

INTRODUCTION TO AFRO LATIN MUSIC

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INTRODUCTION: “Culture cannot be bought – it must be lived.” In other words, culture must be experienced – and to be truly experienced, culture or cultural awareness needs to be shared. Thru our shared experiences, we are participating in the re-vitalization of our own culture. Ancestors have provided certain cultural “foods” which we can elect to digest -or not. The quantity and quality of cultural vocabulary, or cultural literacy- especially when it comes to the arts and music- which we decide to process, become primary factors in the level of “cultural nourishment” we bring to our lives – and to the lives of others in our future.

Texts recommended here are full of historical & musical information:

Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo (Sublette)

The World That Made New Orleans (Sublette)

Latin Tinge (Storm Roberts/Oxford University Press)

The Rough Guide to Cuban Music (Sweeney/ Rough Guides)

Ornament of the World (Menocal)

God’s Crucible: Islam & the Making of Europe (David Levering Lewis)

1491 (Charles Mann)

“5 ENGINES” OF ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE : as we proceed in our consideration of the musics in the Afro Latin musical diaspora, the “5 engines” or dynamic intersections thru which cultures pass as they work to communicate, survive & evolve can be used as references beneath our critical evaluation. All 5 engines are inter-related filters of history, culture, and therefore art form. Certainly relative to a dimensional perspective of a society, they should be considered as we analyze the dynamic relationships within culture and its art forms or music.

- 1) GEOGRAPHY: What are the demands of a given physical environment? The relative stability of a given natural environment (island or ocean community)? What are the physics of survival for a culture to survive? (desert? jungle?). How do we consider these environmental dynamics when we are looking at art form?
- 2) ECONOMY: physical quality of civilization; war vs. prosperity; secular vs. religious government; isolated indigenous group vs. disenfranchised slave group; epidemics vs. economic stability: How do these dynamics affect cultural vocabulary?
- 3) LITERACY: What is communicable within a given society – and/or sharable with outside groups. Knowledge that is active within a society: “what was, what is, what can be”; what is “written” as tradition, taboo or allowable as the group morality. What is the level of quality and clarity of the “active principles” – or assets of mind -in a cultural tradition?
- 4) TECHNOLOGY: what tools are used to support an economy (food? tradition? money? education?); to facilitate community success within

demands of geography (medicinal herbs? long distance communication skills?); to share a quality of literacy across the culture (internet medium? bembe vs. rave?)

- 5) INDIVIDUALITY: the occasion of a seminal mind, or consciousness; the individual as a singular “force of nature”, one who separates social “wheat from chaff”, an ability to rise above overwhelming circumstance and remain a force for change: i.e. Martin Luther King, Jose Marti, Gandhi, Miles Davis, John Coltrane.

How does a society generate and maintain cultural creativity when limited relative to these particular “5 engines”? What is our contemporary perspective of the “cause and effect” at play under adverse circumstance? Music is a strong metaphor for the level of cultural literacy active in a given society: the self-awareness of the society is reflected in its art- in its music. Music can also include a greater mythic purpose: one which resonates beyond a specific cultural group and goes “cross-cultural”. Afro Latin music is just such a form: its all-inclusive energy has been loved and accepted around the world.

INTRO SAMPLER COMPILATION: this compilation represents a “whirlwind” of stylistic samples, a fast processional of major styles and influences pouring out from within – and as a result of - the Afro Cuban cultural diaspora. It is intended to give a sense of perspective to the breadth and dynamism of the music.

- 1] “Our Circle” (3:54) Sudan/Dinka Women’s Song (Smithsonian Folkways, ©1976- MusiCD 06873)
- 2] Taureg Minstrels @ Timbuktu (3:21) Music of Mali (Smithsonian Folkways, ©1966 -MusiCD06913)
- 3] “La Barrosa” (4:36) Paco De Lucia/ Siroco ©1987
- 4] “Obatala” (6:30) Lazaro Ros/ Olorun ©1994
- 5] “Chano Pozo” (2:36) Mongo Santamaria/ Afro Roots ©1972
- 6] “Estudio en Trompeta” (2:18) Israel Cachao Lopez / ©na- MusiCD 04531
- 7] “3-D Mambo” (2:23) Tito Puente (1957) Dance Mania ©1958 –MusiCD 04474
- 8] “Vivo en el Monte” (4:13) Papi Obiedo /Afro Latino ©1997
- 9] “Drume Negrita” (2:38) Bola de Nieve /Orfeon ©1998
- 10] “Se Formo” (5:25) Yolanda Rivera + Sonora Poncena/ Latin Divas ©1977
- 11] “Todos Locos” (5:35) Herbie Mann/ Flautista ©1959
- 12] “Guachi Guara” (2:24) Cal Tjader / Soul Sauce ©1959
- 13] “O Ye Como Va” (5:07) Santana / Sacred Fire ...Live ... ©1993
- 14- 15] “Rumba Mama” (2:11) / “Palladium” (4:46) Weather Report/ Heavy Weather ©1977
- 16] “Esto Te Pone La Cabeza Mala (4:13) Los Van Van/Cuba Si ©1999
- 17] “Contagio” (6:41) Gonzalo Rubalcaba/ Rhapsodia ©1993
- 18] “En Cinco” (6:13) Manuel Varela /La Forma Nueva ©2004
- 19] “Mama Guela” (3:24) Spanish Harlem Orch./ Un Gran Dia en el Barrio ©2002

TOTAL TIME: 1:19