



**THE ROOTS OF CHICHA 2** - Out October 12, 2010 (Barbès Records)

### **ELECTRIC CUMBIAS FROM THE LOWER DEPTHS OF PERU**

Cultural phenomena streak through popular consciousness like meteorites. There's a significant, even life-changing, impact made somewhere, but for many it's only a moment that flickers by, soon to be swallowed back into the cosmos. Chicha might have been like that. Instead, a once-obscure music that enjoyed a fanatic embrace in the Peruvian slums of the 1970s has become a full-fledged global occasion – thanks, in part, to the stunning success of a 2007 CD called *The Roots of Chicha*.

The album, released by the Brooklyn-based **Barbès Records**, was a passionate act of cultural appreciation: a heartstrong effort to turn the world on its ear with something it had never expected to hear. It took listeners back to the late 1960's, when a number of Peruvian guitarists from Lima and the Amazon created a new electric hybrid, which mixed cumbia, surf, Cuban guaracha, rock, Peruvian folklore, and psychedelic touches. This new wave of Peruvian *cumbia* came to be known as *chicha*. Scorned by the middle-class and the official tastemakers, chicha remained mostly associated with the slums of Lima, where the ever-growing population of Andean migrants embraced the music and its players as their own.

When **Olivier Conan** released the first volume of *Roots of Chicha* in September 2007, he couldn't have foreseen the kind of impact it would have. The musician, who co-owns the club Barbès in Brooklyn and owns the label of the same name, had fallen in love with the music on a trip to Peru in the summer of 2006. Back in New York, he started his own band, **Chicha Libre**, as an attempt to share his enthusiasm. Then he released a compilation of some of the best chicha tracks from the '70s. The music quickly found an audience in the US and in Europe. Musicians and DJs embraced it as a lost link between rock and Latin cultures. Accolades flowed from the *New York Times*, *NPR*, *Le Monde*, *El Comercio* and the *BBC*. One of its songs was covered by the band **Franz Ferdinand**, actor **Elijah Wood** praised it profusely in an interview to *Paste* magazine. Chilean rock group **Los Tres** gave a copy of the record to then-president **Bachelet**, which somehow became national news.

And now, there's more.

**Roots of Chicha 2** showcases 11 bands and 16 tracks recorded from 1968 to 1981. This is music at once familiar and exotic - rooted in the changing sounds fostered by the worldwide musical revolution that took place in the late 60's - yet the music remains oddly timeless. The new collection is not a sequel. It's an attempt to rectify some of the biases and inaccuracies of the first volume. Here, the selections focus more on the urban aspect of the music and less on the Amazonian side. It highlights some lesser-known bands, and

broadens its scope to include some of the early Cuban-influenced groups that would play such a crucial role in the elaboration of the chicha sound. And it introduces some of the later bands, such as Los Shapis, who played in the more Andean style that would eventually define chicha. **More roots. More chicha.**

This collection includes such crucial chicha outfits as **Grupo Celeste**, which had a huge influence on the emergence of Mexican cumbia; **Chacalon**, the legendary “bad boy” of chicha; **Ranil**, the doggedly independent folk hero from Iquito; **Manzanita**, unheralded yet dazzling; and **Los Destellos**, whose seminal role in the evolution of chicha is further documented here.

The new edition is next chapter in a fascinating story. Even as a new audience for *chicha* has begun to develop far, far away from Peru, it’s the effect that the music has had in its contemporary homeland that has been the biggest surprise. For decades, chicha had been scorned as the trashiest expression of Lima’s slums. While the music certainly lived on with the working class, many journalists, students and musicians were becoming increasingly interested. *Roots of Chicha* became a perfect excuse to explore this obscured chapter of their popular culture. News that a gringo was interested in chicha found its way in many of Peru’s mainstream magazines, newspapers and TV – including *canal cuatro* and the very official *El Comercio*.

Within two years, a Peruvian cumbia revival was in full swing. Not only were old bands such as **Juaneco y su combo** and **Los Mirlos** given sudden attention, but popular Peruvian rock bands started paying homage to the music. All of a sudden, Peruvian cumbia found itself in the hip clubs of Barranco, the “bohemian” neighborhood of Lima. After 40 years, chicha was no longer invisible. Still, as if to avoid the social stigma attached to the music, people were calling it *cumbia*, not chicha.

*Chicha* still belongs to the slums.

Album Tracklisting:

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| 1. Constelación – Los Destellos                    | 9. A Trabajar – Chaclón y la Nueva Crema                  |
| 2. El Diablo – Compay Quinto                       | 10. Cumbia del Desiertro – Los Destellos                  |
| 3. Silbando – Los Ribereños                        | 11. Mala Mujer – Ranil y su Conjunto                      |
| 4. Colegiala – Los Illustionistas                  | 12. Agua – Manzanita y su Conjunto                        |
| 5. La Pastorcita – Los Destellos                   | 13. El Aguajal – Los Shapis                               |
| 6. Lamento del Yacuruna – Los Wembler’s de Iquitos | 14. Paga la Cuenta Sinvergüenza – Manzanita y su Conjunto |
| 7. Como Un Ave – Grupo Celeste                     | 15. Siboney – Los Walkers                                 |
| 8. El Hueleguiso – Manzanita y su Conjunto         | 16. La Danza del Petrolero – Los Wembler’s de Iquitos     |

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