



FEBRUARY 2010 ISSUE

Features

FROM THE EDITOR

Yvette and Rudy, as well as all our contributors worldwide, welcome you to our first issue of 2010, Volume 20, Number 1, February 2010. As we commence our 20th consecutive year of documenting and informing on the history and evolution of Latin music and other world beat genres, we ask for your help in spreading the news that Latin Beat Magazine is well and alive in cyberspace at www.lbmo.com and/or www.latinbeatmagazine.com. If you enjoyed our previous print-version of the magazine, Latin Beat Magazine Online continues along the same path and focus of the print magazine while adding the multi-media magic of the Internet that facilitates the capability of streaming music, showcase videos and events and information. Cuban pianist/bandleader Roberto Fonseca is our February featured artist, with an interview that highlights his career and latest achievements. Drummer/percussionist Charlie Morgan- currently drumming for Latin pop superstar Manuel Mijares and previously working with Elton John, Paul McCartney and Tina Turner- is also featured in this issue. And as always, you can count on lots of music and entertainment news, reviews, hit parades and music information for your enjoyment. - *Rudy Mangual*

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ROBERTO FONSECA: DANCING ON THE IVORY KEYS



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The Estrada Brothers

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Santiago Ceron

Besos de Hada

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Johnny Polanco y Su

Conjunto Amistad

El Gusto de Mi Salsa

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Siempre Salsa All Stars

Salsa Para Siempre

By Rudy Mangual

The incredible career of Roberto Fonseca follows the history of Cuban music of the last several decades, even though his professional appearance as a pianist came in 1990 (at age 15), performing at the Havana Jazz Plaza International Festival. From his performances in nightclubs and hotels to collaborations with Cuban legends such as Ibrahim Ferrer, Omara Portuondo, Orlando "Cachaito" López, to appearances in international jazz festivals worldwide, Fonseca has evolved into a true revelation among the pianists of his generation. He indeed joins the golden league of renowned Cuban virtuosos of the ivory keys by displaying his amazing technique, exquisite talent, and dazzling approach. Fonseca brings a fresh instrumental voice, full of passion and emotion, as he leads us through colorful landscapes in his interpretations, constantly revisiting his native roots and with no final destination in sight.



Rudy Mangual: What first sparked your interest in music?

Roberto Fonseca: I was blessed by being born into a musical family; my mother is a singer and my brothers play piano and drums. At the age of four, I started getting interested in drumming and playing percussion instruments. By my eighth birthday, I was studying basic piano at the Guillermo Tomás Conservatory of Music in Guanabacoa.

RM: Why did you select the piano as your instrument of choice?

RF: In reality, my parents initially convinced me to learn to play the piano, due to the fact that it is the most complete instrument and one full of possibilities for anyone pursuing a career as a musician. My passion for drumming clearly influenced my current trademark percussive piano-playing style.

RM: Is it correct to assume that drumming would have been your second choice?

RF: Without a doubt. I love playing trap drums and all percussion instruments. My first gig as a child-musician was drumming for a Beatles cover band. I used to listen to Beatles music on the radio with my mom, and it was something that marked me; I played the drums as though I were one of them, I loved it.

RM: When you were learning music and the piano, which musical



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genres influenced you the most?

RF: I have always been open-minded to all forms and styles of music. In school, we regarded North American jazz as a point of reference; I felt that my music would be a fusion of both genres (Cuban music and jazz). I admired jazz musicians such as Herbie Hancock and Keith Jarrett, but also



enjoyed old North American funk and soul classics. At the age of 14, I wrote my first composition on the piano, drawing inspiration primarily from the Afro-Cuban genres. The following year (1990), I was invited to perform at the Jazz Plaza International Festival in Havana, where I started displaying my piano and compositional skills.

RM: How did your career evolve?

RF: After performing at the Havana Festival, I continued my studies, graduating as both a piano major and music teacher. Next, I attended the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA), gaining a degree in music composition. Guided by the need to fuse my talents with other world music styles, I embarked on a tour across Italy with singer Augusto Enríquez, which included numerous performances on the Italian national TV channel RAI. This experience was musically different to me, making me realize even more that I needed to search for my own personal path. After my return to Cuba a year later, I met saxophonist Javier Zalba (of Irakere and Cubanismo! fame) and formed the group Temperamento. After a year of intense creativity together we recorded the album *En El Comienzo* (In the Beginning), which was the recipient of "Best Jazz Album Award" at the "Cubadisco '99 Festival" in Havana.

That same year, I co-produced, arranged and played on Augusto Enríquez's album *Cuando Yo Sea Grande* (Egrem), as well as recorded my debut solo production *Tiene Que Ser* (1999, Egrem), which received an award in the popular Cuban music category of the Trimalca Competition organized by UNESCO. In 2000, I released my second recording as a leader titled *No Limit*, self produced for the Japanese record label JVC. I also composed the soundtrack for the movie *Black*, by French director P. Maraval; and produced the record *Un Montón de Cosas*, for the hip-hop group Obsesión. This period of my career was pretty intense. I needed to express all the creativity that was inside of me and I didn't really know where it was all driving me to, because each idea I had led to a thousand others.

In 2001, after releasing my third solo production *Elengó*, my career would take an unexpected turn. I went to the Egrem studios to record Angá Díaz's album, invited by him, and when I got there I saw many people who were legends to me – Rubén González, Cachaito López, and Guajiro Mirabal, among others. It was a cultural awakening, a flashback into the roots of Cuban

music. I spent two months working in the studio with these giants and my whole life changed. Shortly thereafter, I was invited to be the support pianist to the great maestro Rubén González, as part of Ibrahím Ferrer's renowned orchestra, and also joined the Barcelona-based management company Montuno. Sharing the stage every night with Rubén González was a real dream; I'd just stay there, staring at him play for hours. I toured all over the world, promoting Ibrahím Ferrer's music and recordings (over 400 concerts) playing next to Cuban icons such as Cachaito López, Guajiro Mirabal and Manuel Galbán. Venues included the prestigious Frankfurt Alter Opera (Frankfurt), Palais des Congrès (Paris), Albert Hall (London), Beacon Theatre (New York), and Sydney Opera House (Australia).

In 2002, the legendary Cuban songstress Omara Portuondo, feeling passionate about my playing, invited me to take part in her tours, including the Tokyo Jazz Festival, where I shared the stage with Herbie Hancock, Michael Brecker and Wayne Shorter. I couldn't believe it when Herbie Hancock himself called me to play with him; I did not sleep that night!

I spent almost a decade working and recording with great musicians and artists all over the world and I matured musically during that period, leading to the creation of my 2007 release *Zamazú*, a production that finally truly integrated all my musical influences – Afro-Cuban, jazz, classical, Brazilian and traditional Cuban music. I called on the talents of Brazilian music producer *Alê Siqueira*, creator of such projects as *Tribalistas*, *Flor de Amor* (Omara Portuondo), and *Infinito Particular* (Marisa Monte) to aid me in this production. *Zamazú* received raving reviews worldwide, allowing me again to tour extensively and appear at some of the most prestigious jazz festivals in the world. Columbia Pictures chose the track *Llegó Cachaito* from his album for the soundtrack of the film Hancock, featuring actor Will Smith.

Along with Nick Gold (of World Circuit Records) I put the final touches on what was to be the final recording of Ibrahím Ferrer – *Mi Sueño* – released in 2007 and nominated for a Latin Grammy Award under the "Best Traditional Tropical Album" category.

2008 was another year full of work and experiences that inspired the bulk of the scores on my latest production. Elements and sounds drawn from life experiences, people and cultures I encountered in my most recent travels outside of Cuba were my main source of inspiration. I dedicate this new production to all the people that have welcomed me with open arms into their hearts.

RM: What is the title of the new production?

RF: *Akokán*, which means "heart" in Yoruba. This recording is the most personal production of my career so far, sort of a calling card or introduction to the world. I don't want people to think that I am



aiming for a display of virtuosic acrobatics on the piano, as most people perceive is the case of most Cuban piano players. I'd rather win their hearts



through a balanced combination of beautiful melodies with playful rhythms and sophisticated harmonies. I also wanted to translate the special magic, strength and improvisations that occur during a live show into the studio. In the company of musicians that I have been working with for the past 12 years, I encouraged creativity and chemistry amongst all players. There are also two very special collaborations from artists that I respect and admire in this new recording: Mayra Andrade, the Cape Verdean singer that wrote the lyrics and sings on the selection *Siete Potencias*; and Raúl Midón, the North American guitarist that composed and is featured on the track Second Chance. In comparison to my previous recording (*Zamazú*), the piano on this new recording is the true protagonist, with some intriguing piano solos and a different way of playing, one enriched by many experiences and my desire for the listener to feel my passion for life as the driving force of each piece.

RM: Do you consider yourself a Cuban or Latino musician, or an international musician?

RF: I have always approached music as a universal language and myself as another musician from this world. In the same way, I always carry my Cuban roots everywhere I go, never forgetting where I came from. My compositions are created to communicate and entertain all people of the world, without any borders.

RM: As a bandleader/pianist, which is your favorite format: duet, trio, quartet, or big bands?

RF: The formats of trios, quartets and quintets are very intimate in their interpretations, while combos and big bands have a different attitude, flavor and sonority. While I prefer the intimacy of the smaller groups, where I can communicate more directly with the other musicians in the group as well as with the audience, there's something very special and unique about the big sound and interaction of an orchestra.

RM: Which musicians have influenced you the most?

RF: I have always tried to nourish my musical palette by listening and studying different genres of music, combined with the rhythmic patterns and forms of my Cuban musical roots. From Cuba, my main influences include Lili Martínez, Rubén González and Peruchín; and from the jazz world, Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett and Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Dexter Gordon.

RM: What's your opinion of the current state of popular Cuban music?

RF: Currently, Cuban music is extremely rich in its variety of forms and styles in reference to the popular waves of its fans in and out of Cuba. As always, there are styles that are more popular than others due to their popularity in the markets and depending on the degree of

promotional exposure they receive. There are new trends that eventually will influence the mainstream in one way or another. In my opinion, there's no good or bad music; it's all music, and opinions are in the hands of each individual listener. Of course there's music that is not played correctly, but that's reason or material for another interview. I find the term "world music" interesting at times but misleading because all music is world music.

RM: Which music genre if any best describes your musical compositions and interpretations?

RF: My scores have so many influences from numerous genres, styles and musical forms that I have decided to call it simply "música abierta" (open music), open to all possibilities and musical tendencies of our planet.

RM: Describe a common day in the life of Roberto Fonseca.

RF: Being home, studying, caring and maintaining my dad's classic car, while enjoying the love and warmth of my family, surrounded by lots of music and spirituality. I am a very tranquil individual.

RM: When would you be performing in the United States?

RF: In late February and early March of 2010, I will be performing throughout the USA as the opening act for one of the most important Cuban vocalists of our times, Omara Portuondo. The music will be from my latest production *Akokán*.

Discography

<i>En el Comienzo</i>	Temperamento - 1998 (Egrem)
<i>Tiene Que Ver</i>	Roberto Fonseca - 1999 (Egrem)
<i>No Limit</i>	Roberto Fonseca - 2000 (JVC Japan)
<i>Elengó</i>	Roberto Fonseca - 2001 (Egrem)
<i>Zamazú</i>	Roberto Fonseca - 2007 (Enja Records)
<i>Akokán</i>	Roberto Fonseca - 2009 (JustinTime)

Omara Portuondo/Roberto Fonseca 2010 USA Tour

2/23	Keswick Theater	Philadelphia
2/24	Lisner Auditorium	Washington, DC
2/26	Sanders Theater	Boston
2/27	Town Hall	New York
3/2	Filmore Theater	Miami

You can see a music video of Roberto Fonseca in our "Video Corner" in our home page.



THE 2010 NAMM SHOW

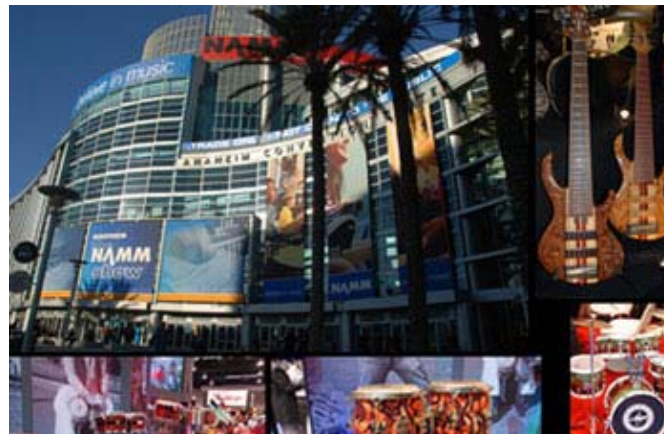
By Rudy Mangual

Photos ©Nathan Yaris



Founded in 1901, the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) is the largest and most significant music trade show of its kind, attracting over 1,500 exhibitors and approximately 85,000 attendees annually to the Anaheim Convention Center in Southern California.

This industry-only affair the longest running trade show in the U.S. provides a launching pad for the music manufacturing industry's newest developments and latest innovations. Held from January 14th through the 17th, this four-day event (also known as the Winter NAMM, as a Summer NAMM is conducted each July in Nashville, Tennessee) showcased thousands of new music products from all over the world, attracting a thriving worldwide



community of thousands of passionate individuals and companies that make, buy and sell the instruments that allow millions of people to make music everyday. Some of the highlights of this year's event included the official launching of Latin Percussion's "Aspire Santana Abraxas Angel" line of conga and bongó drums by legendary guitarist/bandleader Carlos Santana; as well as Remo's latest drum heads, including its new Tattoo Skyns, Ebony Powermax, and Skyndeeep Bongó drumheads; and performances by the bands respectively led by the New York City-based percussionists Chembo Corniel and Victor Rendón Chemboró and Blue Mambo. Other noted segments included the performances of guitarists Serj Tankian (System of a Down), Stephen Barker Liles, Eric Gunderson and Brian Bandas (Love and Theft), Jack Blades, Brad Gillis, Kelly Keagy and Joel Hoekstra (Night Ranger), troubadour Jason Mraz, and the Mexican rock group Maná.



This event was the candy store of all candy stores, as it featured every instrument and appliance known to mankind, from guitars, basses, violins, cellos, pianos, synthesizers, drums and percussion instrument to amplifiers, sound effects, studio recording equipment, live staging and lighting equipment, audio and video equipment, DJ gear and all the latest in computer music software and technology.—*Rudy Mangual*



Interview with Charlie Morgan

By Glen Moore

As a professional drummer and music producer, Charlie Morgan has had a remarkable career in rock, pop and Latin-influenced music. Review his work and you will see he has made a journey most drummers/percussionists can only dream about. His work with Elton John, Paul McCartney, Tina Turner, and Orleans, among others, has produced dozens of gold and platinum recordings.

Some of his recent work on Manuel Mijares' new CD has seen top 10 chart success in the Latin music scene. In a previous interview with Charlie Morgan for the Elton John fan magazine "East End Lights" I had the privilege of talking to him about his experiences in the rock and pop world. Because of the huge success of the new Mijares' CD, I decided to contact Charlie again as I was curious about the kind of "re-tooling" it takes, both mechanically and mentally, to produce different genres of music.



Glen Moore: Thanks again, Charlie, for taking the time out of your busy schedule to chat a little more about the music biz.

Charlie Morgan: You're very welcome.

GM: It's been a while since we last talked, but I see that things are still going strong for you these days!

CM: As it happens, yes. Even with the current economy, and all the gloom and doom regarding the music business, I am a firm believer that things are nowhere as bad as the major record labels would have us think. True, things are not great for them, but what is happening to the industry is something of a "change of the guard", so to speak. The "majors" are losing control to a myriad of smaller companies, each able to access the enormous potential of the Internet, and to understand its usefulness.

GM: I know what you mean. I saw an interesting article about a company called Indaba.com. It's for musicians looking to put new projects together, getting some real attention.

CM: Yes. Indabamusic.com is part of a new genre of music publicity. The most notable success story is with Taylor Swift, actually. Her family raised a large amount of funding – some their own (swift meat packing) – and some from 'angel investors'? and did much of the promotion themselves. The investors have seen a massive return already!

GM: The video clip of you working on the Quantum of Solace tracks, very cool but looks intimidating!

CM: When I first did sessions like that, they were very awe-inspiring. After 35-plus years in the business, I wouldn't say I was jaded or blasé about such things; there is an element of adrenaline rush when I do such sessions – but I feel much more in control these days! That said, I still get a huge kick out of the sense of accomplishment. There's nothing quite like "driving the super-tanker."

GM: Aside from the new Mijares CD, which we will get into shortly, I know you have been very busy in the new studio and on the road.

CM: The studio was a long-term master project. When I lived in Orlando, I had a small, but fully functional studio behind the garage. It was always a plan to build something altogether more "professional" when we moved to Nashville. While all studios are an on-going development programme, I am happy with what I have right now. The roadwork could be more frequent, but I'm working on that, too.

GM: Would you rather be in studio more, or on the road? Seems like



being away for long periods of time can get pretty exhausting.

CM: I still love touring, although much of what I do these days involves "fly-dates" which can be quite exhausting. The sheer logistical nightmare of getting through check-in and security is trying, to say the least. In comparison, I actually find touring on a bus quite relaxing! That being said, I would like to be doing more studio work, especially in my own space. It's probably worth pointing out that when I met Elton in 1985, I was already one of the top two session drummers in the UK. It was because of my reputation that Elton asked me to play on his "Ice on Fire" album (for the record, the other top session drummer at the time, Dave Mattacks, also played on that album). So I was a seasoned studio cat when Elton asked me to join his band and tour the world. Although I'd done some touring beforehand, this was a totally different level! So the short answer to your question is I am a studio cat at heart, but I've been a road dog for a long time, too!

GM: New projects?

CM: Various things for Disney – I've done a lot of their park music – for parades and festivals etc. For example: The Halloween Parade music for Disneyland Tokyo, summer parade music for them too. Also, introduction parade music for the opening of Disneyland? Paris. Completing a drum game iPhone "app" in partnership with a Brazilian company. More publicity for the Rock & Pop Masters (RPM), which is always in development.

GM: How about an RPM CD with original tunes? Lots of talent there!

CM: True, but what normally happens with each artist is they record and release their own original work, then we perform it as part of a show. It has been quite tricky to keep the division between the artists intact. RPM is really a vehicle for what each artist has already achieved, and as such works well.

GM: How did you get connected with Manuel Mijares for his new CD?

CM: I was contacted by producer/arranger/composer Scott Erickson (for whom I do the Disney music, Barry Manilow, etc.) to record an album for Manuel. It was to be a "long-distance" project, as with so much of the work I do for him.

GM: How do you get started on a new project? What's the process?

CM: With such projects, the first order of business is to receive the rough audio files, so I can overdub my live drums onto them. We have it down to such an art these days. Scott (Erickson) is very experienced in this method of recording, so what he sends me normally requires minimal work to set up.

GM: Do you miss the "good old days" when everyone was in the same room working and creating together?

CM: Yes, I love to get the chance to do that still. In fact, I jump at the opportunity to do demo sessions here in Nashville for that very reason. There's still a very old-school approach to Nashville's music business. There is nothing that can really substitute for musicians interacting in the studio together. The long-distance thing has more to do with people who already know what to do in completing a project according to their instructions.

GM: I know that you usually have creative license on most of the work that you do. Was this the case on Mijares' new CD?

CM: Yes. Scott and I have a great understanding. He usually trusts my judgment to a large degree. I also send him rough mixes of what I've done, to give him an opportunity to critique it before I sign off on it.

GM: Mijares' new CD has done well on the charts. What are you most proud of on this project?

CM: Very hard to say, but I particularly like the version of Manilow's *Could it be Magic*, and also our version of *Vivir Así*, which is quite a big departure from the original, and required a lot of manual dexterity!



GM: Manual dexterity? Enlighten me!

CM: Well the part itself is quite a complicated combination of Latin and rock beats. There's an underlying samba feel, but it has a basic rock backbeat.

GM: What makes a great Latin-influenced song? What's the secret recipe?

CM: It really has to come from the heart. I have extensive experience in working with Latin American, Spanish, and Italian artists. It was a high percentage of my work back in the UK. I used to do a lot of work for Spanish producer Oscar Gómez, and also did a large amount of work with Italian producers Maurizio Fabrizio, and Celso Valli.

GM: Keeping up with any of them?

CM: Some. A couple have left music production totally. I am in touch with Oscar Gómez. I'm trying to re-establish contact with Maurizio and Celso, but they have moved around a lot.

GM: What is your way of capturing the right "feel" for each track?

CM: As I said before, it really is a question of 'feel' as opposed to technique. Not that technique doesn't come into it, but 'feel' is most important. The dynamics are especially important. One has to know what the vocal will be doing at a specific point: soft or loud, etc....

GM: Any unusual challenges when recording the Mijares CD?

CM: We cut all the tracks with – at best – a guide vocal track. In some cases, there was no vocal guide. I had to imagine what was to come.



**GM: Any future plans with Mijares?
Other Latin artists?**

CM: As it happens, we are preparing for a new album with Mijares. I believe the scheduled release is in February, 2010. Obviously, I'd love to repeat the success with any other Latin artists that are interested.



GM: I think you and Santana could make great music!



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