

Cubanisms: North American Band with Deep Cuban Musical Roots

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The echoes of Jazz Plaza still bounce in Cuba. Every year the festival becomes a true musical bridge among groups of different formats that defend various sounds, going hand in hand with the countries they represent and the roots or musical influences they have.

The story in this article speaks about the band **Cubanisms**, a North American jazz band from Kansas City but with the Cuban tres guitar and the fusion with different sounds of our country build up the essence of its musical arrangements, even the primary source for inspiration of its leader and musical director Michael McClintock.

This multiethnic band is sounding since 2015, last year 2018 they earned according to the newspaper Pitch the “Best local Band”; the nomination as “Best performer” went to McClintock; and its vocalist, Fedra Cooper, received a nomination for “Best vocalist”.

They have been trying to come to Cuban for a while now as a group and participate, after in 2017 they launched their first album: “**Cuban accent**”, where songs like **El cuarto de Tula**, **Inolvidable**, and **Aguanile** stand out. The group also has interesting song arrangements of Flor Palida, of Polo Montañez, and other icon songs of the Cuban music besides Michael already works in the writing of his own songs thinking of the second album. Without renouncing to the essence of their proposal so far.

Going back to their presence at Jazz Plaza Festival, they took an important step when they were in Cuba in January 2018. They promoted their disk here in Cuba, McClintock had the chance of being invited as tres guitar player to play with different Cuban bands, and that opened him the doors to come in 2019. Besides, the band’s debut album competed in the category of International Prize in Cubadisco 2018.

Of course whenever asked about the drive of this special opportunity he always asserts that it’s his wife Dálida, Cuban through and through and whom he met precisely here in one of his previous trips to take tres guitar lessons.

"She has a huge energy and an organizational capacity that I've never seen in anyone. She takes my musical career more seriously than me. She is my manager, consultant, main promoter, she gives ideas, and what's essential, inspiration source. I am blessed to have met her and have her by my side", said the musician.

He decided to establish a romance with the Tres guitar after listening Barbarito Torres (Buena Vista Social Club) for the first time, Mc Clintock deepened: "The Tres guitar is basically an accompanying instrument, essential when defending Cuban traditional music. What I think is interesting in our proposal is that the arrangements and proposals of Cubanisms are not bounded to traditional music: we shift in styles like jazz, flamenco, bossa nova and other Brazilian rhythms. All that merged with the Afro-Cuban rhythms.

We are extremely happy, because Jazz Plaza was the first international performance for Cubanisms, and the first time the band was in Cuba complete. It was an honor for all of us to be able to perform in one of the most important musical festivals of this country.

In fact, we are working in our first DVD with the footage of the concerts in Bertolt Bretch and at Fábrica de Arte, a place simply incredible, where people connect with one in a very natural way.

That is something that all my musicians praised here and that it differs when we perform in Kansas City or anywhere within the United States: the way in which the public connects and gets involved with our music. I believe is in the blood of Cuban that musicality.

The essence of what we seek with Cubanisms is that when people listen to our music they can identify us right away. I personally love Cuban rhythms and the fusion with other sounds of different countries. We are working so that the second album, with most of the songs written by me, it comes the as near as possible to that objective", he said.

An interesting element is that Cubanisms is more than a musical band. Since it started wants to become a cultural project that also includes the organization of trips to Cuba to be deeply involved with culture, the traditions and different institutions, besides working as bridge in the relationships between our country and the United States. A bridge spread by music, love and respect to our people and its culture.
