot\|\cdot\cdot\cdot\cdot\|\)) 1(23) 1(23) 1(2) 1(2) 1(2). If you really begin to investigate and delve profoundly into the rhythms of each culture, you become aware that we are not that far apart from each other.

In addition, I believe that the rhythmic element of Flamenco, arrived through Persia, throughout this region of gypsies that was brought from India that were nomadic, I also see the rhythm coming from Africa. I see it clearly, in the rhythmic claves, it very much comes from Africa and gets distributed everywhere, and in each region we use it in a certain way. You start to turn it over and make it yours, but there are many similarities!

**RG:** Well. Within the clave I want to ask several questions but first. We were talking about tanguillos and this comes from the *habanera*.

**CD:** Well, for me the tanguillos do not come from the *habanera*. No, because the *habanera* is in another time signature, the tanguillos is in 6/8, and the *habanera* would be in a 4/4, you know?

**RG:** The reason I say this is because Francisco Núñez wrote on the *Ida y Vuelta* and he was writing about the Return and he said…

**CD:** No, no, no, he knows a lot hey. He is a fantastic Flamencologist.
RG: No, no, what he said was,

“In Flamenco the strength of the habanera rhythm is providential, there are so many styles that are based on its rhythm that it would surprise more than most about the presence of Cuba in the art of Flamenco and that is was so wide spread”

Talking a little about the habanera that comes from Cuba could you comment briefly on…

CD: Yes it is true that the tanguillo has a lot in common with the habanera because it depends how you look at it rhythmically, you can play it as a habanera or as a tanguillo. You see what happens is that the rhythm of the tanguillo is a very, very open rhythm that allows you to put other rhythms within it.

In other words, use the polyrhythms, I do this in my music a lot, we are playing a tanguillo and I cross to a 4/4 or cross to Soleá crossed with Bulería, or Bulería, because it is a rhythm that permits you to do this, depending how you subdivide it within itself. You would understand me perfectly being a percussionist; you can cross from one to another (sings example).

I can put it into Bulería, into Soleá crossed by Bulería, into Rumba, it is a rhythm that is very open and that can go into many other rhythms.

RG: Then there are some rhythms that lend themselves to jazz more than others? What I mean is Flamenco rhythms that can be utilized.

CD: Man, this is something that we started some Spanish musicians, and I don’t know. For me what works the best, I will tell you, are the rhythms for parties, they work very well. I mean rhythms like, Bulería, or the tanguillo, or
the *Rumba*, or the tangos (Flamenco tangos), they are rhythms that work well.

I also like to write jazz standards with Flamenco rhythm, by composers such as (Theolonius) Monk, above all, or Bill Evans, or Wayne Shorter, which I did in my last album that is soon to be released. In the end, I like to adapt music already written by American composers. And the truth be told, the party rhythms go really well with them, although, I also love to play rhythms that are slow such as the *Soleá*. The *Soleá* seems to be a marvellous time to express oneself in.

It’s like if we talk about the *Soleá*, for me it is like we are talking about the blues, more from the roots. In actual fact, I love to do blues crossed with *Soleá*. I consider myself in love with this mix, from the structure of the blues it permits you to go creating and recreating once and again within this “structure”, always between brackets and with the Flamenco sense that the *Soleá* has.

**RG:** It’s very personal no? Because you have a song, Mañana de Reyes…

**CD:** Mañana de Reyes is a tanguillo, there is a *Soleá* that is called “*Soleá Blas*” that is sung by Blas Cordoba and that is a blues crossed by *Soleá*. It is a blues that uses the structure of blues but in the Phrygian mode so that the singer can sing it, and would be the “turnaround” of the last four bars of the blues, what I use is like the Flamenco “turnaround” of the *Soleá*.

There is a harmonic change there but there is a mix that for my way of understanding is very natural and is perfect. I have used this in more than one record and I think that I shall continue using it because it is a majestic formula. Blues and *Soleá* together.

**RG:** You have talked about Blas Cordoba, for you, what importance do singers and dancers have, because you use…
CD: Dance, of course. I hold a great deal of importance. For me, Flamenco song has been with me since I remember, because my father was a great aficionado, and this in my house was always playing. Every day I heard Flamenco since I was young. I for instance would have loved to be a Flamenco singer. I think that it is a gift from nature to sing Flamenco, because I think it’s incredible how you can control the voice in this manner and to be able to do these melodic turns that are so impressive that some singers do. For me it is very important. As musicians we begin to play music, music and more music and we forget that the voice is the first instrument of them all.

Rather rhythm and voice are the two first instruments; or rather the clave and the voice are the first instruments that we had.

For me I love it, because in addition the voice of the Flamenco singer is a voice that is ancestral. It’s a voice that can transport you in time, and in space and, I don’t know, is a way to communicate with the voice separate to the music. I love to take a singer in my group, I almost prefer to take a singer than a saxophonist for example that does a solo. I very much like to accompany Flamenco song.

I like very much the brushstrokes of the voice, and top of this I have had the luck to find a singer like Blas Cordoba who has been working with me for about six or seven years and for me is one of the most beautiful singers I have heard in my life. Because normally, a Flamenco singer can be harsh and aggressive, and Blas Cordoba makes it smooth and sweet like fairy floss, you know? Therefore, perfect. Therefore I love him for my group for the contrast but not in the traditional sense.

And with dance, I, to begin with, have always used a dancer like an additional percussionist of the group because I believe that they have such strength with rhythmic hits from a taconeo (noise made by heels) that is
definitive, there is like nothing else. So, I like to take this colour as well in the group and apart from this when you have a dancer that comes out, you win over the audience. It's the conductor if you like, and in my concerts I use it with very concrete brushstrokes because the dance is really the great protagonist when done live. A concert takes on a character more of a spectacle when we have a dancer.

I also like this because I enjoy when I go out on stage, and the audience enjoys themselves, and I love the dancer that comes with me, Tomasito, because he is a young man that is seeded in this tradition, that has more than enough timing because he has all the rhythms from Jeréz. He knows all the ancient traditions from Jeréz, but having all the modernity of having grown with Michael Jackson, and all the modern rock and pop. And he also knows how to combine these claves as well. So for me, in my group, I think that this is also key. So, for me voice and dance has been with me all my life and it simply is.

**RG:** But you have also done collaborations with Martirio and Marta Valdés. Quite distinct, no?

**CD:** Yes, of course. I have also been very interested in popular Spanish music for example. I have been interested in extracting information and drinking from the fountain of knowledge that has occurred around me, here.

Because I remember that one-day all of a sudden, many years ago, I realised one thing. I was learning how to play Autumn Leaves, All The Things You Are, heaps of songs that I love and today I keep playing, American Standards.

But, I realised that these tunes had been played by musicians in the 40’s because these were the songs that were in fashion, they were the songs that they had heard, so in other words, they simply versioned their popular
music. And soon I began to discover Spanish music, because when I was young my mother always had the radio playing, and my mother was always singing the Spanish songs, there were some beautiful melodies. There were songs that if all of a sudden you rescued them from their original state. All this music might bring all the images of the dictatorship, but perhaps not.

I am sure that these musicians and these writers of that period were very strong, because it was a time where writers and musicians met in café theatres, did collaborations together. Things that today are more complicated to do because we tend to do more multimedia but each person in their own house. So I realised that there are many songs, very beautiful songs that if you took them out of their context and you played them as a jazz musician that disregards all those rules, and you simply took the melody and the harmony and you interpreted it as you liked it, it then sounded good to you.

I discovered that there are many from popular music to traditional Spanish music and this took me to bolero, and took me to Latin-American music, and the songs from Latin America and I believe that the musicians of Latin jazz have some Latin standards that are marvellous and that I would love to recuperate.

I play tunes like “Gracias a la Vida”, that I believe is one of the most marvellous songs written in Spanish. I think it is as valid as All The Things You Are or Autumn Leaves, and they have this structure that is at times more interesting, because the Spanish song, the structure that we encounter is never going to be 32 bars. It always has more than two parts, so they are more complex. And the words are very strong, they have a lot of meat shall we say, it has a lot of strength, all that was written in that period. I would love to recover all of that, and I love to play all those tunes because they are in my musical memory since my infancy, since I began to remember. Therefore I love to play this music.
**RG:** Therefore, it’s a bit like... for example Chucho Valdés and Jerry Gonzalez look towards their roots a lot, they use it in their work. For you is it important to have this Flamenco root or to fuse it and move ahead or is it a combination of both?

**CD:** No, no, no. Look, if I am a musician I consider myself a fairly eclectic musician. I like a lot of things, and really even though in the last decade I focused mostly on the music that I have recorded in the style that I have recorded, I like to continue discovering and changing because it is what enriches me. In other words, I am a musician that cannot play the same thing three nights in a row. Therefore, I am always throwing myself into the deep end, I always want to put my nose in something, and this is what makes me most alive and to maintain the motivation from the first day and to confront things as these are my goals. And this I love.

This is why, I have done a CD now that will be released in the next few months that isn’t the RTVE (Spanish National Broadcaster) record, it’s my own production and it is new music with completely new compositions with a new group. So, I am in the process of change. I believe that it is constant and vital, because I don’t like when I return to the same thing with the same tunes in the same form. I am always anxious to find something, to throw myself into the deep end to see what happens.

This makes me feel alive and in constant movement. So therefore, I am not a musician that has only one direction, I mean I think I have a very clear direction but this direction can open a great deal, this is why I can sit down with Marta Valdés because I love her music, or to sit down with Martirio and do Spanish songs, or to now be with the National Ballet and to be accompanying dancers from all the songbooks of Federico Garcia Lorca. With this traditional music that I also recognise since I was young, that I used to sing it in school. I played it in my first group when I played the Flamenco guitar so they are things that come with me since forever.
**RG:** Speaking of ballet, and the fact that you enjoy to change the music, you can’t change the music for the ballet right?

**CD:** No, but I will explain. Within the stability that is this concert that we accompany the National Ballet, because in terms of bars it is completely straight. From beginning to end, there are always some songs that are never the same, because they are solos. I wrote some songs that are completely for a soloist, or for guitar solo or piano solo. Very straight, if it is 8 bars it is 8 bars, but I wanted to conserve within this rigidity that comes from accompanying dance, to conserve the spontaneity within this rigidity. And this was the condition I put forward when I sat down with Jose Antonio, the director of the National Ballet.

To create this adaptation of this music for ballet, that on the other hand was very “prêt a porter” in the sense that it was largely defined by what Jose Antonio wanted to do for each song. To dance to, and to choreograph to, for example “La Tarara” is in the rhythm of tanguillo, because he wanted it to be in the rhythms of tanguillo. However, there were other songs that weren’t like this as I convinced him to have a rhythm of Colombiana of the Ida and Vuelta, and I convinced him that it would sound good and in the end it ended up to be one of the most beautiful songs I gave to him.

**RG:** This music has always been with you.

**CD:** Yes, they are standards. They are what I consider standards. The standards I like to play.

**RG:** Fernando Trueba said once “that with Chano Domínguez, Domínguez, Camarón and Monk shake hands”

**CD:** A beautiful phrase isn’t it?
RG: Yes, and it’s interesting that Monk has influenced you a great deal, and he has also influenced Jerry Gonzalez a lot.

CD: Yes, look. It’s just that with Monk’s music, apart from having a complete fascination for his music, because he is one of the most particular musicians born from contemporary music. I have always seen Monk as Flamenco in character. So much himself, when you see him, as his manner in playing. For me, Monk is very natural to hear him in Bulería. He is a musician, when he plays you hear turns, phrases, notes, that if you took them out of context and you grabbed them with Pro Tools, and we put them in Bulería style with palmas. It would be perfect. Perfect!

He is a composer that is incredible for his simplicity (in brackets), of his compositions in forms that are very standard, very much for musicians to play them, but at the same time with a personality that is unique. The melodies of Monk, I don’t think that any other musician would have dared to compose them.

RG: He was unique, out of the mould.

CD: Also, he composed in so many directions, his ballads, his swing tunes, his blues. He wrote everything, it’s magnificent no? His work is so broad that not only Jerry Gonzalez and myself, but many musicians have been nourished by this fountain of inspiration that is Monk. I think he is one of the most important musicians in contemporary music. In my opinion that is, in my humble opinion.

RG: Well for instance, I love your tune Monk Medley that incorporates Bemsha Swing and Well You Needn’t.

CD: But it sounds natural (sings example). Those were already Flamenco; he was already using the F and F sharp (4 and sharp 4 or flat 5). He was doing
the Flamenco turn. And afterwards, another thing that I believe is spectacular; he never recorded the same tune the same way.

He recorded many times the same tunes, but he always changed the melodies situation. He always had an element of surprise, by having a little nook that he hadn’t shown before and where he put a note that would kill you. Later when you see him play, I loved his unpredictability. He is a musician that would change his mind at the very last millisecond. He was a natural improviser, a natural creator.

I don’t know, for me he is a fountain of inspiration. And I think that in many of my records I have recorded things of his, but I think I will continue to record tunes of his because I always love to record at least one tune from a composer that I like. For instance in this last album I recorded Nefertiti by Wayne Shorter. I resist in saying I will not record another Monk tune in future.

**RG:** Talking a little about albums, on your DVD Oye Como Viene, you said that in the 80’s you listened to the album Moliendo Café, by Jerry González, and for you this was Latin Jazz.

**CD:** Yes, that’s where I discovered Latin Jazz. That’s where I really found it. It was where there was a clear understanding between the two languages (Jazz and Latin) in a natural union, in a completely natural manner.

**RG:** Because for you, when do you commence with Jazz, when do you cross to Cuban and when do you end in Flamenco?

**CD:** Wow, that is complicated. I think this depends on the musicians that are playing it. I couldn’t tell you when Jazz begins and ends in Flamenco, or where Flamenco starts and ends in Jazz in my music. I think I am a bilingual musician, I am a musician that has been formed in two types of languages and in my case these two types of languages are more than merely fused,
it’s inside me. I mean I have it. I don’t need to force anything. It’s like the Puerto Rican that speaks Spanglish, I mean he speaks Spanglish, what are we going to do?

So in my case, I think I am like this.

**RG:** Sorry to focus so much on Jerry.

**CD:** No, no, I love talking about Jerry because he is a musician that I have learnt a lot from him, and he has helped me a great deal with his manner of understanding music, since I first met him. Much earlier than I had met him in person, when I met his music.

I met his music in Belgium. Here in Spain his records were not available. In the 80’s I played with a musician called Nono Garcia who is a great Flamenco guitarist. I would say one of the greatest Flamenco guitarists. Because this hand was of Jazz, and this hand was Flamenco. In other words, his left hand world work in a jazz style and his right hand in the Flamenco style. A very curious mix, and when I went to play with him, he had albums of Jerry Gonzalez. To discover this music was very enriching.

**RG:** Can you tell me the first time you met Jerry?

**CD:** Ah, I met Jerry at the Miami Film Festival in 2000. I went for a concert with Martirio and Fernando Trueba had a surprise in store for me. He put me in a room and all of a sudden Jerry Gonzalez appears. We did a concert together in Miami, and from then on we established a friendship that is still strong today.

Even though, later, here in Spain, Jerry established himself here in Madrid and played with other musicians more than we played together. On all accounts, I believe that Jerry is a musician that is unique and is doing a lot of things with great Cuban and Flamenco musicians. He has found a series
of people that have created a language to understand Flamenco, Rumba and jazz all in a particular way.

RG: Because after Calle 54 he made an album of the “Pirates of Flamenco”.

CD: Exactly, that’s what I am talking about.

RG: And when he came he was living above Café Berlin. The first time I saw him was at a Jam Session.

CD: Of course, one of those that keep going at 5 am.

RG: Yeah, he came down from his flat and starts playing. Of course, all pretty amazing. But there are also a lot of Cubans who are here through necessity.

CD: Yes, there are many Cubans here in Madrid and also in Barcelona. They come because they know that they have work here as musicians and they keep coming.

RG: It’s like another “Vuelta” or Return.

CD: Well yes, it’s true, I’ve never thought of it like that but it is another Vuelta, because the musicians come and bring new things with them, their understanding of their tumbaos (rhythms), their claves and all this mixes with the people here and this is what creates the fusion. I love that there are Jam Sessions here at Cardamomo, and Flamenco and Cuban musicians mix together and they go off!

RG: I noticed that with Alain Pérez, who was playing with Niño Joselé, Enrique Morente, and now Paco de Lucía. Want it or not, their influence finds a way into the music.
**CD:** Of course.

**RG:** Could you talk to me a little about Paco de Lucía, is he important within Latin Jazz or only Flamenco.

**CD:** I don’t know, I think Paco de Lucía is important within music full stop. I think Paco is a great, great musician. In my case, perhaps he has been the musician that has been one of my most important influences. Paco de Lucía arrived at a moment and made a record that opened the doors of Flamenco, improvised music and jazz. Clearly he found the key and opened the door.

He made an album in 80 – 81 that was called, Solo Quiero Caminar (I only want to walk), and that includes musicians from Brazilian music, rock musicians and Jazz musicians. Of course, Rubén Danta came from Brazilian music, Carlos Buenavent was a rocker, nearly a Jazzman, but a rocker and Jorge Pardo was a great Jazz musician.

He has the intelligence in the music he wrote, the musicians began to play and I believe that is where Paco opened the door. He opens the door that afterwards we all have passed, Jorge Pardo, Carlos Buenavent and Rubén Danta the first. But after them a whole heap of musicians have drunk from this musical idea of Paco’s. Paco is the greatest!

I don’t know how to speak of him. I am scared of talking about Paco! Because I admire and respect him so much, I think he is such a great musician I am scared of saying something that might offend him! (laughs). And I will tell you something else. Paco has influenced so many musicians. Not only in Flamenco but also from Jazz to Classical music. I think Paco has influenced half the planet. Whoever has listened to Paco’s music has become trapped by it, I am sure of it.

**RG:** He also did many things like using the *cajón* in Flamenco.
**CD:** Well. The *cajón* is an instrument that was adopted by Flamenco and this is what Paco does with Rubén Danta. Paco gave Rubén a cajon as a gift, and told him.

“Here, start playing this instrument with me”. And Rubén was the first that played it, Rubén is the grandfather. You can already say that he is no longer the father but the grandfather of the Flamenco *cajón*. Later arrived all the other percussionists and there are some spectacular “*cajóneros*” like Israel Suárez “Piraña” who is now playing with me, and he is now going to go play with Paco as well, he’s a star. But this was an idea from Paco, like that of the bass or the flute or all the instruments that later have been incorporated.

**RG:** And speaking of this, can you tell me a little how you knew Guillermo McGill?

**CD:** Guillermo and I met at the end of the 80’s. We started seeing each other at concerts, at some clubs and we started to play together. Later I told him, “Guillermo, I know you have a *cajón*!” because he lived with a girl that was a Flamenco dancer and also knew the Flamenco claves so I told him to “bring the *cajón*”. We played a *Bulería* one day and from that day he then owned the position of percussionist in my group.

**RG:** This was the first time that the *cajón* was used with the piano.

**CD:** Yes. From what I can remember, before nothing had been recorded. At the beginnings of the the 90’s, we were pioneers fusing this language. The language of grabbing Flamenco claves and putting them in the world of Jazz in this way, with jazz standards, with the blues.

I remember that we were so immersed that with my first trio, with Guillermo McGill and with Manolo Calleja, a bassist from Seville, that we
were inventing ways that we could play this stuff. It was work that you
could hardly lean on anything, you know? Simply, you had to have trust in
your criteria and the way you played and assemble this music between the
three of you.

Later, arrived Javier Colina, who then became double bassist in my group,
because he arrived almost pleading me to play with him at the beginning
of the 90’s. And he won the place that Manolo Calleja had held, and formed
part of all these musicians that created music during this time. People like,
Javier Colina, Guillermo McGill, Tino Giraldo, that wanted to play these
rhythms and have fun. Above all to have fun, and finding your own way of
doing this (musically).

**RG:** But before had a good time playing rock right?

**CD:** Geese, and boy did I have a good time! What happened is that I also
bent the rules a little because back then in the 70’s when we started, we
played with only amps and I remember that I played the organ with
distortion. So, you can imagine!

**RG:** And when did you change the chip to do Jazz?

**CD:** Well, I started playing the keys because in reality I started off playing
the Flamenco guitar. But one day I came across a harmonium and started
cross over from the guitar to the harmonium and that’s where I started my
relationship with the keys.

And from there, I jumped to a rock group, with the synthesisers. They fitted
well with me. I even listened to Jethro Tull or Pink Floyd. These groups were
my first influences, from the world of records, or what records arrived. And I
tried to imitate them, and since I only had a little keyboard, I put it through
distortion, I bought flanger pedals, chorus pedals etc. And well, this is how
we played, and my first influences were these groups, and these groups later took me to Jazz Fusion.

That later lead me to pure Jazz, that lead me onto Jelly Roll Morton, in other words it was all a very natural process. And from the keyboards I arrived to the piano in part because I thought that the keyboards were great and I loved the sounds from synthesisers, the organ etc. but if I played the piano to an acceptable level I could play any keyboard well.

And I decided that I had to centre myself on the piano. And in my case this was quite late, because I sat down and started to study piano when I had 20 years of age. But with all the motivation in the world, with all the enthusiasm in the world, because I had found the instrument that I would develop on.

So, let's say that all my adolescence and youth I spent having fun with keyboards, but when I had a touch of maturity I sat down and studied well this instrument because then I would be able to play any keyboard, an organ, a synthesiser, a clavinet, any of them and do it well.

RG: So, it wasn’t as Luc Dellanoy, a French musicologist wrote, that you stopped playing the guitar because you bit your fingernails.

CD: Well, yes. It has something to do with it. I bit my nails always and as a guitarist I was always horrible. I recognize this. I played the guitar for 6 or 8 years and when I found the keys I fell in love with them, and I left the guitar.

I loved playing the guitar. And in fact, I think that the guitar is a little bit like a bicycle. Once you learn how to play it you never forget. I grab the guitar and play some chords and in fact I enjoy playing with my son who does play the Flamenco guitar, and fairly well I might add. And he definitely has nails. I enjoy listening to him play, and accompanying him
but really it was not because I ate my nails. It is true that I eat my nails. It is a defect like many others that I have.

RG: No, no. It’s just that it sounded a bit strange what Dellanoy wrote.

Well, you were telling me that you discovered Jelly Roll Morton. One of the pioneers of Jazz.

CD: He was the first pianist that improvised. He was the first to improvise and that was recorded to have improvised!

RG: He also said, “In fact if you can’t manage to put tinges of Spanish in your tunes, you will never be able to get the right seasoning, I call it, for jazz”.

CD: It’s true, it’s true. I have heard that.

RG: Therefore, the Spanish influence has been in Jazz since...

CD: Since the beginning. You have to realise that in New Orleans all the Spanish, Dutch, Belgians met. I don’t know, there were African, there were people from everywhere and because of this came about this thing (Jazz) that was so magical. This is when the people off the street grabbed classical instruments and started to play what they heard but in their own way, therefore they had already twisted the rhythm, they have already changed the clave and that started to sound truly really good!

Because really. Jazz comes from a marching band or military band, but of course, played in a wonderful way!

RG: I would like, if you could, comment on how you see Jazz here in Spain and if it has its proper strength. And where you see Latin Jazz in the future?
**CD:** Well, look. For the first question, I am going to tell you that Jazz in Spain has changed a lot in some aspects and it has stayed in the same in many others, let me explain.

I remember that 30 years ago, when we started to play Jazz, when we tried to play Jazz. There were a few crazy musicians in Barcelona, others in Madrid, others in the Basque Country, in Galicia and Andalusia. There was nothing. There were a few venues and there wasn’t any music. I remember that the records we had we had to record them from heaven know where and find the information.

I remember when the first real book, that musicians made, that the alumni of Berklee made, landed in my hands. I always say it’s the “wrong book” more than the real book, but anyway. When this book landed in my hands, it was a true discovery. It was very complicated in that era, and we were a few crazy musicians trying to find our way and create venues to play.

Today, there is no comparison. Today we have achieved that there are schools funded by the ministry of Culture, in the Basque Country, in Galicia, in Catalonia, in the state of Madrid and it is is being done in Andalusia. So, contemporary music, jazz and the language of Jazz today is studied in schools in Spain. 25 years ago this would have been unthinkable. The “Musicians Workshop” started in Barcelona, afterwards one was formed here in Madrid, “El Aula”. There were two or three schools that well, it was ok.

Today, there a many musicians that are amazing. If you go to Barcelona, and go to a Jam Session, you are going to see musicians that are 20 playing with incredible professionalism, playing music that has been very well prepared. What I mean is that what we did, a few musicians in the 80’s with a lot of effort and with great abandonment, today it changed a great deal.

**RG:** Because before there was Pedro Iturralde…
CD: Well, before there was Pedro Iturralde and Tete Monteliu and you can stop counting. And they played in the places that you could play, and bravo and later overseas.

But there were no musicians. There were so few, there was hardly anyone. This has changed a great deal! The “Musicians Workshop” in Barcelona could have more than 500 students. In “Las Mus” there could be more than 300 or 400 students studying a level superior of contemporary music, Jazz music, Flamenco. This has nothing to do with before.

But there is another aspect that has stayed the same. And this is really the support of all these musicians that don’t have venues to play. They have studied and learnt marvellously, they know how to play music, they know how to read music, they know how to share with any musician that comes along, from any part of the world, and really in this country we still have the same venues for Jazz.

The support to the musician, I believe is very precarious. In the clubs, they continue to pay the same as they did 20 years ago, for musicians that are much more prepared than before. I don’t know how to explain it. There is a great unbalance I believe, because on one side we are creating a great base of musicians. But on the other side, there is no place for them to play.

Therefore I believe that there is a great lack of effort on part of the administration that musicians can truly work in this country. In other words, what is needed is a great effort on behalf on the communication outlets, so that music can truly be exhibited on these platforms because it cannot be that in today’s age we cannot see any group playing live.

I am embarrassed to go out to Europe and see in Italy, in France, in Portugal, that you put on the television and all the programs are very, very commercial. There is music that is very, very, commercial but there are
musicians at least playing it live. In this country this does not occur. I think there is a great unbalance so that Jazz music in this country, or live music in this country I believe that in a few areas they are very strong, but in others completely forgotten.

And what we are doing, we are creating a base of musician that are good, but later they are not going to know where to play. And this I think is important to take into account to truly change this in this country.

And on the flipside musicians are also abandoned, like always. What I mean is that we don’t have regulation, in France they have a syndicate, in Germany, in Belgium, in Denmark. A musician is not out of work. They have their help from the government. Here, this does not exist yet. There are things that are good, and there are other things that are really, really bad.

**RG:** I wanted to go back a bit. Before you were talking a little about the clave. I wanted to talk about something that a Berklee teacher wrote, his name is Eduardo Uribe, and he wrote, that the concept of the clave has descended from generation to generation through various African cultures, and its influences can be found in Cuban music and the Spanish Flamenco styles.

**CD:** Sure, I also told you before. If we begin to look and we go back to the roots, for me the rhythmic claves come from Africa, and they travel. And via each country that they travel by, it becomes adopted in some way and is used in some way. But, the famous clave of five hits is used in the entire world.

**RG:** But, the “palmas” within Flamenco are like a clave. What importance do the “palmas” have, because within certain styles they are essential?

**CD:** Yes. Well, it’s that that they’re essential, because you can play a *Buleria* without *palmas.* And in fact, I do this. But there is no doubt that the *palmas*
offer a rhythmic support that is very stable. Because, in addition, normally the clave is what is called doblada, in which they divide the time and play it constantly and very stable (double time). It has its own importance, I believe that it give a great deal of support to the dancer and also the singer. But really we use the rhythms of Buleria or other rhythms without the use of palmas as well. I think that each musician has to have the time kept internally, however we are grateful if all of a sudden two palmeros come along and make a rhythmic bed for you, the music then plays itself.

**RG:** It’s an art form no?

**CD:** Man, the palmas are pretty amazing. You hear professional palmeros, and they are professionals for a reason. I can play the palmas right. I can play them but after a few minutes I am spent, I have no strength. So the palmas is an instrument very…

**RG:** So for me as a foreigner, it would be impossible (laughs)

**CD:** Gee ‘se, no no. But, not because you are a foreigner, but you really need physical resistance to play the palmas. But of course! You start to play the palmas and see who lasts the most. Me, after two minutes I won’t be able to. The pain starts to kick in here. But you imagine a palmero that can stand a Buleria that lasts seven or eight minutes. Or a fiesta that lasts 15 minutes. So, the work of the palmero, forget about it! It is already known that percussion is about resistance, and a lot of resistance. But with the palmas you need to have a lot, a lot of resistance!

**RG:** I would like to talk about your new album that you are about to release. What is it called?

**CD:** It’s called NFS. The New Flamenco Sound. Yes, we have put a brand on it because it is a new sound within my music that is influenced by Flamenco, and the Flamenco claves. Let’s say, it’s like… if you know my
sextet, it is like my sextet but much richer. Its like my sextet but bigger, apart from the two trios that I have fronted, the trio of Flamenco and the trio of jazz. The Flamenco trio with singer, dancer and percussionist, and the jazz trio with the double bass, the piano and drums, for me this is the perfect trio.

Well as I was saying, richer with electric guitar, rock guitar, is what there is. With a trumpet, an alto sax, but the sax uses pedals, Gilbert Fortuna a young Catalan that brings to the group a very particular timbre with his saxes and pedals. With vibraphone, psaltery and keyboards played by Marina Alvero who is my wife, and forms part of this group as well. I don’t know, there is a very different colour to this group.

The music is all new, except Nefertiti by Wayne Shorter because I wanted to record on this album, and a version of a cantigua from the 12th century written by Alfonso Décimo Ulsavio. All the rest, is my own new original. So new music, with new sounds.

**RG:** But with a resonance of when you played the keyboards before.

**CD:** Yes, I think that I have always played the same music. That is the music that I liked to play, along with the clave of the rhythms that I liked along with the influences that I absorbed during different periods. In the 70’s I was in love with symphonic rock, that’s why the group Cai has these songs that are full of keyboards and synths but with also the Flamenco claves.

Today, I do the same but after the experience of all these years and with all these musicians that I have worked with, all the music that kept filling me up, that I kept learning. But really, the driver remains the same. The rhythms that I love to play, the influences that have influenced me, and playing improvised music, these three factors have remained constant throughout all of my musical history.
RG: And I hope it remains this way. Many thanks.


Appendix i a: Interview with Chano Domínguez 21 March 2006 Transcription

Roger González: ¿Qué es Jazz Latino?

Chano Domínguez: Es una pregunta que podemos estar horas hablando, creo yo, sobre lo que es Jazz Latino. Pero para mí, realmente se puede resumir en algo muy simple, no. Que es la expresión de los músicos que tenemos en este lenguaje común que es el castellano, la expresión creativa de los músicos latinos. La expresión creativa esta claro que el Jazz, el lenguaje de Jazz ha impregnado todas las músicas de hoy en día. Yo creo que el Jazz es una música quasi corrosiva, que se ha metido dentro de toda la música porque tiene la peculiaridad de darte, de abrirte las puertas a que tu puedas crear con esa lenguaje, en el momento no. Y esto, los músicos latinos lo utilizamos con nuestras claves y con nuestras raíces no, o sea. Yo desde mi perspectiva como músico latino que ha nacido en España, y en el sur de España, con lo que eso conlleva, haberse criado con todos los ritmos del Flamenco, como yo me criado. Para mi es lo mas natural del mundo.

Pero, soy un músico que me encanta la improvisación, y que eso es lo que me ha hecho llegar al Jazz, la improvisación. Y que eso es lo que me ha hecho acercar a esa música para escribir este lenguaje que yo he creído indispensable para mi música no. Pero claro, mi música es un Jazz, con notaciones latinas de este lado del charco. Del otro lado del charco, yo por ejemplo, músicos como Jerry González que han conseguido de verdad sintetizar lo que es los ritmos y las claves de su tierra con todas las estructuras formales del Jazz, los temas de 32 compases, el blue, la música de Monk. Todo eso a mi me parece que es una manera tan natural que como no, el Jazz depende. Si lo toca músicos latinos será Jazz latino, si lo toca un músico Sajón (anglosajón) será Jazz Sajón, si lo toca un músico Africano será Jazz Africano porque es lo que te he dicho en principio que para mi el Jazz es una música que ha impregnado todas las músicas de hoy.
en día. Desde el Flamenco, la música Hindú, la música Africana, la música Brasileña, hay todo un montón de estilos que se han nutrido del Jazz.

**RG:** Mucha gente, cuando piensa en Jazz Latino, piensan en un base Afrocubano, y encima una armonía jazzística. Pero es más allá de eso, o no?

**CD:** Hombre, yo creo que está claro que va más allá de eso porque yo soy un músico de Jazz. Siempre lo he dicho, aunque mucha gente se empeña de decir que soy un pianista de Flamenco, yo creo que no. Que yo soy un músico de Jazz, que utilizó las claves de mi tierra. Y las claves de mi tierra, creo que son tan poderosas que nutren al Jazz de esa forma también, o sea, que le dan otra peculiaridad que no tiene en principio mucho que ver con la manera de ver del Jazz Latino del otro lado del charco. Pero yo creo que después si lo profundizamos en el tema nos damos cuenta que hay, de verdad, muchas similitudes en ciertos tipos de ritmos y estructuras de canciones o de frases que son comunes en el Flamenco y en la música que se ha hecho en el Caribe. Que se ha hecho en Cuba y todo lo Afrocubano no?

**RG:** Quiero hablar de los patrones que se parecen mucho en el Flamenco y también lo Afrocubano más tarde. Pero, quería preguntarte de la percusión, la importancia de la percusión dentro del Jazz Latino, dentro del Flamenco y si me puedes comentar un poco de eso no?

**CD:** Bueno, yo creo que la percusión en la música latina y en el Flamenco es imprescindible. O sea, en el Flamenco hay unos ritmos, hay unas claves que no son muchas pero que después se utilizan de diferente forma y que eso es lo que le da entidad rítmica y muy fuerte a cada palo del Flamenco, o sea. Y eso es imprescindible para mi música, mi música por ejemplo sin las claves del Flamenco no sería mi música, no se reconocería. O sea, la importancia de los ritmos es clave. Tan clave como que se llama por ejemplo la “clave”, no.
Lo que quiero decir es que si no tienes la clave, no tienes nada. O sea, si tu no sabes de cómo montar una idea musical sobre una estructura rítmica que es lo que te va a dar lo soporte de todo eso, no te entenderás nada, porque aquello se te va a caer por todos los lados. Con lo cual, fíjense, no es que sea importante es que es vital! Sin las claves, no tenemos nada o sea yo me agarro sobre todas las claves de mi música. O sea, me agarro a las claves de la alegria de Cádiz, a las claves de la Soleá, a las claves de la seguidilla, a las claves de los tangos, a las claves de los fandangos, de todo esos ritmos que a mi me da un soporte imprescindible para yo después montar pues estructuras tan formales como las de los estándares de Jazz, de 32 compases, o los del blue. Por que yo soy un enamorado de la estructura del blue y lo he utilizado mucho en mi música con los ritmos con las claves del Flamenco, o sea yo hago blue por bujería, por Soleá, blue por tanguillo, y quiero decir que para mi lo que me da el sustento de poder montar todo precisamente es el ritmo, por lo cual no es que sea importante, es vital.

Aunque después dentro del mundo del Flamenco, haya algunos palos que no necesiten del “ritmo” entre comillas, fijo, de un ritmo fijo como pueden ser palos que a mi me encantan también, que suelo grabar en mis discos, o que pueden ser la granadina, la malagueña, o las mineras, las tarantas. Son palos libres que cuando tu lo aprendes, y sobre todo esto se aprende acompañando a los cantaores de Flamenco, te das cuenta que si que tienen un tiempo, no. Pero es un tiempo que se va estirando, es un tiempo que no esta sujeto a una división estable, entre los golpes no. Pero que si que tiene un tiempo, y esto para mi también es increíble no, porque cuando tu ves a un guitarrista de Flamenco, y a un cantaor cantando una minera, o una granadina, te das cuenta que van al limite. Pero hay un tiempo, que va respirando con el forme del cantaor, va alargando o acortando ese melisma que va haciendo no. Con lo cual es muy interesante eso para mi el Flamenco. Porque es como ir al limite pero no es al limite exactamente. Yo creo que el Flamenco para mi tiene una gama de matices rítmicos, muy, muy fuerte que son las que sustentan mi música sobre todo. Que también,
en los últimos años yo, por la conexión que tenía con músicos del otro lado del charco, he empezado a hacer muchas cosas mas rumberas, y me encanta porque la siento muy naturales, no es como bien porque si me pongo a tocar por tangos, o me pongo a tocar por Rumba flamenca, ya puedo tumbar como las Rumbas cubanas, como el Son cubano. O sea, estamos hermanados totalmente ahí. Ahí esta el punto de inflexión total en los temas de por 4 por 4. Aunque también el tanguillo de Cádiz, por ejemplo, tiene mucho que ver con la música Afrocubana, con todo el 6 por 8, el 12 por 8, Afro no. Entonces yo ahí también veo que las claves se entrelazan no. La clave cubana que es 2-3 (sings it), son cinco golpes no. Pues las claves flamencas son cinco golpes! O sea, la Bulería son cinco golpes. 1(23) 1(23) 1(2) 1(2) 1(2). O sea, si te pones de verdad a investigar y a ver desde la profundidad de los ritmos de cada tierra, te das cuenta que no estamos tan lejos, con ningunos del otro.

Y aparte, yo creo que el ritmo al Flamenco, yo creo que también le lleva aparte de llegarle por Persia, por toda esa zona de todos los Flamencos, o los indios que iban caminando que eran nómadas, también el ritmo viene de África. Yo lo veo claramente, en las claves rítmicas viene muy de África y se van repartiendo para todos los lado no, y en cada sitio lo vamos utilizando de una manera no. Le vas dando la vuelta y le vas haciendo tuya, pero hay muchas similitudes.

**RG:** Bueno, dentro de la clave quiero preguntar varias preguntas, pero también quería umm, estábamos hablando de los tanguillos, y eso viene de la habanera.

**CD:** Bueno, los tanguillos para mi no vienen de la habanera. No porque la habanera es otro tiempo, el tanguillo es un 6 por 8 y la habanera digamos que sería mas un tiempo mas 4 la habanera no, sabes?

**RG:** La razón que lo digo, es por algo que Francisco Núñez escribió sobre La Ida y Vuelta, y era dentro de la parte de la Vuelta, ha dicho…
**CD:** No, no, no, el sabe mucho eh. El es un flamencólogo buenísimo, Francisco Núñez, o sea que.

**RG:** No, no, que lo que ha dicho es que

“En el Flamenco fuerza del patrón habanera es providencial, son tantos los géneros que basan su ritmo en el dichoso anfibraco que sorprenderá a más de uno que la presencia de Cuba en el arte Flamenco sea tan grande”

Hablando un poco de la habanera, que viene de Cuba, me puedes comentar brevemente un poco con…

**CD:** Si que es verdad que tiene mucho que ver el tanguillo con la habanera porque depende de cómo lo miras rítmicamente, lo puedes tocar una habanera o puedes tocar un tanguillo. Es que ocurre una cosa, el ritmo de tanguillo además es un ritmo muy, muy abierto que te permite meter otros ritmos dentro de él. O sea, usar la poli rítmica, yo en mi música lo hago muchas veces, estamos tocando tanguillos y paso a 4 por 4 o paso a Soleá por Bulería, o paso por Bulería, porque es un ritmo que te permite, dependiendo cómo se subdivida dentro de él. Y tu me entenderás perfectamente como eres percusionista, puedes pasar de uno al otro.

(canta ejemplo)

Lo puedo meter dentro el de la Bulería, el de la Soleá de Bulería, el de la Rumba y es un ritmo muy abierto que puede abarcar dentro de muchos otros ritmos.

**RG:** Entonces hay algunos ritmos que se permiten, dentro del Jazz mas que otras? Quiero decir patrones de Flamenco que se puede utilizar.
**CD:** Hombre, esto es que es una cosa que hemos empezado a hacer unos cuantos músicos españoles, y yo no se. A mi lo que me funciona mejor, yo te diré que son los tiempos fiesteros, quedan muy bien. O sea, los tiempos como la *Bulería*, o el tanguillo, o la *Rumba*, o los tangos, son tiempos que le van muy bien. Incluso a mi me gusta redactar temas estándar con ritmo del Flamenco, o compositores como Monk sobre todo, o Bill Evans, o Wayne Shorter que lo he hecho en el último disco que va a salir. En fin me gusta adaptar música ya hecha de compositores Americanos. Y la verdad, los tiempos estos fiesteros le van muy bien. Aunque, yo me encanta también tocar los tiempos lentos como la *Soleá*. La *Soleá* me parece un tiempo maravilloso para expresar no. Es como si hablamos de la *Soleá*, para mi es como si habláramos del blue, mas de raíz. De hecho, a mi me encantar hacer el blue por *Soleá*. Me considero enamorado de esa mezcla, de la estructura del blue que te permite ir creando y recreando una y otra vez dentro de esa “estructura” siempre entre comillas y del aire Flamenco que tiene la *Soleá*.

**RG:** Es muy personal no? Porque tienes un tema, Mañana de reyes…

**CD:** Mañana de reyes es un tanguillo. En ese disco, hay una *Soleá*, que se llama “*Soleá Blas*” que la canta Blas Córdoba y eso es un blue por *Soleá*. Es un blue que utilizo la estructura del blue pero en el modo frigio (phrygian) para que el cantaor lo puede cantar y lo que sería el “turnaround” de los cuatro últimos compases del blue, lo que hago es utilizar como el “turnaround” Flamenco de la *Soleá*. Hay un cambio harmónico ahí pero ahí hay una mezcla que para mi manera de entender muy natural que queda perfecta. Yo lo he utilizado en mas de un disco y creo que seguiré utilizándolo porque creo que es una formula magistral digamos. El blue y la *Soleá*, junto.

**RG:** Has hablado de Blas Córdoba, para ti que importancia hay de los cantaores y también de los bailarines, porque tu utilizas…
El baile, como no. Mucha importancia. Yo, el cante Flamenco está conmigo desde que yo recuerde, porque mi padre era un grandísimo aficionado, y eso en mi casa sonda siempre. Cada día yo escuchaba Flamenco desde pequeño. A mi de hecho me habría encantado ser cantaor de Flamenco no. Yo creo que es un don de la naturaleza cantar Flamenco, porque me parece increíble como puedes dominar la voz de esa manera y poder hacer esos giros melódicos tan impresionantes que hacen unos cantaores. Para mi es muy importante. Los músicos empezamos a tocar música, música y música y olvidamos la voz que es el primer instrumento. O sea el ritmo y la voz son los dos primeros instrumentos, o sea la clave y la voz era el primer instrumento que tuvimos. A mi me encanta, porque además la voz del cante Flamenco es una voz ancestral. Es una voz que te puede transportar en el tiempo, y la distancia y no se y es una manera de comunicar también con la voz aparte de con la música. A mi me encanta llevar un cantaor en el grupo, casi prefiero llevar un cantaor que llevar a un saxofonista, por ejemplo que haga un solo. Me gusta mucho acompañar el cante Flamenco no.

Me gusta mucho las pinceladas de cante, y además yo he tenido la suerte de encontrar a un cantaor como Blas Córdoba que lleva trabajando conmigo desde hace seis o siete años y para mi es un cantaor de los mas lindos que yo he escuchado en mi vida. Porque normalmente el cante Flamenco puede ser muy agresivo y muy duro, y Blas Córdoba hace que sea suave y dulce como un algodón de caramel, sabes? Entonces, perfecto. Me encanta para mi grupo con el contraste del cante Flamenco pero de esa manera no.

Y el baile. Yo en principio siempre lo he utilizado como un percusionista mas del grupo porque creo que tienen tanta fuerza un remate con un taconeo que es definitivo, o sea, no hay mas. Entonces, me encanta llevar ese color también en el grupo y aparte es el baile cuando sale se gana el publico. Es lo conductor si quieres, que yo en mis conciertos lo utilizo con pinceladas muy concretas porque realmente se lleva un protagonismo.
grandísimo el baile en directo. Que el concierto toma un carácter mucho más de espectáculo cuando tenemos un bailaor. Y eso también me gusta porque me gusta cuando salgo en el escenario que la gente se lo pase bien y a mi me encanta el bailaor que viene conmigo, Tomasito, porque es un chaval que esta sembrado, que esta pasado del compás porque tiene todo el compás del Jerez. Sabe todo lo antiguo de Jerez, pero tiene toda la modernidad de haber crecido con Michael Jackson, y con todo el rock y todo el pop moderno. Y el sabe muy bien mezclar esas claves también. Es una pieza en mi grupo, yo creo que también clave. Entonces, para mi el cante y el baile han estado conmigo desde toda la vida y es.

**RG:** Pero también has hecho colaboraciones con Martirio, Marta Valdés. Es un poco distinto no?

**CD:** Sí, claro. A mi también me ha interesado la música popular española por ejemplo. Me he interesado mucho a sacar información y beber de la fuente de lo que ha pasado alrededor mío, aquí. Porque yo de repente recuerdo hace muchísimos años que un día me di cuenta de una cosa. Estaba aprendiendo a tocar Autumn Leaves, All the things you are, montones de temas que me encanta y que hoy en día sigo tocando, de temas estándar Americanos.

Pero, me di cuenta que esos temas lo tocaban esos músicos en los años cuarenta porque era los temas que estaban de moda, eran los temas que ellos habían escuchado, o sea ellos simplemente versionaban la música popular suya. Y de repente empecé descubrir en la canción española, que también yo lo escuchaba de pequeño porque mi madre siempre estaba con la radio, y mi madre siempre cantaba canciones españolas, que había melodías preciosas, que había canciones que si de repente la rescatabas de ahí donde estaban puestas, con tanto polvo, con tanto toro que conlleva esa música, quizás trae la imagen de todo el régimen de la dictadura, pero que quizás no. Yo estoy seguro que son músicos, y esos escritores de esa época eran muy fuertes, porque era además un momento donde los
escritores y los músicos se reunieron en los café-teatros, hacían cosas juntos. Cosas que hoy en día es más complicado porque todos tendemos a hacer muy multimedia digamos pero muy cada uno en tu casa.

Entonces, me di cuenta que hay muchas canciones, muy bonitas que si las sacabas de ahí las tocabas como un músico de jazz que la despoja de todas esas reglas y de todo eso, y simplemente cogía la melodía y la armonía y lo interpreta como a ti te gusta, te suena bien. Ostia, descubrí que hay muchos desde la música popular y tradicional a la canción española y también, como no, eso me llevo también al bolero, y me llevo a la música latinoamericana, a la canción latinoamericana que me parece que los músicos de jazz latinos tenemos todo unos estándar latinos que son maravillosos y que a mi me encantaría recuperar. Yo toco temas como Gracias a la Vida, que me parece unos de los temas mas maravillosos, escritos en español no. Y creo que es tan válido como All the things you are, o Autumn leaves, y tienen es estructura que a veces, incluso son más interesantes, porque la canción española, la estructura que encontramos nunca vana ser de 32 compases. Siempre tienen mas de dos partes, o sea son más complejas. Y las letras son muy fuertes, las letras de la canción española también. Tiene mucha chicha digamos, tiene mucha fuerza digamos, todo lo que se hizo en esa época no. A mi me encanta recuperar todo eso, y me encanta tocar todos estos temas porque están digamos en mi memoria musical desde mi infancia desde que podía recordar. O sea, por lo cual me gusta tocar esa música no.

**RG:** Entonces es un poco como… por ejemplo Chucho Valdés y Jerry González miran muchos a sus raíces, lo utilizan en su trabajo. Para ti es más importante tener ese raíz flamenca o de fusionar e ir adelante o es una combinación?

**CD:** No, no, no. Mira, si yo soy un músico, yo me considero un músico bastante ecléctico o sea. Me gustan muchas cosas, y que realmente aunque la ultima década, me haya centrado mucho en la música que he grabado en
el estilo que he grabado, a mi me gusta ir descubriendo cosas y cambiando porque es lo que me va enriqueciendo. O sea, yo soy un músico que no puedo tocar tres días seguidos el mismo repertorio. Con lo cual, siempre me voy a tirarme a la piscina tío, siempre voy a querer meter las narices en algo, y eso es lo que me hace estar mas vivo e estar con la ilusión del primer día de afrontar cosas que para mi son retos no. Y eso a mi me encanta no.

Por eso, yo he hecho un disco ahora que va a salir de aquí unos meses que no es la de RTVE, es una producción mía, y es una música nueva con todo composiciones nuevas con un grupo nuevo o sea. Yo, estoy en un proceso de cambio. Yo creo que constante y vital, porque no me gusto cuando me vuelvo de ver de la misma manera y tocando los mismos temas de la misma forma. O sea, siempre tengo esa inquietud de buscar algo, y de tirarme en una piscina y de ver que pasa no. Y eso me hace estar vivo y en constante movimiento, por lo cual. No soy un músico que tenga una dirección, o sea creo que tengo una dirección muy clara pero es dirección se abre muchísimo, y por eso soy capaz de sentarme al piano con Marta Valdés que me encanta su música. O de sentarme con Martinir y hacer la canción española no. O de ahora mismo estar con el ballet nacional que me encanta estar acompañando al baile o bailarines con todo las cuadernos de Federico García Lorca. Con esa música tradicional que yo también conozco desde pequeño, que yo lo he cantado en la escuela, sabes. Yo lo he tocado en mi primer grupo cuando tocaba la guitarra flamenca sea que son cosas que vienen conmigo desde siempre no.

**RG:** Hablando del ballet, y también hablando que te gusta cambiar lo que tocas, no puedes cambiar en la música por un ballet no?

**CD:** No, pero si yo te cuento. Dentro de lo estable que es todo ese concierto que acompañamos al ballet nacional, porque de compases esta cuadrado. O sea, de principio a fin. Hay siempre unos compases que nunca pasa lo mismo, porque hay solos. O sea, yo he escrito unos de los temas con partes
totalmente de un solista, y solo de guitarra eléctrica, o solo de piano. Muy cuadrado, si son 8 compases son 8 compases, pero yo he querido conservar dentro de la rigidez que es, que supone acompañar por el baile, conservar la espontaneidad dentro de esa rigidez. Y esa fue la condición que yo puse cuando senté con José Antonio, el director del ballet nacional, para hacer la adaptación de esa música para el ballet, que fue una adaptación por otro lado muy pret a porter en el sentido de que estaba muy sujeta como José Antonio pretendía hacer las canciones. Para bailarla, y hacer el su coreografía, con lo cual por ejemplo la Tarara esta en ritmo de tanguillo, porque el quería que fuera en ritmo de tanguillo. O sea, hay otras que no, que yo convencí que haya un ritmo de colombiana por ejemplo de Ida y Vuelta, que yo le convencí que quedaba muy bien y al final salió un numero de los mas bonitos que le dio a el.

RG: Esta música siempre ha estado contigo.

CD: Sí, son estándar. Son lo que yo considero estándar. Los estándar que a mi me gusta tocar no.

RG: Fernando Trueba dijo que “Con Chano Domínguez Domínguez, Camarón y Monk se dan la mano”

CD: Es bonita la frase no?

RG: Sí, y es interesante que Monk haya influenciado a ti, pero también a Jerry González mucho.

CD: Sí, mira es que yo con la música de Monk te aseguro que, aparte que es un fascinación absoluta lo que tengo por Monk, porque me parece un músico de lo mas particulares que ha dado la música contemporánea. Yo siempre he visto en Monk, un personaje muy Flamenco. Tanto en el, cuando le veas a el, como su manera de tocar. O sea Monk para mi es muy natural oírlo por Bulería, quiero decir, yo ya cuando lo oigo a el ya lo oigo
por *Bulería* por ejemplo no. Es un músico que, tocando el, le noto que hay remates. Si tu notas, hay frases que toca si lo sacas de ese contexto y lo cojieramos con Pro Tools, y lo metemos por *Bulería* con palmas. Perfecto! Perfecto!

Es un compositor increíble por la sencillez, entre comillas también, de las composiciones cuanto a la forma muy estándar, muy para los músicos lo podemos tocar, pero después con una personalidad arrolladora. Quiero decir, las melodías de Monk no creo que ningún otro músico se hubiera atrevido componerlas.

**RG:** Era un fuera de serie.

**CD:** Además, compuse en tantas direcciones, las baladas que tiene, los temas de swing, los blue. Todo, o sea, es un magnifico no. Yo creo que el es de una obra muy amplia que no solo Jerry González y yo, hay muchos músicos que se han nutrido de esa fuente de inspiración de Monk. Es un personaje yo creo de lo mas importantes de la música contemporánea no. Para mi eh, para mi. Para mi humilde opinión.

**RG:** Bueno, para me encanta tu tema de Monk Medley con Bemsha Swing y Well You Needn’t.

**CD:** Pero suena natural (canta ejemplo) Eso ya es Flamenco, el ya estaba utilizando fa y fa sostenido. El estaba haciendo el giro Flamenco. Y depuse otra cosa que me parece de el que es espectacular, el nunca grababa la misma tema igual. Grabó muchas veces los mismos temas, pero siempre cambiaba la melodía de sitio. Siempre tenía un rincón que no había mostrado donde ponía una nota que te mataba. Después cuando le ves tocar a el, me encantaba ese imprevisible. Es un músico que te va a cambiar la ultima milésima del segundo. Tu lo ves tocar y el va a poner un acorde, y en la ultima milésima del segundo decide que no es ese, que es (pak). Es un improvisador nato, es un creador nato. No se, para mi es una fuente de
inspiración. Y yo creo que en muchos discos míos he grabado cosas suya, pero es que yo creo que voy a volver a grabar cosas suyas en mis discos porque a mí siempre me gusta lo de grabar de algún compositor de jazz que me guste. Como en este último he grabado Nefertiti de Wayne Shorter. Pues yo me resisto creer que no voy a grabar algún otro tema de Monk más adelante.

**RG:** Hablando un poco de discos, en tu DVD Oye como viene, has dicho que en los años ochenta escuchasteis el disco Moliendo Café, de Jerry González, y era para ti Jazz Latino no.

**CD:** Sí, ahí descubrí yo el Jazz Latino. Ahí es donde lo descubrí yo realmente, fue donde realmente había una entendimiento clarísimo de los dos lenguajes de una manera natural, de una manera totalmente natural.

**RG:** Porque para ti, cuando empieza el Jazz, y cuando cruzas al Cubano y cuando terminas en el Flamenco?

**CD:** Uy, esto es complicado. Yo creo que esto depende de los músicos que estén tocándolo. Y yo no sabría decirte donde empieza el Jazz y termina el Flamenco, o donde empieza el Flamenco y termina el Jazz en mi música. O sea, yo creo que soy un músico bilingüe, que soy un músico que ya estoy formado en esos dos tipos de lenguajes y que en mi caso eso dos tipos de lenguajes están mas que fusionado, es que están dentro de mí. O sea lo tengo, no hay que forzar nada. Es como el Puerto Riqueño que habla Spanglish, quiero decir habla Spanglish… que vamos a hacer?

Entonces yo en mi caso yo. Yo creo que soy así.

**RG:** Perdona de enfocar tanto de Jerry.

**CD:** No no no, me encanta hablar de Jerry porque es un músico que he aprendido muchísimo de el que me ha ayudado mucho con su manera de
entender su música, desde que yo lo he conocido. Mucho antes desde que yo conociera a el, cuando conocí a su música. Yo conocí su música en Bélgica, de modo que no estaba en España, aquí no estaban sus discos. Y yo en los años ochenta tocaba con un músico que se llamaba Nono García que es un grandísimo guitarrista de Flamenco. Yo digo el mejor guitarrista de Flamenco ya. Porque este mano lo tiene de Jazz, y este mano lo tiene de Flamenco. O sea su mano izquierda como un jazzista y la mano derecha es como un Flamenco no. Es una mezcla muy curiosa también, y cuando yo fui a tocar con el, el tenia discos de Jerry González y eso fue, de descubrir esa música fue muy enriquecedor.

**RG:** Me puedes contar la primera vez que conocisteis a Jerry...

**CD:** Ah, yo conocí a Jerry en el festival de cine de Miami, en el año 2000 yo creo. Que fuimos a hacer un concierto con Martirio y Fernando Trueba me tenía una sorpresa preparado. Me metía en un a encerrona y de repente me ha metido en un camerino, y aparece Jerry González no. Hicimos un concierto juntos en Miami, y a partir de ahí se estableció una relación de amistad que hoy en día permanece y muy fuerte con Jerry no. Aunque después aquí en España Jerry se ha establecido aquí en Madrid y ha tocado con otros músicos mas que tocar nosotros juntos. De todas maneras me parece que Jerry es un músico irrepetible también y que esta aquí haciendo mucho con muchos grandes músicos Cubanos y del Flamenco. Se ha encontrado una serie de gente que han creado una lenguaje de entender el Flamenco, la *Rumba*, el jazz, todo junto muy particular.

**RG:** Porque después de Calle 54 el hizo el disco de los piratas del Flamenco.

**CD:** Exacto, de eso hablaba.

**RG:** Y se ha venido aquí y estaba viviendo en el Café Berlín. La primera vez que le vi y le conocí, le vi en un Jam Session de…
CD: Como no, de las 5 de la mañana.

Roger González Y baja de su piso y empieza a tocar sabes? Claro todo, impresionante. Pero, también hay muchos Cubanos que vienen ahora por necesidad.

CD: Como no, hay muchos Cubanos en Madrid, en Barcelona también hay. Bueno, vienen porque aquí además saben que como músico tienen trabajo no, y van viniendo como no.

RG: Y es como otra Vuelta ahora?

CD: Pues si. Pues si, es verdad no lo había pensado de esa manera pero es otra vuelta, porque los músicos vienen y traen sus cosas nuevas, y traen su manera de entender sus tumbaos, sus claves y todo esto se mezcla con la gente de aquí y eso hace que pasen cosas. Yo me encanta, hay Jam Sessions de Flamenco aquí en el Cardamomo, que se que se mezclan los músicos de Flamenco con los músicos Cubanos y la lián!

RG: Yo noté con Alain Pérez, que estaba tocando con Niño Joselé, y después Enrique Morente, y Paco de Lucía. Y si quieres o no, siempre están metiendo su cosas.

CD: Claro claro, como no.

RG: Me puedes hablar un poco de Paco de Lucía, es importante dentro del ámbito de Jazz Latino o solo de Flamenco.

CD: Yo no se, yo creo que Paco de Lucía es importante dentro de la música con mayúsculas. Creo que Paco es un músico muy muy grande. Y en mi caso, quizás ha sido el músico que ha sido más importante dentro de mi influencias no. Paco de Lucía llegó un momento que hizo un disco que
para mi abrió las puertas del Flamenc a la música improvisada y al jazz claramente el encontró la llave y abrió la puerta.

El hizo un disco en el año 80-81 que se llama, Solo Quiero Caminar, y que incluye músicos de la música Brasileña, músico de Rock y músicos de Jazz porque claro Rubén Dante venía de la música de Brasil, Carlos Buenavent era un rockero casi, un Jazzman pero roquero, y jorge Pardo era un grandísimo músico de Jazz no. Y tuvo una inteligencia muy grande en los temas que hizo, los músicos que puso a tocar junto, yo creo que ahí Paco abre la puerta. Abre la puerta de que después todos hemos pasado, Jorge Pardo y Carlos Buenavent y Rubén Danta los primeros no. Pero detrás pues un montón de músicos que hemos bebido de esa idea musical de Paco. Paco es el mas grande! Yo no se como hablar de Paco, es que me da miedo hablar de Paco! Porque le respeto tanto y le admiro tanto, y me parece tan grande su música que tengo miedo de decir algo que le ofenda! (laughs).

Y además de diré otra cosa, Paco ha influenciado machismos músicos. No solamente del Flamenco, del Jazz, de la música clásica. Yo creo que Paco ha influenciado a medio planeta. O sea, el que haya escuchado la música de Paco de Lucía se ha quedado atrapado seguro. Se ha quedado…

**RG:** También ha hecho cosas como poner el *cajón* dentro del Flamenco.

**CD:** Bueno, el *cajón* es un instrumento que a adoptado el Flamenco y eso lo hace Paco con Rubén Danta no. Paco le regala a Rubén un *cajón*, y le dice. “Toma, ponte a tocar este instrumento conmigo, no”. Y Rubén fue el primero que lo tocó, Rubén es el abuelo. Ya se puede decir no el padre, pero el abuelo del *cajón* del Flamenco no. Después llegaron todo quien llegaron y hay *cajón*eros espectaculares como Israel Suárez “Piraña” que viene tocando conmigo, que ahora va con Paco de Lucía también, es un crack no. Pero eso fue un idea de Paco, como la del bajo, o la flauta o todos los instrumentos que después se han ido atraer.
RG: Y hablando de esto, me puedes hablar un poco de cuando conociste a Guillermo McGill.

CD: A Guillermo y yo ya nos conocíamos desde los finales del 80. Finales de los 80 ya nos fuimos viendo Guillermo y yo, conciertos, en algún club y empezamos a tocar. Y después yo le dije, “Guillermo, yo se que tu tienes un cajón”, porque el vivía con una chica bailaora y también conocía las claves del Flamenco y le dije, “tráete un cajón”. Y tocamos un día una Bulería improvisada y se hizo dueño de la percusión de mi grupo desde entonces.

RG: Esto era la primera vez que se utilizó el cajón con el piano.

CD: Sí. Que yo recuerde, antes de esto no hay nada grabado. En los principios de los noventa, fuimos pioneros de mezclar este lenguaje no. De coger los claves del Flamenco y de ponerlas dentro del mundo del Jazz de esa manera. Con los estándar, con el blue y ahí no cabe duda que estábamos tanto ahí yo recuerdo muy bien los principios de mi trío con Guillermo McGill, y con Manolo Calleja, un bajista Sevillano, que estábamos inventando cada uno como lo íbamos tocar a eso no. Fue un trabajo que casi no te podías apoyar en nada no. Simplemente tenías que confiar en tu criterio y en tu manera de tocar y ensamblar ahí esa música entre los tres no.

Después, llegó Javier Colina quien fue el que se dirigió como contrabajista de mi grupo. Porque el llegó casi pidiéndome por favor que fuera a tocar con el en los años noventa, principios de los noventa. Y como no, se gano este puesto quien lo tenía Manolo Calleja, y formo parte de todo esa creación que hicimos entre estos músicos que nos juntamos en esa época. Pues eso, Javier Colina, Guillermo McGill, Tino Giraldo, hay unos cuantos no que estábamos por la labor de tocar con estos ritmos y de pasarlo bien. Sobre todo era pasárselo bien, encontrando una manera tuya de hacerlo no?
RG: Pero antes lo pasabas bien tocando rock no?

CD: Ostia, yo me lo pasaba de maravilla!

Lo que pasa es que también me averié y me asqueo un poco porque en esa época en los años setenta cuando empezábamos, tocábamos con los amplificadores simplemente y recuerdo que yo tocaba el órgano con distorsión. O sea, imagínate.

RG: Y cuando cambias el chip para ir hacia el Jazz?

CD: Bueno, yo empecé tocando los teclados porque yo en realidad empecé tocando la guitarra flamenca. Pero, un día me atrópese con un armonio, y empecé a pasarlo de la guitarra al armonio y ahí empezó mi relación con los teclados no.

Y de ahí, solté al grupo de rock, con los sintetizadores. Me encajaban no. Yo oía hasta Jetho Tull o Pink Floyd. Estos fueron mis primeras influencias del todo, del mundo de los discos, lo que llegaba de los discos. Y yo intentaba imitar eso, y como aquí solamente teníamos la posibilidad de tener un tecladito, o un teclado le ponía distorsión, compraba pedales de esto de flanger, de chorus todo. Y bueno con eso tocábamos, y mis primeros influencias fueran esos grupos, y eso grupos me llevaban después al Jazz Fusión. Que me llevaban al Jazz mas puro, que me llevaban hasta Jelly Roll Morton, o sea que todo fue un proceso muy natural. Y yo desde los teclados, llego al piano en una forma también un poco ya porque un día ya me doy cuenta que los teclados están muy bien, y me encanta tocar con los sonidos de sintetizadores, el órgano pero que realmente si podía tocar el piano mas o menos aceptable. Entonces podría tocar cualquier teclado bien no.

Y me decidi que me tenía que centrarme al piano no. Y eso en mi caso fue bastante tarde, porque yo me senté a estudiar piano con 20 años. Pero, con
toda la ilusión del mundo, toda las ganas del mundo de que realmente había encontrado cual era el instrumento en el que yo me iba a desarrollar no. Sea, que digamos que toda mi adolescencia y mi juventud la pasé disfrutando con los teclados hasta que en un día me dio un toque de madurez y anoche me tenia que sentar y estudiar bien ese instrumento porque entonces podrás tocar cualquier teclado, un órgano, un sintetizador, un clavinet cualquier sea, y hacerlo bien no.

**RG:** Entonces no era como Luc Dellanoy, un musicólogo francés, escribió que dejaste la guitarra porque mordía las uñas.

**CD:** Bueno, sí. Algo tenía que ver. Yo me mordía las uñas siempre y yo como guitarrista siempre he sido nefasto. Si yo lo reconozco. Yo toque la guitarra durante siete o ocho años y en cuanto encontré un instrumento de teclado me enamore de él, y dejé la guitarra no.

Yo, a mi me encantaría tocar la guitarra. De hecho, parece que la guitarra es como una bicicleta. Una vez que aprendes a tocarla no se te olvida. Yo cojo la guitarra y toco los acordes y de hecho disfruto con mi hijo que si toca la guitarra flamenca, bastante bien además. Y a el si que tiene uñas. Yo disfruto de el tocando, y acompañándolo pero realmente no fue porque comía las uñas. Si es cierto que me como las uñas, es un defecto como otros muchos que tengo.

**RG:** No, no. Es que me parecía una poco raro que decía Dellanoy.

Bueno, me estabas contando que descubriste al Jelly Roll Morton no. Que el era unos de los pioneros del Jazz.

**CD:** Fue el primer pianista que improvisó. Fue el primero que improvisó que se recuerda que improvisó!
RG: El dijo también, “De hecho, si no son ustedes capaces de insertar ingredientes españoles en sus composiciones de jazz, no lograrán jamás obtener lo que yo llamo el perfecto condimento”.

CD: Es verdad, es verdad. Si lo he escuchado eso.

RG: Entonces, la influencia española ha sido ahí (en el Jazz) desde el …

CD: Desde el principio. Hombre date cuenta que en New Orleáns se unieron de todo españoles, holandeses, belgas. No se, había africanos, había gente de todos los lados y por eso surgió esa cosa tan mágica no. Eso de cuando la gente de la calle coge los instrumentos del clásico y se pone a tocar lo que oye pero a su manera, entonces ya han girado el ritmo ya han cambiado la clave y aquello empieza sonar rico de verdad!

Porque realmente, el Jazz no, casi viene del marching band de la marcha militar. Pero claro, tocado de una manera rica!

RG: Me gustaría si podrías comentar como ves el Jazz aquí en España hoy en día, si tiene fuerza propia. Y donde ves donde va el Jazz Latino en el futuro?

CD: Bueno, mira. Para la primera pregunta, te voy a decir que el Jazz en España ha cambiado en algunos aspectos mucho. Y sigue exactamente igual en otros mucho, y me explico.

Yo recuerdo que hace treinta años cuando empezábamos a tocar jazz, intentábamos hace 25 o 26 años. Unos cuantos locos en Barcelona, otros en Madrid, otros en el País Vasco, en Galicia y por Andalucía. No había nada. Había cuatro locales, no había partituras. Yo recuerdo los discos teníamos que ir a grabarlos no se donde, a buscar la información. Yo recuerdo cuando llego a mis manos el primer real book, que lo hacían los
músicos, los alumnos de la Berklee no, ese famoso libro. Que siempre digo es el “wrong book” mas que el “real book”, pero bueno.

Cuando llego ese libro a mis manos, fue como todo un descubrimiento no. Era muy complicado en esa época, y éramos unos cuantos locos que teníamos que buscarnos la vida y crear locales para tocar.

Eso hoy en día no tiene nada que ver. Hoy en día se ha conseguido que hayan escuelas que están subvencionado por el Ministerio de Cultura, en el País Vasco, en Galicia, en Cataluña, en la comunidad autónoma de Madrid, se esta haciendo en Andalucía. O sea, la música contemporánea, el jazz y el lenguaje del jazz hoy en día se estudia en las escuelas, en España. Eso hace 25 años era impensable. O sea, empezó el taller de músicos de Barcelona, después se fundo otro aquí en Madrid, El Aula, había dos o tres escuelitas que bueno.

Hoy en día, hay un calvo de cultivo de músicos impresionante. Si te vas a Barcelona, y te vas a una Jam Session, vas a ver músicos de veinte años tocando con una profesionalidad increíble. Tocando música muy preparado. Quiero decir, lo que hemos hecho unos cuantos músicos en los años 80 con mucho esfuerzo, muy abandonado, hoy en día ha cambiado mucho.

**RG:** Porque antes había Pedro Iturralde...

**CD:** Bueno, antes había Pedro Iturralde y Tete Monteliu y para de contar. Y ellos tocaban en los sitios que se podía tocar, y bravo y después pa afuera.

Pero, no había músicos. Había muy pocos, había poquísimos. Esto ha cambiado mucho! El taller de músicos en Barcelona puede tener mas de 500 alumnos. El las Mus?? Puede haber mas de 300 o 400 alumnos estudiando nivel superior de música contemporánea, de música de Jazz, de Flamenco. Esto no tiene nada que ver con lo de antes.
Pero hay otra aspecto que sí que sigue estando igual. Y que es realmente el apoyo de todo estos músicos que ahora mismo no tienen por donde a tocar. Que se han formado de maravilla, que saben tocar, que saben leer música, que saben compartir con cualquier músico que venga, de cualquier parte del mundo, y que realmente en este país seguimos teniendo los mismos locales de Jazz. El apoyo al músico es muy muy precario creo yo. En los clubs se siguen pagando lo mismo que se pagaban hace 20 años, para músicos que hoy en día están mucho mas preparados que los de entonces. No se como explicarlo, hay un de-equilibrio muy grande creo yo, porque por un lado se esta creando una base de músicos muy grande. Pero por otro lado, no se le esta dejando a tocar a estos sitios, porque no hay sitios para tocar. Entonces yo creo que ahí falta un esfuerzo de parte de la administración muy grande para que los músicos de verdad puedan trabajar en este país. O sea, se hace falta un esfuerzo por parte de los medios de comunicación, para que la música de verdad pueda exhibirse en esta plataformas porque no puede ser que en la televisión hoy en día no veamos ningún grupo en directo.

O sea, a mi me avergüenza salir a Europa y ver que en Italia, y en Francia, que en Portugal, o sea tu pones la televisión y todos los programas son programas muy, muy comercial, hay una música muy, muy comercial pero hay músicos tocándolo en vivo. En este país no lo hay. Creo que hay un desequilibrio muy grande con lo cual, el jazz en este país o la música viva en este país esta, yo creo en algunos factores, potenciadas y en otras totalmente olvidadas.

Y que estamos haciendo, estamos creando una base de músicos muy buenos, que después no van a saber donde van a tener donde tienen que ir a tocar. Y esto creo que es importante que se tenga en cuenta, de verdad cambie esto en este país.
Y por otro lado los músicos también estamos abandonados, como siempre. Quiero decir, no tenemos una regulación, en Francia hay un sindicato, en Alemania, en Bélgica, en Dinamarca. Un músico no se queda parado, tiene su ayuda del gobierno. Aquí, eso todavía no haya. Hay cosas que están bien, y otras cosas que están muy, muy mal.

**RG:** quería ir atrás un poco. Antes estábamos hablando un poco de la clave, y hablar sobre algo que escribió uno de Berklee, que se llama Eduardo Uribe, y escribió que “La clave de África, evolucionó mucho hacia la clave Cubana pero también hacia las palmas Flamenca”.

**CD:** Claro, yo te lo he dicho antes también. Si nos ponemos a buscar y andamos para atrás, para mí las claves rítmicas vienen de África y se van. Y para cada sitio que se van, se adopta una manera y se usan de una manera. Pero, la clave famosa de los cinco golpes, está utilizado en todo el mundo.

**RG:** Pero las palmas dentro del Flamenco es como la clave. Que importancia tienen las palmas, porque dentro de unos patrones son imprescindible.

**CD:** Si. Bueno, no es que sean imprescindible porque tu puedes tocar una Bulería sin palmas. De hecho, yo lo hago. Pero no cabe duda que las palmas te ofrecen un soporte rítmico muy estable no. Porque además, normalmente van en la clave la llaman doblada, con lo cual te dividen el tiempo y lo hagan muy seguido y muy estable. Tiene la importancia que tiene, yo creo que tiene mucha importancia sobre todo para el apoyo del baile también y del cante. Pero realmente utilizamos los ritmos de Bulería o los ritmos sin hacer palmas también. Yo creo que el compás lo tiene que tener el músico después agradecidos somos que de repente vienen dos palmeros y te toca unas palmas que te hacen una cama que ya caminas solo no.

**RG:** Es un arte no?
**CD:** Hombre, es muy fuerte lo de las palmas. Oyes los palmeros profesionales, son profesionales por algo. Yo puedo tocar las palmas no, puedo tocar las palmas, pero después de dos minutos tocando las palmas me voy a fundir, porque ya no tengo fuerza. O sea, las palmas es un instrumento muy…

**RG:** Yo como guiri, imposible (laughs)

**CD:** Ostia, no no. Pero mas que nada no como guiri, pero si no que realmente hace falta una resistencia para tocar las palmas. Hombre claro. Tu ponte a tocar las palmas, a ver quien aguanta mas yo dentro de dos minutos no podré. Ya me entra un dolor aquí. Pero tu imaginate que son esos palmeros que aguantar una *Bulería* de siete u otro minutos, o una fiesta de quince minutos. O sea, el trabajo del palmero, déjalo estar eh. Ya se sabe que la percusión es resistencia, y ademas no mucha resistencia no. Y en la palmas hay que tener mucha resistencia.

**RG:** Me gustaría hablar del nuevo disco que vas a sacar. Como se llama?

**CD:** Se llama NFS. The New Flamenco Sound. Sí, lo hemos puesto un sello ahí porque es un sonido nuevo dentro de mi música que esta influenciado con el Flamenco, con las claves del Flamenco. Es digamos, es como… si conoces mi sexteto es como mi sexteto enriquecido. Es como mi sexteto ampliado, aparte de los dos tríos que yo ya he enfrentado, el trío de Flamenco y el trío de jazz no. El trío Flamenco con el cante, el balie y la percusión y el trío de jazz con el contrabajo, y el piano y eso es el sexteto perfecto para mí. Pues eso enriquecido con la guitarra eléctrica, guitarra de rock, lo que hay. Con un trompeta, y con saxo alto pero el saxo alto utiliza pedales, Gilbert Fortuna es un chaval joven catalán que lo aporta al grupo un color muy particular con sus saxos y sus pedales. Con vibráfono, salterio y teclado toca Marina Alvero que es mi mujer, y que esta incluida en este grupo también. No se, hay un color muy diferente. La música es toda nueva, efectuando Nefertiti de Wayne Shorter porque lo he querido grabar en este disco y una versión de una cantiguda del siglo 12 que escribió

**RG:** Pero con una resonancia cuando tocabas los teclados ante.

**CD:** Sí, yo creo que he tocado siempre la misma música. Que es la música que a mí me ha gustado, junto con las claves de los ritmos que me gustan con las influencias que a mí me iban absorbiendo en las diferentes épocas. En los años setenta yo estaba enamorado del rock sinfónico, y por eso el grupo Caí tiene esos temas cargado de teclados y de sinfónicos pero también con las claves del Flamenco. Hoy en día, yo hago lo mismo pero después de la experiencia de todos los años y con todos los músicos que he trabajado, toda la música que me ha ido llenando, y que he ido aprendiendo. Pero que realmente un poco lo conductor sigue siendo lo mismo no. Los ritmos con los que me gusta tocar, las influencias que me han marcado, y la música improvisada, y eso son tres factores que se mantienen a lo largo de toda mi historia musical no.

**RG:** Pues, espero que siga así. Muchas gracias.
Appendix ii: Interview with Alain Pérez 22 March 2006

Translation

Roger González: Firstly, I wanted to ask something that I am sure means a lot to you, and that is "What is Latin Jazz?"

Alain Pérez: Well, Latin Jazz is, not theoretically, but what it means to me. It is the language of North American Jazz with Latin Rhythm, with the roots of the Latin Rhythms.

RG: And now, Flamenco is also being fused and you used the Flamenco
cajón in your group and other elements of Flamenco, therefore Latin Jazz is evolving, no? When did the Latin Jazz that we know today start?

**AP:** From what I know, Latin Jazz started in the 40’s. Yes in the 40’s and 50’s in Cuba in the Escarcas.

**RG:** And there are also people like Mario Bauzá, who are Cuban who travelled to New York, right?

**AP:** Yes, this you already know, and well, this also gave birth to Latin Jazz, the fusion on the Cuban musicians with the North Americans, almost always what they did was to incorporate the rhythm. From Ibu, and that is what enticed the north American jazz musician, to Afro Cuban music.

**RG:** For example, I read that there is the tune Manteca from Dizzy Gillespie, that incorporated Chano Pozo in his group and that’s where it all began. (*for many the first concert of Dizzy Gillespie at Carnegie hall is the birthplace of modern Latin Jazz*)

**AP:** Chano Pozo, if I am not mistaken is the composer of Manteca, Chano Pozo...(sings the tune) and that’s year’s back, from the 50’s or something like that.

**RG:** And then, what importance does percussion have within Latin Jazz? You were stating that there are two parts, the base rhythm and the harmony that is more influenced by jazz.

**AP:** Yes, the harmony and the phases of this language, and the North American harmony.

**RG:** And also the Rumba players, for example in your last record, the song “El sabor de la Rumba” you talk of Giovanni (Hidalgo) and Tata Güines and of people like this that are very important within Latin Jazz.
**AP:** The great percussionists form part of the evolution of this genre because they bring their support, their rhythmic wealth and their intelligence. To fuse all these Latin, Afro Antillean rhythms with all this music, that maybe a composer, a North American composer, has an idea for a Latin Jazz piece but doesn’t know what rhythm would fit with this tune, and what bass line would fit with this idea. Then, there are these percussionists in the music scene of New York that form part of all these compositions, with a lot of ideas, and create a lot of records. You know what I mean?

**RG:** Could you talk to me a little about the *Ida and Vuelta* between Spain and Cuba, how it started and how it incorporated *Santería* and the importance of percussion within this movement?

**AP:** Well, I am young, not as young as you, but I am young as well. Remember I am not the elder so to speak to talk to you of this. I don’t have the understanding of the exact period and century to specify for you, but what I do know is Cuba.

This Cuban music that was formed, comes about from the influence of the Europeans and the Afro Cubans. The Spanish brought to Cuba the harmony, this traditional element, the harmony of the Spanish song. Some elements of Flamenco stayed there, harmonically speaking. What is produced in Cuba is assimilated in another way, fitting in all this music into Cuban rhythms and vice versa. Spain also enriches itself, as it adopted some Cuban rhythms as well.

**RG:** Well, as you were saying, you are very young, but for someone so young and to have had the career you have had thus far playing with and producing Celia Cruz, Isaac Delgado, and playing with musicians like Chucho Valdés and Jerry González and now great Flamenco musicians in Spain is exceptional. Can you tell me about how you met Chucho?
AP: I met Chucho when I was studying in the National School of Arts, there in AENA. I was studying guitar, classical guitar at school. I did the entire career for 8 years, elemental and intermediate. And then within the school I had a group as part of my career as a classical guitarist. And on the side of studying this I created a group for popular music, where I did my own arrangements, sang, and directed the group.

And at an event that the school held, I participated with this group where there were many important figures of Cuban music, (Juan) Formel, Chucho Valdés, etc, Changuito, all these people, who were teachers at that moment in an international course of popular Cuban music that was being held there.

I played at this party for this course, and Chucho saw me play, in the group singing, and I had a tune that was Latin Jazz, and I did a solo on piano, I played the drums, percussion, the bass, I played various instruments, it was like a show that I nearly went crazy. For him, he noticed me during this and called me over when the concert had finished, he congratulated me and hugged me. I was a kid, I was only 16 years old, and he told me “you and I are going to work together”. All this was said pretty lightly, and then 2 months passed and the manager of Chucho and Irakere came to the school asking for me.

“They are looking for you, listen a man is looking for you. He’s over there”. Then I remembered that I had seen him before and thought that it was strange that this guy was looking for me, I had forgotten all about the concert, what Chucho had said, and I kept on studying. He then told me, “Chucho is interested in working with you, and he wants you to come with me to his house to talk about an idea he has. For you to sing and to play some keys etc.” and well that’s how it was.

We arrived to Chucho’s house and well, I was there and was very naïve and
surprised at what was happening at that moment, and started to sing a little, and he told me “to sing, to sing”, and I played the piano and sang and that’s how I started to work with Irakere.

**RG:** Because Chucho, along with Paquito d’Rivera and Arturo Sandoval started Irakere, and it was a group made to create fusion music, to fuse jazz with good music, therefore with just 16 years of age you were in Irakere.

**AP:** Yes, in Irakere, 16, I turned 17 being in Irakere singing and playing the keys in the Latin Jazz tunes, and I also did arrangements for the songs that I sang, 

He (Chucho Valdés) gave me the liberty to do my own arrangements.

**RG:** And he guided you a bit, right?

**AP:** Well no, because this is what I had expected that he was going to guide me, that he would help me a bit with my arrangements and my composition for Irakere, for the compositions that I was going to sing and he told no, “do it yourself, you already know what you want”.

**RG:** And he influenced you?

**AP:** Yes, did he ever. I have a direct influence from him inside of me in a spiritual form, for feeling the music I have a direct influence from Irakere, because there was a tremendous energy, a tremendous strength. Irakere still is the flag of Cuban music.

**RG:** And later, you also worked on the record “Belé Belé la Habana”, singing and playing bass. When did you change to the bass?

**AP:** I changed in 1996.

**RG:** Why, for necessity?
**AP:** I like the bass, I played the bass at school, informally, in the *Escarcas* and that stayed with the musicians at school. I would grab a bass, and just start mucking around. I played it because it was what I wasn’t studying; I played it because I liked to play it. I knew what I wanted to play, and I just played it. This is how people would say that I played bass as well, and then arose the opportunity that they were looking for a bass player for Isaac, Isaac Delgado, and it crossed my mind that it could be good.

**RG:** So they needed a bass player.

**AP:** Yes, Isaac was left without a bassist, I had some friends that were already playing with Isaac at that moment, Melon Feliú, Santi, and they were also playing with me at school, in the *Escarcas* and they knew that I played bass. Five days later, Isaac appears and he had come to the school to find me, to talk and so that I could play some bass for him. The electric bass I had played previously, but the *Baby Bass* never in my life. He gave me 15 to 20 days to practice, and on the 20th day we started to rehearse with the band.

**RG:** This story is very similar to that of Mario Bauzá, he was a saxophonist and he was bought a trumpet to learn in 2 weeks, and in 2 weeks he learnt and started gigging. But it seems with the guitar, the bass and percussion with which you hadn’t had formal lessons, you had it within you all the time. Many Cubans state that with Cuban music if you are not born with it you can’t play it. Can you tell me a bit about your influences, you come from the country right, from Trinidad?

**AP:** Yes, from Trinidad de Manicaragua.

**RG:** And your father was a great amateur musician right?

**AP:** Yes, he was a musician, a poet, and he sang as well. I think that the majority of farmers have this love, they are like the gypsies, you know what
I mean? It’s the tradition there is.

**RG:** And afterwards you went to la Havana to study?

**AP:** No, I started there in my house singing in my house, learning in my house with my cousin Regua, I started to learn the first position, the first chords, the major chords, *el son, el punto guajiro, el punto libre*, and these things. Then tonality, the *décima*, this is what I was brought up with since very young, I am talking about 6, 7, 8 years of age and then my dad had a friend in the *Casa de Cultura de Trinidad* (Cultural House of Trinidad), who was a musician and he helped me, he gave me some classes of the harmony of songs, singing and things like this.

**RG:** And you studied en La Havana guitar, classical guitar.

**AP:** Yes, but I learnt in Cienfuegos because when I was 9 I took my first serious step towards becoming a musician. I started singing in a children’s group called *Cielito Lindo* and at the same time I combined my studies of the classical guitar in the Conservatorium of Cienfuegos. The group took up much of my time, because it was a group that was in all the youth festivals, and at the time is was great but it didn’t leave me much time to study at the conservatorium, to continue with my musical career.

The group was more as a hobby, and I was studying solfege with Enrique, the director of the group, but it was not an official career like the conservatorium, so I left the group and continued studying at the conservatorium of Santa Clara. So from Cienfuegos, I went to Santa Clara, and then I jumped to the level to go to La Havana and I travelled around the crocodile [Cuba is commonly referred to as the Crocodile due to it’s shape].

**RG:** Therefore, playing bass you would know Cachao (Israel “Cachao” López) and that he introduced the syncopation within the *danzón*. What
importance does the bass have in Cuban music and also within Latin Jazz?

**AP:** The first thing is that it makes everyone want to dance, it should make everyone want to dance, and well, the bass is like a drum, it’s like the congas. It’s like a drum but with more notes and has a close relationship to the congas; the rhythms are engrained with each other.

**RG:** You see the bass as a percussion instrument right?

**AP:** Yes, like percussion but also harmonically like the piano.

**RG:** Because, when I have seen you play, first you dance at the same time and you immerse yourself with the music and you also play the fret board like a percussionist.

**AP:** Yes like a drum, like the bass from the *Tumbadora* [bass conga].

**RG:** Most people wouldn’t know what is a typical Cuban bass line, for example from the *danzón*.

**AP:** The *montuno* of the bass line, of the *danzón* with the *montuno*. The first parts are more classical, the *paseo* and these things in the *montuno*, can be (sings) I don’t know, it depends.

**RG:** I see that at the same time as you are singing the bass line you are playing the clave, can you tell me what is the clave? Let’s start from there.

**AP:** The clave is like the time signature, it’s like the key that opens the time signature and the logic of where the *tumbao* [rhythm] goes, where the congas go, in *Son* not much because in the *Son* you can do many things, the clave varies itself within the *Son*, from the original *Son* from the 30’s, because in the 20’s *Son* was played without clave. It was very traditional, it was very folkloric and this went evolving and then the *Rumba* clave
emerged, and I have heard recordings where the clave was the same but the entry of congas is slightly different, but this kept changing until it was fully established.

Now, the clave is a certain way and the Guaguancó has to enter in a certain place. For me, the Rumba, the Yoruba and the batá don’t have much clave but they have their Catá (a form of clave) and other such things.

RG: And you said it is the key to open it all.

AP: Yes, yes. You have to fit into the time signature with this clave.

RG: And what happens when you fall out of clave?

AP: If you change the clave, you start hitting into things. It’s like an obstacle course, or if you fall out of clave it’s like being on a precipice.

RG: Or they don’t hire you again.

AP: (Laughs) they don’t hire you again.

RG: There is a recording of Luis Armstrong, who tried to record an Afro Cuban track (Peanut Vendor?) with some great Jazz musician but they were out of clave, but for people who are born in Cuba or are involved in this type of music, it is natural, the clave is like this and that’s it.

AP: It cannot be any other way. All music has a clave, but in Cuban music it is much more evident.

RG: Can you explain to me the difference between the Son clave and the Rumba (clave)…

AP: Plays and sings… (first the Son clave) it’s the different accent, now the
Guaguancó clave (Rumba clave) has this, the figure changes, it started the same but the last three hits change.

(As written in Western text books, many Cubans feel the clave differently, across the bar. It is always a 2 bar phrase, and the clave is felt as a whole rhythmic cell.)

**RG:** And also talking about the Rumba clave, there are the Rumberos, and the importance of the jam session (descarga) that is very similar to jazz, with improvisation, no?

**AP:** Yes, I think that the improvisation is jazz, it can be within a different language, but improvisation is jazz.

**RG:** Yes, and it’s what comes from within, no?

**AP:** Sure, Jazz has its origins as a popular music, it was melodically very traditional, and this is like all the genres from the earth.

**RG:** We were talking about Chucho Valdés, and I wanted to talk about the first time I met Chucho, and the first time I saw you, it was at the festival of Jazz in La Havana. It was when Adel González, my then teacher was playing your piece in the SGAE Latin Jazz competition. Can you tell me a little about this competition?

**AP:** Ah, the SGAE Latin Jazz competition.

**RG:** Yes, and your tune “En el Aire”.

**AP:** This tune I composed it at the Aena, when I was at school, inspired by a muse, with the desire to compose, to make music, with no pretensions to compete or anything like that. But this tune has an excuse because Feliú, a saxophonist, Roman Feliú asked for a piece for his graduation recital. It is
because of this I sat down at the piano and began to compose, this piece didn’t have a name or anything.

When I presented the tune to the SGAE, it was already 7 years old. A friend of mine, Bobby Martinez, called me up telling me that this competition existed, and that you had to present it like this. Bobby called me to record the debut of his songs that he was going to present to the competition and he told me that we should take advantage and also record your songs and Pepe’s (Rivero), and I recorded this tune and another one, *La Razón*.

I always believed in the originality that this track had, in it’s freshness. It was something new for me, the melody how it moved, the bass how it moved, the turn that it did. What the piece said, for me was different and I always had that piece tucked away, and I presented it to the competition. I was there that night, without ambitions, without any preconceptions of winning, and I presented it because the opportunity arose and for me it was a great piece, it always was a great track, but from there they gave the piece the first place Latin Jazz composition prize from the SGAE to the piece “*En el Aire*”. And Chucho Valdés was the president of the board, there was Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Dave Valentín, from here in Spain was Jorge Pardo, all great musicians of Latin Jazz.

**RG:** Speaking of Spain, how did you come and why did you decide to live here?

**AP:** I arrived here in 97-98, I came with Isaac Delgado to record an album, I produced the album and did arrangements, compositions, and there are tunes from my dad. The strength of that album came from the tunes of my father, and I did the arrangements.

We recorded this album and we were working here for some time with Isaac, and the same record company made me an offer to record my solo album as a singer, as a soloist, something that I had always wanted to do,
and then my brother Isaac kept going with his work and returned to Cuba, and I stayed on, not because I wanted to stay in Spain, but because I wanted to make music, and I had the opportunity, and various musicians stayed on, musicians that were with Isaac, youngsters looking for another scene.

RG: Therefore, more opportunity presented itself here in Madrid, in Spain for you than in Cuba.

AP: Yes, to record in Cuba was very difficult, for me impossible, in any case I was only 21 and they gave me this opportunity to develop my solo career, and everyone had that idea of going forward, to try other paths other worlds.

RG: And you come from a difficult generation in Cuba.

AP: Yes, with respect to the system, with the problems of the Special Period and the economic crisis in Cuba. I am from this generation.

RG: Therefore, during this period there wasn’t much opportunity for people in Cuba, there have been many that have immigrated, and continue to immigrate, you were talking before of the musicians of Isaac Delgado.

AP: Yes, now a lot of Cubans continue to migrate, there is no liberty in the market, to be recognised, to leave Cuba is very complicated because you are controlled by a person, and the fact that you can tour is great luck in itself, to form part of a group of the highest calibre, and you travel with them but there comes a time when you search for more, you grow professionally but your surrounding doesn’t let you, and all that remains is to stay.

RG: And Spain always had a strong relationship with Cuba, and it would be easier because of the language.
**AP:** Yes, of course, with the language it is easier, and for someone who speaks more languages more so, but I only speak one language, Cuban, Castilian-Cuban, and Spain is a country that we are descendent from, we have common points, but at the same time we are very different, there are places in Spain where we have more in common, like in Andalusia.

**RG:** So there is a close link with the people, in Andalusia. In Cuba it is the cradle of Latin Jazz and in Andalusia it is the cradle of Flamenco.

**AP:** Exactly, this joy that they have, is different to the rest of Spain.

**RG:** Now that you are here in Spain, you are working with many people, famous people within the realm of Flamenco. For example, Enrique Morente, Paco de Lucía, that Chano (Domínguez) stated is a monster without comparison. Can you tell me how you met Paco and how you became part of his group?

**AP:** They put me in there. Because I didn’t go searching, they called me. I met Paco through Javier Limón, who called me for a recording. I already knew who Paco was, and they called me to record a track on his recording *Cositas Buenas*, and I arrived, and he was there, with all my respect and admiration, I was thinking what the hell am I doing here. This is easy, but I was brave, because I know that nothing has been written about cowards (Spanish saying), you know what I mean?

And they told me, let’s see what you come up with, we greeted each other and he told me this was the tune. Piraña also went, and was scared, but Paco is one of these people that at first sight transmits a sense of calm and is very natural. He is the type of guy that is always the same, very sure of himself, of the things that he tells you, and the things that he does. He has his feet on the ground.
Well, he told me to listen to the tune, to see what I would come up with, and they played the track and I didn’t say a word. He insisted though, and told me that tomorrow we would start to play it, and in sections because we had to do some arrangements, because to put the bass was not easy the majority of the time we had to arrange it. This was even more difficult because the guitar also has a bass line. Maybe you need to create a melody so that it doesn’t crash against each other, maybe change the register, that technically and musically are very detailed elements.

And that’s where we personally met, and he was happy with what was sounding, with what I was playing, and after hearing his solo he told me to take a solo as well. He played me the clave, and was very happy. He transmitted a lot of security whilst I played and this was the first impression and to work with him was a beautiful thing, positive in all its meanings. Then a month later, there was talk that Paco was going to create a new group, and he counted on myself and Piraña to be in it.

**RG:** Because Paco is a person that is always trying to innovate, because it was him that introduced the *cajón* into Flamenco, no? Because it is a Peruvian instrument.

**AP:** Yes, he brought it from Peru, because he went to Peru and was invited to a party and a black friend of his was playing the *cajón*. He told Ruben (Danta), “go there and play that”, and he said this is what instrument is missing from the guitar and the *palmas*, and said this is the percussion instrument that is missing from Flamenco.

**RG:** And on the recording that you did on *Cositas Buenas*, do you remember the bass line that you played and within that line did you give it your Cuban flavour.

**AP:** The bass line that appears is because he wanted it like this, that is why they called me to give it that flavour, so that I would put my style, my
country, my self.

**RG:** How did the line go?

**AP:** (sings) It was something like that.

**RG:** And now, Piraña is also very young, and he is playing *cajón* with Paco de Lucía along with many others, including Chano Domínguez.

**AP:** And with everyone within Flamenco, Piraña has been playing with them since he was 12 years old.

**RG:** I also remember in Cuba, the Amadeo Roldán theatre, you were playing with your group in the Jazz Festival, can you tell me a little about this group?

**AP:** Yes, I took Piraña because I wanted to change the congas for the *cajón*, normally you always use congas in Latin Jazz, and I wanted to change it because Piraña had the concepts of Cuban music, the claves, of the rhythms and the *cajón* gave me another texture, another *swing* and it worked, it was fresh and you have to exploit this.

**RG:** It’s curious because the *Rumba* originally started with *cajones*.

**AP:** Yes, but different, the sound is dry, and these *cajones* were the boxes that they used for the fish, from the people that worked at the docks, the majority come from there when they played the packing boxes, and finally the sound became the *cajón* for use in the *Rumba*, but the sound is dryer. These *cajones* are made with a string inside (usually a guitar string) and they vibrate, but Cuban *cajones* have that dry sound.

**RG:** I also remember yourself and Piraña playing with Jerry González.
AP: We met in a jam session at the Café Berlin, when it existed; there was Piraña, Caramelo and I. There were a few more players around, but all four of us ended up jamming, and Jerry was here in Spain and was playing with another group. He told us that he liked how we played and was different to his other group; it was all mixed together, the sense of Jazz, the clave, and the *timba* all rolled into one.

RG: After Callé 54, Jerry did a record here (in Spain) called *Pirates of Flamenco*, and then he decided to stay here, and continue fusing all of this together.

AP: Yes, of course, mixing Flamenco that was here because those players also wanted to, because not all who play Flamenco wanted to fuse the music. The majority of Flamenco players are closed (to change), and here there are people in Madrid that are purists and also intelligent, right? I am sorry if I am saying something that isn’t, but it is what I have seen and understand.

People want to learn, apart from the folk music because Flamenco is a folkloric music from this country, in Cuba there is also music like this and also people that want to open themselves up and discover other things, and Jerry found people like this like Piraña, like Niño Josele, or Javier Limón, like El Cigala, you know what I mean?

RG: And I think you can learn a great deal from Jerry, simply because of the fact that he has played with Dizzy Gillespie.

AP: That’s only one, he has played with many such as McCoy [Tyner], also with Dizzie, and he played with [Jaco] Pastorius, he has played with so many people, he played with Tito Puente for a long time and Eddie Palmieri.

RG: And, is Be Bop important within Latin Jazz, for example on your new album you have recorded Donna Lee.
**AP:** Yes, *Donalí*, the displacement of the melody, I anticipate and displace the melody. Be Bop is a revolutionary language within Jazz, it elevates it to a level and takes it out of the popular music that it was, in Swing it was more danceable, but Be Bop is to fly, technically it is the most difficult that is played in Jazz, that’s what I think, it’s the most difficult.

**RG:** Then to mix Be Bop with the clave…

**AP:** It’s too much. There are recordings of Machito with Parker, and when all this music that has similar roots is done well, they move ahead, they fuse.

**RG:** So with people such as Jerry González now, that spend the majority of their time here, the fusions of Jazz that are done such as with Chano Domínguez and the numerous Cubans that come here to Spain and influence the new music of Latin Jazz, do you think this is a new Vuelta (return)?

**AP:** I think so, now Cuba is coming here. The world keeps turning and things arrive in a different manner, and the flip side is that we are living here in Spain, and it favours Spain, the Spanish culture, and the level that is brought. There are so many Cuban musicians in Madrid, that’s without talking about Barcelona or Valencia.

There are many talented people, and we are in the thick of it, and what all that brings, there is always a Cuban. In Pop groups, Flamenco groups there are always some Cuban musicians that sneaked in somehow. At the end of the day, Cuban musicians are very well respected; by luck we have that reputation, and those who came before us as well.

**RG:** Where do you see Latin Jazz in the future?

**AP:** Latin Jazz is going to change where there are people interested in evolving it and still transmitting those roots, always and when there are
strong foundations. Music that has no roots that does not have these foundations that does not respect history for me does not have foundations.

It is difficult to find someone who says “they a world” [they know it all] and that what they say is consistent. Because education is like everything, if you don’t have someone to guide you, you can end up being shameless, and I count on the roots. Actually I study more the roots and the feeling within our music and other genres, now that I am here in Spain I am studying this, more than study, I am feeling it.

**RG:** This is just what Chucho Valdés and Jerry González have done.

**AP:** Always searching of course, because things done any other way don’t have lifeblood, they are very cold, but feeling it there is no comparison.

**RG:** Now, could you talk to me a little about your new Latin Jazz CD?

**AP:** Yes. This CD we recorded it in November, in 2 weeks. The CD is called *En el Aire*, the title of the CD is taken from the award-winning piece. The CD is comprised of compositions that I had from school, that I did for my graduation. Half the songs I wrote 10 or 12 years ago, and I had to record them, they are alive, more alive then ever, and well, this CD is very good.

**RG:** There is a piece that I love, called *Camino del Oso*.

**AP:** That one I did when I went to the Jazz Festival in Cuba, 2002, whilst I was here I wrote that tune. However, the CD without the collaboration and feeling from the musicians that participated is nothing. I am very happy with the interpretation from all the musicians, Melon, Caramelo, Pepe, Carlos ,Valor, that give strength to the Cuban music, Quique Ferrer is also interesting because he plays from the same roots but differently, within the same argument but with different opinions.
RG: Talking about drummer, last week you played in a trio with Horacio “El Negro”.

AP: Yes, we played in Clamores, presenting the trio and project called Jazz Tablao, from Jazz tablao to Flamenco tablao done in a Cuban style. We were recording this project for a live CD and DVD that we are considering to release, El Negro is a machine, but a real machine made of blood, bone and feeling.

RG: Therefore, it is Latin Jazz incorporating Flamenco.

AP: Yes, we also fused a piece or two with Niño Josele, with Piraña fusing with Flamenco, this way we can justify the Spanish element that continues to be interesting and opening up always.

RG: Many thanks!

AP: I wish you the best of luck. You are a monster!
Appendix ii a: Interview with Alain Pérez 22 March 2006

Transcription

Roger González: Primero quería hacerte una pregunta que seguro significa mucho para ti, ¿Qué es el Latin Jazz?

Alain Pérez: Bueno, el latin jazz, es sin teóricamente sino de lo que es para mi. Es el lenguaje del jazz americano con el ritmo latino, con las raíces de los ritmos latinos.

RG: Y ahora, dentro del Flamenco, por ejemplo se están utilizando Flamenco y tú utilizas el cajón Flamenco en tu grupo y elementos del Flamenco, entonces esto está evolucionando, no? Cuándo empezó el jazz latino que conocemos hoy en día?

AP: Según lo que conozco el Jazz Latino empezó en los años 40, en los años, si en los años 40, en los años 50 en Cuba en las Escarcas.

RG: Y también hay gente como Mario Bauzá, que son cubanos que se fueron a Nueva York, no?

AP: Sí, ya eso ya te lo sabes ya, y bueno, eso también dio lugar al nacimiento del Latin Jazz, la fusión de los músicos Cubanos con los norteamericanos, casi siempre lo que hacían era incorporar la rítmica, no? De Ibu, y eso era lo que atraía al músico norteamericano de jazz, le atraía la rítmica Afrocubana.

RG: Bueno he leído que hay un tema de Dizzy Gillespie por ejemplo, que incorporó Chano Pozo, en su grupo y empezaron creo, con el tema Manteca.
**AP:** Chano Pozo, si no me equivoco es el compositor de Manteca, Chano Pozo con (canta un poco) y eso tiene años, eso será de los años 50 o así.

**RG:** Y entonces ¿qué importancia tiene la percusión dentro del Jazz Latino? ¿estás hablando que hay dos partes, está el ritmo, el base ritmo y la armonía más influenciada en jazz?

**AP:** Si la armonía y el lenguaje fraseo, y la armonía americana no?

**RG:** Y también los rumberos, por ejemplo en tu último disco “El sabor de la Rumba” creo hablas de Giovanni y hablas de Tata Güines y de gente así que son muy importantes dentro del Jazz Latino.

**AP:** Los grandes percusionistas forman parte del desarrollo de este género porque ellos aportan su aporte, su riqueza rítmica, su inteligencia no? en base a cómo insertar, cómo fusionar los ritmos latinos, afrocubanos, afroantillanos, con toda esta música, que alomejor usa un compositor, eh… un músico americano no? Tiene una idea de un tema de Latin Jazz pero no conoce exactamente que ritmo es el que encaja con ese tema, y con esa línea de bajo con esa idea, entonces están estos percusionistas en la escena de la música en Nueva York que son los que forman parte de esas composiciones de muchas ideas, de muchos discos entiendes?

**RG:** ¿Me puedes hablar un poco de la ida y vuelta entre España y Cuba de sus comienzos, incorporando la Santería y la importancia de la percusión dentro de esto?

**AP:** Bueno, yo soy joven, no tanto como tu, pero soy joven también, acuérdate que no estoy en el ancestro, no soy el mayoral como para hablarte, no tengo tampoco el conocimiento y la exactitud de la época y el siglo, para especificarte, pero sí sé que bueno, Cuba…, está la música cubana que esta formada, surge con la influencia de los Europeos y los afrocubanos no? Los españoles que llevaron a Cuba la armonía esta
tradicional elemental, la armonía de la canción española, entiendes. Algunas cosas del Flamenco se quedaron allí, armónicamente, lo que en Cuba se reproduce, se asimila de otra manera, encajando toda esta música a los ritmos Cubanos, entiendes? Y viceversa, España se enriquece, adopta ritmos, también, cubanos, ritmos también, si, si no muchos pero alguno también.

RG: Y bueno, como estabas contando eres muy joven, eres super joven, pero para ser alguien tan joven, también para tener la trayectoria que has tenido, que has tocado y has sido productor para Celia Cruz, para Isaac Delgado, y tocando con gente como Chucho Valdés y Jerry González y también grandes del Flamenco ahora en España, me puedes contar un poco como conocistes a Chucho?

AP: A Chucho yo lo conocí, yo estudiaba en la Escuela Nacional de Artes, allí en la Aena, estaba estudiando guitarra, guitarra clásica, yo estudié guitarra clásica en la escuela, hice toda la carrera durante 8 años, nivel elemental y nivel medio y entonces dentro de la escuela yo tenía un grupo a parte de mi carrera como guitarrista clásico y a parte de todo lo que estaba estudiando hice un grupo de música popular donde yo hacía mis arreglos de la orquesta cubana de música cubana salsa y eso, y entonces hacía mis arreglos cantaba, dirigía el grupo y en un evento que hubo en la escuela yo participé con el grupo en la fiesta de la escuela, y estaban muchas figuras de la música cubana, (Juan) Formel, Chucho Valdés, etc, mucha gente, Changuito, toda esta gente, que eran profesores en ese momento de un curso internacional de música popular cubana que se estaba celebrando allí en la escuela, y yo toqué en la fiesta de este curso y Chucho me vió, con el grupo cantando y yo tenía un tema como de Latin Jazz y hacía un solo de piano, tocaba batería tocaba percussion, bajo, tocaba varios instrumentos, era como un show, aquello que casi me volvía loco, y a él le llamó mucho la atención después que terminó el concierto me llamó cuando terminó el concierto, me felicitó, me abrazó era un niño tenía 16 años, y me dijo tu y yo un día vamos a trabajar juntos. Todo esto así como
muy ligero, y pasaron como dos meses, y se acerca a la escuela el manager de Chucho, de Irakere, preguntando por mí, te están buscando oye te están buscando un señor ahí te anda buscando y entonces yo lo conocía de vista, y yo pensaba, que raro que me esté buscando, y a mí se me había olvidado todo aquello, lo de Chucho, y yo seguía en mi mundo como estudiante intranquilo, buscando no?, y entonces me dice que Chucho está interesado en trabajar contigo y quiere que vayas conmigo a su casa para conversar sobre la idea que tiene de trabajo contigo, de que cantes en el grupo y de que toques también un poco el teclado, y bueno así fue. Llegamos a casa de Chucho y bueno, yo estaba allí y era muy ingenuo y sorprendido de lo que estaba pasando en ese momento y el me puso a cantar un poco allí y me dijo canta canta y yo toqué el piano y canté así empezamos a trabajar en Irakere. Empecé a trabajar en Irakere.

**RG:** Por que Chucho junto con Paquito d’Rivera y Arturo Sandoval empezaron Irakere y era algo para hacer fusión era un grupo justamente para hacer una fusión de jazz y de música buena, entonces con 16 años estabas metido en Irakere.

**AP:** Si en Irakere, 16, 17 años cumplí yo estando en Irakere cantando y tocando los teclados en los temas de latin jazz y eso, a parte hice arreglos para los propios temas que cantaba Él me dio la libertad de hacer mis propios arreglos.

**RG:** Y el te guiaba un poco, no?

**AP:** Pues no, porque eso era lo que yo esperaba que el me guiara que me ayudara un poco en mis arreglos en las composiciones para Irakere para las composiciones que yo iba a cantar y el me dijo no, hazlo tu todo tu sabes lo que quieres.

**RG:** Y te impresiono?
AP: Sí, y que si me impresionó tengo una influencia directa en mi interior en mi forma espiritual de sentir la música tengo una influencia directa por Irakere, porque había una energía tremenda una fuerza tremenda. Irakere todavía seguía siendo la bandera de la música cubana.

RG: Y después, también has trabajado con él en el disco Belé Belé la habana cantando y tocando el bajo, cuando cambiastes al bajo?

AP: Cambié en el 96

RG: Sí, Por que? por necesidad?

AP: Me gustaba el bajo, yo tocaba el bajo en la escuela así informalmente, en las Escarcas y eso siempre con los músicos allí de la escuela, yo cogía el bajo, venga va, toca el bajo, porque los propios bajistas no querían porque lo estaban estudiando no, pero yo lo tocaba porque no era lo que yo estudiaba no estaba estudiando el bajo, yo lo tocaba porque me gustaba tocarlo yo sabía lo que quería tocar ya, y yo tocaba el bajo. Y así me conocían, el toca el bajo también, y así nació la oportunidad de que estaban buscando un bajista para Isaac, Isaac Delgado, y a mí me paso por la mente, pudiera ser una buena…

RG: que era que necesitaba un bajista.

AP: Sí, Isaac se ha quedado sin bajista, el bajista de el voló y entonces me comentaron, yo tenía amigos que ya estaban tocando ya con Isaac en ese momento, Melon, Feliú, Santi, ya estaban tocando con Isaac y ellos también tocaban conmigo en la escuela en las escarcas y tocábamos juntos y ellos sabían que yo tocaba el bajo también y nos encontramos en la escuela y me dijeron que Isaac estaba buscando un bajista en la iguana me dice Melon y yo tanto como eso, no percibía yo llegar así tan rapido, bajista ahora mismo, bajista. Pero me quedé con ello en la cabeza, y así mismo fue como en 5 días apareció Isaac y fue a la escuela a buscarme y conversó
conmigo para que le tocara el bajo. El bajo eléctrico sí lo he tocado, pero el “Baby Bass” nunca lo había tocado en mi vida, y me dio 15 días, 20 a 15 días y a los 20 días empezamos a ensayar para tocar en la orquesta.

**RG:** Esta historia es muy parecida a la de Mario Bauzá, que era saxofonista le han dicho compra una trompeta y en 2 semanas lo aprendió, pero parece que en guitarra bajo y percusión que yo te he visto tocar la percusión que tu no lo has aprendido formalmente pero lo tienes dentro de ti, y esto de la música cubana dicen muchos cubanos que lo puedes tocar si no lo tienes de nacimiento.

Pero, tu me puedes comentar un poco, cuales son tus influencias? tu vienes del campo, no? de Trinidad

**AP:** Sí, de Trinidad de Manicaragua.

**RG:** Y tu padre era un aficionado de la música no?

**AP:** Sí aficionado de la música, poeta, canta también y todo eso. Yo creo que la mayoría de los campesinos tienen siempre esa afición, son como los gitanos, me entiendes? Alguno canta las parrandas, es la tradición que hay.

**RG:** Y después fuiste a la Habana a estudiar?

**AP:** No, empecé allí en mi casa cantando en mi casa aprendiendo en mi casa con mi primo Regua, empecé a aprender las primeras posiciones los primeros arcos, los acordes mayores, el Son, como se rallaba el Son, el punto guajiro, el punto libre, esas cosas. Y entonces la tonada, la décima, eso fue lo que yo mamé de chiquito, estoy hablando de los 6 -7 años 8 años y seguidamente mi papá tenía un amigo en la Casa de la Cultura de Trinidad de música y me ayudó me dio unas clases de armonía de canciones cantando y eso.

**RG:** Y estudiaste en Habana guitarra, guitarra clásica.
*AP:* Sí, pero estudie en Cienfuegos porque yo a los 9 años fue el primer paso serio, de tomar el camino de la música. Que empiezo cantando en un grupo de niños cantando que se llama Cielito Lindo y simultáneamente conjugo los estudios de guitarra clásica en el conservatorio de Cienfuegos, y el grupo me robaba mucho tiempo porque era un grupo que estaba en todos los festivales de la juventud y todo y en el momento esto era muy bonito pero no me quedaba tiempo para estudiar para el conservatorio para seguir mi carrera para estudiar mi carrera de músico, y el grupo además era poco aficionado yo estaba estudiando solfeo con Enrique el director del grupo pero no era una carrera oficial como el conservatorio, yo deje el grupo y seguí estudiando en el conservatorio en Santa Clara. Osea que de Cienfuegos me fui a Santa Clara y de Santa Clara hice el pase a nivel para la Habana y le di una vueltecita al caimán.

*RG:* Y entonces, también tocando el bajo conocerás Cachao y que introdujo el síncopa atraves del *danzón* que importancia tiene el bajo dentro de la música cubana y también dentro del jazz latino?

*AP:* La primera es que hace bailar a todo el mundo, debe hacer bailar a todo el mundo, y bueno, el bajo es como el tambor, es como las tumbadoras, es como el tambor pero con más notas y eso está relacionado con los tumbados de la tumbadora y con los tumbados del tambor y eso da una vuelta eso engrana.

*RG:* Tu miras al bajo como instrumento de percusión no?

*AP:* De percusión, sí y armonico sí, como el piano

*RG:* Porque yo cuando te he visto tocar, bueno primero bailas a la misma vez y te metes muy dentro de la música y también tocas el brazo como un percusionista, como un bombo sí, como un bombo grave de conga, ese efecto y la gente no sabrá que es una línea de bajo típico cubano por
ejemplo como el de *danzón*.

**AP:** El *montuno* de la línea de bajo, del *danzón* dentro del *montuno* la primeras partes son como mas clásicas, el paseo y esas cosas y en el *montuno*, puede hacer… (canta) no sé depende por ahí.

**RG:** Y veo que tu a la misma vez que lo estas diciendo estas tocando la clave, me puedes decir que es la clave? Empezamos por ahí.

**AP:** La clave es como el compass… es como la llave que abre el compás y la lógica de donde va el tumbao, de donde van las tumbadoras, en el *Son* no mucho porque en el *Son* hay muchas cosas que la clave varía en el *Son* te estoy hablando del *Son* tradicional cubano de los años 30, porque el *Son* es de los años 20 en aquel momento se hacía el *Son* sin clave, y la gente rayaba, muy tradicional, era muy folklorico y esto fue evolucionando y llegó la clave de la *Rumba* y tengo escuchado grabaciones, la clave era la misma pero el tumbao de las congas donde entraba a veces era de una manera. Pero eso fue cambiando hasta que quedó establecido, En la actualidad la clave es de una manera y el *Guaguancó* tiene que entrar por ahí, para mí y la *Rumba* y todas esas cosas y la Yoruba y el batá que no lleva mucha clave pero tiene su Catá y lleva sus cosas.

**RG:** Y como has dicho es la llave para abrir todo.

**AP:** Sí, sí aquí tiene que regirse el compas con esta clave.

**RG:** Y que pasa cuando sales de la clave.

**AP:** Si cambias la clave, caminas chocos, es como una carrera con obstáculos cuando cambias la clave, o si te vas de la clave es como un precipicio.

**RG:** O no te contratan otra vez.
Hay un disco de Louis Armstrong, que intentó hacer algo Afrocubano y lo intentó hacer todo con el cielo de jazz pero fuera de la clave pero para gente que no nace en Cuba o que no está involucrado en este tipo de música, pero para ti la clave es natural, es así y es así y es así.

**AP:** No puede ser de otra manera. Todas las músicas tienen una clave, y en la música cubana es más crudo todavía.

**RG:** Me puedes explicar la diferencia entre la Clave de *Son* y la clave de *Rumba*…

**AP:** Toca y canta… (Primero explica la de *Son*) es el acento diferente ahora la de *Guaguancó* tiene esto… cambia la figura, empieza igual pero los últimos tres golpes cambian.

**RG:** Y también hablando de clave de *Rumba* están los rumberos y la importancia de la descarga que es muy parecido al jazz, la improvisación, no?

**AP:** Sí, yo creo que la improvisación es jazz, puede ser dentro de un lenguaje o otro, pero la improvisación es jazz.

**RG:** Sí, y es lo que sale de dentro, no?

**AP:** Claro, el jazz en sus orígenes era música popular y era muy tradicional melódicamente, y así contados los géneros de la tierra.

**RG:** Estábamos hablando de Chucho Valdés, y quiero hablar un poco de la primera vez que te ví que te conocí de vista, a Chucho y a ti, yo te conocí de vista cuando estuve en el festival de Jazz de la Habana, y hablamos para quedar en Madrid para continuar estudiando y era la noche del SGAE que Adel González, mi maestro entonces que estaba tocando tu pieza que ganastes. Me puedes contar un poco?
AP: Ah, de cuando el concurso de SGAE de Jazz Latino.

RG: Si y tu tema de En el aire.

AP: Ese tema yo lo compuse en la Aena, estando yo en la escuela, así por la musa, por deseo de componer, de hacer música, no por pretensiones de concursar, ni competir ni nada de eso. Pero ese tema tiene una excusa porque Feliu, un saxofonista, Roman Feliu me pidió un tema a ver si puedes hacer algo para mi graduación, es por eso que me siento en el piano a componer, ese tema que no tenía ni título ni nada. Cuando yo lo presenté al Sgae tenía 7 años, un amigo mio Boby Martínez me dijo existe este concurso, la convocatoria es así, Boby me llamo para grabar un debut de sus temas que iba a presentar al concurso y me dijo aprovecha y grabamos también el tuyo de otra gente, de Pepe, y gravé ese tema y otro más, la razón, y siempre creí en en la originalidad que tenía ese tema, la frescura era algo nuevo para mí, la melodía como se mueve, el bajo como se movía, la vuelta que daba. Lo que decía el tema, para mí siempre fue diferente y lo tenía ahí siempre muy reservado ese tema, y lo presenté al concurso, estaba esa noche ahí, sin ambiciones, sin pretensiones ninguna de ganar, y lo presenté porque ya se dio la oportunidad y dije bueno, para mí si era un gran tema, siempre fue un gran tema, pero de ahí a que le fueran a dar un premio, no lo tenía yo todavía visto, y le dieron el primer premio de composición del Sgae a la pieza En el Aire de jazz latino, y Chucho Valdés era el presidente del jurado, estaba Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Dave Valentín, de aquí de España estaba Jorge Pardo, grandes de la música del jazz latino.

RG: Hablando de España, como has venido y por que has decidido quedarte aquí?

AP: Yo llegué en el año 97-98 vine con Isaac Delgado a grabar un disco, su disco, en esa temporada grabamos un disco acá, yo produje el disco e hice
arreglos del disco, composiciones, y hay temas de mi papá en el disco, el fuerte del disco está en los temas de mi papá como compositor, y yo también hice arreglos. Grabamos ese disco y estuvimos trabajando aquí una temporada acá con Isaac Delgado y ese mismo sello, esa misma discográfica me hicieron una oferta de grabar mi disco en solitario como cantante, como solista, que yo siempre lo quise hacer, y entonces mi hermano Isaac siguió con su trabajo y regresó a Cuba, y yo me quedé, ya pero tenía en mis manos un por qué para estar en España, tampoco es que yo quisiera quedarme en España, yo quería hacer música pero tuve una oportunidad, y nos quedamos aquí varios músicos, también varios músicos de Isaac que estaban conmigo, jóvenes que estaban buscando otro clima.

RG: Entonces se presentó más oportunidad aquí en Madrid, en España, para vosotros que en Cuba.

AP: Sí, grabar en Cuba era muy difícil, para mí era como imposible, yo de todas formas tendría como 21 años, y aquí me dieron esta oportunidad para desarrollar mi carrera en solitario, o sea que para adelante, y todo el mundo tenía esa idea, de seguir para adelante, de probar otros caminos y otros mundos.

RG: Y vienes de una generación difícil de Cuba.

AP: Sí, con respecto al sistema, si, a los problemas del periodo especial, y de la crisis esa económica de Cuba. Yo soy de esa generación.

RG: Entonces con este periodo no había mucha oportunidad para la gente en Cuba, ha habido mucha gente que sigue inmigrando, has hablado de la gente del grupo de Isaac Delgado.

AP: Sí, ahora muchos cubanos siguen inmigrando, y no tienen libertad de mercado, y de darse a conocer, salir de Cuba es muy complicado porque estas controlado por una persona, y tienes esa suerte, porque eso ya es una
suerte tremenda, formar parte de un grupo de primera de figuras, y esa gente viaja y puedes ir con ellos, y llega un momento de tu vida que tu buscas más, que tú estás dando más profesionalmente, quieres más pero tu entorno no te deja sacar eso, y lo único que te queda es quedarte.

**RG:** Y España siempre a tenido relación con Cuba, y será más fácil por el idioma.

**AP:** Sí, claro el idioma, es más cómodo, y el que habla otros idiomas sí, pero yo solo hablo uno, el Cubano, el Castellano-Cubano, y España es un país que nosotros somos descendientes, hay puntos en común, pero no tiene nada que ver, lo que sentimos no tiene nada que ver con España, bueno hay lugares de España que sí como Andalucía.

**RG:** Entonces hay un link muy parecido en la gente, en Andalucía, donde Cuba es una cuna de la música del Jazz Latino, y Andalucía es una cuna del Flamenco.

**AP:** Exactamente, esa alegría que tienen ellos, es diferente al resto de España.

**RG:** Ahora que estás aquí en España estas trabajando con gente, muy famosa dentro del ámbito del Flamenco, Por ejemplo Enrique Morente, Paco de Lucía que hablando con Chano dice que es un monstruo sin comparación.

Me puedes comentar un poco como conociste un poco a Paco y como te metiste en su grupo?

**AP:** Me metieron no? Porque yo no me metí me llamaron. A Paco lo conocí mediante Javier Limón, que me llamó para una grabación. Yo ya sabía quien era Paco, y me llamaron para grabar un tema de su disco Cosita Buena, y llegué yo, y allí estaba, con mis respetos y aspiración, y yo pensaba que hago yo aquí, pensaba yo por dentro. Esto no es fácil, pero
bueno, yo he sido valiente, porque yo sé de donde vengo, tengo mi infancia siempre en mi cabeza porque yo soy valiente, porque de los cobardes nunca se ha escrito nada, sabes, no? Y me dijeron bueno, pues nada toca aquí a ver que se te ocurre, nos saludamos y me dijo tengo este tema aquí, y fui también con Piraña y estaba asustado, pero Paco es de estas personas que a primera vista te transmiten un sentido de naturalidad tremendo, no? Es un tipo que siempre está igual, muy seguro de sí mismo de las cosas que te dice de las cosas que hace. Tiene los pies en la tierra, y bueno, me dijo escucha el tema, a ver que se te ocurre ahí, y me pusieron el tema, y yo no dije nada, pero el insistió y me dijo si, mañana empezamos a tocar, y por partes porque había que hacerle unos arreglos, porque para colocarle el bajo no es fácil la mayoría de las veces hay que hacerle un arreglo, aquí es más difícil porque la guitarra también tiene bajos también. Alomejor tienes que hacer una melodía para que no choque y alomejor cambiár de registro que técnicamente y musicalmente son cosas más de detalle, y ahí nos conocimos personalmente, y el estaba contento con lo que iba sonando, con lo que yo estaba tocando, y después de oír su solo el me dijo que hiciera un solo, y me tocó la clave, y estaba muy contento, me transmitía mucha seguridad, y yo tocaba y esa fue la primera impresión de conocernos y de trabajar fue muy bonita y positiva en todos los sentidos, y ya al més se estaba hablando de que él iba a hacer un grupo nuevo y que iba a contar conmigo y con Piraña.

**RG:** Porque Paco es una persona que siempre habla de innovar porque él fue el que introdujo el *cajón* dentro del Flamenco, no? Porque es un instrumento Peruano, no?

**AP:** Sí, lo trajo de Perú, Porque él fue a Perú y estaba en una fiesta y lo invitaron a una fiesta y estaban tocando el *cajón* un amigo suyo negro que tocaba el *cajón* y el le dijo a Rubén, toca ahí, ponte ahí y toca, y el dijo este instrumento es el que le falta a la guitarra y a las palmas y dijo este es el instrumento de percusión que le falta al Flamenco.
RG: Y en la grabación que hiciste de *Cositas Buenas*, recuerdas la línea de bajo que hiciste y dentro de esta línea has dado tu sabor cubano

AP: La línea de bajo que aparece porque el quiere que sea así, con ese sabor me llamaron a mí porque para darle mi honda, mi tierra, para ponerle lo mío.

RG: Como era la línea?

AP: (Canta) Era una cosa de esas.

RG: Y ahora Piraña es también muy joven, y esta tocando cajón con Paco de Lucía entre muchos otros, y con Chano Domínguez.

AP: Y con todos los del Flamenco ha tocado Piraña, está tocando desde los 12 años.

RG: Y también recuerdo en Cuba en el Teatro de Amadeo Roldán, que estabas tocando con tu grupo en el festival de Jazz, me puedes contar un poco de tu grupo?

AP: Si, yo me llevé a Piraña porque quería cambiar las tumbadoras por el cajón, normalmente siempre usan tumbadoras en el latin jazz, y yo quería cambiarlo porque como Piraña tiene todo ese concepto de la música Cubana y de los patrones, ritmos cubanos y las tumbadoras me daba otra textura otro swing, y funcionaba, era fresco y hay que explotar esto.

RG: Es curioso porque la Rumba inicial de Cuba empezó con cajones

AP: Si pero diferente, el sonido es seco, y esto eran cajones de los que trabajaban en cajas de pescado de los que trabajaban en la marina, la mayoría vienen de ahí que tocaban de las cajas de embases, y el sonido finalmente se hizo un cajón como instrumento para la Rumba, pero es más
seco y estos cajones se hacen con una cuerda, y vibran, es como una botonera, pero los cajones cubanos tienen un sonido seco.

**RG:** Yo también recuerdo ver a Piraña y usted tocando con Jerry González.

**AP:** Nos conocimos en una jam session en el café Berlin, cuando existía, estaba Piraña, Caramelo y yo, estaban alguno más por ahí pero nos quedamos nosotros cuatro tocando, y Jerry ya estaba aquí en España y ya había tocado en otro grupo pero eso fue lo que le gustó el dijo me quedo con ustedes le gusto como tocábamos y el resultado era otra cosa, estaba todo al mismo tiempo el sentido del jazz de la clave de la timba, todo el mundo preparado.

**RG:** Después de Calle 54 Jerry hizo un disco de Piratas del Flamenco, y entonces, decidió venir aquí y fusionar algo más un poco todo esto. Jerry grabó su disco mezclando el Flamenco.

**AP:** Si claro, mezclándose con lo Flamenco que estaban por acá porque ellos también querían porque no todos los Flamencos quieren fusionarse. Porque la mayoría de los flamencos son cerrados, porque aquí hay gente en Madrid que son Flamencos puros pero son inteligentes, no? Y que me disculpen si estoy hablando algo que no es pero es lo que yo he visto lo que yo entiendo. Gente que quieren aprender, aparte del folklore porque el Flamenco es folklore música autóctona de la tierra, en cuba también hay música así y también hay gente que quiere abrirse y encontrar otras cosas, y él encontró gente así, como Piraña, el niño Josele, esa gente, o Javier limón, como el Cigala, me entiendes?

**RG:** Y también es quizás yo creo que se puede aprender mucho de Jerry solo del hecho que ha tocado con Dizzy Gillespie.

**AP:** Eso es con uno, pero ha tocado con muchos también con McCoy (Tyner), también, con Dizzie, tocó con (Jaco) Pastorious, ha tocado con tanta
gent, tocó con Tito Puente por tanto tiempo y tocó con Eddie Palmieri,

**RG:** Y, el Be Bop, en sí es importante dentro del Jazz Latino, por ejemplo en tu nuevo disco tienes el tema de Donna Lee.

**AP:** Si el donalí el desplazamiento de la melodía, anticipo y desplazo de la melodía. El Be Bop es un lenguaje revolucionario dentro del jazz, lo eleva a un nivel y lo saca de la parte popular de donde esta, el Swing era más bailable, pero el Be Bop es el vuelo, técnicamente es lo más difícil que se toca en el jazz, es lo que creo yo, es lo más difícil.

**RG:** Pero mezclando el Be Bop con la clave...

**AP:** Es un vacilon. Claro hay grabaciones de Machito con Parker, y es que todas esas musicas que tienen raices si se hacen con buen ojo, salen, se fusionan.

**RG:** Entonces con gente como Jerry González ahora, que pasa la mayoria del tiempo aquí, la fusión del Jazz que lo hace como Chano Domínguez y de la cantidad de cubanos que vienen aquí a España estan influenciando la nueva musica del jazz latino, crees que esto es una nueva vuelta?

**AP:** Creo que sí, ahora de cuba para acá, la tierra sigue girando y las cosas acontecen de manera diferente la otra cara de la película es lo que estamos viviendo aquí en España, y favorece mucho a España, a la cultura de España, y el nivel que traen. Hay una cantidad de musicos cubanos en Madrid, nada más, sin hablarte de Barcelona y Valencia, hay mucha gente buena, que estamos en la escena de todo lo que acontece, hay un cubano ahí musico, en los grupos de pop de Flamenco siempre hay un musico cubano que esta por ahí colado De todas maneras los musicos cubanos son muy respetados por suerte tenemos el abal, y a los antecesores lo hicieron.
**RG:** Donde ves el jazz latino en el futuro?

**AP:** El jazz latino va a cambiar donde estén los músicos interesados en seguir evolucionando y transmitiendo esas raíces, siempre y cuando tengan fundamento, el músico que no tenga raíces que no tiene fundamento que no respeta la historia para mi no tienen fundamento. Es difícil encontrarte a uno que te diga yo soy un mundo y que eso que el dispara sea consistente, entiendes? Porque la educación es como todo, la familia, si no tienen hogar, tus padres te guían, terminas siendo un sin vergüenza, y yo cuanto con las raíces, actualmente estudio más las raíces y los sentimientos negros de nuestra música y de otros géneros, ahora yo estoy aquí en España yo estoy estudiando eso, más que estudiarlo sentirlo.

**RG:** Eso es justamente lo que ha hecho Chucho Valdés, Jerry González en su música tiene el batá.

**AP:** Buscando claro, porque las cosas de otra manera no tienen sangre, son muy frias, pero el sentimiento es otra cosa.

**RG:** Ahora me puedes hablar un poco del nuevo disco de jazz latino,

**AP:** Sí. Este disco lo grabamos en noviembre, en dos semanas, el disco se llama “En el Aire”, retomo el tema del premio “En el Aire, que le da título al disco y el centro de este disco está dado por las composiciones que yo tenía en la escuela, que yo hice para mi graduación. La mitad de los temas yo los he compuesto hace 10 años 12 años, y tenía que grabarla ya, estaba viva, y esta más viva que nunca y bueno, el disco está muy bien.

**RG:** Hay un tema que a mí me encanta el *Camino del Oso*.

**AP:** Eso lo hice aquí cuando fui al festival de jazz del 2002 de Cuba, estando aquí compuse este tema, el disco sin la colaboración y el sentimiento de los músicos que participaron no es nada. Y también estoy muy contento por la
interpretación de todos los músicos Melon, Caramel, Pepe, Carlos, Valor, que le da el valor a la música cubana, Quique Ferrer también y es interesante porque tocan de las mismas raíces pero diferente, dentro del mismo argumento pero con opiniones diferentes.

RG: Y de baterías esta semana pasada has tocado en un trio, con Horacio “El Negro”.

AP: Si tocamos en Clamores presentando el trio y el proyecto de llama “Jazz Tablao”, de jazz tablao de tablao Flamenco y jazz tablao de ya está hablado a lo cubano. Y estuvimos grabando este proyecto para un cd en vivo que se piensa sacar y un dvd, el negro es una maquina, pero una máquina de verdad, de moler carne y de sentimiento.

RG: Entonces es una música de jazz latino pero incorporando el Flamenco.

AP: Si también se fusiono algun tema con niño josenle y el piraña fusionando con el Flamenco, para justificar la parte española que sigue siendo interesante y abriendose siempre. Estamos en talla?

RG: Pues sí, estamos en talla. Muchas gracias.

AP: Te deseo mucha suerte. Eres un monstruo!
BM: I’m 44, I was born in Philadelphia. My parents are Cuban, my
grandparents are Spanish, they’re from Galicia. So, I grew up in the states, I
grew up in Miami. I was born in Philadelphia, but I grew up in Miami
because that’s where, back then in the sixties, the majority of Cubans were
and my parents decided to go down there. So I grew up there, although I
was born an American, I was always hanging with Cuban people, Cuban
musicians and Cuban friends and all this.

I grew up listening to swing jazz and Latin, you know salsa and Latin jazz.
So, I sort of grew into both so I am at ease with no problem. And later on I
went to New York when I was about twenty, yeah I was in my twenties I
went to New York and studied with Eddie Daniels for a couple of years over
there, came back to Miami and I played with Miami Sound Machine, then I
was the band leader for KC and the Sunshine Band. With which I toured Australia, which was a blast man.

And after that I did the chorus for years, I was always doing recordings for different artists, you know and I worked for very many people, I had my own band called Paragon with which we put out a record with Atlantic Jazz back in the eighties. This was a fusion band, I was still in Miami back then. And this and that and what not, here and there you know, a regular jazz musicians life, you know, bump into this and bump into that.

Then later on, about nine years ago, I decided to come to Europe, I wanted to get into the jazz scene in Europe cause a lot of friends of mine were telling me, “Hey man, you know, jazz is really happening here”, you know, and this and that. And since I am descended from Spaniards, I said what the hell, I am going to go to Spain. So here I am, I have been here for like ah, it’s going to be ten years now, you know. And I put out a recording about four years ago, with a swing quartet I had and that went well and I toured a little bit with that, and now I just recently put out my new CD which is playing Latin Jazz with all my friends, all my Cuban friends here. You know I have been lucky to find all these “cats” here in Spain you know.

They’re all from Cuba and I can communicate musically with them like perfectly you know. And I also found myself in a situation, since I grew up in Miami, and in Miami you go to school and you learn Jazz, then you are in the street and you play Latin Jazz. So for me to flip the coin is no problem.

When I got here to Spain I found myself having problems with the guys that played Swing with me, they couldn’t play Latin. They said, “Oh no, no man, I don’t play Latin”, you know and the guys that play Latin they don’t play Swing, you know. So it’s like I found these guys, working with me now they are like in the same boat I am, you know, they play Jazz, they play Latin and it’s perfect so this recording I did with them has been a lot of fun. I had the honour of having Paquito D’Rivera play on a couple of tunes ‘cos
he was here and we were doing some things together so he’s on the recording, on the album and his piano player that was with him also played on one of the tunes, Alon Yavnai who’s a great piano player. This guy’s great and there was another friend of mine in here, a trumpet player, a Cuban guy called Mario Morejon “El Indio”, who was here so he recorded for a couple of tunes on there also. And then the band you know, the guys Pepe, Pico, you know all the guys already you know, and that’s basically what’s been going on you know.

**RG:** You mentioned before that when you were at High School you were doing Jazz, and then you did Latin Jazz on the streets. Now, a lot of people wouldn’t know what the difference between Latin Jazz is and Salsa, you know what I mean?

**BM:** Well, let me see how I can explain it. Salsa would be like more “Pop” and Latin Jazz would be like Salsa but with a lot of Latin Jazz language in it. So, the harmony would probably be more complex, there is a lot of more complex rhythms, details in Latin jazz than in the typical Salsa beat. The typical Salsa beat is straight ahead Salsa Latin beat and it’s done for dancing. And a lot of it is very good, but Latin Jazz is more intricate, more complicated, more “Jazz”, it’s jazzy, you know. Language improvisation, harmony ah lots of harmony, a lot of complex rhythms and that’s what makes it jazz.

**RG:** Well, it’s closely intertwined with Bebop, I mean that’s the inception of it really.

**BM:** Well, back in the forties and fifties when the first Cuban musicians started to arrive to the United States that went to New York, you had people like Machito and these guys were doing Big Band Latin Jazz back then, and the funny thing about it was that the majority of these musicians in these bands were American.
So, I saw this documentary on these musicians, these American musicians just talking about back then when they did these gigs, “Man, when these guys pulled up these arrangements we couldn’t figure out how they played so syncopated”, you know ‘cos in Latin music there is a lot of syncopation and in regular Bop, in Jazz and Swing there is a lot of either swung eighth notes or straight eighth notes, and in Latin there is a lot of syncopation, so that’s the first thing that the American Jazz musicians were flippin’ about, “Wow man, I don’t know if I should beat my left foot or beat my right foot or …” (laughs)

**RG:** And, the home of Latin Jazz in the States has traditionally been New York.

**BM:** Oh yeah, hey listen there’s these recordings of Charlie Parker man, the greatest Jazz saxophonist in history with Machito playing Latin Jazz. I have on video Dexter Gordon trying to “blow” on a *montuno* with the Machito Orchestra, and he was going nuts ‘cos he couldn’t get into the syncopation, you know syncopated beat you know and he was just “balling” and going berserk, and I have that on video.

So I mean like, the combination of Jazz and Afro-Cuban rhythms is something that comes way, way back. Dizzy Gillespie started doing it, Stan Kent even did that. There’s a lot of people that did that besides from the Cubans that went to New York in the fifties.

I believe that the language of Jazz blends so “easy” and nicely with those Afro-Cuban rhythms that it’s without a doubt, unquestionable.

**RG:** Well I think that Chano Pozo once said to Dizzy actually, when they first got together, that he didn’t speak English, Dizzy didn’t speak Spanish but we both spoke African. I suppose that is one of the reasons it intertwines so well, is that the mother of all this music comes back from Nigeria and what not.
BM: That’s it man, that’s where it comes from. That’s where it all comes from man, it all comes from there.

RG: We were talking about the Afro-Cuban rhythms coming into Jazz, and the harmonies of Jazz, but now there seems to be a new wave of people coming back to Spain. Way back when, there is the “Ida and Vuelta” between Spain and Cuba, do you know much about that?

BM: Well, a lot of that, the reason it’s happening now in Spain I think, I think, I think! A lot of it has to do with politics, and the history of Spain. This country was run by a dictator for over forty years, you know. And during these forty years this place was apart from any type of improvement or anything that goes forward in life.

And I think that’s why now we are having like a big boom here man, like a lot of Jazz musicians, a lot of Cubans, a lot of Americans are coming over here, great musicians you know and I think that’s what’s happening basically in Spain is that man. Spain was basically annihilated for forty years, now all of a sudden they’re able to have all this stuff and it’s like “Wow”, it’s the last country in Europe to get into the soup. You know what I’m saying?

RG: But at the same time, I suppose the Cubans…

BM: Well the Conquistadors that went to Cuba back, way back, a lot of these “cats” were musicians too. Classical musicians, they took like for instance from Spain in Cuba they received the violin, piano. From France the Cubans learnt to use a wooden flute that is very typical in Cuban music. That’s thanks to the French, and the enrichment of the “pasodoble” and the “copla española” had a lot to do with Cuban music, you can hear it in Cuban music anywhere.
You know, that comes from Spain, and then you got all that stuff that the natives took from Africa, you know all the rhythms, congas and the what not and all the toys and stuff to play. That’s how you got all that combination of all that richness of different music’s together in a place like Cuba. That’s how that Cuban music comes about.

**RG:** It’s funny that you talk about African drums and what not, because you have people like Chucho Valdés going back to their roots. Jerry González going back to the *batá* and incorporating this into their music at the moment. How important is the percussion side of it in all this?

**BM:** I think the percussion is, to me, the percussion is everything. To me the percussion is very important, and it makes it all move. You know, if there is no percussion it would be very lame for me. That doesn’t mean that there is a lot of music that has no rhythm and it’s beautiful music, but I don’t know. I can’t see my music without percussion, forget it! I can’t even think of it! Percussion is like putting Tabasco on a something you know…

**RG:** It gives life to it…

**BM:** Yeah!! You know, it’s like give me that pepper, where’s that pepper man!?! That’s percussion bro.

**RG:** Well in Flamenco it’s a big thing, the incorporation of the *cajón* with Paco de Lucía who brought that in, and now it’s coming into Latin Jazz.

**BM:** Well, the *cajón* is nothing more than another musical instrument. A rhythmical musical instrument. What happened is that the Brazilian guy playing percussion with Paco de Lucía back then incorporated that in Flamenco. And it blended in just like any other percussion instrument would have, because Flamenco is a very percussive music you know.
So that’s what happened, and in actual fact the cajón is just a box, just a wooden box and it’s brought from Peru I think, it’s a native thing from Peru. And, it’s a percussion instrument so it can be played in anything man, just like any other percussion, just like congas. It’s just that it’s a neat thing though, absolutely very neat, and I think yes because of Paco it’s been introduced now, it’s been fusioned into all these different styles of music now. Which is true, that’s what I think you were talking about.

RG: Also, one thing that is a mystery to a lot of people who don’t do Latin music, or get into Latin Jazz is the clave, and people who attempt to play clave don’t understand the concept of it. How would you describe what clave is?

BM: Well clave is ahh… (laughs) oh man ah, couldn’t ask me something else? (laughs) Ok, let’s see… the clave is basically what the rhythms section moves around ok, it’s like the base you know, and you’ve got the clave which is the 2-3 and you’ve got the clave which is the 3-2, and you’ve got to feel it when you work with the clave because you could play on the opposite side.

Most of the time what I do to feel it is that I go with the bass player. Usually the bass player will give you the 2 beat (sings the bass line), and basically I recommend to listen to a lot of music with the clave, and figure it out yourself. Especially with Cubans man, if you don’t have the clave right you’re dead!

RG: And you’ll never get a job again.

BM: Oh man, you will never play with Cubans if you don’t have you’re clave down man! So I suggest that you listen to a lot and figure it out man, and follow the bass player. That’s what helped me. I’ve messed it up like a lot of people man.
RG: A lot of this music is passed down, not written down, but passed down through an oral tradition.

BM: Well the styles yes, but the music is written down. It’s not like Flamenco. I mean, man, I toured for three months with Paco de Lucía in the United States, and I had never played Flamenco before in my life. I had never played with gypsies before in my life. Paco de Lucía is not a gypsy, he’s Spanish, but he thinks like a gypsy and he lives like a gypsy and he does not know any music.

So, when I got to the first rehearsal with the guy, he couldn’t even tell me, “Hey, it’s not a B flat it’s a C”. He would take the guitar and say, “That note you’re playing, it’s not that note it’s this note”, ding ding ding, and play the note. And then like for instance he couldn’t say you’ve got a quarter note rest and then an eighth note. He would have to say, “Listen, you have to wait this time (sings the phrase)”. Ok, so I had to figure it out you know.

So, I was flipping ‘cause here I am playing with the greatest guitar player in the world, doing this Flamenco guitar you know, and the guy can’t tell me a friggin’ note man! What the hell’s going on here!? Because, they learn, they do what they do by heart, by ear, since they grew up, since they were little kids.

RG: I suppose it’s from improvising on the streets.

BM: Now the Cuban thing is a little different, there is a lot of Cubans that they really know their music and they have it written down and stuff like that. But, at the same time it is something that is given to you, because it’s roots man, it’s there.

RG: Well the reason I say that is because, I am a percussionist and when I was studying in Cuba, I was studying with this guy called Adel González who plays in Irakere, the Afro-Cuban All-Stars etc, an awesome percussionist, and I had always approached the clave from a written down
stand point of 2-3 or 3-2 but their feeling of the clave or sense of clave was different.

**BM:** You can write it down, you just need to know where it goes, because it depends on where it’s being played on the tune. How the tune goes, you know.

There’s a place where it’s either 3-2 or 2-3, that’s where you’ve got to know how to figure it out. If you figure out that right you can feel it. When you are doing it right, you can feel it because it just flows with the rhythm.

When you are doing it on the opposite side, the contrary, you will feel it because it is not smooth, and everything else in Cuban music is around the clave. Everything they do can be “clave-sised” (laughs). If it cannot be “clave-sised”, man, it’s fucked up.

**RG:** At the same time in Flamenco, they have their own sort of…

**BM:** They have their own clave too man, yeah. Absolutely! Especially for the *Bulería* man, oof. That’s some hard shit man. My experience with Paco de Lucia was mind-boggling. I will story first so you can have a little laugh.

Alain Peréz calls me, he’s the bass player you know, he’s a friend of mine. So, they bring Paco de Lucia this flute player from India, a Hindu guy. He played all kinds of bamboo flute and what not flutes, beautiful sounds and all this and that, but the guy didn’t improvise right. So Paco de Lucia turns around to the manager and says listen, “I’m not going to go on a three month tour to the United States with a guy that doesn’t improvise, man”. You know, it’s like forget it.

So, Paco de Lucia turns to the manager and says, “send this guy back to India”. So, what are we going to do? So Alain Peréz says, “Well listen I have a friend who’s a sax player and a flute player who can probably come and
cover for you, at least for the tour, you know. Do like what Jorge Pardo used to do for you.”

So, Paco de Lucia says, “Ok, tell him to come tomorrow for rehearsals so I can see him play”. So he (Alain Peréz) calls me and says, “Hey you want to play with Paco de Lucia?”

I said,”What!?"

He said, “Yeah man, you need to come to rehearsal tomorrow”

I said, “Man, I have never played Flamenco in my life”

(Alain) “Well, come. He needs someone to improvise”

I said ok, so I go with my Tenor and my Flute and they started playing a Rumba. Which is easy, it’s a 4/4 thing, you know. So I did my solo, you know, and all this and that. Paco likes it, and he says, “Man, the gigs your’s. You’re going on tour with me”

I said, “Ok man, fucking A”, you know, “alright!”

So he gives me a CD with the music, the tunes that I had to play on, right. Some of the stuff was Bulería so, real hard shit. I’ve never done that in my life man. So I go home, I had a week to do my homework before I flew to Canada right?

So I go home, I start doing my homework, I get these Bulerías. And I can’t get the measuring down. I’m going nuts, “Holy shit, how am I going to put this on music man?” “This is weird”, you know.

So I call Alain Pérez, and he comes home, he helps me out and he tells me how to measure it and all that. So I started getting that down. The rest of
the week I had everything written, and I was practicing all the parts and the stuff that was hard man. There were some lines that I had to double with Paco de Lucia, and when he plays he's like a machinegun. So I was like at home doing all these lines you know, listening to Jorge Pardo doing all the Arabian stuff, with the quarter tone notes and all that stuff. I had never done any of that.

So man, here I am really happy, you know I had done all my homework and had everything written down. I fly to Canada, we have a rehearsal a day before the first concert in Canada. We get to the musicians union where we were going to rehearse you know. I get my stand, my music, I am sitting right across the street from Paco de Lucia and he’s looking at me.

And I’m like, you’re looking at me? He says, “Yeah, what’s that you got there?”

“This? This is my homework man, I've done my homework man, I've got everything down”

And he says, “We don’t read music in Flamenco”.

And I go “What? So what does that mean?”

“You’d better not have any of that stuff tomorrow on stage”

So I automatically shit my pants all kinds of colours man. Here I am, with this guy telling me I have to memorise music I have never played in my life before, after I had done all this homework. I am going nuts man. So I started having this like heart attack you know, and I go to Alain and say, “Listen man, I am going back to Madrid man, I can’t do this gig. This guys crazy!”
So listen man, you know. Alain talks to me and says, “You got to do it man, come on Bobby, you’re a great musician.” I’m like ok, ok, all right, whatever.

So then on, for the following week I didn’t sleep any night. I spent every night trying to memorise all these Arabian scales that I had never played in my life before. Including quartetone notes man, (laughs) it was fucking mind-boggling! It’s incredible. I nearly lost my hair man. That was a hell of an experience for me.

And to be honest with you, I had never had so much pressure on me in any job I have ever done but that one. Man. When those three months finished and when we came back to Spain I was relieved that it was over. Cause it was like the pressure was on big time, every time you are playing with this monster guy man, and with this music I had never played before. And then there’s lines that fly like bumblebee’s. I was flipping man. I was flipping. And that was my experience with Paco de Lucia, which was great you know, because I learnt a whole lot of shit. I learned that for Flamenco people, when they say a Flamenco chord it’s nothing more than a flat nine chord.

It was great man, it was a great experience.

**RG:** I was talking to Chano Domniguez, and he was explaining *Bulerías* to me as umm, it’s similar to the clave in a way because…

**BM:** The clave is 123-12-12-12 123-12-12-12. That’s the clave of *Bulería*. But, within that anything can happen! And if you’re not a Flamenco guy, you can lose it like that man. Like that! Cause they have this grace of being able to be playing, and all of a sudden they go. Vrum. And come in all together again, and who knows what. Was it two or three or four, but they all come in together again, and they know exactly where they are.

**RG:** It reminds me of a lot of jazz in a way.
BM: True, true, true, true, true. A lot of jazz is that way too, yeah!

RG: You mentioned Alain Peréz, and how he helped you out. I was talking to him as well and he mentioned that you helped him out when he was in Cuba, to do a recording. He’s just released an album now called “En el Aire”.

BM: Yes

RG: Tell me about that.

BM: Yes, well that was funny cause ah, I had just met Pepe. Pepe and I had started working together right. So I find out about this competition that is being held in Cuba by SGAE, here in Spain, of Latin Jazz. So I go to Pepe and I go to Alain, listen man, let’s go to the studio. The three of us we’ll record two tunes of mine, two tunes of Pepe and two tunes of Alain. We’ll present it to the committee competition. I am sure one of us, at least one of us will win something and whatever money we get from there we pay for the recording. “Ok. Ok let’s do it!”

Great, so here we go, we go to the studio we record this music man. What happens to me, I was so pissed off, I get home a week later after we sent the material. I get an email from SGAE saying, Bobby man, we are so sorry to tell you that, you know, your music is fantastic and we are honoured for you to want to compete, but you’re American, and this competition is for non-Americans! (laughs) I can’t believe this shit, I mean I can’t believe it.

So I can’t compete, so they competed and they won! You know, Alain won the first prize and Pepe won the second prize and Pepe had to share the prize with Perico Sambeat whom you met the other day. So that was really funny man.

So we did that… hey come here Pepe.
(Pepe enters the bar – following in Spanish)

(English)

**BM:** Where were we?

**RG:** I was going to ask you what the SGAE is?

**BM:** SGAE is the association of composers here. It’s like the place where you go and write in your music, “Hey I wrote this song”, and register it. And they take care of getting back your respective money from your music. That’s what SGAE is. It’s the composers association.

(Pepe back – Spanish)

**PR:** Sorry, you finally have the record hey? Finally

**PR:** Perdona, ya tienes el disco eh? Por fin!

**BM:** It’s ugly hey, it’s ugly.

**BM:** Esta feo eh, esta feo.

**PR:** But it grabs your attention.

**PR:** Pero llama la atención.

**BM:** It was going to be a brownish, it was going to have another colour on the outside, and Nelson decided to do it in black, without telling me anything.

**BM:** Iba a ser maroncito, iba a tener otro color afuera, y Nelson decidió que lo hicieron en negro, sin decirme a mí nada.

**PR:** You have to tell him, for the next run, that I want it like this.

**PR:** Tienes que decírselo, para la próxima tirada, que lo quiero así.
BM: It looks nice. It looks nice, but it has nothing to do with the music.

PR: Of course, of course.

BM: Esta bonito. Esta bonito, pero no tiene nada que ver con la musica.

PR: Claro. Claro

BM: It's very serious, and it looks like a Colgate ad.

BM: Esta muy serio, y parece un anuncio del Colgate.

RG: Do you have it here?

RG: ¿Lo tienes aquí?

BM: No, Pepe has it. One that I gave to Pepe. Now he can show you. The record is good, the cover is good, the work is good. What's wrong is that the record doesn't have any other colour, it's greyish black. And Latin Jazz without colour! It's a bit strange, you know? Latin Jazz is like putting chilli on food! So you know, it's like it has nothing to do with the music.

BM: No, lo tiene Pepe. Uno que trajee a Pepe. Ahora que te lo enseñe. El disco esta bien, la caratula esta bien, el trabajo esta bien. Lo que pasa es que, por ejemplo el disco no tiene ningun color, es negro grisoso. Y Latin Jazz sin ningun color! Es un poco raro me entiendes? Latin Jazz es como echarle picante a la comida! Entonces tu sabes, ves es como que no tiene nada que ver con la musica.

RG: What's the record label?

RG: Con que discografica?

BM: With Karonte. It's a good label, an important label.

BM: Con Karonte. Un sello bueno de aqui, un sello importante.

PR: And the official presentation of the record?

PR: Y la presentacion oficial del disco?

BM: They're going to do it at the SGAE.
**BM:** En el SGAE lo van a hacer.

**PR:** When?

**PR:** Cuando?

**BM:** The 3rd of April i think, something like that. We will have to play some tunes.

**BM:** El tres de Abril creo, o algo de eso. Tendremos que tocar un par de temas.

**PR:** Yeah, play something there.

**PR:** Sí, tocar algo ahí.

**BM:** I suppose so, and we will have to go to the FNAC [a large music store] as well, but we will do it in a quartet, yo know.

**BM:** Yo supongo que sí, y tendremos que ir al FNAC también, pero bueno iremos un quartetico, sabes.

**PR:** Ok man, do you remember when…

**PR:** Bueno chico, te acuerdas cuando…

**BM:** A quartet, because I feel bad you know, to ask people to do the gig, because there ain’t no money.

**BM:** Un quartetico, porque me da pena tu sabes, decirle a la gente ir, porque ahí sí que no hay pasta eh.

**PR:** At the FNAC no.

**PR:** Ahí de lo FNAC no.

**BM:** FNAC doesn’t pay shit, neither does the SGAE. I don’t know if the school would want to get involved to pay for costs at least, to get there.

**BM:** FNAC no paga ni pinga, ni el SGAE tampoco. Yo no se si la escuela se quiera enrollar para pagar por lo menos gastos, para ir alla.
PR: That’s up to them.

PR: Eso son cosas de ellos.

RG: Because playing at the FNAC is all about selling the record.

RG: Porque lo del FNAC es más bien para vender los discos.

BM: Yes, it’s for promotion, so you know there isn’t any money. This is to promote, which is really good you know, because when you okay at the FNAC, a lot of times you sell a lot of records there and then. People are watching you, and at the FNAC I would like to take the whole group 100%. Anyway, we’ll see. I don’t think anyone will say no, you know.

But with the SGAE we will do it in the quartet, we’ll see.

BM: Sí, es para promoción, entonces ya sabes, no hay dinero. Eso es para promover, que esta muy bien tu sabes, porque cuando tocas ahí en el FNAC muchas veces se vende mucho discos ahí. La gente te esta viendo y el FNAC a mi si me gustaría ir con el grupo entero cien por cien. Bueno, vamos a ver, ya veremos. Yo no creo que nadie me va decir que no, sabes.

Pero ya lo del SGAE, ya lo hacemos en cuarteto, yo que se.

PR: Something small, we’re not going to play the whole record right?

PR: Algo pequeño, tampoco es tocar todo el disco, sí no…

BM: Three songs.

BM: Tres temas.

BM: We are going to see Fernando to see if there’s a distributor.

BM: Vamos a ver a Fernando a ver si hay alguna distribuidora.

PR: If Fernando does it how I know he does it, I’m telling you that you’re going to have a good distribution.
**PR:** Si Fernando lo hace como yo se que lo hace, te digo yo que vas a tener una distribución buena.

**BM:** Also, I sent the CD to a company in France called “3D Management”. I sent one to San Francisco, to a label I know in San Francisco. Let’s see if one of them is interested in doing management, you know? Because if not… you know that management here is a bit fucked. So this office in France is a good office.

**BM:** Vamos que le he mandado el disco a una compañía en Francia que se llama “3D Management”. Mande a uno en San Francisco, un sello que conozco en San Francisco. A ver si alguno de ellos se interesan de verdad en hacer el management, sabes? Por que si lo contrario… Es que tu sabes que el “management” es poco jodido aquí. Entonces esta oficina de aquí en Francia es una oficina bien buena.

**PR:** I will tell you honestly. The music like Jazz like it is, works better in France, in Germany and from there upwards.

**PR:** Yo te digo sinceramente. La music como Jazz como tal, funciona mejor en Francia, en Alemania tirando por ahí p’arriba.

**BM:** I know, and Latin Jazz much more hey.

**BM:** No, y el Latin Jazz mucho mas eh.

**PR:** Especially Latin Jazz. Here no, here it’s only beginning. Here in six or seven years will be much better.

**PR:** Latin Jazz mas todavía. Aquí no, aquí ahora es que se esta empezando. Aquí a seis o siete años mas estara mejor.

**BM:** It will be better still.

**BM:** Estara mejor todavía.

**PR:** You have seen right, that there, there are more clubs and these things, but…

**PR:** Tu lo has visto no que ahí hay mas clubs y esas cosas, pero…
BM: That's what I told you, with what we were talking about the forty years of the political situation here, now is when Spain is waking up.

BM: Es lo que te dije, con lo que estabamos hablando de los cuarenta años de eso de la política aquí, ahora es que España se esta despertando.

(In English) It’s the last country in Europe to hop onto the train.

Do you understand me? It’s the last country in Europe to hop onto the train. So now it’s starting to…

(Spanish) Me entiendes? Es el ultimo país de Europa en montarse en el tren.
Entonces ahora esta empezando a …

PR: This is virgin. Virgin here, virgin.

PR: Esto esta virgen. Virgen aquí, virgen.

RG: But Chano was also telling me that the problem here is that they pay the same as they did ten years ago.

RG: Pero Chano tambien me estaba contando que el problema de aquí es que aun pagan igual como pagaban hace diez años.

PR: Sometimes they also pay less hey.

PR: A veces aquí incluso pagan menos eh.

BM: Sometimes less, take note.

BM: A veces menos, cuidao.

RG: Like in Australia then, because there everything is going up in price, but the musicians pay always stays the same.

RG: Como en Australia entonces, porque ahí todo sube, pero el sueldo del musico siempre queda igual.
**PR:** Yes, there is no doubt. There is a phenomenon that occurs wherever you want. When you come from abroad, to those they pay better than the ones who live there. Doesn’t matter where. They took us to the United States and they were even going to pay us more than the ones they sent to Spain, because you are the exotic. That happens wherever you want, around here they it’s pretty fucked.

In that way, the levels of everything are much lower, in terms of money and everything. They are trying to pay you in comicbooks. But, more or less, with some luck, we are living here and living off music and to being able to play our own music. You’ve seen what it’s like…

**PR:** Ya, no es menos cierto. Que hay un fenómeno que ocurre donde quieras. Cuando vienes de afuera, a eso se les pagan mejor de los que estan. Eso da igual eh. A nosotros nos llevabana a los estados unidos y incluso nos van a pagar mas que de los que traen aquí o viceversa, porque eres lo exotico. Eso pasa donde quieras, para aquí las cosas estan bastante jodidas.

Así, los niveles eses que estan ahi, es mucho mas bajo, de dinero de todo. Te estan intentando pagar en tebeos. Pero mas o meno chico con suerte, nosotros estamos viviendo aqui viviendo de la musica y de poder de estar tocando nuestra musica. Mas o menos tu vistas algo…

**RG:** Well, I think that the level of musician here is very high.

**RG:** Bueno, yo creo que el nivel del musico aquí es muy alto.

**PR:** No, no, no (no doubt about it)

**PR:** No, no, no. (in agreeance)

**BM:** This has increased heaps. Not only the musicians that come from abroad, but Spanish musicians have improved heaps. There are many Spanish musicians that are very, very, very good. And that before didn’t exist, before about 20 years ago there were only two musicians here. Tete
Montoliu and Pedro Iturralde, and that’s it! Now there are heaps, and they play incredibly well.

Well, you saw Perico. That guy with a saxophone is to die for.

**BM:** Esto ha subido mucho. No solamente por los musicos que han venido de afuera, musicos españoles que han subido mucho. Hay muchos musicos españoles que son muy, muy, muy buenos. Y eso antes no lo había, antes hace 20 años atrás námas había dos musicos aquí. Tete Montoliu y Pedro Iturralde y se acabo! Ahora hay (mogollon), y que tocan que te cagas!

*Bueno, tu vistes a Perico. Ese chiquito con un saxofón es pa morirse.*

**PR:** Like him, there are others around here.

**PR:** Como el hay otros, por aquí.

**BM:** Several!!

**BM:** Hay vários!! *(laughs)*

**RG:** What I have noticed is that there are heaps of Cubans, more than anything else to find a better living.

**RG:** Lo que yo he notado es que hay muchísimos cubanos, que más que nada es para encontrar una vida mejor.

**PR:** Of course.

**PR:** Claro

**BM:** Yes, imagine. I haven’t been there, but from what everyone has told me, life there is very difficult.

**BM:** Sí, imaginate. Yo no he estado alla, pero con lo que todo el mundo me cuenta, la vida es muy difícil alla.

**PR:** In our case it was for professional reasons, this is for Alain and myself. In Cuba we weren’t that bad. We had the good fortune of being in an
important group over there in Cuba. What happens is that you get connected, not only to play, but to record, and we were well connected. But, from a professional point of view, you say to yourself, “This is all well and good, but I want something else!” You understand? I don’t want to say I am good now, but now there’s no turning back.

In the case of Feliu, I don’t know if you have met this Cuban saxophonist that was here. He was with Irakere, and he was perfectly fine in La Havana. In the end he had to leave, he played with Irakere and whoever else, but…

**PR:** El caso de nosotros a sido por razones profesionalmente, porque en el caso de Alain, en el caso mio. Así en Cuba no estábamos mal, yo te digo no. Hemos tenido la suerte de estar en un grupo importante ahí allá en cuba, lo que pasa es que ya te conectas y no solo para tocar pero también para grabar, estábamos bien conectados. Pero, de punto de vista de así profesional que tu dices, “Coño, pues si todo esto esta muy bien, pero yo quiero otra cosa!” Entiendes, no quiero decirte que estoy bien pero que va, no hay p’a atrás.

**PR:** En el caso de Feliu, no se si lo has conocido este saxofonista cubano que estaba aquí. Estaba con Irakere, con el otro, y ahí estaba perfectamente bien en La Habana. Ha tenido que irse. Igual lo mismo, el estaba ahí, tocaba con Irakere que se yo pero…

**RG:** We are talking mostly about the “special period”.

**RG:** Estamos hablando mas bien del tiempo del “periodo especial”.

**PR:** Yes

**PR:** Sí.

**RG:** But also, like Paquito D’Rivera, I have read that he was meant to go to Sweden and instead he stayed in Spain.

**RG:** Pero también, como Paquito D´Rivera, que he leído que tenía que ir a Suecia y se quedó aquí en España.

**PR:** Yes, here in Spain, yes.
PR: Sí, aquí en España sí.

BM: He stayed here in Spain and stayed with Carlos Calde, hehe.

BM: Se quedó aquí en España y se quedo con Carlos Calde, je je.

PR: And I am talking about other musicians that were in Cuba, and Paquito D’Rivera was “Paquito D’Rivera” in Cuba hey. And all the musicians respected him, and I can’t say he had it bad but he has other worries. He always said to the other Cuban musicians, “If you want to play Jazz go to New York!” He always said it.

Simply put, if you want to progress get away from here.

PR: Y te estoy hablando de otros músicos que (había) en Cuba, y Paquito d’Rivera era “Paquito D’Rivera” en Cuba eh. Y todos los músicos de siempre le respetaban y no te puedo decir que lo tenía mal pero el tenía otras inquietudes. El siempre decía a los otros músicos cubanos, “Si quieres tocar Jazz vete para Nueva York!”. Siempre lo decía!

Simplemente, si quieres progresar y eso vete de aquí.

RG: But, if you get to a point in Cuba, even if it was the cradle of Latin Jazz…

RG: Pero, si llegas a un punto en Cuba, aunque ha sido la cuna de Jazz Latino…

PR: Yes, you need to open yourself up. If you don’t, it doesn’t matter, but when you reach 50 years it’s not the same. Because the world is rotating and and Cuba is stopped, I don’t know if you have been to Cuba. It’s stopped in it’s tracks, and only information from musicians that can travel there can get in.

PR: Sí, tienes que abrirte. Si no, no pasa nada, y cuando te das cuenta tienes 50 años en la costilla y ya no es igual eh. Porque el mundo esta así (rotating movement), y
Cuba esta así (stopped movement), no se si has estado en Cuba. Esta detenido, y si, entra información de músicos que puedan, que entran ahí de viaje.

**BM**: Stopped in time!

**BM**: Detenido en tiempo tú!

**RG**: It's a shock because the first time that I left home I went there, in La Habana, I went to study and what not. It was a cultural shock man! It was fantastic but…

**RG**: No, es un shock porque la primera vez que me fui de casa para allí, en La Habana, fui a estudiar y tal. Era un shock cultural tío! Ha sido fantástico pero…

**PR**: In what year?

**PR**: En que año?

**RG**: Actually, it was the year that I saw you in the Latin Jazz competition held by the SGAE. Before we were talking about how the three of you tried to…

**RG**: Precisamente, era el año que te vi en la competición de Jazz Latino del SGAE. Antes estabamos hablando de los tres intentando a…

**PR**: Ah yeah, look. We didn’t even know about that competition. Bobby had been a judge of that competition.

**PR**: Aah sí, mira. Nosotros ni sabíamos de este concurso. Bobby ha sido jurado de ese concurso.

**RG**: Yes!? (laughs)

**RG**: Sí!? (laughs)

**PR**: Yeah, he had been a judge the year before.

**PR**: Sí, el ha sido jurado el año anterior.

**BM**: The year before.
BM: *El año anterior.*

PR: He knew that that competition existed, we didn’t know. And Bobby calls me one day and says, “Hey listen Pepe. There’s a competition that I know of. Why don’t we three get together and record some songs.”

Actually, the recording was the real reason. We didn’t think we were going to win the competition or anything, but to make the most of it, we paid the studio between the three of us and recorded the songs that the three of us had written and well. We then had them recorded, which was what interested us really, and we presented it. And the…

PR: *Y el sabia que existia ese concurso. Nosotros ni lo sabiamos. Y Bobby me llama un día y dice, “Oye Pepe. Hay un concurso que se yo, porque no quedamos entre los tres y grabamos unos temas.” Bueno, realmente la grabacion era la escusa. No estabamos pensando en ganar el concurso ni nada, para aprovechar, pagamos el estudio entre los tres y grabamos los temas de los tres y bueno. Ya lo teniamos grabado, que es lo que nos interesaba realmente, y lo presentamos. Y los cabrones…*

BM: They disqualified me. I told you… you’re American, you can’t compete.

BM: *A mi descualificado. Te lo dije… eres Americano, no puedes concursar*

PR: Because he was American.

PR: *Porque era Americano.*

BM: What sons of bitches.

BM: *Que hijodeputas.*

PR: And Alain and I sent in the works, on top of it all it was the last day to submit. The woman was changing things that we needed, and we hoped to get something because if not…

PR: *Y Alain y yo mandamos las obras, además el ultimo día fuimos ahí ya el ultimo día de plazo ahí. La mujer esa la cambiando cosas que necesitábamos. Y ojala nos dan algo porque si no…*
RG: What year was this, 2001 or…

RG: Que año era eso, 2001 o…


RG: In January?

RG: En enero?

PR: No, no, I think it was in December because the Jazz Festival of La Havana is in December. I couldn’t be there. I won a prize, and the year before last it happened to me again, I had won a prize and I couldn’t be there.

PR: No, no, creo que en diciembre porque el festival de jazz de La Habana es en diciembre. Yo no pudo estar. A mi me premiaron, y el año antepasado me paso lo mismo, volvieron a premiar y yo no pudo estar.

RG: Because I was there and saw Alain. My teacher was Adel Gonzalez, and later I came to Spain to learn more off Alain, it's interesting. And it's also great that there is a Latin Jazz prize.

RG: Porque yo estuve ahí y vi a Alain. Mi profe era Adel Gonzalez, y después vení a España a aprender mas con Alain, es curioso. Y tambien esta bien que hay un concurso de Jazz Latino.

BM: Of course.

BM: Coño. Claro

PR: Perico also won, he shared third prize with me.

PR: Tambien Perico gano, el campartio conmigo el tercer premio.

BM: Did I tell you or didn’t I tell you?
**BM:** Te lo dije o no te lo dije?

**PR:** Yes, it's really good. We didn’t even know about the prize and the one made things happen…

**PR:** Si, está muy bien. Nosotros no lo conocíamos y el quien lo movió todo para…

**RG:** Couldn’t compete, and to top it off he had been a judge!

**RG:** Que no podía ni concursar, y encima era anteriormente en el jurado!

**BM:** Yes! (laughter). Part of the judging panel, and I put myself in the running and I can’t compete.

**BM:** Sí! (laughter) En el jurado, y me meto en competencia y no puedo.

**PR:** Yes, and Bobby said, when we were recording the songs. “These songs! I know because I know what I have heard there! These songs are going to win prizes. Something we’re going to win!” And because Bobby didn’t present any songs, because if he was allowed we would have…

**PR:** Sí, y Bobby decía, que cuando estábamos grabando los temas. “Estos temas! Yo se, porque yo se lo que escuchaba ahí! Estos temas van a ser premios. Algo vas a coger!” Y el porque no se presento, porque si hubiera presentado los temas…

**BM:** The three of us, the three of us would have won prizes.

Because I had been on the judging panel the previous year, I heard ninety songs from composers, and the majority that I heard was shit. There were some good things, but there was also a lot of shit. When we were recording and we were listening to them, listen that sounds awesome! And we are going to win for sure.

**BM:** Los tres, los tres sacaríamos premios de ahí.
Es que como fui de jurado en el año anterior, yo oí noventa temas de compositores de donde quieras y la mayoría de lo que oí era caca. Había algunas cosas buenas, pero había mucha caca. Cuando nosotros estábamos grabando y nosotros estábamos escuchando, oye esto está de pinga! Y vamos a ganar seguro.

RG: What do they look for? So I know.
RG: Que buscan? Para que sepa.

BM: What they look for is a song that is good. Well elaborated, well recorded, with an interesting melody and harmonically good. That it’s well played.

BM: Lo que ellos buscan es un tema que esté bien. Bien desarrollado el tema, bien grabado, que este interesante con melodía y harmónicamente bien. Y que esté bien tocado.

PR: In truth, the competition is very just because it’s anonymous all of the time. You never know who the composers are, just in Cuba because that’s when they rehearse it, but it is anonymous to the judges until the prize is given out. This is good, because you don’t know. Maybe you’re in the judging panel and you are listening to a song of a friend of yours and you don’t know.

PR: La verdad, que el concurso de verdad es muy justo porque es anonimo todo el tiempo. Nunca se sabe, incluso en Cuba, es cuando ya se sabe la compositor porque lo vas a ensayar ahí. Pero incluso, ni la gente. Todavía es anonimo hasta que no. Esto esta bien, es justo porque no se sabe. Al a mejor estas en el jurado y esta escuchado el tema de tu amigo y no lo sabes.

RG: And it’s still running?
RG: Y aun sigue?

BM: Yes, yes, yes. They do it every two years I think.
BM: Sí, sí, sí. Lo hacen cada dos años yo creo.
PR: I am waiting to enter again, so that they keep on giving me third place!

PR: Estoy esperando a ver, por presentarme de nuevo, para que me siguen dando tercero!

BM: I am waiting that they hold it again so I can enter again, and hopefully by then I am a Spanish citizen with a Spanish passport and they let me enter! I won’t tell them I am American, you hear!

BM: Y yo estoy esperando que lo presenten de nuevo para ver si ya a esa altura ya soy ciudadano español con pasaporte español y me dejan entrar! No digo nada que soy americano, oiste!

RG: Well, if you want you can write the song and put my name on it. I'll go to Australia and win with your song.

RG: Bueno, si tu quieres escribir el tema y poner nombre también eh. Yo me piro a Australia gano con tu tema.

PR: Well, I have to go. I have a lesson.

PR: Bueno, yo tengo que irme que tengo una clase oiste.

RG: Ok, we'll talk.

RG: Ya hablamos.

PR: We'll talk, we'll talk.

PR: Hablamos, hablamos.

(English)

RG: Since you had Cuban parents, and Spanish grandparents. I suppose you spoke Spanish at home, you had that culture at home.

BM: Well I’ll tell you, my parents to this day barely speak any English. It’s ridiculous man. My parents have been over 45 years in the United Status.
My dad spoke a little more English. My mum? Very bad. So when I was born, you know my first language was Spanish. You know I learnt English when I started to go to school, and I made American friends. That’s when I started, you know, to learn English. But actually my first language was Spanish.

And then as far as music goes, my dad was a jazz commentator in Cuba. So my dad had an enormous collection of jazz, from Charlie Parker, Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie to you name it he had it. All the old Pablo recordings and all those things man, he had everything.

So you know I was lucky enough to listen to like, when I was 5 years old, to Charlie Parker and Coltrane. And then, I also listened to Debussy. And then with my friends outside I listened to Latin Jazz, you know so that helped me out big time. I was fortunate because of that.

**RG:** So tell me a little about your influences…

**BM:** My influences? As a saxophonist?

**RG:** Yeah.

**BM:** Well Coltrane is my first influence on tenor, and Dexter Gordon. I focused a lot on them and then of course, when I was about 16 a guy by the name of Michael Brecker came into my life. And of course he just took me to another place that I had not been to before, I became a Brecker fanatic, I mean I would eat, piss, shit Brecker. And I did that for several years, you know, then I became a man!

Hehe, and I matured and I realised you know, Brecker is Brecker and I started to work on my own thing. You know and that’s basically what I have been trying to do for the past 20 years.
**RG:** How did you get into music?

**BM:** Well, my father was a frustrated musician. Funny, he studied sax but he was like really bad. He told me the story later on when I became a musician he told me a story, “I studied sax, but I sucked. I sucked so much I had to quit!”

So when he saw that I had talent, he flipped man. So anything I need I had, but the way I started was, there was this program, a TV show, that was on every night at 9 o’clock. It was called the Johnny Carson Show, he was a commentator, a funny guy you know. And on that program he had a guy called Doc Severinsen, a trumpet player with a big band, and they always played on this show.

I used to sit just to watch the band play, cause I used to love the saxophone, you know. I thought it was the coolest instrument, you know the way it would bend and all that it was cool as shit.

So, my dad noticed that every day at the time of the show, I would sit in front of the TV and watch you know. So one day he comes up to and says you know, “What is it, do you like that show?”

“No, I like that instrument, that instrument that looks like a pipe, like a smoking pipe”. When I told him that he flipped man.

He said, you’re kidding, “Do you like the sax?” Next day I had a sax. Next day he bought me my first alto sax, which is the one I am playing now, consequently.

So I started, he took me to this Cuban teacher, a Cuban violinist that played saxophone and clarinet. Who later on turned out to be a wonderful person and he acquired a love for me, I was like another son for him.
And since I had talent, I started studying man and I would pick up the shit quickly man. Within a year and a half I was playing the sax really good. It was neat man, cause anything I needed my dad would buy. By the time a year went by, I started out with this Conn saxophone, which is a good sax, but when my father bought it he bought it for 50 bucks and it was a piece of shit. So, the first year comes by, and my teacher, Herlando Luis, he goes to my dad and says listen, Amable, you’re going to have to buy your son a better sax cause your son is going to be a good sax player, he’s got talent, and the sax he’s got is very shitty.

So he went out and bought me almost the best saxophone, he bought me a Buffet. And wow, man I was flipping with that Buffet, so about another year and a half or two years goes by, and my teacher goes back to my dad and says listen you got to buy your son the best saxophone in the world because the Buffet is not good enough. And your son is going to be one of the greatest saxophone players in the world. So my dad went out and bought me the best sax.

He was always there for me, as far as music goes, cause like in a certain way I was doing what he wanted to do but he had no talent, and I did so he was having a blast. He was living his life through me.

**RG:** Well, I think any artist needs the support of their family.

**BM:** I got it big time man. My dad would even take me to jam sessions, he would take me to clubs when I was 12 years old. When I turned 18, 19 and now a professional musician, I worked with these cats.

They would turn around and tell me the story, and say, "Man, when we saw your father walk in through the door we would say to each other, oh man, here comes Amable with his son. He’s going to play again. Shit!" These were now my colleagues, you know.
My childhood was beautiful, it was really nice cause I had all this support from my parents. I had talent for music and I learnt fast, you know when I was 12 I was already playing the shit out of the sax. So it was fun you know, and later on when I was in my twenties I worked with all the cats that used to take all my bullshit when I was a kid. So that was a lot of fun.

**RG:** You must have music in the genes, because your father was a jazz commentator, but also your extended family is with Jerry [González]…

**BM:** That’s another funny story, cause you see Jerry is my cousin. We’re cousins, but we never met. We met here in Spain. Can you believe that shit? It’s incredible! You know, he grew up in New York, between Puerto Rico and New York and I grew up in Miami, and he was in a different scene then I was and there is a difference in age also. He’s like 12 years older than I am.

So, I remember calling him once when I was in my 30’s before I came to Spain. I called him on the phone and I said, listen. I am your cousin man and I’m a motherfucker tenor player. He thought I was kidding with him so he hung up!

**RG:** So that was your first contact.

**BM:** That was my first attempt, you know. Then a couple of years go by. You know and I come to Spain to live and I am playing at Café Central, this club right, and in walks Jerry. And I’m looking at him, you know, and I’m thinking shit, I am going to tell him. So I go up to him and I say, “Hey Jerry”, he looks at me and says, “yeah”.

“I’m your cousin Bobby”.

“Cousin Bobby? I ain’t got no cousin Bobby”, he says.
“Yeah me! I’m the tenor player that called you a couple of years back and you hung up on me.”

So he’s looking at me and like, “Man this guy…” So he sort of let it slide, you know, and he hung with me like his cousin that night. The following day I was working at the Central, so he comes by and the moment he sees me he hugs me and kisses me, “MY COUSIN BOBBY, YEAH!”

He had called his mother, and his mother told him, yeah that’s Bobby your cousin. He’s 12 years younger than you, he’s from Miami. He’s a saxophone player. He was like, “so it’s true!” (laughs)

So then he was telling everybody, he would go around and, “Hey Bobby, Bobby, this is my cousin man. He’s my cousin bro!”

**RG:** How long ago was that?

**BM:** This was seven years ago. When that movie came out, six years ago. That movie, Calle 54 came out. That’s when he started coming to Spain, that’s why I bumped into him. And that’s the story with Jerry man.

**RG:** Have you played with him?

**BM:** With Jerry? Oh yeah. When he first came down to Madrid he was coming down often you know. I booked several gigs with him and we played together. But after a while he started to get really busy doing some other things, I got busy doing some other things also. I’ve got my own band, he’s got his own thing, so every now and then we bump into each other and we play together.

But it’s, you know, it’s different. We come from different worlds too, you know. But I love him man, he’s a sweetheart, he’s a true guy very honest
true guy man. He’s one of those typical persons that he’ll tell you whatever he feels no matter how it comes out.

He hides nothing, you know, and he is what he is. So I like that a lot about him, and he’s a great musician. He’s got talent up the ears.

**RG:** So, it’s come to the end of the interview. Just quickly, how do you see Latin Jazz at the moment? Between Cuba, the States and Spain and where do you see Latin Jazz going?

**BM:** I see Latin Jazz, I think ahh. As far as Spain, and in Europe it’s going places. But Latin Jazz is not a new thing. It’s something that has been around for a very long time. It’s not a new thing, it’s not new to musicians. I think it’s going in a good way now, I think maybe it’s becoming a little more powerful in Europe I think. More now than ever.

But bands, like for instance, like Irakere, they’ve been coming to Europe for years man. 25 years ago, Irakere was coming to Europe. I mean that’s not a new thing you know, but I think maybe to a bigger majority of people, it may be being something new. To the younger people, it’s something new.

The good thing about Latin Jazz is the same thing that happens with Jazz, it’s a good art man. It can never die. Something that’s good just never dies, it’s not a passive thing. You may not like it, but if it’s good it’s not going to die. Jazz is never going to die, I don’t think Latin Jazz is ever going to die either. If you don’t like it that’s one thing, but I can tell you man. I don’t care if you’re a musician or if you’re not a musician or if you even don’t like music. You hear a nice Latin Jazz tune, and your feet start moving buddy.

It’s the way it is! It’s natural, you can’t escape that, you know.
So I think, yeah, going back to your question. I think Latin Jazz is doing well. I think it’s doing better than ever now, I think it’s picking up especially in Spain. I think it’s doing good.

There’s a lot of migration in the whole world man, and I think that has a lot to do with it too. To help to spread all this stuff you know. When I was with Paco de Lucia, in California, we got invited to a party after their concert, the musicians. Where we would go to the party on this mountain, and it was full of Americans singing Flamenco and playing Flamenco like freaking gypsies man, I was flipping, I can’t believe this man, these are rednecks singing Flamenco. I have seen it all now!

I think Latin Jazz is doing great, I think it’s going to do even better.

**RG:** It certainly got more popular after Calle 54 came out.

**BM:** Yeah, and it’s not a music that you have to be like Cuban, or you have to be like Latin to play or anything like that. Like for instance, Paquito d’Rivera’s drummer, Mark, he’s Jewish man. What the hell is he doing playing all that Latin stuff? And he plays the shit out of it, so it’s not a matter of whether you’re not Latin or Cuban and it has nothing to do with that at all.

**RG:** Thank you so much.

**BM:** Thank you man.
Appendix iv: Interview with Pepe Rivero 16 May 2006

Translation

Roger González: We can start with your full name, when and where you were born and a little about yourself.

Pepe Rivero: My name is José Antonio Rivero Rodríguez, more commonly known as Pepe Rivero. I’m Cuban. I was born in the city of Manzanillo, which is in the western part of Cuba, and that’s where I started to learn the piano, which was the first instrument I started to learn, I always wanted to play the saxophone, but I had to start with the piano.

RG: And you continue with the piano?

PR: At the moment I am still playing the piano. I have started to learn the saxophone, but there is it.

RG: With Bobby?
PR: Yes, with Bobby, but recently the most precious thing that could happen has arrived, to have a baby boy, so I haven't been able to practice or make noise at home.

RG: Congratulations! And when did you start to play and why?

PR: I started to study the Piano when I was 5, in the music school Manuel Navarro Luna, I still remember the name of it, there in Manzanillo. The Cuban system is very similar to the old Soviet Union system, now Russia. It is 7 years of elementary, which is what I did in Manzanillo, and later I transferred to Camagüey, which is in the centre of Cuba, there I did the intermediate level and later I transferred to La Havana to the superior institute of Art “Elisa”, and that’s where I finished my superior studies in classical piano. This is what I studied from a very young age.

RG: And is there a Latin Jazz course within the conservatorium or do you do this on the side?

PR: Now there is, not a course that is extremely specialised, but yes. Today students have access to teachers that play in the street and then go to the school and teach percussion, bass, and piano. Before in my day this did not exist. Before you could have been expelled for playing Cuban music. It was classical music and that’s it.

RG: And why?

PR: I don’t know how to explain it, it would be because before, Cuba was with the Soviet Union. For what some people say was bad for others say it was for the best, for classical music it was very good and if they saw you playing a danzón or a tumbao they could kick you out of school.

In my case, when I went to the Elisa, I couldn’t let my teacher find out that I played Jazz, which I had been doing since very young as all my family were
musicians. My father was a saxophonist, my uncle sang, my cousins singer / pianists, percussionists. A whole family of musicians, and since I was very young I had the luck to be a part of a family of musicians that played popular music and to have both at the same time.

Since I was young, my father told the musicians of Manzanilla, “teach the kid how to play a *tumbao*” so as well as playing classical music I played other things, and when I had a sense of reason, I started to get interested in Latin Jazz, in my house since I was 7 years old once one starts to understand a little more, I saw my father trying to play a solo by Paquito d’Rivera and I had the luck to be able to tell this story to Paquito, and later play and record with him. I could tell him that I already listened to him, because my father was a great fan of Paquito’s and they are very much alike.

**RG:** It seems that now in Cuba, they are exporting lots of Cuban music around the world, it is one of the elements that attracts and is recognised outside Cuba, right? So you started in the conservatorium and later, was there a moment that you changed and decided Latin Jazz is what I want to do, or how did it come about?

**PR:** It was all one big mix, to me I love classical music, I started to take part in competitions when I was 8 years old, which I don’t know if those competitions still exist but before there was a competition that took place every two years, which was named after Amadeo Roldán, who was a Cuban composer that brought a great deal, and it was a classical music competition, that started in the municipalities, then provinces and ended up at the national level. I won the municipal stage, the provincial stage and lost at the national level. This was because I played a program that was under what others played, because I came from a small town and the kids that came from La Havana had programs that impressed more, and I also always was nervous. But later I started to win first prizes. I almost always won something, and that's when I started my classical music career.
In fact, when I entered into the superior school of music, they prepared me to compete in the Chopin competition in Poland, but I had the bad luck that I had to do compulsory military service and then everything in Russia happened and that was when I decided which way I should go with my music. I finished my classical music career and it was very clear to me what I wanted to do, I knew I wanted to play Jazz. It’s what I liked because it gave me a lot of adrenaline.

**RG:** And for you as a musician, to play Jazz is the pinnacle, right? Because in Australia when you say you will play Latin Jazz they think it will be *Son*. They do not know the difference between *Son* and *Latin Jazz*. Could you explain the difference?

**PR:** I think that the confusion comes from, Cuban music as it is you need to look at it from the past. In Cuba, Jazz had its own performers, that already played a sort of *Jazz*, to put a name to all this improvised music.

Those who were learned knew the difference to play Cuban improvised music, is very different to play *swing* or *bebop* or another thing. What happened, that is true that there was a time that Cuba belonged to the United States, and there was also jazz by itself, and the big band was the type of orchestra that was most recognizable, such as *El Tropicana* of modern music that had a broad range of music, because both American and Cuban music was played.

The rhythms that are found in *Son*, that are known as salsa, within salsa the majority of the music is from the genres of Cuban music, and also other places like Puerto Rico, from the Dominican Republic, but the majority is from Cuban music, and many of the musicians who have played salsa are also Jazz players.
For example, Eddie Palmieri has done salsa, but also Jazz, and he has his group and what he is playing is Guaguancó, but this is Rumba, it comes from the genre of Rumba and it is what is most widely known in salsa. The Son, like you said before, is within salsa but is also used in jazz, and the Cha cha chá, for example is very well known as well, on my record and Alain’s record, you will see that there are tunes that are Cha cha chá, Son, and another that is Guaguancó, and others are a bit more modern, but these are the roots.

**RG:** Each has the Cuban rhythmic base and you have to respect it, but what makes it different is the harmony right?

**PR:** Exactly, all these influences in new music in addition to the American music such as Jazz, a lot of people think that Cuban musicians have a facility to play music from other parts of the world. This is not because we are super talented, not at all, it’s simply because Cuba has had the luck of being a country that before was an island of strategic importance, a place where everyone stopped over on the way to another destination.

Also, ports of all cities have always been places where discoveries, and art have entered. The French had control of us, the English, the Spanish that were here for a very long time and the Americans right? All this music comes from over time, and nowadays in some way I do my Cuban music but I fuse it with Jazz, with Brazilian music, that has also arrived to us, and now I am living in Spain and for example, lots of times without realising it I get Flamenco tours.

**RG:** And what you are talking about, a lot of it is the “Ida y Vuelta” no? Because in New Orleans, Jelly Roll Morton, a pianist, one of the first jazz players said, “If you can’t manage to put tinges of Spanish in your tunes, you will never be able to get the right seasoning, I call it, for jazz”. In other words, he is already talking of the Spanish music that passed through Cuba.
PR: Of course, and we cannot forget that in New Orleans, when the French Revolution occurred, all the French colonies came via Cuba and from Cuba they went to New Orleans and all the syncopation of the United States is what they mostly liked. They even had back then they used the term Jazz Latin, all you have to do is look at French Haiti, and all those colonies.

RG: Well, well Haiti is where the Cinquillo comes from, right? And from the French contradanza or countrydance the habanera originates, Faustino Nuñez who is a Flamencologist states that the most important element within Flamenco is the habanera rhythm, that has passed on from the French to the Cubans, and later Spain.

PR: Yes, and the habanera rhythms if you look further back also come from the Argentine Tango. Even though many people wouldn’t like it, but this rhythm does not come from Cuba, but the Cinquillo, the syncopation, the Cuban clave that is not from Cuba but comes from Africa.

We cannot forget that all that refers to rhythm, all this comes from Africa, all the references of rhythms and melodies come from the Arabs, the melodies are from the Indians, are very similar. There are many that would say that this could be a Bulería, but all comes from the same, so in Cuba this rhythmic pattern, is what condition 90 percent of Cuban music. The clave is there.

RG: What can you tell us or even show us what a Cinquillo is or what is the Cuban clave. What does the clave signify, because for a Cuban it has to come from within, yes?

PR: The clave, above all the most recognised clave, the Guaguancó clave comes from the Rumba. The Rumba is Cuban, even though it comes from the blacks (Africans) and the rhythm is arrhythmic, it comes from the street, like rap nowadays, it’s very much from the streets and the Guaguancó clave
is most known for the \textit{(sung – gua chin chin gua)}… and it is born from there, and from very young you are seeing the clave, the \textit{Guaguancó} or \textit{Son} clave, especially where I come from in Manzanillo, the country music.

The clave that is used in the \textit{Son} clave, that comes from rural regions, like the \textit{Rumba} and many people ask me “what’s the difference between them?” and it’s simply the displacement from one which is (claps) to the other that does (claps).

\textbf{RG:} The \textit{Guaguancó} has the syncopation from Haiti.

\textbf{PR:} Yes, but the music comes from the music of \textit{Afro} and from the \textit{Guaguancó, 6 / 8}, (sings) and you go taking away rhythm and you are left with the clave, that is where the \textit{Guaguancó} clave comes from which is the one that they have used in the Rhumba, but each person interpreted it in their own way, and they began to introduce it in \textit{Son}, in the rural music.

It is true that if you are born somewhere, and you live in that place, there exist certain traits, and you can ask any Cuban to do a 2 3 or 3 2 clave, but this is now, because before you didn’t need to know if it is 2 3 or whatever, instead it’s like this and that’s it. Now people study, mostly the \textit{Son} clave or 2 3 clave, but this is all conditioned by the melody.

\textbf{RG:} And the clave is seen in Flamenco, in the Palmas, each clave is a structure right?

\textbf{PR:} It’s what defines different genres, like the \textit{Bulería}. Yes, and in each one you have a rhythm and you can fit it into a 3 feel, but the most logical is to feel it as it is. And people will tell you that you have to feel it to do anything right? Well I can now dispute this, because it is true that many foreigners have gone to Cuba and they play Cuban music perfectly well. Of course they have immersed themselves and perhaps they are not going to feel it like a black person, but yes, I think if you like it and you can come to
fell it, I think that music is no ones property, and no one can dispute that this is my music.

Now, the music there is, is fusion and I myself am married to a Spaniard and I have a son that is Spanish, and even if I didn’t want him to he is listening to Spanish music, and already each persons tastes are different, and let’s see how you tell the kid, you aren’t Cuban and you can’t play this music, if he has lived in an environment with this sort of music, right?

**RG:** And this music you wouldn’t normally write it right? The normal way to learn was not to write it. It was learnt through listening to the music and by passing it on from generation to generation.

**PR:** For example, you asked in the beginning if we had studied in Cuba, in a school, and I told you that I know what I know from listening to it, because we didn’t have any *Real Book*, or any method that stated that this chord goes with this one, and those who knew it didn’t tell you because they didn’t want to show or others because they didn’t know how to explain it, because they didn’t know themselves what they were doing.

**RG:** But perhaps this gives you more freedom to fuse?

**PR:** Of course, that’s right, because I am not outlining this for any reason in particular, I tell a lot of students this. There are some who have the possibility, normally you have to use a method as not everyone has the same facility as others, and you can’t tell them, “listen, I learnt it like this and you work it out”, it’s never the same. For us, we enjoyed it and we studied it, and I sometimes tell about how we would go to school with a small tape recorder, at 12 midnight, and we were starving, and we listened to Miles Davis and we tried to transcribe those tunes, then later we went to the piano and study those tunes like *All the Things You Are, Autumn Leaves*, and write out the solos, improvise, look at the scales and you see it.
There are students that grab the mixolydian mode, the dorian mode which is great but when the moment comes and you have to improvise what do you do? Are you going to play the scale up and down? No. You have to create, and that's what's missing, because we learnt by ear, and that's how we learnt to improvise and I am still learning, the career of an improviser is infinite.

It's like medicine, it depends how you are that day, if you are in a good mood and it depends if you truly are an improviser, because many people all they do is reproduce solos from other artists, and that can be good. I respect it, but I don't like it, what we do is improvise, right?

In general, now in Cuba, you learn it at school more or less, when I went from the Elisa and I graduated in 96 I stayed on as a teacher, and when I graduated they opened a degree of popular music, for the first time but for foreign students.

Myself along with Chucho Valdés, but Chucho was only there once because he was always travelling, and I stayed in charge playing piano, but it was only for foreigners and I think it's still going. I don't know if in the AENA, there was a subject in popular music and there they taught you along the same lines, and I also taught there, and everything else was the same, the percussion is inevitable, and the teachers that there are there teach you everything, Carlos del Puerto and other teachers giving classes on bass and popular guitar, but a school with a method as such there isn’t.

**RG:** And now to talk a little bit about where Latin Jazz started, you were telling me that there was always a Latin Jazz, but is there a set date for modern Latin Jazz where it was fused with Be Bop?

**PR:** As far as I understand, the music from Peruchín, the pianist Peruchín, I won't say the first, but yeah Peruchín as well as Frank Emilio, another blind Cuban pianist who died recently, these musicians started for example to do
Standards. There is a record that I have, which I don’t recall the name of it, but it has Peruchín playing *All the things you are*, playing, *Autumn Leaves*, playing *Summertime*, playing them but with rhythms from Latin and from Mambo, with the rhythm of *danzón*, and they were the first who started this in Cuba, but well now I have started to go on a tangent but what I am talking about is the mixing of doing Jazz Standards with a Cuban rhythm such as the *Cha cha chá*. But they were the first to start doing this, but these same pianists were also playing straight Cuban music.

Armando Romeo, the pianist, is a great family; he was the first to do a solo in the *danzón*, the first in history. Before Armando Romeo, it had never been done, and the *danzón* has a section called the *paseo* and there for the first time, *Tres lindas cubanas* was the name of the *danzón*, and he was the first to do a piano solo and from then on the piano solo in that section became a part of the *danzón*, because before the piano was an instrument that was only accompanying.

**RG:** What year are we talking about?

**PR:** Forty something, fifties.

**RG:** Yes because at the same time, a little bit before Arsenio Rodríguez introduced the congas into Cuban music and at the same time in New York Chano Pozo went and played with Dizzy Gillespie…

**PR:** All this was around about the same time.

**RG:** And in Cuba Peruchín and Armando Romeo yes?

**PR:** Yes, but what we were talking about regarding Armando Romeo was a great deal before Peruchín, a great deal. It was the first solo that was done on piano and from then the *danzónes* introduced the *montuno* and *chorus*,

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and I don’t know if you have read this but the first *mambo* that there was, was actually a *danzón* that was titled *mambo*.

Of course, Cachao grabbed that part of the *danzón* and started, and Peréz Prado what he did was to give it another character and to harmonise it in the style of a Big Band, he did not invent the *mambo* he did collaborate and brought a great deal, but the *danzón* is what was called *mambo*.

**RG:** And Cachao was the double bassist who started to do mambo. How does a *danzón* bass line go?

**PR:** The normal *danzón* for example (plays), I don’t know if it sounds familiar (plays) if you focus on the bass (plays) it’s stretches further back, it is very similar to the *habanera* (plays). What happened that these people (plays) and all things comes from much further back (plays) from Lecuona, Cervantes, from Manuel Samuel, they have (plays) and this is called the *Velorio* (plays) this is the bass line that they do in the *contradanza*, when it started in Cuba and (plays) but all this comes from (plays) and here with Lecuona the bass was different (plays) (sings) (plays) what happens is that later (plays) the melody is very European (plays) all this melody and influences in the dances that were in style, the French took them, but in Cuba the rhythm kept on changing until (plays) and the *tumbao* later, after all this, this generated in (plays) and Cachao was one of the ones that started it (plays) these are different rhythms which in the end are the same.

From this that I am talking about, you go into more depth, but if we scratch the surface you find much more. And sometimes we forget about people who did this before, but these are the most famous and the ones we know, because sometimes you talk to someone and they tell you that such and such invented this, and later you find out that they didn’t actually invent it but heard it from someone else, you know what I mean?

**RG:** So the father of all this comes from Africa?
PR: Yes, this no one can dispute, and the *Ida y Vuelta* that we were talking about was in the *habanera*, in Barcelona above all, the *habanera* is still being played. There is a rhythm of theirs, I forget the name, that is the same as the *Habanera* and there will be people who tell you that that’s not correct, that that rhythm is unique to Barcelona, but who has the truth, because at that time many ships came and went.

The same with the Flamenco *Rumba*, some people will say that it was learnt in Cuba and on the trip over it was forgotten and on the boat reversed... it was done in their own style, but in the end this comes from there. They did it in their own way, and they did it from what they heard, and they interpreted it in their own way and they did it.

RG: Like the *habanera* coming to Cadiz, and there are many *habaneras* talking of Cuba, and also in *catalan*, the one I know most, “my grandfather went to Cuba, on board the *Catalá*”, and there is a very strong link between Spain and Cuba.

PR: You should finish your Masters going to Cuba, so that you can see both sides, if we were living in Cuba you would also see the same. Look, also the music from the Canary Islands, all the rural music of Cuba has a lot to do with it, with all the *décimas*, it comes from the Canaries, and in Cuba they also took the guitar and invented the *tres*.

RG: But the *décima* is like the verse and I read that it comes from Arabian music.

PR: Yes, that’s because the Moors were here, if my memory serves me correctly for some three centuries in Spain, and in Spain they took and translated Arabian poetry, this is where the *décima* comes from.
In Cuba, it was taken and it was done in another way, in Cuba the décima was transformed into a sort of game, as a tool for improvising. It was made for it, and we could even call this Jazz, because what was being done is improvisation and two people would get together and they would just start.

Perfectly, they are ten lines, with all the endings and conjunctions being perfect, and this comes from the Canary Islands, and their music is very similar to that from Cuba. Because you have the clave, the tres was constructed and this was done in Cuba. In the beginning this was made with an earthenware pitcher, later with a marimbola that comes from Africa. In Cuba this was transformed and these were the first bass' there were, the double bass didn’t come in until later. This was what was used in Son, the marimbotas. It’s like a Flamenco cajón (box), which isn’t actually Flamenco it comes from Peru, and it has the same hole. The same as the cajón, but it has a metal strip, 3 or 5, depending. There also sat on top of the marimbola, it’s like a Flamenco cajón, and with this is what the true traditional Son was played with.

RG: And also, the fusion of the cajón, because you can say that the first Rumbas were played with different boxes. Could you explain it a bit?

PR: The cajón within the Cuban Rumba, comes from… ok now for a little bit of history. One already know what happened with slavery, the English, the French, the Spanish would take slaves and take them all to different destinations. What happened, is that the slaves tried to reproduce the instruments that they played in their original country.

In Cuba, the batá drums, that also come from Africa, and the slaves tried to reproduce the sound and it ended up as batá drums. The same happened with the cajón and the Rumba, because the cajón came before the congas, and these were used in Rumbas. They are similar to congas, but they are boxes, and this was created in Cuba in the Matanzas district, which was
where the port was, and it was a very important port, and in that port is where all the African slave trade entering Cuba would be done. There in the ports is where Rumba started, and in a port there are only boxes, and there is always a smart one that would make a box that would sound better. And from there is where cajón from the Cuban Rumba started.

RG: And also the batá comes from the Santería, from the Yoruba and Jerry Gonzalez uses this influences no?

PR: Of course, because all the Afro music from the Yoruba religion is used in Cuban music. On my records, I have a song that I dedicate to Oshun, which is called the Caridad del Cobre (Charity of Copper), I am not sure if you have heard of the syncretism that existed in Cuba.

The black slaves found a way to celebrate their Saints by having similarities of their saints with the saints of the Catholic Church. The colonies allowed them to worship and have festivals to the Catholic saints that were the embodiments of the Yoruba saints, and they took advantage and did their dances and music. In the end the Cuban culture is music, is the clave, and this was being transformed in a melting pot.

And the blacks took advantage to have parties for their saints, and the day of the Caridad del Cobre they were actually celebrating Oshun, that is a saint from the Yoruba religion. And actually, I dedicated it to them, and in the song the rhythm is Jazz, but is Jazz fused with other things. The rhythm below is always there, but the way Alain plays the bass is more modern without losing our traditions.

RG: I would like to talk a little about Irakere, before you spoke of Paquito d’Rivera and Chucho Valdés who both formed Irakere.

PR: Before we were talking about who were the first, well with Irakère, Emiliano Salvador, who sometimes is forgotten, is from the same time as
Chucho Valdés, was one of those who gave the drive and ended up stating this is Latin Jazz. And Chucho Valdés already brought the influence of American Jazz the same as Paquito d’Rivera and Arturo Sandoval who were in an group of modern music and that’s where Irakere was formed. They continued making Cuban music, but the phrasing of the horns, the way of playing was Be Bop, or whatever. It ended up being that this is what there is and this is Latin Jazz, and Paquito d’Rivera and Arturo Sandoval who were leaders of Irakere, marked a whole period of Cuban music and in the world in general.

They also had the luck of winning a Grammy award, and back then to open up to the world and for people to learn that this was Latin Jazz through Irakere. The entire world knows of the blockade we have had and this caused the doors to close and not allow Cuban music to escape. Before you asked me about Cuban musicians being all over the world, and all the formation that there is in Cuba, and the artist is not from one point but from all points of the world.

The artist is from wherever they are at that point, from the *Special Period* and from these economic situations that are happening in Cuba, this has generated a great deal of migration of many musicians. Much more than before, because before to tour a group outside of Cuba was very difficult. Now groups tour even though they are paid a pittance. People say, “I want to get out of here any way I can”.

**RG:** Because of Chucho Valdés, and Arturo Sandoval, the people who emerged from Irakere, this was before the *Special Period*, right?

**PR:** Yes, much before. Those were the Golden Years of Cuba.

**RG:** The only one of the greats that stayed in Cuba was Chucho Valdés?

**PR:** Chucho, was the only one who stayed there.
**RG:** You are very young, like Alain and the musicians that I have met, and you are from the time of the Special Period, correct?

**PR:** Cuba was in part a bit of the Soviet Union, and everything was OK, and Special Period came about because everything became very difficult (the fall of the USSR). It’s true though, that one of the great things that you have to recognise about Cuba is the education and the schools of arts. You have to go there to see it.

The idea is very good, and in fact the entire world knows that Cubans have a very good education. There is a combination of things that were done. There are some bases that were created and in all of Cuba there are schools of art, with good standing, with people who are very well prepared, and many people want to go there to study, this is also true. Many teachers who were there are no longer there because they have left, or have died, but one still talks of the Cuban school of arts in general.

**RG:** Therefore, music was a way of leaving Cuba during the Special Period, to travel and once you were out of the country you could earn more than in Cuba.

**PR:** This is a very delicate subject, it is true that Cuba, before the Special Period, was an Island of Artists. You played a *palo* (rhythm), and the people would come out, and the same happens in Brazil, and this is because of the type of black people that were brought into Cuba and Brazil, and cultural strengths there are.

The Yoruba, went to Brazil and also to Cuba, and this type of tribe was of the tribes that developed culture, and painting, and was the majority of the slaves that came to Cuba, and 80 percent of the Cuban population always has wanted to study music or dedicate themselves to something related to this, and if not at the very least people always enjoyed parties.
When the Special Period came about, it was easier to leave if you were a sportsman or musician, and people would always say I want to learn something to be in the first group that leaves. The things that happened, stories of people who started a group, would hold an audition and later the musicians wouldn’t go. They would put their families in the group, and this is how they took people out of Cuba.

**RG:** What was the reason that you left, because you are now married to a Spaniard, did you go on tour, or what happened?

**PR:** In my case, and in the general case for those of us who knew each other during that time, when I was in Cuba during this period it was true that I had it all right. If I was to stay in Cuba, I did not have the stress, even living in Cuba I was touring the States and many people would ask you, “why didn’t you stay?” Because the Cuban dream is to go to the United States, and many Americans tell you, “you’re going to stay right?” And I didn’t see why I needed to stay, I hadn’t lost anything there, I haven’t lost anything here (in Spain), unless someone was to offer me something interesting in a professional sense.

In Cuba, we were with Isaac Delgado, in one of the best bands there, and we were always touring and we had our own status, and we were inside a group of musicians that never had no work, and there comes a time when all this becomes small.

One day, I was thinking whilst in bed, that I can’t buy a piano. And why can’t I buy a piano? I was thinking this because I was in Japan and there a piano costs a lot, but it’s not because I didn’t have the money, but with what will I eat it with later? With a bit of ketchup or what, and my family what will they eat?
And one day I asked myself this, and many people in Cuba were saving money for a car, but this didn’t interest me. These were things that I kept asking myself, because I had travelled a great deal, I had done three tours of Europe and we were going to go to Australia, but I don’t know what happened, for whatever reason we didn’t go, but there are many places in the world for me yet to tour and this was becoming very small for me.

Anyway, there was the circumstance that we came to Spain with Isaac, but not to stay here, it was just easier for us to move around the world based here, and we were young. With 25 or 26 and Alain with 20 or 21, and you arrive here with no kids or anything and you begin to meet people, and then arrived the day that Isaac said that we were going back to Cuba, and we all told him that to Cuba he was going alone. Of course, each person for their own motives, I wanted to experiment with what there was here, if I was able, and well time would tell, and did so.

**RG:** It also is more difficult if you have a family, because my teacher in Cuba, Adel González, who was also in Irakere, studied along with Alain and now lives in Cuba because his family is there, and now when you are away it’s much more difficult.

**PR:** Now not so much, in the period that we did it, it was much more difficult. Now I can go to Cuba, I can only be there 30 days, but if you want to stay longer you pay more, but if I want to go to Cuba I go and that’s it. You no longer have to ask for a visa, before you did and you would have to wait to see if they would let you in, this is a step forward.

During the time that we stayed here in Spain, it was more complicated; this is also true of even taking the first step. For musicians like Adel and like us that were doing more or less all right and we had a certain status, you think here is all right. I have now been in Spain for 9 years, and I can say since we have arrived the evolution has been good, not only for us but also for Spain, culturally. People sometimes forget that Spain has gone
through a Civil War, and out of all of Europe it is the most behind, along with Italy.

For example with piracy, you aren’t going to see that in France, and in Germany you are not going to see anyone selling pirated material on the streets, simply because the government wouldn’t allow it and because of their culture because intellectual property is sacred for them. Here you see it and in Italy as well, and it’s not because people are uncultured but rather they have a different set of values, and this is instilled from very young.

What we have seen are festivals, and about 20 Jazz festivals would have been created here, and now I am living from Jazz, which is the most difficult thing to do, as it’s easier to live from pop or rock, and I work in the Música Creativa, and I am working and living from Jazz.

**RG:** Many Cubans have also come here for the language, right?

**PR:** Yes, and on top of this you also feel at home, because it is true that culturally it is very similar, even though we have our difference you feel very welcome, and here we Cubans are much loved and it’s not because we are outgoing or funny, but because if you go back, in Cuba 90 percent of Cubans are descendents from the Spanish. Ask anyone that you see, a black guy and his great, great grandmother is Spanish or Gallego, and the same happens when the Spanish go to Cuba, they are much loved, and it’s not that foreigners aren’t welcome, but it’s because there is a cultural sentiment that the way to have fun is very similar.

**RG:** You have lived here 9 years, played and lived from Jazz, but you also said that you have done Flamenco. You would have had to learn, and no doubt put in some Cuban flavour, no?

**PR:** This is inevitable, a lot of them (Flamenco musicians) search for this, to give it another touch, because one can get in and play but you will never
do it the same. The same thing happens to them, because we like that touch that they put, and there is an *Ida y Vuelta*. We have always been welcome, like they have as well, like the case of Piraña.

They call us to play with them, and Flamenco music is not that different for us, you learn the grooves, rhythms, that you need to learn because each has it’s own thing but it’s not that difficult, because if you have the facility with rhythm you have the facility to be a part of more things.

**RG:** Where do you see fusion music in Spain or in Latin Jazz 10 or 20 years in the future?

**PR:** I now see something, and it’s just coming to me right now and it is something very fluid, and it’s the fusion of Flamenco music with our music. It’s a movement of Flamenco musicians, with Cuban, Venezuelan and Dominican musicians, and it’s not that it’s fusing altogether, but there are points of relation between them that we have identified them very well.

With Jerry González, you have seen him, if he plays with Piraña or Chano Domínguez does his Latin *Jazz* and incorporates his *tumbaos*, and you continue seeing each person introducing their elements. I myself when I do my music, you will see, above all what I am doing right now, that it has a lot of influences and not because I want to do some tunes in the *Bulería* rhythm. I have a piece called *Tumba en Tres*, and at the Cardamomo I have to play it every time, because it is in a Flamenco clave but it is definitely Latin, even if you wanted to call it Latin *Bulería*, and this came about from a tune of mine. Or Alain is working with Paco de Lucía and in some way he has the influence or the way of improvising that would be Flamenco, Cuban or Brazilian style.

We can’t forget that we all come from the same root, and it’s a curious thing because imagine a Brazilian playing with Cubans and at the same time playing with people from Spain and you know that something good
is cooking, but you don’t realise it at that moment, but you realise it after years have passed.

Now we are going to release a record with a Big Band, that is called the Big Band of the Creative Music School, and with my tune I did an arrangement for the Big Band and therein there is also something quite new, and there is Alain singing, and it came out of a jam session from the Cardamomo, he did a bass line within my tune that in the end has stayed and the chorus, and then occurred something that I know will be talked about in no time, he is singing in three, he is singing Latin in the beat of three, and it’s going with the Tumbao, and if you think about it you don’t even realise it, but it’s crossed with Bulería and this occurred on this album.

RG: I would love to get a copy before I leave.

PR: This record comes out in the middle of July, my record is in the store next door. I know that there is maybe one or two left, they’re all my own works and a lot of people that you know and have seen play, play on that record.

RG: It would be perfect to put your music within this documentary, and truly this has been a great interview. Many thanks.
Appendix iv a: Interview with Pepe Rivero 16 May 2006

Transcription

Roger González: Podemos empezar con tu nombre completo, cuándo y donde has nacido y que nos cuentes un poco de ti.

Pepe Rivero: Mi nombre es José Antonio Rivero Rodríguez, más conocido por Pepe Rivero. Soy Cubano. Nací en la ciudad de Manzanillo que está en la parte Oriental de Cuba, y ahí fue donde comencé a estudiar piano, que fue el primer instrumento que empecé a aprender dentro de la música, siempre quise el saxofón pero tuve que empezar con el piano.

RG: ¿Y aún sigues con el piano?

PR: De momento sigo con el piano. He empezado con el saxofón, pero ahí va.

RG: ¿Con Bobby?

PR: Sí, con Bobby, pero desde que hace poco me ha venido al mundo lo más preciado que me ha podido ocurrir, que es tener un niño, pues no he tenido tiempo de seguir practicando, de hacer ruido en la casa.

RG: Enhorabuena, y tú, cuando empezaste a tocar y por qué?

PR: Yo comencé a estudiar el piano a los 5 años en una escuela de música Manuel Navarro Luna, todavía me acuerdo del nombre, allí en Manzanillo. El sistema en Cuba que es muy parecido a la antigua Unión Soviética, hoy Rusia, y son 7 años de nivel elemental, que fue lo que hice yo en Manzanillo, y luego me trasladé a Camagüey, que es la zona centro de Cuba, ahí hice nivel medio de piano y luego me trasladé a La Habana al
instituto superior de Arte Elisa, y ahí terminé los estudios superiores de piano clásico. Que es lo que yo estudié desde muy pequeño

RG: ¿Y hay un curso de Jazz o Jazz Latino dentro del conservatorio, o eso se hace a parte?

PR: Ahora, si, ahora no un curso como tal especializado, pero sí, ya los alumnos hoy día tienen acceso a profesores que tocan en la calle y que van a la escuela a enseñar percusión, bajo, piano. Antes en mi época no existía, antes los músicos de mi generación incluso como dicen otros que son más viejos que yo dicen que hemos tenido más suerte porque podías ser expulsado por tocar música cubana. Era música clásica y nada más.

RG: ¿Y por qué?

PR: No te sé explicar, será porque antes como Cuba estaba con la Unión Soviética. Por lo que haya sido para unos ha sido para mal y a otros para bien, a la música le ha venido bien y era música clásica y se te veían tocando un danzón o un tumbao te podían echar de la escuela. En mi caso cuando yo entré en Elisa, mi profesor de piano no se podía enterarse de que yo tocaba Jazz, yo desde muy pequeño, toda mi familia son músicos. Mi padre es saxofonista, mi tío cantante, mis primos pianistas cantantes, percusionistas una familia de músicos y desde muy pequeño he tenido suerte de formar parte de una familia de músicos populares y de llevar las dos cosas. Desde muy pequeño mi padre les decía a los músicos de Manzanilla, enséñale al niño un tumbao y entonces yo además de tocar música clásica tocaba otras cosas, y cuando ya tenía uso de razón me empecé a interesarme por el Jazz Latino, en mi casa desde los 7 años que ya uno entiende un poco más yo veía a mi padre intentando sacar el solo de Paquito d’Rivera y tuve la suerte de podérselo contar a Paquito, y después de tocar y grabar con él, y le pude decir que yo ya le escuchaba, porque mi padre ha sido muy fanático de Paquito, y se parece mucho.
RG: Parece que ahora en Cuba se está exportando mucha música Cubana por todo el mundo, es lo que más atrae o se conoce fuera de Cuba, no? Entonces tu empezaste con el conservatorio y luego hubo un momento que cambiaste y dijiste el Jazz Latino es lo que quiero hacer o ¿Cómo fue?

PR: Fue una mezcla de todo, a mí la música clásica como tal, me encanta yo empecé con 8 años a hacer concursos, que no sé si existirán todavía pero antes cada dos años se hacía un concurso que se llamaba Amadeo Roldán, que fue un compositor Cubano que era un músico que aportó mucho, y era música clásica, era municipal, provincial y Nacional. Y yo gané el municipal, el provincial y el nacional no, porque yo llevaba otros programas un poco más atrasados porque yo venía del pueblo y los chicos que venían de la Habana tenían otros programas que impresionaban un poco mas, y también me ponía un poco nervioso y luego siempre empecé a ganar primeros premios. Casi siempre me llevaba algo, y entonces empecé a hacer la carrera de música clásica. De hecho, yo cuando entre el superior de arte me prepararon para presentarme el concurso de Chopin de Polonia, pero tuve la mala suerte que me cogió el servicio militar y ya después pasó todo lo de Rusia y fue el momento donde yo decidí por donde tire RG: Terminé mi carrera de música clásica pero yo tenía muy definido lo que quería sabía que quería tocar Jazz, y en general tocar música, pero el Jazz es lo que me gusta porque me da mucha mas adrenalina.

RG: Para ti como músico hacer Jazz va más allá, no? Porque en Australia cuando dices que será Jazz Latino creen que es Son. No saben cual es la diferencia entre Son y Jazz Latino ¿Cómo explicarías tu la diferencia?

PR: Yo creo que donde viene la confusión, es que la música Cubana como tal, hay que remontarse un poco más atrás es decir, ya en Cuba el Jazz tenían sus propios interpretes, que ya hacían un Jazz, por ponerle un nombre a toda esa música improvisada. Los más entendidos saben que la manera de tocar de la música Cubana improvisada es muy diferente a tocar
swing a tocar bebop, otra cosa. Que pasa, que no es menos cierto que Cuba hubo una época que perteneció a los EE.UU, y también estaba el jazz como tal, y el big band que era la orquesta más conocida como El Tropicana de música moderna y había un repertorio muy amplio, porque se hacía música de los EE.UU y Cubana. Y los ritmos como tal del Son, que son conocidos como la salsa y dentro de la salsa el mayor por ciento que compone la salsa es música cubana de los géneros de música Cubana, y también de otros sitios como de Puerto Rico, de la Dominicana, pero el mayor grosor es de música cubana, y muchos de los músicos que han tocado salsa son Jazzistas también. Por ejemplo Eddie Palmieri ha hecho salsa pero también ha hecho Jazz, y tienen su grupo y lo que está tocando es música cubana, Guaguancó, pero eso es Rumba, viene del género Rumba y es lo más conocido y se hace en la salsa. El Son, como decías anteriormente y está dentro de la salsa, y también se utiliza en el jazz, y el Cha cha chá, por ejemplo que es muy conocido también, y lo hacemos también en mi disco y en el disco de Alain, verás que hay temas que son Cha cha chá, el Son, otro el Guaguancó, y otros son un poco más modernos, pero son raíces.

RG: Pero lo que va más allá es la base rítmica cubana y hay que respetarla, pero lo que va más allá es la armonía, no?

PR: Exactamente, todas las influencias de las nuevas músicas más la música americana que ha estado ahí del Jazz, mucha gente piensa que los músicos cubanos tienen facilidad para tocar música de otros lados del mundo. Eso no es porque seamos superdotados ni mucho menos, simplemente es porque Cuba ha tenido la suerte de que ha sido un país que antes era una isla estratégica que todo el mundo hacía escala para luego seguir, y también los puertos de todas las ciudades siempre han sido lugares donde han entrado todos los descubrimientos, el arte, tanto alguna vez los franceses nos tomaron, los ingleses, los españoles también estuvieron mucho tiempo y los americanos no? Toda esa música viene de hace mucho tiempo, y de alguna manera ahora yo hago mi música cubana pero la fusiono con el jazz, con la música Brasileria, que también es muy allegada a...
nosotros, y ahora estoy viviendo en España y muchas veces sin darme cuenta me vienen giros del Flamenco, por ejemplo.

**RG:** Y esto de lo que estás hablando también es mucho de la ida y vuelta no? Porque en New Orléans, Jelly Roll Morton, un pianista uno de los que empezó con el jazz dice cosas como “si ustedes no son capaces de insertar Ingredientes españoles en sus composiciones de jazz no lograrán jamás obtener lo que yo llamo el perfecto condimento”, es decir, que él ya está hablando de la música española que ha pasado por Cuba.

**PR:** Y claro, no podemos olvidarnos de que New Orléans cuando la revolución francesa, todos los colonos franceses pasaron por Cuba y de Cuba se fueron a New Orleans y toda la sincopa y de EE.UU es la zona donde más les gusta, incluso ellos ellos algo tenían por ahí que llamaban Jazz Latin, ya lo usaban, esto es como latino como algo, mira tu por donde por Francia, de Haití, todos esos colonos.

**RG:** Bueno, de Haití viene el Cinquillo, no? Y de la contradanza francesa viene la habanera, que Faustino Núñez que es Flamencólogo dice que lo más importante del Flamenco es el patrón de habanera que ha pasado desde los franceses y cubanos.

**PR:** Si y el patrón de habanera si tiras más atrás viene del Tango de Argentina, y viene de ahí, aunque a muchos de ellos no les guste, pero es que ese patrón que no es Cuba, pero el patrón del Cinquillo, la sincopa, la clave cubana que no es de Cuba, que vienen de África. No podemos olvidar que todo lo referente al ritmo, todo eso viene de África, todo lo referente a ritmos y melodías viene de los árabes, las melodías vienen de los indios, muy parecido. Hay muchos que te dirán esto puede ser una Bulería, pero todo viene de lo mismo, entonces en Cuba ese patrón rítmico es lo que condiciona el 90 por ciento de la música cubana. La clave está ahí.
**RG:** ¿Puedes decírnos o incluso enseñarnos que es el *Cinquillo*, o que es la clave cubana? y que significa la clave, porque para un músico cubano tiene que salirle de dentro, no?

**PR:** La clave sobre todo la más conocida la clave de de *Guaguancó* que viene de la *Rumba*, que ya la *Rumba* si es cubana como tal, aunque viene de los negros y el patrón es arrítmico, que viene del solar, de la calle, como ahora el rap, que es muy callejero la clave del *Guaguancó* es la más conocida por el guachinchingua, (y canta), y hay que nacer allí, y desde pequeño estar viendo la clave, del *Guaguancó* o del *Son*, sobre todo de donde soy yo que de donde soy yo de Manzanillo, la troba, la música campesina, la clave que usa es la clave del *Son*, que viene de la zona rural, como la *Rumba* y mucha gente pregunta ¿en que se diferencia una de otra? Y simplemente es el desplazamiento de una que (palmas), y la otra que hace (palmas).

**RG:** La de *Guaguancó* tiene la síncopa de Haití.

**PR:** Sí, pero sin embargo viene de la música Afro, y la de *Guaguancó*, 6 por 8 (Canta) y vas quitando ritmo y se queda en la clave, de ahí es de donde viene la clave de *Guaguancó* que fue la que usaron los de la *Rumba*, pero cada uno la interpretó de una manera o de otra, y la introdujeron pues en el *Son*, en la música campesina. Pero no es menos cierto que si naces en el lugar y estás en el lugar, existen unos términos y a cualquier cubano le dices que te haga la clave 2 3 o 3 2, pero esto es de ahora, pero antes no se necesita saber si es 2 por 3 o lo que sea, sino que le sale te dice “esto va así”, ahora la gente estudia por lo general tu dices que la clave de *Son* es 2 por 3 y todo esto está condicionado por la melodía.

**RG:** Y la clave se ve dentro del Flamenco y las palmas, cada clave es una estructura no?

**PR:** Es lo que rige en diferente género, como en la bujería. Sí, y en cada uno tienes que tener ese patrón y lo puedes llevar a tres, pero lo más lógico es
sentirlo como ello, no? Y la gente te dice tienes que sentirlo para hacer cualquier cosa, no? Pero yo ahora puedo discutir eso, porque no es menos cierto que hay muchos extranjeros que han ido a Cuba y tocan perfectamente la música cubana. Claro se han metido y a lo mejor no lo vas a sentir como un negro, pero si, si te gusta yo creo que si lo puedes llegar a sentir, yo creo que la música no es de nadie, ni nadie te puede decir esta es mi música. Ahora la música que hay es la fusión y yo mismo estoy casado con una Española y tengo un hijo que él es español, y por mucho que yo no quiera él está escuchando música española, y ya los gustos son de otra manera, y a ver como le dices a ese muchacho, tu no eres cubano así que no puedes tocar, si ha nacido en un ambiente con ese tipo de música no?

**RG:** Y está música lo normal era que no se escribiera, no? Lo normal es de escucharla de oído y de pasarlo de generación en generación, no?

**PR:** Por ejemplo tu me decías algo al principio que si nosotros habíamos estudiado, en Cuba una escuela, y yo todo lo que sé lo sé de escucharlo, porque nosotros no teníamos ni Real Book ni un método que decías este acorde con este acorde es así, y quien lo sabía tampoco te lo decía porque no querían enseñarte y otros porque no sabían como explicártelo, porque no sabían lo que estaban haciendo.

**RG:** Pero esto quizás te da más libertad de fusionar, no?

**PR:** Claro, eso sí, porque no estoy esquematizado por algo, yo a muchos alumnos se lo digo. Hay algunos que tienen posibilidad, normalmente tienes que llevar un método no todos tienen la misma facilidad, y no le puedes decir oye yo aprendí así y tu arréglatelás no es el mismo caso, a nosotros nos gustaba y nos poníamos y nosotros yo a veces les cuento que íbamos a la escuela con una pequeña grabadora, a las 12 de la noche y pasábamos mucha hambre, y escuchábamos a Miles Davis y intentábamos sacar los temas después íbamos al piano, y ninguno de esos temas de All the Things You Are, Autumn Leaves, y sacar los solos, de improvisar, mirando
las escalas y tu los ves, estudiantes cogen la escala myxolirica, la escala
dórica si muy bien, y a la hora de improvisar que, que haces? Vas a tocar
la escala por arriba y por abajo, no, tienes que crear, y ahí falta la otra parte,
porque nosotros lo sacábamos de oído, y así aprendimos a improvisar y
todavía estoy aprendiendo, y la carrera de improvisar es infinita. Es como la
medicina, depende que como estés ese día, y si estás de buen ánimo y
depende si de verdad eres un improvisador, porque hay muchos que lo
que hacen es reproducir solos de otros, y puede estar bien. Lo respeto pero
no me gusta, lo que hacemos es improvisar, no?

Por lo general, ahora en Cuba, si hay más o menos, cuando yo me fui de
Elisa, yo me gradué en el 96 y a mí me dejaron de profesor conmigo
cuando yo me gradué se abrió una cátedra de música popular, por primera
vez pero para extranjeros. Yo junto con Chucho Valdés, pero Chucho solo
estuvo una vez porque él no estaba mucho porque viajaba mucho y yo me
quedé al frente y tocaba piano, pero solo para extranjeros y yo creo que
todavía funciona, y no sé si en la Aena, que se llamaba una asignatura taller
de la música popular que allí te enseñan cifrados y tal, yo también di clase
ahí, y todo lo demás sigue igual, y la percusión es inevitable, y los
profesores que hay allí te enseñan a tocar de todo, Carlos del Puerto y hay
otros profesores dando clases de bajo y de guitarra popular, y escuela
como con un método allí no lo hay.

RG: Y para hablar un poco de donde empezó el Jazz Latino, me estás
contando que siempre ha habido Jazz Latino pero hay una fecha del Jazz
Latino moderno que se fusionó con Be Bop, o no?

PR: Según yo tengo entendido, el músico Peruchín, pianista Peruchín, no
 digo yo el primero, pero sí, tanto Peruchín como Frank Emilio otro pianista
cubano ciego que murió hace poco, ya estás comenzaron a hacer por
ejemplo Standards, hay un disco que tengo que no me acuerdo como se
llama de Peruchín tocando All the things you are, tocando, hojas muertas
tocando summer time, tocándolo pero ya con ritmo de Latin y de Mambo,
con ritmo de *danzón*, y fueron de los primeros que comenzaron a hacer esto en Cuba, pero bueno, ahora me fui liando pero te estoy hablando mezclando haciendo Standards del Jazz con ritmo cubano haciendolo en chachachá por ejemplo, *All the things you are* en Chachachá. Pero ellos fueron los primeros que empezaron a hacer esto, pero estos mismos pianistas estaban haciendo música Cubana como tal y en el *danzón* por ejemplo. Armando Romeo el pianista, es una familia grande, fue el primer solo que se hizo en la historia, en un *danzón*, lo hizo Armando Romeo, nunca se había hecho, y el *danzón* tiene una parte que se llama el *paseo* que ahí por primera vez, *Tres lindas cubanas* se llama el *danzón* ese, y el fue el primero que hizo un soló de piano y a partir de ahí se quedó el soló de piano como una parte, porque antes el piano era un instrumento que solo estaba acompañando.

**RG:** ¿Y de qué año estamos hablando?

**PR:** Cuarenta y tantos, cincuenta.

**RG:** Si porque también a la misma vez, un poco antes Arsenio Rodríguez introdujo las tumbadoras dentro de la música y también a la misma vez en Nueva York, lo que estaba pasando es que Chano Pozo se fue y tocó con Dizzy Gillespie…

**PR:** Todo eso fue más o menos en la misma época…

**RG:** Y en Cuba Peruchín Y Armando Romeo, no?

**PR:** Si pero esto que estamos hablando de Armando Romeo fue mucho antes de Peruchín, de mucho antes. Fue el primer solo que se hizo de piano y a partir de ahí en los *danzónes* se introdujo el *montuno* y el coro, y no sé si lo has leído que el primer *mambo* que hubo fue un *danzón* que se llamaba *mambo*. Claro, este Cachao cogió una parte del *danzón* y empezó, y Peréz Prado lo que hizo fue que le dio otro carácter armonizarlo al estilo *Big Band*,
no inventó el mambo pero sí que colaboró y aportó, pero un danzón era lo que se llamaba mambo.

RG: Y Cachao era el contrabajista que empezó a hacer el mambo
Y como sería una línea de bajo de danzón…

PR: Lo normal del danzón Por ejemplo (toca) no sé si te suena (toca) si te fijas el bajo esto (toca) estirando más atrás, es muy parecido a la habanera (toca) Que pasó que esta gente (toca) y todo eso viene de mucho antes (toca) De Lecuona, Cervantes, de Manuel Sanuel, tienen (toca) Esto se llama el velorio (toca) este es el bajo que hacen ellos en la contradanza, cuando se empezó a hacer en Cuba y (toca) pero todo eso viene de (toca) y aquí ya con Lecuona ya el bajo era diferente (toca) (canta) (toca) que pasa que después (toca) La melodía es muy Europea (toca) toda la melodía y las influencias de las danzas que estaban aquí de moda, se lo llevaron los franceses pero en Cuba ya se le fue cambiando el ritmo un poco hasta que (toca) y el tumbao luego después de todo eso generó en (toca) y Cachao fue uno de los que empezó (toca) estos son diferentes ritmos que al final es lo mismo.

PR: De esto que te estoy comentando se puede profundizar más, pero si rascamos más podemos encontrar más. Y a veces pasamos por alto gente que lo hicieron antes, pero estos son los conocidos y los que conocemos, porque a veces hablas y te dicen ese inventó eso, y luego te vas enterando y ese no lo inventó porque ese lo oyó de otro. Me entiendes?

RG: A veces el papá de todo esto el África, no?

PR: Si eso nadie te lo puede discutir, y la ida y vuelta que hablamos estuvo en la habanera, en Barcelona sobre todo se sigue cultivando la habanera. Hay un ritmo de ellos, no recuerdo el nombre, que es igual que la habanera y ahora habrá alguno que te diga no, esto es de aquí, y quien tienen la verdad, porque en esa época iban muchos barcos allá y venían. La misma
Rumba flamenca, alguno por ahí le dirá no en el barco de Cuba para acá se lo olvidó y le cogieron en el barco al revés... lo hicieron a su manera, pero al final eso viene de allí. Ellos lo hicieron a su manera y lo hicieron de lo que escucharon y lo interpretaron a su manera, y lo interpretaron y lo hicieron.

RG: Como la habanera viene a Cadiz, y hay muchas habaneras hablando de Cuba, y también en catalán, el que conozco yo, “mi abuelo se fue a cuba, a bordo del Catalán” y hay un enlace muy fuerte entre España y Cuba.

PR: Tu tendrías que terminar tu master yéndote a Cuba, para que vieras las dos partes, si nosotros viviéramos allá te ibas a encontrar con nosotros también. Mira y también con la música canaria, toda la musica campesina de cuba tiene mucho que ver, todas las décimas, viene de Canaria, en cuba se llevó de otra manera se inventó el tres.

RG: Pero la décima es como el verso que yo he leído que ha venido de la música árabe.

PR: Si es que los árabes estuvieron aquí si mi memoria no me falla como tres siglos y en España se tomó al traducirlo y viene de la poesía árabe, viene la décima. En cuba se llevó y se hizo de otra manera en cuba la décima se ha transformado en algo de juego pero como improvisadora es improvisadora nata, y lo mismo le podemos llamar a eso jazz, pues se lo podemos llamar, en décimas porque lo que están es improvisando y se reúnen dos ahí y empiezan. Perfectamente son diez líneas y las terminaciones y toda la conjugación es perfecta, y eso viene de Canarias, y su música es muy parecida a la van cuba porque se dice una clave y se construyó el tres, que eso ya se hizo en Cuba, al principio se hacía con una botija y luego se hizo con una marimbola que viene de África, en cuba se transformó y eso fueron los primeros bajos que se hubo el contrabajo no entró hasta después, y era lo que se tocaba en el son la marimbotes. Es como el cajón Flamenco pero no es Flamenco que viene del Perú, y tiene
igual el hueco, igual que el **cajón** pero tiene una lámina de metal, 3 o 5 depende, igual se sientan encima de la marimbola, es como un **cajón** Flamenco, y con eso es con lo que se toca el Son tradicional verdaderamente.

**RG:** Y también en la fusión del **cajón** se puede decir que las primeras **Rumbas** se enfocaron con cajones diferentes, no? Puedes explicarlo un poco?

**PR:** Lo del **cajón** en la *Rumba* cubana, viene de, bueno ahora un poco de historia. Se sabe lo mismo que pasó, los negros que los fueron a coger, los ingleses los franceses, y los españoles y cada uno lo llevaron a diferentes lugares. Que pasa, que ellos intentaron reproducir al país que lo llevaron lo mismo que hacían, los instrumentos que tocaban allá en su país. En cuba los tambores batá, que también vienen de ellos, y ellos buscaron de reproducir el sonido y terminó siendo los tambores batá, y con esto de la **Rumba** y el **cajón** ya esto es mucho después, pero el **cajón** está antes que la tumbadora, y en cuba hay unos parecidos a las tumbadoras pero son cajones, y eso se creó en Cuba en los barrios de matanza, que estaba el puerto, y era un puerto muy importante, por ahí entraba toda la trata negrera, y ahí en los puertos es donde empezaron a hacer la **Rumba**, y en un puerto lo que hay son cajas, y siempre hay algún inteligente que hizo una caja y sonaba mejor, y de ahí es de donde nace de los puertos, y el **cajón** de la **Rumba** cubana.

**RG:** Y también la batá viene de la *santería*, de la *yoruba*, y Jerry González lo utiliza, no?

**PR:** Claro, es que toda la música *afro* de la religión de *yoruba* se utiliza en toda la música cubana. Yo en mi disco hay tema que yo dedico a Oshun, que es la caridad del cobre, no sé si has oído hablar del sincretismo que existió en cuba. Los negros encontraron una manera de celebrar sus santos y encontraron un parecido de sus santos con los santos católicos, y
entonces hicieron coincidir y los colonos los dejaron y hacían como unos carnavales en corpus cristi y ellos aprovechaban y hacían sus comparsas y en el fondo la conga cubana es música, está la clave, y todo se fue transformando con un sartén. Y los negros aprovechaban para poder festejar sus santos pues le ponían el día de la caridad del cobre y ellos estaban celebrando Oshun, que es el santo de la religión Yoruba. Y actualmente yo se lo dediqué a ellos y está en un tema el ritmo que hay ahí es Jazz pero es Jazz fusionado con otras cosas, el ritmo está ahí debajo está todo el tiempo pero la manera que Alain toca el bajó ahí es mucho más actual, sin perdernos, no?

RG: Esto es perfecto porque son las cosas que he leído, pero me gustaría hablar un poco de Irakére, antes has hablado con Paquito d’Rivera, y Chucho Valdés. Que formaron Irakére… bueno cuéntanos.

PR: Antes hablábamos de quienes fueron los primeros, pero ya con Irakére, Emiliano Salvador quien a veces se pasa por alto, que es de la misma época de Chucho Valdés fue uno de los que le dieron el impulso y acabaron de decir esto es Jazz Latino como tal. Y Chucho Valdés ya traía toda la influencia del Jazz Americano igual que Paquito d’Rivera y Arturo Sandóval, que estaban en una orquesta de música moderna y de ahí fue de donde se creó Irakére, fueron haciendo música cubana, pero el fraseo de los metales, la manera de tocar era del Be Bop, o de lo que fuese y ahí fue donde se terminó de decir esto es lo que hay Jazz Latino y Paquito d’Rivera y Arturo Sandoval que eran los líderes de Irakére, marcaron una época en la música cubana y en el mundo en general, y además tuvo la suerte de ganar un Grammy en aquel entonces y de abrirse un poco más al mundo y la gente tuvo la suerte de conocer, esto es Jazz Latino, por Irakére y todo el mundo sabe el bloqueo que hemos tenido y se hizo que se cerraron un poco las puertas a la música cubana para salir.

Antes me preguntabas que los músicos cubanos están por todo el mundo, y toda la formación que hay en Cuba y el artista no es de ninguna parte es
de todas partes, y el artista es de donde esté, a partir del periodo especial y partir de cosas económicas que están pasando en Cuba ha generado la emigración de muchos músicos muchos más que antes, porque antes para sacar una orquesta… era muy difícil, ahora salen orquestas aunque pagándoles una mierda. La gente dice “yo quiero salir de aquí como sea”.

**RG:** Porque Chucho Valdés, y Arturo Sandoval, la gente que salió de Irakére, era antes del periodo especial, no?

**PR:** Si mucho antes, era la época de oro de Cuba,

**RG:** El único de los grandes que se quedó en Cuba fue Chucho Valdés, no?

**PR:** Chucho, ha sido el único que se ha quedado ahí.

**RG:** Tu eres muy joven, como Alain y los músicos que he conocido, y sois de la época del periodo especial, no?

**PR:** Cogimos un poco de la parte de la Unión Soviética que estaba todo ok, y del periodo especial porque luego se puso la cosa muy difícil, y no es menos cierto que una de las cosas grandes que hay que reconocerle a Cuba, fue la educación y el complejo de escuelas de arte, hay que ir ahí para verlo, no? La idea esta muy bien, y de hecho todo el mundo sabe que los músicos cubanos tienen muy buena formación, hay un conjunto de cosas que se hicieron hay unas bases que se crearon y que en toda cuba hay escuelas de arte con formación con gente bien preparada, que actualmente se preparan y ahora todo el mundo busca la manera de irse, eso también es cierto. Y muchos de los profesores que habían ya no están porque muchos se han ido, o han fallecido y la ya se habla de una escuela cubana de Arte en general.
**RG:** Entonces la música era una manera de salir de Cuba del periodo especial, y de viajar y cuando ya estabas afuera podías ganar más que en Cuba.

**PR:** Eso es un terreno delicado, pero no es menos cierto que Cuba, ante el periodo especial, Cuba es una isla de artistas, y tu tocas un *palo*, y sale la gente, y lo mismo pasa en Brasil y eso es por el tipo de negros que llevaron tanto a Cuba y a Brasil, las potencias culturales que hay. Los Yoruba, fueron a Brasil y fueron a Cuba también, y ese tipo de tribu eran uno de los que mas desarrollaban la cultura y la pintura, y fueron los que más llevaron a nosotros, y un 80 por ciento de la población cubana siempre ha querido estudiar música o dedicarse a algo relacionado con esto, o sino a la gente siempre le han gustado las fiestas, y al producirse el periodo especial pues siempre ha sido más fácil si eras músico o deportista salir y la gente siempre decía yo quiero aprender tocar algo para el primer grupo que salga.. irse y no sabes las barbaridades que se han hecho, de gente que han ido allí para sacar familiares y han montado un grupo de gente que hacían como una audición y luego no se iban ni los músicos, metían a los familiares y se iban. Y así han sacado a gente de Cuba.

**RG:** Cuál es la razón por la que tu te has ido, porque estás casado con una Española, y tu te fuiste de gira, o , como fue?

**PR:** Mi caso, y el caso general, que fuimos los que nos conocimos en la misma época, cuando yo estaba en Cuba en la última época no es menos cierto que yo no estaba mal, si yo me hubiese querido quedar en Cuba, yo no tenía el agobió, incluso viviendo en Cuba estaba girando en EE.UU muchas gente te pregunta, por qué no te quedaste, no? Porque el sueño cubano es irse para EE.UU, y mucha gente en EE.UU te dice te vas a quedar, no? Y yo no veía porque me tengo que quedar, no? A mí no se me ha perdido nada aquí. A no ser que me ofrecieran algo interesante profesionalmente hablando, y en Cuba, estábamos con Isaac Delgado en una de las orquesta de las punteras, y siempre estábamos viajando y
teníamos un estatus, y estábamos dentro de un clan de músicos donde no nos faltaba trabajo, y hubo un momento en el que esto se te queda pequeño, y un día pensando en mi cama pensé, no me puedo comprar un piano, y por qué no me puedo comprar el piano? Porque claro estuve en Japón y allí un piano te cuesta un montón y no porque no tuviese el dinero, sino porque con que me lo como después, con un poco de ketchup o que, y mi familia de que va a comer, no? Y un día me lo pregunte, y mucha gente en cuba decía estoy reuniendo dinero para comprarme un coche, pero a mí eso no me interesa y me vi una vez en eso, porque te daban una carta, y me vi una vez reuniendo, y fueron cosas que me fui preguntando ya había recorrido gran parte del mundo, habíamos hecho tres veces gira por Europa, e ibamos a ir a Australia, pero no sé que pasó que al final no fuimos y me faltan muchos lugares del mundo donde ir pero ya he ido a unos cuantos lugares y todo se me quedaba pequeño y dio la casualidad de que vinimos a España con Isaac y no para quedarnos sino era mas fácil movernos desde aquí movernos por todo el mundo, y jovencitos yo vine aquí con 25 o 26 y Alain con 20 o 21, y llegas aquí , yo no tenía ni hijos ni nada, y empiezas a conocer a gente y hubo un buen día que cuando Isaac nos dijo vámonos para Cuba, y todos le dijimos, a Cuba te vas tu solo, y claro cada uno lo hizo por sus motivos, yo quería experimentar que había aquí, si era capaz, y bueno el tiempo lo dijo.

**RG:** También es más difícil si tienes familia es más difícil porque mi maestro en Cuba, Adel González, también creo que estaba en Irakére, el estudió junto con Alain y ahora el vive en Cuba porque tiene su familia ahí, y cuando estas afuera es muy difícil.

**PR:** Ahora ya no, en la época que lo hicimos nosotros era más difícil, ahora yo puedo ir a Cuba, solo puedes estar 30 días y si quieres estar más pagas, pero ahora si yo quiero ir a Cuba, voy y ya está, ya no tienes que pedir un visado y antes tu tenías que pedir un visado y a ver si ellos te daban el permiso para entrar, ahora puedes ir, y es un paso de avance. En la época que nos quedamos era un poco más complicado, y no es menos cierto que
dar solo el paso, y músicos como Adel o como nosotros que estábamos mas o menos bien, y nosotros ya teníamos un estatus, y tu dices pero aquí yo estoy bien y yo llevo 9 años en España, y puedo decir que desde que llegamos hasta ahora la evolución ha sido para bien, tanto para nosotros como lo que ha estado pasando aquí en España, culturalmente, la gente a veces se olvida que España ha tenido guerras civiles, y de Europa es lo que más atrasado, está igual que Italia, y por ejemplo piratería no vas a ver en Francia y si vas a Alemania no vas a ver a nadie con una manta, simplemente porque el gobierno no lo va a permitir y porque la gente no lo va a comprar por cultura porque la propiedad intelectual es sagrado para ellos. Y aquí lo ves y en Italia lo ves también y no es que las personas sean incultas sino es como te hagan llegar los valores, y eso hay que crearlo desde pequeño. Entonces, si que hemos visto festivales, y se deben de haber creado más de 20 festivales, y yo ahora estoy viviendo del Jazz, de lo que es más difícil y es más fácil vivir del pop o del rock, yo trabajo en la escuela de Música Creativa, y yo trabajo y estoy viviendo de eso del Jazz.

RG: Pero también muchos Cubanos han venido por el idioma, no?

PR: Si, además te sientes como en casa, porque no es menos cierto que es lo mismo, culturalmente es muy parecido, aunque tengamos diferencias pero te sientes muy arropado, y aquí los Cubanos somos muy queridos y no es porque seamos más simpáticos o más graciosos sino porque y vuelvo atrás, en Cuba el 90 por ciento de los cubanos venimos de Españoles, le preguntas a cualquiera y ves a un negro y la bisabuela es Española o Gallego, e igual pasa, los Españoles cuando van a Cuba, son muy queridos y no es que los extranjeros no sean bienvenidos, sino que hay una cosa por ahí un sentimiento que culturalmente la manera de divertirse es muy parecida.

RG: Has vivido 9 años aquí tocando y viviendo del Jazz, pero también has dicho que has hecho Flamenco, pero habrás tenido que aprender la música flamenca y seguramente has puesto tu sabor cubano a esto, no?
PR: Eso es inevitable, incluso muchos de ellos te buscan por eso, por darle otro toque, porque uno se puede meter y tocar, pero nunca lo vas a hacer igual, igual les pasa a ellos porque a nosotros nos gusta también esa cosita que le ponen ellos, y ahí hay un ida y vuelta y hemos sido bienvenidos tanto de un lugar como de otro, como es el caso del Piraña, y nosotros encantados o nos llaman a tocar con ellos y tampoco es muy lejana la música flamenca para nosotros y vas aprendiendo los palos, que tienes que aprender porque tienen sus cosas pero no es tan difícil, porque si tienes facilidad con el ritmo tienes facilidad para meterte con más cosas.

RG: Donde ves la música la fusión dentro de España o el Jazz Latino dentro de 10 o 20 años en el futuro?

PR: Yo ahora veo una cosa y ahora mismo está ocurriendo una cosa muy fluidamente y es el Flamenco con nuestra música, y es un movimiento de los músicos Flamencos con los Cubanos o Venezolanos o Dominicano, no es que nos estemos cerrando pero hay puntos de encuentro y nos hemos identificado muy bien, y Jerry González tu le has visto, que si toca Piraña, El Chano Domínguez hace un Jazz Latino y hace sus tumbaos, y vas viendo como cada uno va introduciendo sus elementos, y yo mismo cuando hago mi música ves y sobre todo la que estoy haciendo ahora ves que tienes muchas influencias y no es porque lo quiera hacer así sino hay algunos temas que van por palos de Bulería, yo tengo un tema que se llama Tumba En Tres en el Cardamomo y cada vez que voy hay que tocarlo y porque claro esta en el tempo de ellos pero es Latin, como le quieras llamar Latin Bujería, y eso ha surgido y da la casualidad que es un tema mío, o Alain que está trabajando con Paco de Lucia y de alguna manera ya tiene la influencia o la manera de improvisar y esto es uno por aquí otro por allá y será el Flamenco con la música Cubana y Brasileña, no nos olvidemos de ellos estamos ahí, y es una cosa muy curiosa porque imagínate un Brasileño tocando con Cubanos y a la vez tocando con gente de España a sí que algo bueno se está cocinando y ahora mismo no te das cuenta
porque está ocurriendo eso te das cuenta cuando pasan los años …..y nosotros vamos a sacar un disco con una Big Band que se llama la Big Band de la Música creativa y mi tema le hice un arreglo para Big Band también y ahí ocurrió algo que para mí es muy novedoso y está Alain cantando y un día surgió una descarga en el Cardamomo el hizo un bajo dentro del mismo tema mío y al final eso se quedó y este coro, y ha surgido algo ahí que es eso, algo, y yo sé que se va a hablar dentro de nada, está cantando en tres, está cantando Latin en tres, y está con un tumbao y si no lo piensas no te das cuenta, y está por Bulería y eso ha ocurrido ahí en ese disco por ejemplo.

**RG:** Pues a ver si puedo conseguir una copia de este disco antes de que me vaya.

**PR:** Eso sale a mitad de Julio, mi disco está en la tienda de aquí al lado, yo sé que queda como uno o dos, son temas míos y toca mucha gente que tú has visto.

**RG:** Sería perfecto para poner tu música dentro del documental y la verdad ha sido una entrevista fantástica.

Muchas gracias.
Appendix v: Ethical Clearance Release Forms

Participant Information Sheet

"Latin Fusion Styles and their Evolution from Cuba, North America and Spain"

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Statement of consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- have read and understood the information sheet about this project;
- have had any questions answered to your satisfaction;
- understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team;
- understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- understand that you can contact the research team if you have any questions about the project, or the Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project;
- understand that the project will include audio and/or video recording; and
- agree to participate in the project.

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Signature

Date
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Statement of consent

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• have read and understood the information sheet about this project;
• have had any questions answered to your satisfaction;
• understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team;
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• agree to participate in the project.

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- understand that the project will include audio and/or video recording; and
- agree to participate in the project.

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Name

Signature

Date
Appendix vi: Radio Documentary Script

*Latin Jazz: A Syncretic Journey from Spain, Cuba, the United States and back.*

**Script:**

**Soundscape: Waves lapping, boats creaking people talking**

In the early 17th century, the island of Cuba was booming. Havana and Santiago de Cuba were both bustling port cities full of traders, as Cuba was the gateway to the New World.

Ships from all over the world passed through these docks, mixing news, ideas and traditions.

**Song: Hubo Un Lugar – Jerry González y Los Piratas del Flamenco (2004)**

The melting pot of cultures and the trade routes that were created also transported music that would effect Cuba, America and Spain. This fusion of music would eventually influence the entire world, all of which stems from the same African beginning.

The fusion between these three countries would eventually evolve into a style that would extend musicians both rhythmically and harmonically. It would piece fragments of different music, and bring together the best of the old world with the new. It would hold peoples imagination through it’s Latin Tinge and survive and adapt to this day.
This style is Latin Jazz.

I’m Roger González. I’m a percussionist, and have been fascinated and playing Latin Jazz for as long as I can remember. However something was missing. I wanted to learn more, I needed to learn more, to learn from the source so I decided to travel to Madrid in Spain.

Madrid was a hub where American, Cuban and Spanish musicians met and shared ideas. I would meet them, learn from them and discover what the essence of this style was. I would meet Chano Domínguez, a Flamenco jazz pianist, Bobby Martínez, an American saxophonist with Cuban and Spanish heritage, Alain Pérez a cuban bassist and Pepe Rivero a cuban pianist.

All were exceptional musicians, and I hoped that they would be key to unlocking what Latin Jazz is today.

**Soundscape: Madrid**

My first port of call was to a Flamenco bar in the backstreets of Madrid called Cardamomo. I heard of a Jam Session where Pepe, Alain and Bobby were playing. I’d meet them and experience this new style of Latin Jazz first hand.

But first I had to find the place.

**Song: Yatai – Bobby Martínez (2005)**

**RG:** I caught up with the musicians afterwards, and went straight to the point. What is Latin Jazz? Here’s Bobby Martínez.

**BM:** I see Latin Jazz, I think ahh. As far as Spain, I think and in Europe it’s going places. But Latin Jazz is not a new thing, it’s not new to musicians.
RG: I also asked Flamenco pianist Chano Domínguez.

CD: I think that “What is Latin Jazz?” is a question that we could spend hours discussing. However for me, I think it can be summarised into something quite simple. It is the expression of the musicians who have Spanish as their common language. It’s the creative expression of Latin musicians.

RG: Bassist Alain Pérez explains.

AP: Well, what Latin Jazz is, … to me, is the language of North American Jazz with Latin Rhythms, with the roots of the Latin Rhythms.

BM: The combination of Jazz and Afro-Cuban rhythms is something that comes way, way back. Dizzy Gillespie started doing that, Stan Kent even did that. There’s a lot of people that did that aside from the Cubans that went to New York in the fifties.

I believe that the language of Jazz blends so “easy” and nicely with those Afro-Cuban rhythms that it’s without a doubt, unquestionable.

RG: Bobby Martínez.

BM: There is a lot of more complex rhythms, details in Latin jazz than in the typical Salsa beat. The typical Salsa beat is straight ahead Salsa Latin beat and it’s done for dancing. And a lot of it is very good, but Latin Jazz is more intricate, more complicated, more “Jazz”, there’s Jazz in it, you know. Language improvisation, harmony ah lots of harmony, a lot of complex rhythms and that’s what makes it jazz.

Song: Minor Rama – Machito and his Afro Cuban Orchestra (1957)
**BM:** Well, back in the forties and fifties when the first few Cuban musicians started to arrive to the United States that went to New York. You had people like Machito and these guys were doing Big Band Latin Jazz back then, and the funny thing about it was that the majority of these musicians in these bands were American.

So, I saw this documentary on these musicians, these American musicians talking about back then when they did these gigs, “Man, when these guys pulled up these arrangements we couldn’t figure out how they played so syncopated, man”, you know ‘cos in Latin music there is a lot of syncopation and in regular Bop, in Jazz and Swing there is a lot of either swung eighth notes or straight eighth notes, and in Latin there is a lot of syncopation, so that’s the first thing that the American Jazz musicians were flippin’ about, “Wow man, I don’t know if I should beat my left foot or beat my right foot or …” (laughs)

**Song: Agarrame si puedes - Alain Pérez (2006)**

The song you’re hearing is “Agarrame si puedes” by Alain Pérez. I asked Alain about the importance of rhythm, the use of timing, and the percussionists that help define this style.

**AP:** The great percussionists form part of the evolution of this genre because they bring their support, their rhythmic wealth and their intelligence to fuse all these Latin rhythms with all this music. Maybe a composer, a North American composer, has an idea for a Latin Jazz piece but doesn’t know what rhythm would fit with this tune, and what bass line would fit with this idea.

**Song: Al Abordaje – Jerry González (2004)**

**RG:** How does this relate with Spanish Flamenco and the new fusions within Latin Jazz. Chano Domínguez.
**CD:** I think that Flamenco has a spectrum of rhythmic blends that are very, very strong that are what supports my music above all.

In the last few years, through the connection I have had with musicians from the other side of the Atlantic, I have done things which are livelier, which I love because I feel them in such a natural way.

It is a case of now we are going to play a tango, or I start to play a Flamenco Rumba and I can groove along with the Cuban Rumba, or the Cuban Son. We are completely related in this.

**BM:** I think the percussion is, to me, the percussion is everything. To me the percussion is very important, and it makes it all move. You know, if there is no percussion it would be very lame for me. That doesn’t mean that there is a lot of music that has no rhythm and it’s beautiful music, but I don’t know. I can’t see my music without percussion, forget it! I can’t even think of it! Percussion is like putting Tabasco on a something you know… it’s like give me the pepper. Where’s the pepper man? You know, that’s percussion bro.

**RG:** I asked Pepe Rivero about the history of all this rhythm.

**PR:** We cannot forget that all that refers to rhythm, all this comes from Africa, all the references of rhythms and melodies come from the Arabs, the melodies are from the Arabs and the Indians. There are many that would say that this could be a Bulería, but all comes from the same, so in Cuba this rhythmic pattern, is what conditions 90 percent of Cuban music. The clave is there.

**RG:** Clave, a really important aspect of Latin Jazz, we’ll look into this more in depth. But first, Chano.

**CD:** Well, I think that the percussion within Latin music and within Flamenco is indispensable. In other words, in Flamenco there are some
rhythms, and claves, which are not many, but this is what gives a rhythmic entity that is strong for each rhythm of Flamenco. This is indispensable in my music. For example, my music without the Flamenco claves would not be my music. It would not be recognisable. I mean the importance of the rhythms is the clave. So key that this is why in Spanish clave literally translates to key.

What I mean is that if you do not have the clave, you have nothing. If you don’t know how to create a musical idea on top of a rhythmic structure that gives you the support of all this, you won’t understand anything, because everything would fall down around you.

Therefore, take note, it is not that it’s important, it is absolutely vital!

**Song: Cardamomo (Bulería) – Chano Domínguez (1996)**

**CD:** If we begin to look and we go back to the roots, for me the rhythmic claves come from Africa, and they travel. And via each country that they travel, it becomes adopted in some way and is used in some way. But, the famous clave of five hits is used in the entire world.

I also see that the claves are linked. The Cuban clave that is 2-3 (\[\ldots\] \[\ldots\]) is 5 hits right? Well the Flamenco claves are also 5 hits! For example the Buleria clave has 5 hits (\[\ldots\] \[\ldots\]) 1(23) 1(23) 1(2) 1(2) 1(2). If you really begin to investigate and delve profoundly into the rhythms of each culture, you become aware that we’re not that far apart.
BM: Well clave is ahh… (laughs) oh man ah, couldn’t ask me something else? (laughs) Ok, let’s see… the clave is basically what the rhythms section moves around ok, it’s like the base you know, and you’ve got the clave which is the 2-3 and you’ve got the clave which is the 3-2, and you’ve got to feel it when you work with the clave because you could play on the opposite side.

AP: The clave is like a time signature, it’s the key that opens the time signature and the logic of where the (rhythm) goes, where the congas go.

All music has a clave, but in Cuban music it is much more evident.

If you change the clave, you start hitting into things. It’s like an obstacle course, or if you fall out of clave you fall out of time.

BM: There’s a place where it’s either 3-2 or 2-3, that’s where you’ve got to know how to figure it out. If you figure out that right you can feel it. When you are doing it right, you can feel it because it just flows with the rhythm.

When you are doing it on the opposite side, the contrary, you will feel it because it is not smooth, and everything else in Cuban music is around the clave. Everything they do can be “clave-sised” (laughs). If it cannot be “clave-sised”, man, it’s fucked up.

**Song: My Favourite Things – Francisco Aguabella (2002)**

PR: The clave, above all the most recognised clave, the Guaguancó clave comes from the Rumba. The Rumba is Cuban, even though it comes from the blacks (Africans) and the rhythm is arrhythmic, it comes from the street, like rap nowadays, it’s very much from the streets and the Guaguancó clave is most known for the distinctive *(sung – gua chin chin gua)*…

**Song: Guaguancó II – Jerry González (1994)**
Everyone has heard that before, so what happens is that you have to be born there, and from a very young age you are seeing the clave, the Guaguancó or Son clave. Especially where I come from in Manzanillo, as Son music is from the rural or country areas.

The clave that is used in the Son clave is like the Rumba clave, and many people ask me “what’s the difference between them?” and it’s simply the displacement from one which is (claps) compared to (claps).

BM: Most of the time what I do to feel it is that I go with the bass player. Usually the bass player will give you the 2 beat (sings the bass line)

Song: Descarga Cachao – Israel “Cachao” Lopez (1994)

Song: Zyriab – Chano Domínguez (1995)

I continued to look for the other key elements of what Latin Jazz is, and I stumbled upon the importance of Harmony.

Harmony, the colours of music. Latin Jazz has taken inspiration from Spanish Flamenco you’re hearing now, to the more recognised jazz harmonies.

There are however, crossovers that have occurred. One specific example is that of Thelonius Monk.

Monk is often seen as the founder of bebop. He was a pioneer jazz pianist that would use angular harmonies and unusual melodies.
During the forties and fifties his style was seen as completely innovative, however we can see parallels between his jazz harmonies and that of Flamenco music. Chano Domínguez explains.

**CD:** I have always seen Monk as Flamenco in character. So much himself, when you see him, as the way he plays. For me, Monk is very natural to hear in a Flamenco style. He is a musician that when he plays you hear turns, phrases, notes, that if you took them out of context and you grabbed them with ... a computer and mixed it together with a *Bulería* style and Flamenco hand clapping. It would be perfect. Perfect!

But it sounds natural (sings example). This was Flamenco; he was already using the F and F sharp (4 and sharp 4 or flat 5). Which is the Flamenco turn.

**Song:** Well you needn’t – Thelonius Monk – Jazz (1963)
**Song:** Well you needn’t – Chano Domínguez – Flamenco (2002)

**CD:** Another thing that I believe is spectacular; he never recorded the same tune the same way.

He recorded many times the same tunes, but he always changed the melodies situation. He always had an element of surprise, by having a little nook that he hadn’t shown before and where he put a note that would kill you. Later when you see him play, I loved his unpredictability. He is a musician that would change his mind at the very last millisecond. He was a natural improver, a natural creator.

**Soundscape:** Boats, and the sea.
RG: Now, it’s easy to talk about fusion and how well all these different styles meld, but it becomes clear that all this music had to originate somewhere. This didn’t happen overnight.

We have to understand, that what we know as Spanish Flamenco, American Jazz and Cuban music are all cousins to each other. They’re all related in some way, this in turn makes it easier for all of them to meld. Now if all these styles are cousins, that begs the question, who are they related to?


In my travels, I discovered that the biggest influence, or the styles Grandparents if you like, come from the African Slaves being introduced into the New World.

They were taken from Africa, processed in Spain and then sent to the Caribbean. Ships quite literally travelled back and forth from the old world into the new, and vice versa.

This movement of back and forth, otherwise known in Spanish as the Ida y Vuelta is what creates a myriad of different styles. They all have elements in common; the importance of rhythm and percussion, the importance of the clave and the importance of harmony. There are many more elements that clearly show the relationship between these countries, but I believe it’s important to understand how Latin Jazz originally formed. To understand why it fits together. Here’s Alain Pérez

AP: This Cuban music that was formed comes about from the influence of the Europeans and the Afro Cubans. The Spanish brought to Cuba the harmony of Spanish song. Harmonic elements of Flamenco stayed in Cuba, and what is produced in Cuba is assimilated in another way, fitting in all this music into Cuban rhythms and vice versa. Spain also enriches itself, as it adopted some Cuban rhythms as well.
The Spanish brought to Cuba the harmony of Spanish song. Harmonic elements of Flamenco stayed in Cuba and what is produced in Cuba is also assimilated in another way. Fusion between the two countries occurs as Spain also enriches itself adopting Cuban rhythms.

**RG:** Pepe Rivero.

**PR:** The *Ida y Vuelta* that we were talking about was in the *habanera*, in Barcelona above all, the *habanera* is still being played [...] at that time many ships came and went.

The same with the Flamenco *Rumba*, some people will say as a joke that it was learnt in Cuba and on the way back it was forgotten, and on the boat reversed... some gypsy might have gone and liked it and then they played it in their own way, but it does come from there.

**CD:** You have to realise that in New Orleans all the Spanish, Dutch, Belgians met, there were Africans, there were people from everywhere and because of this, this fusion emerged that was so magical. This is when the people off the street grabbed classical instruments and started to play what they heard but in their own way, therefore they had already twisted the rhythm, they have already changed the clave and that started to sound really good!

**Song:** Cuba – España – El All-Stars de la *Rumba* Cubana (2001)

**RG:** The piece you are hearing now, called Cuba and Spain, takes a traditional song from Spain and mixes it with the drums and rhythms from Cuba. You can also hear Cuban Clave and Spanish hand clapping working together. I wanted to find out, why it fits together so well. I asked Pepe Rivero about the *Ida y Vuelta*. 
PR: A lot of people think that Cuban musicians can easily play music from other parts of the world. This is not because we are super talented, not at all, it's simply because Cuba was lucky enough to be a country that was an island of strategic importance. A place where everyone stopped over on the way to another destination.

Also, port cities have always been places where discoveries, and art have entered. The French had control of us, the English, the Spanish that were here for a very long time and the Americans.

All this music comes from over time, and nowadays I do my Cuban music but I fuse it with Jazz, with Brazilian music, and now I am living in Spain and alot of times without realising it I get Flamenco tours.

A lot of Flamenco musicians search for this Cuban element, to give it another touch. The same thing happens to them, because we like that feeling that they put, and there is a new Ida y Vuelta that occurs. We have always been welcome, and vice versa.

They call us to play with them, and Flamenco music is not that different for us. You learn the grooves, rhythms that you need to learn because each has it's own thing but it's not that difficult, because if you can pick up rhythm, you can be a part of more things.

RG: Coming back to this melding of three cultures, famous Flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucia is a master of fusing these styles. He has melded Flamenco, jazz and latin elements and has been a driving force and an inspiration to many musicians within this genre. Here's Chano Domínguez.

CD: I think Paco de Lucía is important within music full stop. I think Paco is a great, great musician. In my case, perhaps he has been the musician that has been one of my most important influences.
RG: I asked Bobby Martínez about his experiences with Paco de Lucía.

BM: My experience with Paco de Lucía was mind-boggling. I will story first so you can have a little laugh.

Alain Pérez calls me, he’s the bass player you know, he’s a friend of mine. So, they bring Paco de Lucía this flute player from India, a Hindu guy. He played all kinds of bamboo flutes and what not flutes, beautiful sounds and all this and that, but the guy didn’t improvise right. So Paco de Lucía turns around to the manager and says listen, “I’m not going to go on a three month tour to the United States with a guy that doesn’t improvise, man”. You know, it’s like forget it.

So, Paco de Lucía turns to the manager and says, “send this guy back to India”. So, what are we going to do? So Alain Pérez says, “Well listen I have a friend who’s a sax player and a flute player who can probably come and cover for you, at least for the tour, you know. Do like what Jorge Pardo used to do for you.”

So, Paco de Lucía says, “Ok, tell him to come tomorrow for rehearsals so I can see him play”. So he (Alain Pérez) calls me and says, “Hey you want to play with Paco de Lucía?”

I said, “What!”

He said, “Yeah man, you need to come to rehearsal tomorrow”

I said, “Man, I have never played Flamenco in my life”

(Alain) “Well, come. He needs someone to improvise”
I said ok, so I go with my Tenor and my Flute and they started playing a Rumba. Which is easy, it’s a 4/4 thing, you know.

**Song: Río Ancho – 10 de Paco – Chano Domínguez (Jorge Pardo soloist) (1995)**

So I did my solo, you know, and all this and that. Paco likes it, and he says, “Man, the gigs your’s. You’re going on tour with me”

I said, “Ok man, fucking A”, you know, “alright!”

So he gives me a CD with the music, the tunes that I had to play on, right. Some of the stuff was Bulería so, real hard shit. I’m never done that in my life man. So I go home, I had a week to do my homework before I flew to Canada right?

So I go home, I start doing my homework, I get these Bulerías. And I can’t get the measuring down.

**Song: Que Venga El Alba [Bulería] – Paco de Lucía (2004)**

“This is weird”, you know.

So I call Alain Pérez, and he comes home, he helps me out and he tells me how to measure it and all that. So I started getting that down. The rest of the week I had everything written, and I was practicing all the parts and the stuff that was hard man. There were some lines that I had to double with Paco de Lucia, and when he plays he’s like a machinegun. So I was like at home doing all these lines you know, listening to Jorge Pardo doing all the Arabian stuff, with the quarter tone notes and all that stuff. I had never done any of that.
So man, here I am really happy, you know I had done all my homework and had everything written down. I fly to Canada, we have a rehearsal a day before the first concert in Canada. We get to the musicians union where we were going to rehearse you know. I get my stand, my music, I am sitting right across the street from Paco de Lucia and he’s looking at me.

And I’m like, you’re looking at me? He says, “Yeah, what’s that you got there?”

“This? This is my homework man, I’ve done my homework man, I’ve got everything down”

And he says, “We don’t read music in Flamenco”.

And I go “What? So what does that mean?”

“You’d better not have any of that stuff tomorrow on stage”

So I automatically shit my pants all kinds of colours man. Here I am, with this guy telling me I have to memorise music I have never played in my life before, after I had done all this homework. I am going nuts man. So I started having this like heart attack you know.

So then on, for the following week I didn’t sleep any night. I spent every night trying to memorise all these Arabian scales that I had never played in my life before. Including quartetone notes man, (laughs) That was a hell of an experience for me. I had never had so much pressure on me in any job I have ever done but that one.

**Song: Sólo quiero caminar – Chano Domínguez (1995)**

**RG:** Alain Pérez explains how he started playing with Paco de Lucía.
The next day I went in and started to record.

The bass line is there because he wanted it to be like that, with that flavour. That’s why he called me, to give it my vibe, a part of myself.

**Song: Casa Bernardo [Rumba] – Alain Pérez (de Lucía 2004)**

The 90’s was also a time of great influx of other musicians, especially from Cuba. This was partially due to the collapse of the Russian communist state, creating a rapid depression in Cuba known as the Special Period. I asked Pepe Rivero if this influenced migration to Spain.

Sure, When the Special Period came about, it was easier to leave if you were a sportsman or musician, and people would always say I want to learn something to be in the first group that leaves. The things that happened, stories of people who started a group, would hold an audition and later the musicians wouldn’t go. They would put their families in the group, and this is how they took people out of Cuba.

Yes, now a lot of Cubans continue to migrate, there is no liberty in the market, to be recognised, to leave Cuba is very complicated because you are controlled by a person, and the fact that you can tour is great luck in itself, to form part of a group of the highest calibre, and you travel with them but there comes a time when you search for more, you grow professionally but your surrounding doesn’t let you, and all that remains is to stay.

So, Spain is a country that in the end we are descendent from. You know?
RG: So the language would also play an important part.

PR: Yes, and on top of this you also feel at home, because it is true that that culturally it is very similar, ... you feel very welcome, and here we Cubans are much loved and it’s not because we are outgoing or funny, but because if you go back, in Cuba 90 percent of Cubans are descendents from the Spanish.

RG: Now why would other musicians from other countries come to Spain? I asked Bobby Martínez his reasons.

BM: about nine years ago, I decided to come to Europe, I wanted to get into the jazz scene in Europe cause a lot of friends of mine were telling me, "Hey man, you know, jazz is really happening here", you know, and this and that. And since I am descended from Spaniards, I said what the hell, I am going to go to Spain. So here I am, I have been here for like ah, it's going to be ten years now.

RG: I now understood, that even if musicians come from different countries, in this style there is always a common ground. Be it the percussion, the clave, the harmony or the people. Each musician has something to give, and this fusion of styles that started hundreds of years ago seemed to be continually developing. It was occurring today. There was a migration of musicians coming to Spain and influencing the musical landscape. I asked Chano if this was a new Return or a new Vuelta?

CD: Well yes, it's true, I've never thought of it like that but it is another Vuelta, because the musicians come and bring new things with them, their understanding of their tumbaos (rhythms), their claves and all this mixes with the people here and this is what creates the fusion. I love that there are Jam Sessions here at Cardamomo, and Flamenco and Cuban musicians mix together and they go off!
**RG:** Alain Pérez.

**AP:** Now Cuba is coming here... and it favours Spain, the Spanish culture, and the level of musician that is brought. There are so many Cuban musicians in Madrid, that’s without talking about Barcelona or Valencia.

**CD:** there are many Cubans here in Madrid and also in Barcelona. They come because they know that they have work here as musicians and they keep coming.

**AP:** There is always a Cuban. In Pop groups, Flamenco groups there are always some Cuban musicians that sneaked in somehow. At the end of the day, Cuban musicians are very well respected; by luck we have that reputation, and those who came before us as well.

**BM:** the reason it’s happening now in Spain I think, I think, I think! A lot of it has to do with politics, and history of Spain. This country was run by a dictator for over forty years, you know. And during these forty years this place was apart from any type of improvement or anything that goes forward in life.

And I think that's why now we are having like a big boom here man, like a lot of Jazz musicians, a lot of Cubans, a lot of Americans are coming over here, great musicians you know and I think that's what's happening basically in Spain is that man. Spain was basically annihilated for forty years, now all of a sudden they’re able to have all this stuff and it's like "Wow", it's the last country in Europe to get into the soup. You know what I'm saying?

**RG:** My journey to Spain has helped me understand what Latin Jazz is. Meeting with these great musicians has made it clearer for me. However, for the last word, here is the music of Pepe Rivero.
**Song: Oshum – Pepe Rivero (2004)**

**PR:** There are Cuban musicians from all over the world. An artist is not from one particular place.

**RG:** Alain Pérez

**Song: En El Aire – Alain Pérez (2006)**

**AP:** Latin Jazz is going to change where there are people evolving it, and still transmitting it’s roots.

**RG:** Chano Domínguez.

**Song: Alma de Mujer [Colombianas] – Chano Domínguez (1996)**

**CD:** I couldn’t tell you where Jazz and Flamenco begins and ends in my music. I think I am a bilingual musician.

**RG:** and Bobby Martínez.

**Song: Ni Pa Tí Ni Pa Mí – Bobby Martínez (2005)**

**BM:** The good thing about Latin Jazz is the same thing that happens with Jazz, it’s a good art man. It can never die. If you don’t like it that’s one thing, but I can tell you man. I don’t care if you’re a musician or if you’re not a musician or if you even don’t like music. You hear a nice Latin Jazz tune, and your feet start moving buddy.

It’s the way it is! It’s natural.

**RG:** I’m Roger González and this is Latin Jazz.
Appendix vii: Working screen from Logic Pro
Appendix viii: A Selection of Influential Latin Jazz Artists

Duke Ellington (1899 – 1974) Piano, bandleader (USA)
Francisco “Machito” Grillo (1909 – 1984) Voice, maracas and band leader (Cuba)
Mario Bauzá (1911 – 1993) Trumpet, saxophone, clarinet and composition (Cuba)
“Peruchín” (1913 – 1977) Piano, composition and arrangements (Cuba)
Chano Pozo (1915 – 1948) Congas (Cuba)
Dámaso Pérez Prado (1916 – 1989) Piano, composition and band leader (Cuba)
Thelonious Monk (1917 – 1982) Piano (USA)
Dizzy Gillespie (1917 – 1993) Trumpet (USA)
Israel “Cachao” Lopez (1918 – 2008) Double bass and composition (Cuba)
Bebo Valdés (1918 -) Piano (Cuba)
Charlie Parker (1920 – 1955) Alto Saxophone (USA)
“Candido” Camero (1921 -) Congas (Cuba)
Mongo Santamaría (1922 - 2003) Congas (Cuba)
Tito Puente (1923 – 2000) Timbales, Vibraphone (USA)
Armando Peraza (1924 -) Bongos (Cuba)
Francisco Aguabella (1925 -) Congas (Cuba)
Ray Barreto (1925 - 2006) Congas (Puerto Rico)
Cal Tjader (1925 - 1982) Vibraphone (USA)
Miles Davis (1926 – 1991) Trumpet (USA)
John Coltrane (1926 – 1967) Tenor Saxophone (USA)
Carlos “Patato” Valdés (1926 - 2007) Congas (Cuba)
Eddie Palmieri (1936 -) Piano (USA)
Pedro Iturralde (1929 -) Tenor and Soprano Saxophone (Spain)
“Tata” Güines (1930 - 2008) Congas (Cuba)
Herbie Mann (1930 - 2003) Flute (USA)
Tete Montoliú – (1933 – 1997) Piano (Spain)
Leandro “Gato” Barbieri (1934 -) Saxophone (Argentina)
McCoy Tyner (1938 -) Piano (USA)
Herbie Hancock (1940 -) Piano (USA)
Chick Corea (1941 -) Piano (USA)
Chucho Valdés (1941 -) Piano (Cuba)
“Amadito” Valdés (1946 -) Timbales (Cuba)
Paco de Lucía (1947 -) Flamenco guitar (Spain)
José Luis “Changuito” Quintana (1948 -) Percussion (Cuba)
Paquito D’Rivera (1948 -) Alto Saxophone and Clarinet (Cuba)
Dave Samuels (1948 -) Vibraphone (USA)
Steve Turre (1948 -) Trombone and conch shells (USA)
Jerry González (1949 -) Congas and Trumpet (USA)
Arturo Sandoval (1949 - ) Trumpet (Cuba)
Poncho Sánchez (1951 - ) Congas (USA)
Dave Valentin (1952 - ) Flute (USA)
Ignacio Berroa (1953 - ) Drum kit (Cuba)
Michel Camilo (1954 - ) Piano (Dominican Republic)
Jorge Pardo (1956 - ) Flute, Tenor, Soprano and Sopranino Saxophone (Spain)
Chano Domínguez (1960 - ) Piano (Spain)
Horacio “El Negro” Hernandez (1963 - ) Drumkit (Cuba)
Giovanni Hidalgo (1963 - ) Congas (Puerto Rico)
Gonzalo Rubalcaba (1963 - ) Piano (Cuba)
Danilo Pérez (1966 - ) Piano (Panama)
Appendix ix: Rhythm Section Examples

Son-Montuno

Section A (Son)

Section B (Montuno)
Rumba Guaguancó

(Urbe 1996)