This CD is produced by Cuba Solidarity Campaign as part of the Cuba50 Festival of Cuban Culture in the UK in 2009.

Cuba Solidarity Campaign is an NGO which campaigns for an end to the US blockade of Cuba and for normalisation of relations between the UK and Cuba. www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk

Cuba50 is an initiative of CSC to celebrate Cuba’s achievements on the 50th anniversary of the revolution. www.cuba50.org

The Music Fund for Cuba charity sends educational equipment for music and the performing arts to Cuba. www.musicfundforcuba.org.uk

Thanks
Tracks: World Circuit Ltd www.worldcircuit.co.uk
Tumi Music www.tumimusic.com
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Cover images: Roberto Fumagalli www.rfphoto.it
Production and notes: Trish Meehan assisted by Dave Willetts
Design by Chapman Design
1. **Los Jovenes Clasicos del Son** Tambor en el Alma 3.55  
(Norberto Chang) Licensed from TUMI Music. From ‘Tambor en el Alma’

2. **Celia Gonzalez** Yo soy el punto Cubano 4.19  
(Celia Gonzalez, Reutilio Dominguez). Licensed from TUMI Music. From ‘Rica Cosecha’

3. **Lazaro Valdés Y Bamboleo** La culpa es mia 3.52  
(Lazaro Valdes Rodriguez) Licensed from Bis Music DVD ‘Knock Out’

4. **Gerardo Alfonso** Sabanas Blancas 4.04  
(Rachel Abraham López) Licensed from Bis Music. From ‘Sabanas Blancas’

5. **Juan Formell y Los Van Van** La Habana no aguanta más 5.32  
(Juan Formell) Licensed from TUMI Music. From ‘Best of Juan Formell & Los Van Van’

6. **Issac Delgado** Vuelve pronto que configo quiero estar 4.31  
(Juan José Almeida Bosque) Licensed from Bis Music. From ‘Me gusta así’

7. **El Gremio** Quién hala mas? (Conga Latina) 3.06  
(Karel Armas Ramirez) Licensed from Bis Music. From ‘El Gremio’

8. **Yusa** Conga Pasajera 3.06  
(Yusa) Licensed from TUMI Music. From ‘Haiku’

9. **Candido Fabre** El Apagón 4.53  
(Candido Fabre) Licensed from TUMI Music. From ‘La Habana quiere guarachar’

10. **Omara Portuondo y Orquesta America** Mucho Corazón 3.35  
(Emma Elena Valderamas) Licensed from TUMI Music

11. **Telmary Díaz** Rumba pa’ofrendarle 3.25  
(Telmary Diaz Fernandez / 1 coauthor) Licensed from Bis Music. From ‘La Rumba soy yo II’

12. **Charanga Habanera** Marina quiere bailar 5.46  
(Juan José Almeida Bosque) Licensed from Bis Music. From ‘Me gusta así’

13. **To’Mexclao** Dale 3.16  
(Julio Montoro) Licensed from TUMI Music. From ‘Hibrid’

14. **Buena Vista Social Club** El Cuarto de Tula 8.03  
(Sergio Siaba) Licensed from World Circuit Ltd. From ‘Buena Vista Social Club live at Carnegie Hall’

15. **Grupo Su4-Danae** Hasta siempre comandante 3.23  
(Carlos Puebla) Licensed from TUMI Music. From ‘Hasta Siempre Comandante’

This special CD celebrates the wonderful development of Cuban music over the last 50 years since the Cuban Revolution of 1959.
African slaves transported by Spanish rulers to Cuba brought their religion, music and dances which evolved with European influences. Being only 90 miles from Florida has always meant a close entanglement with US culture, especially in the early 20th century when there was a constant flow of Cuban musicians in and out of the US. Other Caribbean islands and Latin America have also made their mark.

Cuba’s socialist revolution in 1959 brought sweeping changes to the way in which culture was produced, taught and distributed. Music institutions and colleges were founded and opened to all for free while Afro-Cuban art forms received state support for the first time – ensuring the preservation of some ancient songs and dances. Musicians were encouraged to experiment, to innovate.

For most of the last 50 years Cuba has lived with an economic blockade imposed by the US government – restricting travel, import of music and instruments amongst many other things – so ability to innovate has proved useful.

**Jovenes Clasicos del son’s Tambor en el alma** (‘drum in the soul’) celebrates the African drums at the heart of all Cuban music. Jovenes, a group of young musicians, formed in the late 90s committed to rejuvenating the traditional Cuban son.

**Yo soy el punto cubano** by the queen of country music, Celina Gonzalez, written in 1949, aimed to put campesino music on the map when it had been forgotten, staking its claim as part of the Cuban independence struggle. Musically she mixed country music with Afro-Cuban rhythms, making it more danceable.

**Los Van Van** made their name mixing streetwise lyrics with top class musicianship. They formed in 1969 led by Juan Formell and have been at the forefront of innovative dance music,
mixing son, jazz and rock they created their own funky songo rhythm which drives home the insistent double edged message of La Habana no aguanta más (Havana can’t take much more) from the ’80s.

Timba - the fast, upfront and confident dance music which jazzed up salsa in the ’90s - was developed by NG la Banda and others, paving the way for the phenomenal success of Bamboleo, led by Lazaro Valdés, now one of the most popular dance bands in Cuba.

Issac Delgado, who originally sang with timba innovators NG, formed his own band in 1991 and he remains one of Cuba’s greatest singers. His sweet voice emphasizes the sadness of love across the divide with Vuelve pronto que contigo quiero estar (come back soon so I can be with you).

The more direct timba sound of Charanga Habanera reflects the noisy streets of a bustling city. Gerardo Alfonso takes a typical almost clichéd Havana image of washing lines (sabanas blancas – white sheets) and creates a homage to a great city which has become an anthem. While Alfonso rocks it up, the more intimate side of the nueva trova movement (led by Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés in the ’70s) is represented here by young singer-songwriter Tusa whose Conga Pasajera is sparse and stylish.

In older times street corner battles were played out through the lyrics of a rumba. Telmary’s Rumba pa’ ofrendarle an intermixing of rumba and hip hop, is a natural development of Cuba’s long tradition of conscious and combative lyrics. Homegrown hip hop gradually became appreciated during the 90s and is now celebrated with an annual festival.

To’ Mezclao who take their name from national poet Nicolas Guillén’s refrain (‘all mixed up’), epitomise the spirit of adventure which a new generation brings in Cuba. Drawing on many influences from classical to pop and rock whilst keeping their sound strictly bailable (danceable).

El Gremio’s Conga Latina takes a carnival conga and spices it up with Jamaican dancehall-influenced reggaeton, one of the latest rhythms from the streets of Havana.

Omara Portuondo sings here an emotional bolero with Orquesta América but is better known for her crucial part in the international phenomenon that has been Buena Vista Social Club over the last 10 years. This outstanding collection of musicians, many brought out of retirement, took the son around the world most famously to New York’s Carnegie Hall where this live version of the rousing and irrepressible classic Cuban son Cuarto de Tula (Tula’s room) was recorded with great guitar playing by Eliades Ochoa.

That concert was a defining moment in changing attitudes towards Cuban culture especially in America. It has been rare for musicians living in Cuba to be granted entry to the US to perform due to the US blockade. For band leader Juan de Marcos Gonzalez: “…it seemed that after forty years of animosity, the doors of America had finally been opened to Cuban music”.

Cuba has been called the island of music and it continues to share its sounds both traditional and innovative with a grateful and inspired world.