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JOSE LUIS QUINTANA ~ CHANGUITO



Track 1 Introduction and Solo



Jose Luis Quintana, Changuito, drummer and percussionist extraordinaire, has influenced many drummers around the world. As timbalero and drum set artist with the seminal Cuban group, Los Van Van, Changuito helped set the stage for what would be one of the major percussion innovations emanating from Cuba: the rhythm of Songo. This major addition to modern drum set and percussion repertoire has helped to changed the way many drummers play “latin” music.

From the early '70s to the '90s, Changuito forged new percussion ground, propelling Los Van Van to international fame. Los Van Van toured throughout the world, bringing their new swinging grooves to thousands and thousands of dancers, musicians, and new converts to the Afro-Cuban pulse. As the years pro-

gressed, so did Changuito's style. What started out as just timbales was soon replaced by a full drum set. Changuito's drum set mastery on the song “Guararé,” from an early Van Van recording, was a real eye-opener for those of us who had the opportunity to hear it. This was new drumming; cutting edge, hard-hitting and soulful. But the drum set era did not last. The timbales beckoned and Changuito returned. A new style of playing timbales was about to begin. And Changuito would forever change the drumming of the whole world.

Typical patterns, like cáscara, were altered slightly, a note accented or doubled in such a way as to flavor the groove in a new and exciting way. The timbale bells were also subject to change. New patterns were invented, discarded, renewed, reworked, all in the name of groove and swing.

One of the most amazing things, to many drummers and percussionists worldwide, was the new vocabulary of fills and solos which Changuito offered. Chances were taken at almost every opportunity to be outlandish, unpredictable, and still retain the groove and swing. Fills seemed to come out of left field, darting around hair-pin turns, and returning only to fall short or after the downbeat, adding to the tension created by the clave-influenced rhythms. It must have been something to be a musician performing in Los Van Van at this tumultuous time, not knowing where or when one of these fantastic fills would occur. They call him El Misterioso (The Mysterious One). His ideas emanate from some hidden cave of creativity, and boil up to the surface in volcanic eruptions. Without all of these, Los Van Van would have still been great. With the addition of Changuito and his inventive nature, Los Van Van remained at the pinnacle of Cuban popularity for decades.

Changuito's recorded solos are rare things of beauty. They have influenced generations of Cuban percussionists, in turn influencing us all. You may ask if solos can have such a dra-