

MACHITO/CHICO O'FARRILL/  
CHARLIE PARKER/DIZZY GILLESPIE

# AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ

The legendary late '40s, early '50s recordings,  
including the Machito-O'Farrill-Bird "Afro-Cuban  
Suite"; the O'Farrill-Gillespie "Manteca Suite";  
and classic works by Machito and O'Farrill's orchestras.



Nevada gambling center was far less lively than Havana.) Among the important music spots were the Montmartre, the Sans Souci, and, most famous of all, the Casino de la Playa, whose Orquesta provided early jobs for countless important Cuban musicians.

Extensive musical talent is the third resource shared by New Orleans and Havana, and like their Louisiana counterparts, most of the great Cuban players eventually succumbed to the lure of northbound travel. Some went only as far as Florida, but others continued on to New York, and their steady immigration from the beginning of this century insured a constant importation of Cuban music. Thus the tango was popular on the East Coast prior to World War I, the rhumba gained favor at the beginning of the Depression, and in the early 30's Desi Arnaz popularized a carnival dance called the conga.

Arnaz was one of many Cuban musicians introduced to New York by the society bands of Enric Madriguera and Xavier Cugat, two ensembles which achieved vast popularity during the big band era by simplifying the complex Cuban rhythms for mass American consumption. Cugat, who Marshall Stearns and others have called "the Guy Lombardo of Latin Music," featured such imported stars as Tito Rodriguez, Miguelito Valdes, Anselmo Socas, Luis del Campo and, in 1939-40, Frank Raul Grillo, a.k.a. "Machito."

Contrary to some accounts, Machito was born in Havana in 1907, lived and worked in Cuba through early adulthood, and first came to the United States in 1937. He sang with violinist Alberto Izanaga's Orquesta Siboney in Spanish Harlem before recording with Cugat, with whom he made eight sides for RCA and Columbia. In 1940, with the invaluable aid of brother-in-law Mario Bauza, Machito formed the Afro-Cubans, an orchestra which has been called "the most progressive sound in Latin Music" (Tito Puente), "the witches' cauldron in which the mixture of Cuban rhythms and jazz phrases was most thoroughly brewed" (Joachim Berendt), and "undoubtedly the most important single U.S. Latin band ever" (John Storm Roberts).

Any discussion of Machito's Afro-Cubans has to focus on Bauza, whose importance as organizer, arranger and lead trumpeter is similar to that of Don Redman in Fletcher Henderson's early band. Bauza, who moved to New York from Cuba while still a boy, is one of the earliest examples of successful cross-cultural fusion. He held important jazz jobs throughout the 30's in the bands of

Noble Sissle, Chick Webb and Cab Calloway; during his term with Calloway, Bauza persuaded the flamboyant leader to hire Dizzy Gillespie, then began sharing his knowledge of Cuban music with the young trumpeter. (Gillespie's famous statement, "I learned rhythm patterns from Charlie Parker," can be amended to read "and I learned Afro-Cuban rhythm patterns from Mario Bauza.") It was Bauza and Machito's sister, singer Graciela Grillo Perez, who kept the Afro-Cubans alive when Machito entered the army, and both Bauza and Graciela remained vital parts of the band until 1975.

**M**achito returned from the service in October 1943, and Afro-Cuban music, fueled by interest in a new dance, the mambo, took off shortly thereafter. Many seminal moments have been cited in Afro-Cuban jazz evolution—in *The Story of Jazz* Stearns describes a marathon "Tico Tico" dance, held at Manhattan Center on Easter Sunday 1946, with the bands of Machito, Jose Budet, Alberto Izanaga, El Boy and Luis del Campo providing three hours of music each—but the Town Hall concert of January 24, 1947, where Machito shared the bill with Stan Kenton in the first meeting of Afro-Cuban and jazz orchestras on one program, was clearly a watershed event. Kenton was so impressed by the playing of the Afro-Cubans, particularly on their theme song "Tango," that he asked Pete Rugolo to write a tune called "Machito" shortly after the concert, and at year's end borrowed the Afro-Cubans' rhythm section for his popular recording of "Peanut Vendor."

Stylistic interchange became the rule, as jazz musicians investigated the complex cross patterns the Cubans laid over a basic *clavé* beat (over two measures of  $\frac{8}{8}$ , accents on 1, 4, 7, 3, 5) and the harmonically static *montuno* vamps, while the Cuban players learned voicings and advanced harmonic substitutions from jazz modernists. "I truly believe jazz ended up influencing Cuban music more than Cuban music influenced jazz," Chico O'Farrill has told Helen Dance, but with all the common activity, no one really kept score. Chano Pozo became a showstopper with Gillespie in 1947; by decade's end Johnny Mandel was writing what he called "Cu-bop," including the blues "Barbados" for René Touzet and del Campo; del Campo hired Frank Socolow and Red Rodney as featured soloists; and Machito worked, in clubs and on record, with Dexter Gordon, Brew

Moore and Howard McGhee.

The real Afro-Cuban jazz summit meetings occurred when Machito played host to Charlie Parker. Norman Granz, who began recording Machito in 1948, had the idea of pairing the Afro-Cubans and the leading jazz innovator. He took Parker to hear the band rehearse at the newly opened Palladium, a club in the old Alma Dance Studios at Broadway and 53rd which became the Birdland of the Afro-Cuban movement. Rapport was established quickly, and the ensuing record sessions (Granz's first studio dates with Parker) left a lasting impression on Machito. "The man was a genius," he says of Parker. "He had a photographic mind. All you had to do was run through a tune once, twice at most, and he would say 'Let's hit it' and get it right that one time. What a man! But Parker knew his limits—if he couldn't play a tune right, he wouldn't play it. That's one reason we never recorded 'Peanut Vendor.'"

The first sessions, in December, 1948, and January, 1949, produced the classics "Okidoke" (said to be a favorite Parker expression) and "Mango Mangue." Parker's strong soloing doesn't exactly succumb to Machito's rhythmic idiom, but the combination of his alto and the band's biting sections is far more compatible than many of the later "Bird with . . ." encounters initiated by Granz. Speaking of section work, note the vitality and cohesion of the band—the reeds, for example, at the opening of "Mango Mangue." Strongest of all is the rhythm section, with Rene Hernandez, piano; Robert Rodriguez, bass; Jose Manguel, bongos; Luis Miranda, congas; Ubaldo Nieto, timbales; and Machito on maracas.

The extended *montuno* "No Noise" was also recorded during these sessions, with JATP star Flip Phillips added as second soloist. The mellow, port-wine tone and languid delivery of Phillips blends with the band's laser lit as personally, and successfully, as Parker's more advanced fire. A version of "Tanga" featuring Phillips only was also cut, but the two-part performance included here is from Machito's first session for Granz. A classic reading of a classic composition, this "Tanga" can serve as an Afro-Cuban textbook, with its *montuno* base, thick percussion patterns and Machito's rousing vocal. Bauza's arrangement makes room for his own basic trumpet (his low-register work is especially stunning), the crooning alto of Eugene Johnson, Leslie Johnkins' baritone sax and pianist Hernandez.

Parker, Phillips and Machito's band were reunited two years later, with some added depth in the ensemble (the second conga player is Chano Pozo, reputedly Chano's cousin) and Buddy Rich as the

third featured soloist. The occasion was the recording of Arturo "Chico" O'Farrill's "Afro-Cuban Suite." Born in Havana in 1921, O'Farrill took a different route to the U.S. when his family sent him to a Southern military school in 1936. He returned to Cuba in 1940, played trumpet in bands that concentrated on jazz, and in 1946, gave up his horn and began writing.

In 1948 O'Farrill moved to New York, where he studied with Stephan Wolpe and Hall Overton, among others, and contributed "Undercurrent Blues" and "Shishkabop" to Benny Goodman's short-lived bebop band. His Afro-Cuban involvement picked up in the next year, when he wrote "Cuban Episode" for Kenton and began his association with Machito. Given his background in jazz, Cuban music and conservatory composition, O'Farrill was the logical choice to provide an extended suite.

"Cancion" states the basic material with fanfares and a trumpet theme reminiscent of Ferde Grofe. Bauza's trumpet leads the brass, then the reed section growls a bit before turning majestic. "Mambo" establishes a *montuno* and some basic Cuban rhythms, with reeds and brass pitted against each other, before Parker plays a darting 48 bars in various stages of dialogue with the orchestra. The sections snarl before Rene Hernandez solos, then brass and a percussion barrage lead to the end of the first part of "Mambo." ("Mambo" was originally released in two parts, fading at the end of the first because of the 78 r.p.m. format.)

Part two of "Mambo" begins with rubato Flip Phillips; after he muses over the "Cancion" theme, the trumpets introduce a melody quite close to "On Green Dolphin Street." Darkening horn clouds and probing clarinets anticipate danger, but the reeds settle the mood down at the close. The rumbling melody of "6/8," somehow both somber and frisky, spurs the reed and percussion sections to some of their most fantastic playing. One thinks of Ellington when hearing the extended ensemble twining, yet the persistent rhythmic whip provided by congas and timbales is pure Cubano. Phillips blows briefly over the ensemble, then Rich enters with a flurry in anticipation of the next movement.

"Jazz" is just what the name implies, with the band on fire over Rich's confident cooking. There is much of Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young in Phillips' two choruses; Parker, whose mercurial accents demonstrate one dimension of rhythmic perfection, gets only 32 bars. The chorus of "fours," which Ira Gitler once characterized as the pedestrian (Phillips) versus the

time (Parker), can be viewed more charitably as a pairing of one master student and one transcendent original. The tenor spots are intense, if derivative, and experienced listeners will appreciate how the persistent Lester Young borrowings by Phillips ultimately lead Parker to a Young quote of his own. Buddy Rich offers a furious, if lightly lengthy *tour de force*; his bass drum work is outstanding. "Rhumba Abierta" reprises the basic melodic material, swirled through the ensemble, before the trombones take over for a pensive conclusion.

O'Farrill's successful venture in extended composition led Granz to spotlight his writing in a series of recordings originally released on Clef and Norgran. Between 40 and 50 sides were made during the years 1951–55, with the eight selections on side three stemming from the beginning of the period. As O'Farrill did not have his own working band until 1953, these tracks were made with pick-up groups; and while the standard references list no personnel information, several experts feel that some of Machito's Afro-Cubans were present on the 1951 recordings. "I hardly ever used soloists in my records," O'Farrill noted to Helen Dance in a 1967 down beat interview. "In general, it was big band Afro-Cuban jazz, with emphasis on ensemble playing. I guess it was really an arranger's band."

"Manteca Suite," from 1954, is the culmination of O'Farrill's period with Granz. Expanding on the 1947 classic "Manteca" (composed by Gillespie, Chano Pozo and arranger Walter "Gil" Fuller), O'Farrill created a concerto for the jazz musician who, then as now, was most thoroughly attuned to the Afro-Cuban rhythmic idiom. Gillespie's combo of the time—Hank Mobley, Wade Legge, Lou Hackney and Charlie Persip—is joined by a crack group of studio horns plus Machito's rhythm section. (Candido, who performs on "Manteca", often recorded with Machito, though he never worked jobs with the Afro-Cubans.)

Gil Fuller's original arrangement is followed quite faithfully in "Manteca Theme," with Hank Mobley handling the half-chorus originally played by George "Big Nick" Nicholas, until the extended vamp under Gillespie yields O'Farrill's own melodic variations. From this point forward, O'Farrill sets the tone with a variety of tempi and colors. The sultry "Contraste" reworks the bridge of "Manteca" into a rhapsody, with the ensemble passion that has marked all of Gillespie's bands especially when the trumpeter is

soaring on top). Steaming 6/8 drums launch the "Jungla" discussion of the main theme and alteration of the original vamp. Gillespie occasionally rises from among the brass, finally reaching a *montuno* clearing where he dances at length over the percussion and closes *a cappella*; in solos filled with such fertile imagination, one almost overlooks the awesome Gillespie technique. The blues and common time arrive on "Rhumba Finale," as reeds state half the "Manteca" main theme and brass snap the other half in response. Boppish saxes cushion Gillespie, then Lucky Thompson stomps in the manner of his classic solo on Miles Davis' "Walkin'" (recorded less than a month earlier). The brass cry out a chorus and reach an unexpected halt. *Clavés* then bring on the coda, based on the bridge, which tightens the emotional climate as Gillespie calmly muses against the ensemble storm. Finally, Gillespie succumbs in a manner characteristic both of himself and of O'Farrill.

Numerous credits have been accumulated by O'Farrill since the last of these sessions. After settling in Mexico in the late 50's, he composed a symphony, led two bands simultaneously and had a television show. In the years since 1965, when he returned to the U.S., O'Farrill has written for a musical spectrum ranging from Count Basie, Cal Tjadar, the Glenn Miller ghost band, Clark Terry, Gato Barbieri, Stan Kenton, Frank Wess, and Joe Newman, through his old friend Machito. As these notes were being written, O'Farrill had just completed an assignment for Lionel Hampton.

The Latin music scene has changed as well since the "Afro-Cuban" and "Manteca" suites were recorded. Trumpet-and-rhythm *conjunto* bands, first introduced to New York by Tito Puente and Tito Rodriguez, placed emphasis on more solos and a compact combo sound; a host of succeeding influences—from Puerto Rico, Brazil, American rock and soul, and further Cuban strains like the *charanga* ensemble with flutes and strings—led to the current *salsa* hybrid. Venerable sources don't fade away, however. Machito continues working and recording; in 1975, with familiar names like Bauza, Madera, Johnakins and Hernandez still in the band, and Gillespie as guest soloist, he recorded O'Farrill's "Oro, Incienso y Mirra" and "Three Afro-Cuban Jazz Moods" for Norman Granz. And Gillespie, who might have paraphrased his famous "Manteca" vocal by singing "I'll never go back to Cuba," docked in Havana with an American jazz cruise in May

1977. With prospects of a reconciliation between Castro and the U.S., a new era of Afro-Cuban activity may be upon us.

(The author wishes to acknowledge the unstinting assistance of Joe Conzo in the preparation of these notes.)

## SIDE 3

**JATAP MAMBO\***  
(O'Farrill) (565-3) 2:47 BMI

**HAVANA SPECIAL**  
(O'Farrill) (641-1) 3:02 ASCAP

**FIESTA TIME**  
(O'Farrill) (643-2) 3:16 BMI

**CUBAN BLUES\***  
(O'Farrill) (569-2) 3:08 BMI

**AVOCADOES**  
(O'Farrill) 2:43 ASCAP

**ALMENDRA**  
(A. Valdes) 2:39 BMI

**DISAPPEARANCE\***  
(O'Farrill) (568-1) 2:58 BMI

**CARIOLA**  
(Younens, Kahn, Eliscu) (642-5) 3:06 ASCAP

Chico O'Farrill's Orchestra, arranged by Chico O'Farrill. Recorded in New York City, November 24, 1951. \*Recorded in New York City, 1951 (date unknown). (Although not listed in discographies, according to Chico O'Farrill, the tunes "Avocadoes" and "Almendra" were recorded during these 1951 sessions.)

Mario Bauza, Doug Mettome, Jimmy Nottingham, Al Stewart, Nick Travis (trumpet), Eddie Bert, Vern Friley, Fred Zito (trombone), Lenny Hambro, Ben Harrod, George Berg (alto saxophone), Flip Phillips, Eddie Wasserman (tenor saxophone), Danny Banks (baritone saxophone), Rene Hernandez (piano), Bob Rodriguez (bass), Don Lamond (drums), Uba Nieto, Candido, Luis Miranda, Jose Mangue (percussion).

(There is no discographical information about personnel that has been accepted by all. However, Chico O'Farrill stated in 1977 that the musicians listed above were those used for these sessions with slight variation.)

## SIDE 1

**OKIDOKE**  
(Hernandes, Machito) (2171) 3:04 ASCAP

**TANGA, Pt. 1**  
(Bauza) 3:47 ASCAP

**TANGA, Pt. 2**  
(Bauza) 3:00 ASCAP

**MANGO MANGUE**  
(Valdes Sunshine) (2157-1) 2:53 ASCAP

**NO NOISE, Pt. 1**  
(Bartee) (2154-1) 3:02 BMI

**NO NOISE, Pt. 2**  
(Bartee) (2155-2) 2:56 BMI

*Machito and his Orchestra, featuring Charlie Parker and Flip Phillips*

Recorded in New York City, December 1948 and January 1949.

Mario Bauza, Frank Davilla, Bob Woodlen (trumpet), Charlie Parker, Gene Johnson, Fred Skerritt (alto saxophone), Flip Phillips, Jose Madera (tenor saxophone), Leslie Johnakins (baritone saxophone), Rene Hernandez (piano), Roberto Rodriguez (bass), Machito (maracas), Jose Mangue (bongos), Luis Miranda (congas), Ubaldo Nieto (timbales). All arranged (except "Tanga") by Rene Hernandez.

## SIDE 2

**THE AFRO-CUBAN SUITE**

**CANCION**  
(O'Farrill) (577-4) 2:56 BMI

**MAMBO**  
(O'Farrill) (558-6, 559-4) 5:53 BMI

**6/8**  
(Gillespie, O'Farrill) (560-2) 2:12 ASCAP

**JAZZ**  
(O'Farrill) (561-3) 3:38 BMI

**RHUMBA ABIERTA**  
(O'Farrill) (562-4) 2:33 BMI

*Machito and his Orchestra; arranged by Chico O'Farrill; featuring Charlie Parker and Flip Phillips*

Recorded in New York City, December 21, 1950

Harry Edison, Al Stewart, Mario Bauza, Frank Davilla, Bob Woodlen (trumpet), Charlie Parker, Gene Johnson, Fred Skerritt (alto saxophone), Flip Phillips, Jose Madera, Sol Rabinowitz (tenor saxophone), Leslie Johnakins (baritone saxophone), Rene Hernandez (piano), Roberto Rodriguez (bass), Machito (maracas), Jose Mangue (bongos), Chano Pozo, Luis Miranda (congas), Ubaldo Nieto (timbales), Buddy Rich (drums)

## SIDE 4

**THE MANTECA SUITE**

**MANTECA THEME**  
(Fuller, Gillespie) (1711) ASCAP

**CONTRASTE**  
(Gillespie, O'Farrill) (1712) ASCAP

**JUNGLA**  
(Gillespie, O'Farrill) (1713) ASCAP

**RHUMBA FINALE**  
(Gillespie, O'Farrill) (1714) ASCAP

Total Time: 16:24

Dizzy Gillespie's Orchestra; arranged by Chico O'Farrill.

Recorded in New York City, March 24, 1954

Dizzy Gillespie, Quincy Jones, Ernie Royal, Jimmy Nottingham (trumpet), Leon Cormones, J.J. Johnson, George Mathews (trombone), Hilton Jefferson, George Dorsey (alto saxophone), Hank Mobley, Lucky Thompson (tenor saxophone), Danny Bank (baritone saxophone), Wade Legge (piano), Lou Hackney, Robert Rodriguez (bass), Charlie Persip (drums), Jose Mangue (bongos), Ubaldo Nieto (timbales), Candido Camero, Luis Miranda (congas).

## SELECTIONS:

OKIDOKE  
TANGA, Pt. 1  
TANGA, Pt. 2  
MANGO MANGUE  
NO NOISE, Pt. 1  
NO NOISE, Pt. 2

*Machito and his Orchestra, featuring Charlie Parker and Flip Phillips*

**THE AFRO-CUBAN SUITE**

## CANCIÓN

## MAMBO

6/8

## JAZZ

## RHUMBA ABIERTA

*Machito and his Orchestra, composed and arranged by Chico O'Farrill; featuring Charlie Parker and Flip Phillips*

## JATAP MAMBO

## HAVANA SPECIAL

## FIESTA TIME

## CUBAN BLUES

## AVOCADOES

## ALMENDRA

## DISAPPEARANCE

## CARIOCA

*The Chico O'Farrill Orchestra; arranged by Chico O'Farrill*

**THE MANTECA SUITE**

## MANTECA THEME

## CONTRASTE

## JUNGLA

## RHUMBA FINALE

*The Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra; arranged by Chico O'Farrill*

By Bob Blumenthal

**G**eography and jazz history are old acquaintances. Everyone knows the tale about jazz being born in New Orleans, floating up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, then heading overland to Chicago and eventually New York. It's an overly simple synopsis, omitting and obscuring many of the crosscurrents that helped shape early jazz, but the story survives because it provides a concise overview of the music's formative dispersion. The cliché bears repeating because it suggests a similar journey taken by the branch of jazz known as Afro-Cuban: from its birthplace in Havana, via the Atlantic Ocean, to the port of Manhattan.

Cuba's capitol and the Louisiana metropolis both possessed three resources essential to the development of new-world musical forms. Of primary importance, each had a direct link with the rich heritage of African

music brought to this continent by the slaves. Much has been written about New Orleans' Congo Square, where blacks recreated traditional rhythms, dances and rituals as early as 1817; these manifestations of Africa continue today in the Mardi Gras celebration, just as they did in Cuba during the lifetime of Chano Pozo (Luciano Pozo y Gonzales, 1915-1948), the conga drummer-composer who spread the Afro-Cuban message with Dizzy Gillespie's orchestra. Pozo, who chanted and danced as well as playing percussion, joined the Abakwa cult (which can be traced to Nigeria) early in his youth in Havana, and the cult performed annually under the name Los Nanigos during Cuban Mardi Gras.

The active night life of both cities forms a second common bond. Just as jazz thrived in the legendary Storyville District (until 1917, that is, when local authorities shut the District down), Afro-Cuban music found numerous outlets in the clubs and casinos of Havana, a notoriously wide-open city until Castro's revolution. (Chico O'Farrill, who briefly paid some Las Vegas dues, once remarked that the

(continued)

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