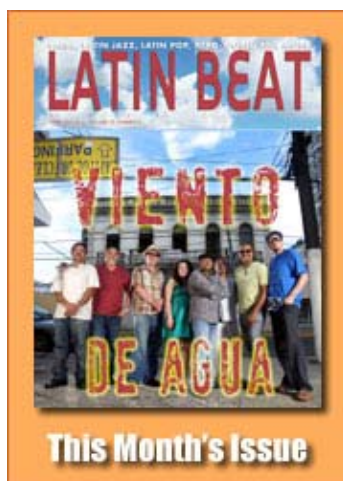




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JUNE/JULY 2010 ISSUE

Features ⊕ ⊕ ⊕

FROM THE EDITOR

In this Volume 20, Number 5, June /July 2010 issue of Latin Beat Magazine Online, we introduce you to Héctor "Tito" Matos, leader of the group "Viento de Agua" (one of the most innovating musical ensembles of our times out of San Juan, Puerto Rico). Celebrating the release of their latest production Fruta Madura, Matos summarizes his musical career and that of his experimental ensemble Viento de Agua. Also meet one of our contributing New York City-based photographers Allen Spatz and his amazing work. As always, we keep you informed of the most current Latin music news and information available — CD reviews, national and international salsa hit parades, calendar of events and our unique regional music columns. Check out the video corner and streaming music tracks. Welcome! ¡Bienvenidos! to summer 2010 and the world of Latin Beat Magazine Online (lbmo.com and latinbeatmagazine.com) — *Rudy & Yvette Mangual*

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VIENTO DE AGUA: THE RAIN IS HERE

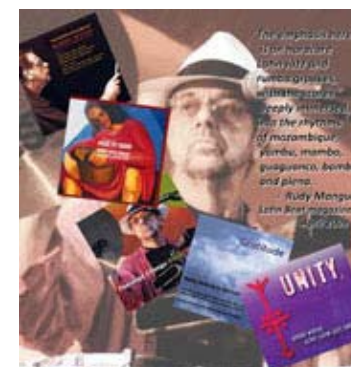
By Rudy Mangual



Founded in New York City, over a decade ago, by percussionist Héctor "Tito" Matos and reedman Ricardo Pons, Viento de Agua (meaning "rain-bearing wind") shocked the Latin music world with its powerful contemporary sound, as applied to its unique interpretations of the traditional rhythms of Puerto Rico. Currently re-established in said Caribbean island, the 13-member ensemble is now enjoying the release of its sophomore production *Fruta Madura*, as reflected in the following telephone interview with bandleader Tito Matos, speaking from his home in the Puerto Rican city of Santurce.

Rudy Mangual: Congratulations on Viento de Agua's new release *Fruta Madura* (Ripe Fruit). Take us to the beginning of your musical journey.

Tito Matos: Born and raised in Santurce, I was surrounded by and immersed in the local music scene as a child, and started playing professionally in my teen years. By the mid-1980s, I was a member of the folkloric



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group "Los Pleneros de la 23 Abajo," which interpreted the traditional Puerto Rican rhythms of bomba and plena.



RM: Are you a self-taught percussionist?

TM: Yes, I basically learned to play and understand the intricacies of the rhythms of Puerto Rico in the streets of Villa Palmera, a section of Santurce known as an incubator and home of the folkloric culture of the island. I have dedicated myself to mastering all the traditional rhythms associated with bomba and plena, as well as mastering the use of the traditional percussion instruments utilized in producing these rhythms, such as the panderetas (rim drums) in the rhythms of plena, and the barriles (barrel drums) in the rhythms of bomba, as well as many other minor percussion instruments. In Villa Palmera, I initially learned from the traditions of the Cepeda family. Led by the late Rafael Cepeda (a master of Afro-Puerto Rican folklore), the Cepeda family is one of the island's leading exponents of the bomba and plena rhythms, and it is responsible for the survival of the traditions and education about such genres. Later on, I took some workshops with other folkloric masters, such as Félix Díaz and Jesús Cepeda, but in the end, the streets of Villa Palmera folklore provided my best

education, musically and culturally.

RM: Can you please describe these instruments to our readers?

TM: Panderetas are hand-held rim drums used to produce the main rhythms of the Puerto Rican plena. There are three different drums used to produce the rhythms and tuned to a specific sound. Each drum plays a particular rhythm pattern (such as a bass line, a rhythmic line and a lead line), which together produce the final plena rhythm. The drums are called seguidor (bass drum, the largest in size), punteador (medium-sized rhythm drum), and requinto (lead drum, and smallest in size). In the case of the rhythm of bomba, the barriles (wooden barrel drums) are used, with two drums playing a set pattern (known as the buleador) while a third drum, tuned to a higher pitch, plays a lead improvisational part in the rhythm (known as the primo or subidor).

RM: How did your musical career unfold in Puerto Rico, as well as in New York City?

TM: In my teens, I started playing with folkloric groups in the island, such as Los Sapos del Caño, Los Pleneros del Almendro, Los Pleneros del Pueblo, Los Pleneros del Coquí, and Los Pleneros de la 23 Abajo. In 1994, I relocated to New York City, joining the excellent popular folkloric, Los Pleneros de la 21, under the leadership of Juan Gutiérrez.

RM: How did Viento de Agua come to be?

TM: It all started a decade ago in New York City. While living and working in the Big Apple,



I met Ricardo Pons (an amazing reedman, a classically trained graduate of the City College of New York) and Alberto Toro (another amazing reedman), with whom I co-founded the group Viento de Agua in 1997. Ricardo Pons and I were members of Los Pleneros de la 21, but we wanted to create a more contemporary, hard-edge ensemble, hence the formation of Viento de Agua. Our debut recording (*De Puerto Rico al Mundo*) received excellent reviews from the international music media, including Latin Beat Magazine.



The popularity of Viento de Agua earned me the opportunity to partake as guest in several recordings, including Eddie Palmieri's *El Rumbero del Piano*, and David Sánchez's *Obsesión* and *Melaza*, all nominated to the Grammy Awards. With Los Pleneros de la 21, I participated in the recording *Para Todos Ustedes*, which was also nominated for a Grammy in 2006. I have also recorded with the New York City-based groups Timbalaye (led by timbalero Ralph Irizarry), and participated in two recordings led by trombonist William Cepeda (*My Roots and Beyond* and *Afroboricua*), and two recordings led by saxophonist Miguel Zenón (*Ceremonial* and *Esta Plena*). I was also featured, playing the requinto, in a popular video of Ricky Martin, which led to the recording of his hit song *Pégate*.



RM: Have you ever opted to play a mainstream form of tropical dance music and/or mainstream Latin percussion instruments?

TM: I do play conga drums, and I am familiar with the traditions of Afro-Cuban and other Afro-Caribbean rhythms, but always opted to concentrate my efforts and talents with elements closer to my Puerto Rican culture and folklore. In Puerto Rico, there are numerous master percussionists dedicated 100% to these more popular rhythms and

forms, which I respect and enjoy greatly, but they do not reach my heart and soul like a good bomba or a good plena does. While I enjoy these traditional folkloric genres, I'm also passionate about going beyond the limits previously set within these traditions, always pushing forward towards the evolution of each rhythm. I also believe that we need more people in the island, as well as abroad, who are dedicated to preserving our traditional rhythms and culture for the sake of the current and future generations of boricuas (Puerto Ricans).

RM: What is the current state of the traditional rhythms of Puerto Rico?

TM: In reality, the rhythms of the bomba and the plena are enjoying a very good time, at least in the hearts of the people and also



through the participation of numerous groups throughout the island and abroad playing this music. Commercially, it is a different story because the mainstream radio stations do not support us in the island. A current movement of events known as "bombazos" and "plenazos" are the new rave, showcasing our folkloric rhythms throughout the island featuring bands like ours, among many others.



RM: Is there any support and/or assistance provided by the Institute of Culture of Puerto Rico?

TM: Yes, the Institute of Culture of Puerto Rico does support many of our cultural events and activities, but their budget is very limited. Our latest recording, *Fruta Madura*, was produced in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, through the Institute of Culture of Puerto Rico. During these hard economic times, musical and cultural events are at the bottom of everyone's list. We are very grateful to the Institute of Culture for its

support.

RM: How would you compare *Fruta Madura* to your first recording?

TM: The title of the new production *Fruta Madura* (Ripe Fruit) gives it away somehow. On the first recording, we were all young, strong and full of energy, taking on a production that was unprecedented. This time around, Ricardo and I are veteran musicians, both having worked with numerous artists and bands, while experiencing different genres and forms, which have nurtured our musical palettes. Without compromising the authentic sound and hard edge of the original ensemble, this latest version of the group is indeed more mature and ripe, ready to eat. Our group's creative vision is stronger than ever and apparent in our latest production. We are not your typical bomba and plena ensemble by any means. Viento de Agua is a contemporary ensemble that uses the traditional rhythms of bomba and plena as a platform to create and entertain audiences everywhere with high-energy, rhythmic music, free of any rules or limitations.



RM: Was this new production recorded in Puerto Rico?

TM: Yes, it was recorded entirely in Puerto Rico. It includes the following core members of

Viento de Agua: Ricardo Pons (musical director/flute/saxes), Eliud Cintrón (trombone), Luis Aquino (trumpet), Roberto Calderón (baritone sax), Luis Amed Irizarry (piano), Javier Curet (bass), Efraín Martínez (trap drums), Erik Noel Rosado, Juan Martínez, Guillermo Cubero, Joksán Ramos, and Héctor "Tito" Matos (percussion), and Sammy Tanco (vocals). Musical guests include Miguel Zenón (alto sax), Christian Nieves (cuatro), Vitito Emmanuelli and Héctor Calderón (percussion), plus vocalists Gema Corredera, Melanie Lozano, Jerry Medina and Pavel Urquiza. We would like to mention that Juan Sánchez (a New York City-based Puerto Rican artist) created our CD's conceptual artwork.

RM: Any plans for touring to promote this new recording?

TM: We have been performing in the island, promoting the album, and we are now planning to tour during the summer. I am currently touring with Miguel Zenón's group, as well. We hope to visit everyone's hometown in the near future.

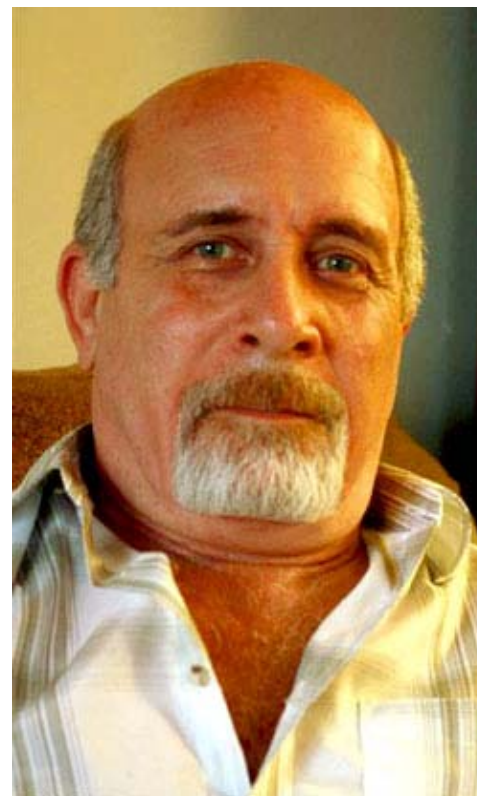


Photographer Allen Spatz

Allen Spatz was born in the Washington Heights section of New York City. Like all youth, Allen was attracted to the performing arts, music and dance. His favorite genres of music are the Cuban son, salsa and Latin jazz. Growing up his musical idols were (and remain) Orquesta Aragón, Arsenio Rodríguez, Israel "Cachao" López, Felix Chapottín, Tito Puente, Celia Cruz, Eddie Palmieri, Joe Cuba, Ray Barretto, Johnny Pacheco, Johnny Colón and so many more.

Growing up in Manhattan, Spatz was lucky enough to frequent many of the fabulous clubs such as the Palladium Ballroom, El Corso and the Cheetah, where these and other performers entertained and thrilled their audiences. He wanted to capture the moments of these wonderful artists and decided to photograph them whenever he had the opportunity. He began to network and connected with many of his idols. In addition to still photography, he also captured some performances on video at the famous Club El Flamingo preserving a moment of artistic flair to forever be appreciated by all.

The founders of the International Salsa Museum within the community of "El Barrio" (Spanish Harlem) were so taken by Allen's work that he became the archival photographer for the museum, displaying his



work in homage to Latino musicians.

Currently, Allen does freelance photography for many Latino musicians and non-profit organizations as well as for corporate and family events. He also is the Director of Still Photography and Producer for !Capicu!Film Arts and J&G Media, two independent production companies located in New York City. Credits also include various high school and cultural photography through Davis Photo Studio in Tarrytown and the Bronx Times Review.

Allen Spatz resides in the Riverdale section of The Bronx, New York and believes his philosophy is not only to be a technical master of this field, but a storyteller, capturing the special moments that make life worth living as he celebrates the human spirit. www.allenspatzphotography.com.

Photography © Allen Spatz

**Hostos Center For The Arts & Culture Presents
Grupo Folklorico y Experimental Nuevayorquino Performing the Music of the Legendary
Arsenio Rodríguez**

Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture presented, by popular demand, the return of one of Latin music's most important alliances, the groundbreaking Grupo Folklorico Y Experimental Nuevayorquino, on Saturday, March 20, 2010 at 7:30 pm in a gala concert that paid homage to a true musical genius, the legendary Arsenio Rodríguez, considered by many musicologists to be the greatest composer/musician of Afro-Cuban music of the 20th century. With Grupo Folklorico's two seminal recordings from the mid-70s, produced by René López and Andy Kaufman, *Concepts in Unity and Lo Dice Todo (We Say It All)*, this legendary Bronx orchestra introduced the world to a new way of playing Latin music — New York style. Grounded in community and folklore, it encompassed various musical genres from both the Cuban and Puerto Rican *Diasporas*. This concert was dedicated to Arsenio Rodríguez's memory and featured compositions not heard in many years.

The members of Grupo Folklorico y Experimental Nuevayorquino are: Andy González (bass/leader); Charlie Santiago (*timbal*, bongo, percussion); Jerry González (trumpet, percussion); Oscar Hernández (piano); Nelson González (*tres* guitar); Gene Golden (*congas*, *batá* drums, percussion); Reynaldo Jorge (trombone); Eddy Zervigón (flute); Jorge Luis Maldonado (vocals); Pedro "Pedrito" Martínez (vocals, *batá* drums, percussion); Eddie Venegas (trombone, violin); Abraham Rodríguez (vocals, *batá* drums, percussion); Tony Rosa (*congas*, *bata* drums, percussion); Guido González (trumpet); and René López, Jr. (percussion). The concert featured four *special invited guest artists* who performed with Arsenio — Alfredo "Chocolate" Armenteros (trumpet); Sergio "Armandito" Armenteros (trumpet); Alfredo Valdés, Jr. (piano) and Israel Berrios (vocals, guitar).

YO NACI DEL AFRICA

A gala concert with
**Grupo Folklórico y
Experimental Nuevayorquino**
The legendary Latin music alliance
performing the music of
Arsenio Rodriguez

Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture | Saturday, March 20, 2010

Israel Berrios Jorge Maldonado

Eddy Zervigon

Oscar Hernandez Nelson Gonzalez

Alfredo Valdes Jr.

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2010 Boston Salsa Congress
Date: March 26, 2010
The Cambridge Marriot Hotel
Johnny Colon y Su Orquesta



Johnny Colon



Richie Viruet



Willie Rios



Jose Mangual Jr.



Misha Tsiganov Dimitri Kolesnik



Sam Burtis



Michael Boscorino Johnny Colon



THE ANNUAL SALSA BOSS



Danny Del Valle

Photography © Allen Spatz

Date: April 24, 2010

Place: Lehman Center for the Performing Arts

Event: LEGENDS OF SALSA 3

"Remembering Graciela, Celia & La Lupe"

Produced by Jimmy Delgado

Featuring: Choco Orta, Cita Rodríguez, Yolanda Rivera and Sully Diaz

Jimmy Delgado and the Mambo Legends 21-piece Orchestra (former all stars of the TP Orchestra) under the direction of José Madera and Johnny "Dandy" Rodríguez with Frankie

Vásquez Invited guest: Ronnie Puente

Also: "Los Tambores Batá" de Pedrito Martínez





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