

# MUSICA de CUBA pre-Castro

*El Rancho*

*Trio Lissabet*

*Jawbone of an Ass*

*Conjunto Siboney*

recorded by Sam Eskin

**Special  
HIGH FIDELITY  
MONOPHONIC  
Edition**

**COOK**

RECORDS

SOUNDS OF OUR TIMES

The infectious music and spirit of a dynamic island people, recorded in Cook high fidelity in 1955. *Jawbone of an Ass* is a real jawbone from a real ass, used as a percussion instrument. The original 'Peanut Vendor' song and eleven other favorites from the life and times of old Cuba.



# Santiago de Cuba -- Cradle of Conga

This was how it all started:

"Dear Sirs:

Since you have the policy of enquiring among your customers about their Favorite Sounds, I am submitting to you an idea I had after hearing Willie Rodriguez\* and his drums which incidentally is a superb piece of recording.

I live in Santiago de Cuba, which is Cuba's Conga home town and probably the only place in the world today where the original Afro-Cuban conga is played and danced once a year during the festivities of Santiago Apostol.

This Conga is all alcohol, percussion and one Chinese Trumpet. I'll be glad to help you if you are interested to make the necessary arrangements and give you all my assistance.

Yours very truly,  
Ariel Fiallo Arias"

Bob! Sounds good. Let's go.  
Emory

The letter was dated May 28th, 1954 and it took us fourteen slow months almost to the day to rush southward to Santiago de Cuba. What we found there has spread to several records. Of them all, *Jawbone* most completely embraces the whole infectious spirit which rocks the island come Carnival time.

From a land where the Conga beat is the universal language, here is a kaleidoscope of music and gaiety—from the primitive to the sophisticated. And permeating all of them—be it the *El Rancho* night club band, street trios or roving Carnival bands—is the same ripe atmosphere of tropical rum and warm easy graciousness. No one could possibly mistake the good-humored whistle and trumpet *repartee* (*Ritmo Y Frutas de Cuba*—Band 1, Side B) for any of the current facsimiles from Broadway & Hollywood ballrooms. All Cuban brass, rough or polished, glows with the same radiant warmth and impudence . . . which can come only from the life and times of this island, and nowhere else.

The *Jawbone of an Ass* is a real jawbone from a real ass. The teeth, still intact, utter their ratchet-like chatter starting toward the end of band 3, on the A side.

Senor Fiallo generously assumed the role of inspired guide, host, confidante and interpreter during our Cuban sojourn. It is an understatement to say these recordings would never have been possible without his expert help.

Selections on this record were recorded by folk-artist and folk-singer Sam Eskin who contributes the following notes:

The vitality of Cuban music woven in so rich a melody and rhythm . . . rvedly created . . . far be . . . l especially in

Whence came this dynamic music to an island whose original Indian inhabitants left no known traces of their culture? The answer seems to lie in the two dominant racial strains—the Negro and the Spanish. African Negro melody is rudimentary and takes its color from the dominant melodic material in Cuba, the Spanish. But Negro rhythm has formed a perfect marriage with this Spanish melody and the two provide the basis for much of Cuban folk and popular music. And this fusion of Negro and Spanish elements must have been sired by the spirit of the dance which is always present.

The selections on this record give some idea of the variety which is achieved while still remaining within the limits of a style which is peculiarly Cuban.

Cubans, like most Latins, are gregarious and the nightclub flourishes throughout the island. The *Rancho* band heard here is an excellent example of the kind of professional music provided for those who seek such entertainment.

The Trio Lissabet is typical of Cuba and such vocal combinations are prevalent in most parts of the island. In this instance they were augmented by two percussionists. The songs of the trio seem to be predominantly Spanish in influence.

*Ritmo Y Frutas de Cuba* comprises one of the larger musical groups frequently heard in the *comparsas* or street processions. Their music deviates from the Afro-Cuban Conga style.

Street bands abound everywhere and are represented here by *Conjunto Siboney* and the other group who play and sing ——— but who must be nameless here."

Sam Eskin

\*#1086: Drums of Rodriguez

## Side A

1. El Rancho Night Club Band
2. Black Tears—Trio Lissabet
3. Jawbone of an Ass  
Roving Carnival Band  
(*Ritmo Y Frutas de Cuba*)
4. Juan Jose  
Street Trio
5. Squeezing  
Trio Lissabet
6. The Peanut Vendor  
Conjunto Siboney Band

## Side B

1. Roving Carnival Band  
(*Ritmo Y Frutas de Cuba*)
2. Beautiful Mulatto Girl  
Trio Lissabet
3. El Rancho Night Club Band
4. The Girl from Miambo  
Trio Lissabet
5. El Rancho Night Club Band
6. Willpower  
Trio Lissabet



Photo: Courtesy B.W.I. Airlines

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