

Paulo FG: Sonando en Cuba, Expression of Needed Identity

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We exchanged with promoter of Sonando en Cuba, Paulo Fernández Gallo, in a Cuban music atmosphere and a project of Isla Grande rum blossoming.

Complicity is in our side and, without further ado, the also known as the Sofocador de la Salsa, since he created la Elite, he agreed to speak with Cubasí.

What sensation has brought this successful second season of Sonando en Cuba? Did you think it would get such welcoming?

I still can't believe it. I'm still moved by people's repeated congratulations. Not only the praising, but also everywhere we go or events in which we participate, the examples of gratitude have been great. People can say bravo, but when they say thank you, it lasts longer.

Does this sensation mean that for coming seasons you plan to redesign it?

We have to move on, the mind is completely evolutionary. Right now we will do a follow-up to their careers in a year, so the public can keep track of them. Meet what was promised to them, boost their artistic presence and after that time, have control of their future careers.

In fact, we have put on hold their joining the groups that were interested on them before, because most of them can be considered talented singers.

Two years and half, two seasons, a quality improvement. Cuba had prior shows like this one ***Todo el mundo canta*** why the idea of such huge project like Sonando en Cuba?

Someone told me: you did it and you were not in need of it. You have a solid career and certainly ranked high in

the Cuban popular music panorama. I think it's just the opposite: if you are aware of your surroundings, with a critical eye and your feeling of belonging to our music, to promote this idea was a must-do task.

It's no secret the degradation of idiosyncrasy existing, especially in the youths. I could see in my kids' friends with a total ignorance of their music, their cultural wealth. Speaking more about what was foreign, Latin, English-speaking, a product sold as modern. Our identity was getting lost, the idiosyncrasy for which our music is identified worldwide. Personally I requested this project three years ago and we could channel it two and a half years ago, it was then when we began the process.

If suddenly, triggered by the changes taking place in Cuba, foreign visitors keep coming or in-house we don't have enough to give our people a cultural event of identity, I'd like to quote Gabriel García Márquez who said that Cuba had established a musical dictatorship in the Caribbean for its authenticity. Just a quick trip back in the history of Cuban music reveal great artists like Lecuona, Bola de Nieve, Rita Montaner, Roberto Faz, Celia Cruz, Benny Moré, a treasure forgotten in a far corner that needed to be rediscovered. It's criminal that young people, schools, overlook that knowledge.

Then we thought of a program with sensibility. I had heard young talented artists around, with great voices and told them: Why do you sing that, with those qualities you have?, they simply answered: If I don't sing this, I won't eat.

Can it be said that Sonando en Cuba becomes an antidote or response to a real threatening situation?

The main goal was always to create for those youths a panorama or build a musical, audiovisual, aesthetics platform. Placing them on a big stage, well trained, and supported by others; to put in their hands great works. We approached those new voices, sounds with new interpretive styles, and something that is essential for me: during the casting, the main objective was to choose contestants with authentic sounds, having a genuine, and very personal interpretation.

Very good vocalists came, but they were tainted, influenced, and those regrettably didn't go through, because they had lost their authenticity.

In that search we found the talent we thought we needed, musically with another renovating energy, and that's what happened.

Why such a huge project that reaches society, the human fiber? Is it another expression of Cuban identity to reach deep?

We grew artistically, culturally and socially with that training. I felt the absence we were witnessing had somehow influenced in the changes that were taking place. It is really hard to educate. The reactions of young people when you ask them to clean a street or carry out a give task are not the same anymore.

I remember I painted curbs in festival dates, we hung adorns on working Sundays, I sowed plants, I completed an internationalist mission in Angola When I started down the path of music with Dan Den, Opus 13, and La Elite, we were even defenders of many ideas of the youth amid the Economic Crisis in Cuba. Those were battles that, in a way, had great human sense, of social solidarity. We wanted the new generations to find that in the show and learn that material things, don't last forever.

Third season already in mind?

Of course. We cannot stop now. Earlier there was a different expression with Bailando en Cuba, and then the third season will have a different dynamics, because we attempt to involve the talents from Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic; it would be an international competition of three teams that comprises rhythms, songs and sounds of the three countries. A wider dimension. We trust it would be equally successful to the one we just finished.

We finished out talk, almost to the sound of two songs of Haila in the Great Hall Canaria of Meliá Habana Hotel. Paulito finished showing his gratitude to every last person who, in one way or another was involved with Sonando en Cuba, and with the people, the greatest critic of any show. Paraphrasing one of his songs and looking up ahead I wish him luck.
