



## Features ⊕ ⊕ ⊕

MARCH 2011 ISSUE

### FROM THE EDITOR

This Volume 21, Number 2, March 2011 issue of Latin Beat Magazine Online features Canadian Latin jazz artist Jane Bunnett. This master of the woodwinds has been delighting us with her talents and music for several decades now. Our senior editor Luis Tamargo chats with Bunnett about her achievements and latest endeavors from her home in Ontario, Canada. In observance of national women's month (March) Bunnett became our cover artist, but undoubtedly we never need an excuse to feature this North American jazzista.

Also paying tribute to our femme stars, DJ Gonzalo (who compiles the New Jersey hit parade) put together a top 20 hit parade of selections by female artists. We salute all female artists in the music industry as well as in all the arts.

As always, Latin Beat Magazine Online also brings you exciting monthly columns from New York, Los Angeles, and Puerto Rico, including the popular Latin Beat Music Update column by Nelson Rodriguez (covering the latest Latin music scene from all over the world) — Music news, national and international independent hit parades; concerts and CD reviews; calendar of events; streaming music tracks and music videos that complete the Latin Beat Magazine Online experience. I dedicate this issue to the hardest working woman I know, my wife and soul mate, Yvette Mangual. Musically yours, —*Rudy Mangual*

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## JANE BUNNETT'S CUBAN JAZZ ODYSSEY

By Luis Tamargo

*Magazine cover photo by @Bill King.*

It was back in the year 2000 that I first met the extraordinary Canadian soprano saxophonist/flutist/composer/arranger Jane Bunnett (along with her talented trumpet-playing spouse Larry Cramer) in Miami. Our initial encounter was documented on the cover story titled “How Ontario Jane Became Havana Juana” (Latin Beat, April/2000).

The following interview serves as a follow-up to the abovementioned Latin Beat item. Almost eleven years later, Bunnett maintains her undisputed position as the most prominent female bandleader of the Latin jazz world. Not to mention her outstanding role as international talent scout!...



**Luis Tamargo:** I had the pleasure of contributing the liner notes for the 2000 Connector CD *Alma de Santiago* (subsequently released in North America by Blue Note). This was the first Grammy-nominated album ever recorded in Santiago de Cuba, where you creatively utilized various distinctive local assets, including the 38-piece Conga de los Hoyos, the Santiago Jazz Saxophone Quartet (SJSQ), the traditional son group Los Jubilados, and a formidable singer from Francisco Guayabal named Eduardo Morales Orozco and nicknamed “El Tiburón” (The Shark), whose feathered back reminds me of a bird’s nest (LAUGHTER).



**Jane Bunnett:** Plus he’s got one of these belt buckles that look like a brick! (LAUGHTER)... Larry (Cramer) wanted to do everything live off the floor, so Los Jubilados were on the far right side, and the SJSQ and me were in the middle of the studio, and Tiburón was someplace else, so we were scattered all over the floor and I remember that the manager of Los Jubilados was shaking his head while probably thinking, “This will never work!” It was quite funny and crazy. It was a remarkable, difficult and demanding session. One of the most difficult things was making sure that the rum kicked in at the right time. If we supplied too much rum, it would wreck the session, so we had to time and monitor the flow of rum perfectly in order to provide what we called the right amount of “Yoruban rocket fuel” to complete the session (LAUGHTER). I’m still very proud of that recording.

**LT: That's when you discovered a prodigious santiaguero (native of Santiago de Cuba) pianist named David Mirelles, whom you subsequently brought to Ontario.**

**JB:** Yes. That's quite a story because I won an award back in 2004, and I brought him to Canada with the money that I received from the award. He was only supposed to stay here for a few weeks to study with some piano-playing friends of mine so he could learn some jazz repertoire, techniques, and stuff like that, but he ended up staying four years at our house. After he got his university degree, he moved to New York City, where he is working with the likes of Paul Motian and Steve Coleman. He was only 15 years old when we met him, but he has gone on to do some remarkable things...

**LT: Your home also served as temporary shelter for the late Havanese rumba master Pancho Quinto. You told me once that he was a very sociable person who made many friends in your neighborhood...**

**JB:** It was a great thing. During my trips to Cuba, I witnessed that all the time —the way people would just drop in without prior announcement, things are very spontaneous there. A positive thing that can be learned about Cuba is that people are very capable of networking while hanging out at their front porches at night. Let's put it this way: they don't need dating services (LAUGHTER). It's pretty depressing that those of us who live in North America don't even know our next-door neighbors.



**LT: And I don't want to know them either (LAUGHTER)... Pancho was prominently featured, by the way, on your Blue Note release titled *Rhythm + Soul* (Blue Note), an innovative session that outlined the similarities between U.S. gospel and Afro-Cuban folklore.**

**JB:** Larry and I thought that they were quite connected, and our featured gospel singer, Dean Bowman, loved hanging out with Pancho. It was a really nice combination. It was different in the sense that we were trying to record a real working unit that we could go on the road with.

**LT: That's when you incorporated, for the first time, an official trap drummer into your band ("Spirits of Havana").**

**JB:** That's right! That was Dafnis (Prieto)! He is doing remarkably well nowadays in New York, playing with Michel Camilo and many other prominent artists.

**LT: On the CD *Cuban Odyssey* (Blue Note, 2003), you ventured outside of your previous comfort zones (Havana and Santiago de Cuba) and recorded almost half of the repertoire in other Cuban cities, in conjunction with various representative regional entities, such as the world-renowned rumba troupe "Los Muñequitos de Matanzas," Cienfuegos' 40-year old son group "Los Naranjos," and the Camagüey-based Cuban-Haitian 10-piece vocal choir known as Grupo Descendann.**

**JB:** Yes, you're right! It was mostly the result of a road trip from Havana to Guantánamo. Larry and I had only worked in Havana and Santiago de Cuba, and we had never ventured into other Cuban regions. People have predetermined ideas of what Cuban music should be, so we wanted them to appreciate the full mosaic of the island's music. This is particularly true of the music performed by Camagüey's Grupo Descendann, which was totally unknown at that time. Right now, it is doing really well in Europe.



**LT: You have defined their ancestral criol-language songs as “contrary to what most people think of Cuban music”.**

**JB:** The thing is that they are an acapella choir with a tiny bit of percussion. Their music often tends to be very solemn, which is so different from most of the Cuban music that I have experienced. They have pieces that are more uptempo and joyful, but there’s also a feeling of sadness attached to many of their songs.... The CD *Cuban Odyssey*, by the way, served mostly as the soundtrack of the Canadian documentary “Spirits of Havana,” and it featured a Cuban trap drummer named Francisco Mela, who is now playing with McCoy Tyner, Joe Lovano, Kenny Barron, etc. He is probably the most in-demand drummer in today’s New York jazz scene. All these guys stay with me for only a minute, and then they go on to do great things!

**LT: Your CD *Red Dragonfly* (EMI, 2005) drew its repertoire from many different nations such as Cuba, Japan, South Africa, and your own native Canada.**

**JB:** Unfortunately, it suffered a slow death after it was given to Narada Records for distribution. It was made with the Penderecki String Quartet, along with David (Mirelles) and Hilario (Durán), among others. I was really fond of this recording, which contained songs from around the world, including a Navajo aboriginal chant, a French-Canadian song, and a South African anti-apartheid anthem, in addition to Silvio Rodríguez’s *Rabo de Nube* and Ernesto Lecuona’s *María La O*.

**LT: On the CD *Radio Guantánamo/ Guantánamo Blues Project, Vol. 1* (Blue Note, 2006), you managed to merge the blues heritage of New Orleans with the ancestral modality of Cuban son known as changüí.**

**JB:** Since the early 1990s, I kept hearing about the changüí from people like the late pianist Alfredo Rodríguez. Someone mentioned that we would have to travel to Guantánamo to be exposed to the real changüí. So off we went to Guantánamo, and we encountered that music that was so funky. Larry and I just loved it! It had everything in it! These guys that we were playing with in Guantánamo were really diehard changüiseros! That music really meant everything to them, although it has been very marginalized by the general public that regards it as low-life and unsophisticated. You know, we went to some changüí parties and it was really exciting! The bongó is soloing right up front, from the start to the end of the piece, instead of playing a supportive role. I thought that the exchange between bongó, marimbula, and tres was truly fascinating. It was very funky and highly syncopated music. Having been down to New Orleans (where we met blues vocalist Johnny Sansone), we thought that it would be really interesting to mix it up with this New Orleans thing. We felt that it worked out really well, so we made the video “Give Me One Dollar,” whose lyrics were done half in Spanish and half in English. Everyone can relate to those lyrics!

**LT: I've heard that you were consistently harassed by the local Commies during your stay in Guantánamo.**

**JB:** While making that record, we were arrested for playing with the changüi musicians and hauled off to the Immigration Department at least three times. It was so ridiculous! I recalled being pulled out of a café, where we were playing with some local musicians, and taken to the police station. We were interrogated at the police station for hours, and I tried to tell these guys, "Look, the only reason we're here is because we want to play with the changüi guys," but they replied, "That can't be why, there must be other reasons..." My God! These guys were really spooky, scary and creepy! We were interrogated by some guy that looked like he would run over his own mother if it was going to get him two steps ahead! (LAUGHTER)...

**LT: I've also heard that there is a new Jane Bunnett record coming out.**

**JB:** Yes. Hilario (Durán) and I just did a totally different recording to be released by the Alma Label. The repertoire is entirely comprised of classical Cuban pieces composed by Lecuona, Cervantes, etc. There is some improvisation, but it is mostly classical...

**NOTES:** A review of Jane Bunnett's most recent recording (*Embracing Voices*, Sunnyside) is included in this issue of Latin Beat Magazine.



## **Announced Line-Up of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Playboy Jazz Festival**

**Text and Photos by Ricky Richardson**

Festival promoters and organizers are gearing up for one of the jazz world's premier annual events: The line-up of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Playboy Jazz Festival, to be presented in conjunction with the L. A. Philharmonic Association, was announced on February 10, 2011, during a press conference conducted at the East Lawn of the Playboy Mansion.



Picture #1-LAUDS All City High School Jazz Band  
Picture #2-Bill Cosby and Darlene Chan  
Picture #3-Hugh M. Hefner, Executive Producer Playboy Jazz Festival and Richard Rosenzweig, President, Playboy Jazz Festival  
Picture #4-Group Photo



The LAUSD All City High School Band, under the direction of Tony White and JB Dyas, provided entertainment to the invited members of the press. The talented students—selected from various schools—performed *Tenor Madness*, *Song for My Father* and *Blue Bossa*, with special guest saxophonist Keschia Potter.

The invitation-only gathering featured master of ceremonies Bill Cosby and various jazz artists and other VIPs, along with numerous television, radio, print and Internet journalists.

Darlene Chan (FestivalWest Inc. Producer) and Bill Cosby announced this year's line-up, which will present, once again, multiple genres in order to satisfy the diverse musical preferences of all in attendance. This landmark festival continues its rich tradition of featuring the biggest names in jazz, along with future jazz headliners, delivering an exciting mix of every style imaginable, from standards and blues to Latin beats and world fusion.

### **Saturday, June 11, 2011, 3-11 P.M.**

(The following line-up is subject to change)

- Dianne Reeves
- The Roots (with special guest Terrence Blanchard)
- FourPlay (featuring Bob James, Nathan East, Chuck Loeb and Harvey Mason)
- Eddie Palmieri Salsa Orchestra
- SFJAZZ Collective Celebrating the Music of Stevie Wonder (featuring Stefon Harris, Avishai Cohen, Greg Osby, David Sánchez, Robin Eubanks, Edward Simon, Matt Penman and Eric Hardland)
- A Night In Treme: The Musical Majesty of New Orleans, featuring Rebirth Brass Band (with special guests Donald Harrison Jr., Kermit Ruffins, Dr. Michael White, and Big Sam Williams)
- Cos of Good Music, featuring Geri Allen, George Bohanon, Dwayne Burno, Ndugu Chancler, Anat Cohen, and Babatunde Lea
- Ambrose Akinmusire
- The LAUSD All-City High School Big Band under the direction of Tony White and JB Dyas

### **Sunday, June 12, 2011, 3 - 10:30 P.M.**

(The following line-up is subject to change)

- Buddy Guy
- Lee Konitz New Quartet
- John Scofield and Robben Ford
- Naturally 7
- Harmony 3 (with Ronnie Laws, Stanley Jordan, and Walter Beasley)
- Geri Allen and her Timeline Band
- Still Black, Still Proud: An African Tribute to James Brown, featuring Pee Wee Ellis, Fred Wesley and Vusi Mahlasela
- Bill Cunliffe and The Resonance Big Band with Mariam Petrescu in a Tribute to Oscar Peterson
- Carlos Varela
- Pullum High School Jazz Big Band under the direction of Fernando Pullum

In addition to Bill Cosby and Darlene Chan, one must recognize the vital efforts of the following individuals: Hugh M. Hefner (Executive Producer), Richard Rosenzweig (President, Playboy Jazz Festival), and George Wein (Producer Emeritus).

**Ticket Information:**

Single-day tickets are currently available through Ticketmaster, starting on February 10<sup>th</sup>. Patrons can purchase tickets at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com), by calling (213) 365-3500 or (714) 740-7878, or at any Ticketmaster outlet

Tickets may also be purchased at the Hollywood Bowl Box Office, beginning on May 7<sup>th</sup>. For more information, call the Playboy Jazz Festival Hotline at (310) 450-1173 or visit [www.playboyjazzfestival.com](http://www.playboyjazzfestival.com).

