

Elito Reve: “I will die in Havana”

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Elito Reve, one of the most important icons of the Cuban popular music, answered some questions for CubaSi with humbleness and grace.

He began playing the claves and then the piano in the orchestra. He still follows the path paved by his father Elio Reve as the leading musician of *El Charangon*. Here some of the answers of *El Charangon*'s director who after 60 years remains in the public's preference.

Let's begin with some history...

Orquesta Reve was founded in 1956 in Havana. My father came from Guantanamo and brought *Changui* —musical genre original from Guantanamo— with him. We are descendent from a French man who fell in love with a Cuban slave; thus, there you have the origin of my surname Reve, which means dream. Six generations of Cubans have danced with *La Reve*. Outstanding musicians like Juan Formell, Cesar Pupi Pedroso, Juan Carlos Alfonso, Yumuri, Vicente Rojas, and young singer-songwriter Emilio Frias “El Nino,” have been part of the orchestra.

How do you feel when you are regarded as a school for other stars in the Cuban musical arena?

We have been lucky to enjoy musicians such as Chucho Valdes, Ibrahim Ferrer, Enrique Alvarez...Being in the preference of the public has not been an easy goal after 61 years. We have created music since my father's day. I have tried to continue the path. Several CDs have come to light since. Our work is reflected in all those generations that have danced with the orchestra. Our band still has its signature.

How much continuity and renewal can we see in *La Reve*?

Look, being in the elite is the hardest thing. There are orchestras that get a hit because they are made of good artists, singers, and they have talent. But being there in the public's preference all the time is not easy at all. My father and I have achieved it. The orchestra still has good national and international preference despite new emerging genres.

I set a full drum work in the orchestra as I wanted to enrich the percussion work of the band. I initiated the use of a bass. A woman works with the orchestra as a singer for the first time. It is a strong band but you need to give a different show every day. I have made some changes for the sake of the group. We have made *changui* better, different, full of spirit; nonetheless, the musical concept of the orchestra remains the same..."

***La Reve* and *Los Van Van* joined forces and performed live at the Sports City in Havana to pay a special tribute. What can you tell us?**

It was my idea. I talked to Samuelito and said: look, Elio Reve and Juan Formell have played an essential role in the musical history of our nation. And we must give this Cuban people and the world a live concert...It was named *Dos leyendas juntas*. The live concert DVD will be launched soon.

What can you tell us about your recently launched CD...?

"*Yo me muero en La Habana*" is a BIS MUSIC CD. *Yomil y el Dani* featured one song with us, with the special arrangement of Dagoberto Gonzalez Jr. and Cucurucho Valdes. It is a very beautiful album. It is online already. The song *La cuchara* has a video and will be premiere in the upcoming days."

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